



SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP 2024 MASTER PLAN

Prepared by the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council
in partnership with the W.E. Upjohn Institute for
Employment Research

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This plan was prepared with the assistance and knowledge of community leaders and the citizens of Schoolcraft Township. Special thanks go to the following individuals:

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INTRODUCTION

This document is an update to the 2008 Master Plan for Schoolcraft Township. The township is an attractive, growing place with proximity to the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage. Population growth has outpaced the county's growth and the projections from the previous plan. This document provides both continuity of previous plans and an eye to the growth potential of the area. Previous plans and recent survey responses suggest that residents appreciate and want to maintain the rural character of the township. The survey conducted for this master plan shows that over 70 percent of respondents are satisfied with the township's development as it currently stands. However, the growth potential of the area can be realized while maintaining that desired character.

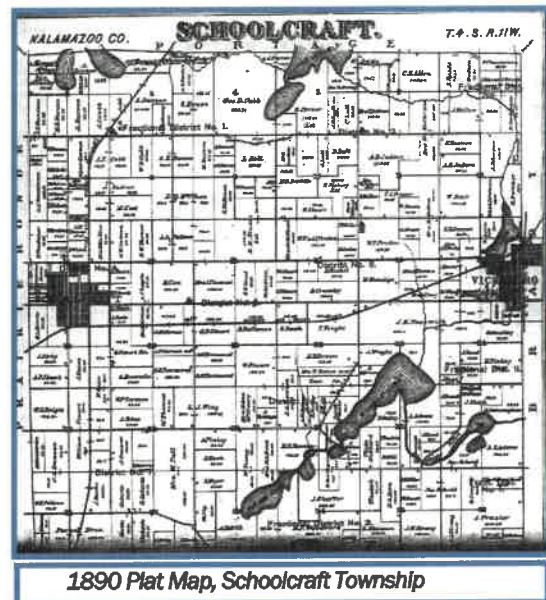
SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP

The Township of Schoolcraft is located in the south-central portion of Kalamazoo County in the heart of southwestern Michigan.

Schoolcraft Township is south of the city of Portage and encompasses two urbanized areas, the Village of Schoolcraft to its west, the Village of Vicksburg to its east. 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.

Schoolcraft Township was formed in 1842 when the western 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 changed the land use 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 Watco Grand Elk Railroad - 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 agricultural 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.



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.

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.

2008 Master Plan

The 2008 Master Plan was developed by LSL Planning and adopted August 12, 2008. The plan included projections for community growth, vision and goals, and future land use plans. The goal themes were focused on agriculture, rural preservation, and economic development.

The goals from that plan have been adapted and updated for this plan, per the planning commission's recommendations and community input. The future land use plan from that document was maintained.

Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg Master Plans

The Village of Schoolcraft's most recent master plan was completed in 2018. The Village projects a very modest population growth through 2036, less than 80 residents. The Village goals are to:

1. Remove center lane on US-131 and replace with planted median.
2. Identify funding for sewers.
3. Acquire properties for single family home development.
4. Develop trail along rail line for non-motorized uses.
5. Improve safety along US-131.

6. Create mixed-use development for “missing middle” housing.
7. Partner with schools to pursue grants for trailhead park.
8. Review zoning standards along US-131 for sustainable and save development.
9. Review zoning standards for Clay Street.
10. Assess amenities to make Burch Park a destination.
11. Develop a plan for Robinson Street.
12. Rezone Cass Street for high-density commercial.

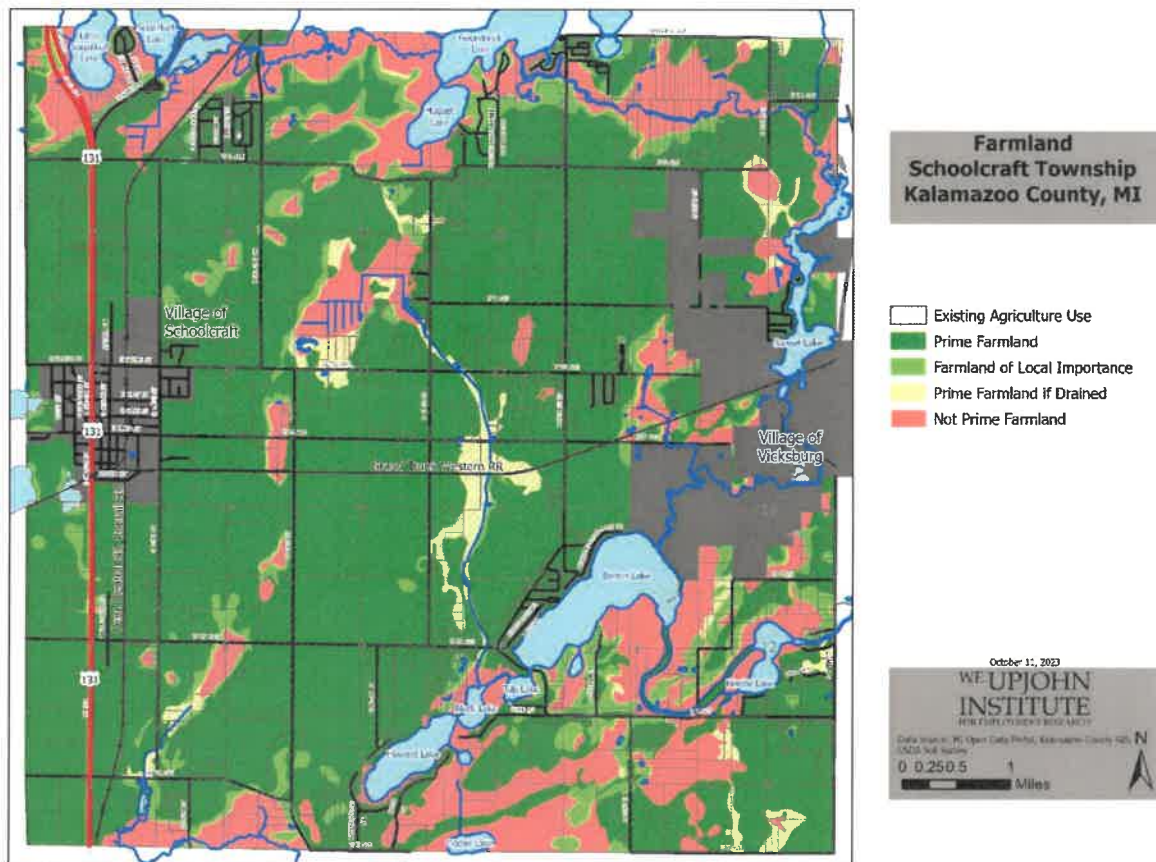
In 2015, the Village of Vicksburg adopted its current Master Plan. The village is currently in the process of updating that Master Plan.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies were established in the 2008 plan or earlier and updated to reflect the continuing priorities of the community. The three main focuses are agriculture and natural resources, rural character and community relationships, and business and economic development. These goals remain of interest to the community. Rural character and natural resources perseverance were represented in several questions in the community survey.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Map 1: Farmland



Goals

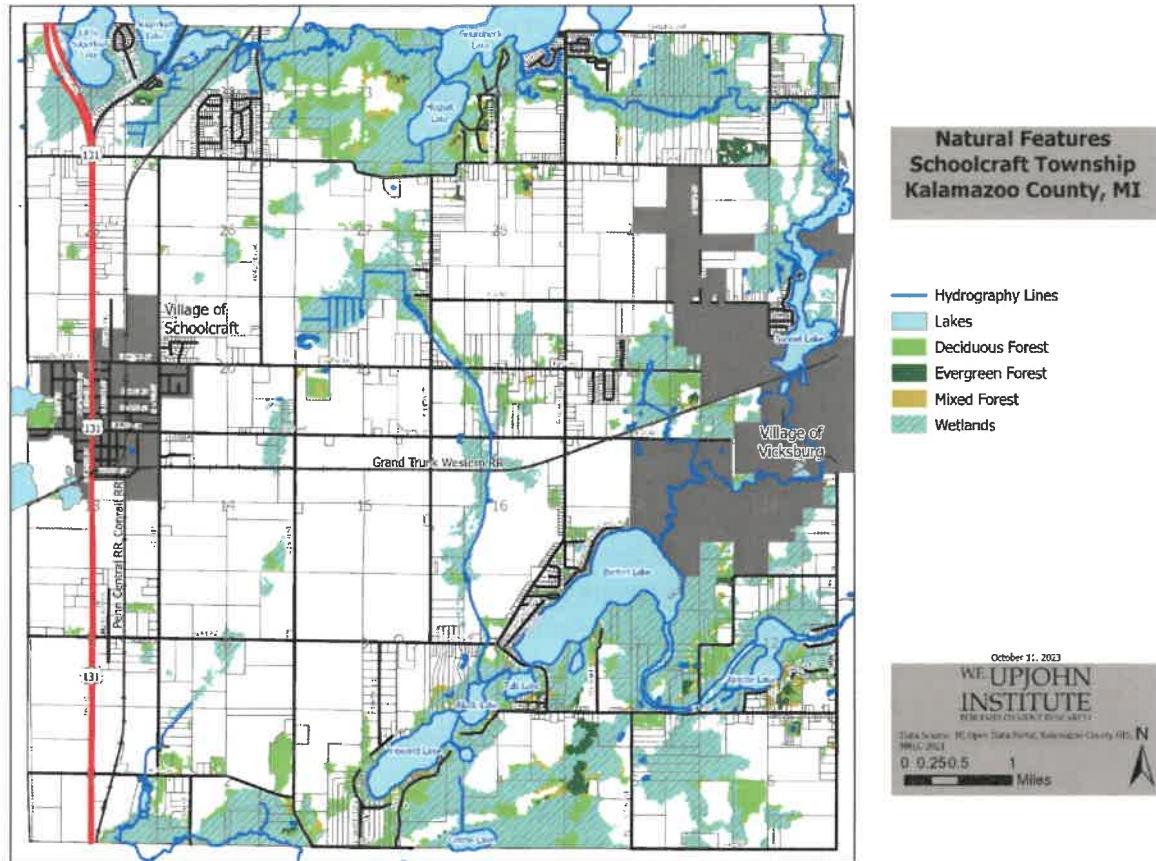
- A. Support a viable agricultural community through planning and zoning techniques that preserve farmland.
- B. Protect the environmental resources important to the township, which include the lakes, wetlands, wildlife habitat and woodlands from the negative impacts of development.
- C. Identify lands 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. Continue to maintain exclusive agricultural zones to preserve farmland.
- 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 site plan review process, 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. Use the site plan review process to ensure 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. Recognize the potential for conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and focus residential development away from major agriculture areas and sensitive environmental areas.
- 6. Consider using or extending programs such as transfer or purchase of development rights, conservation easements, P.A. 116 and creation of land trusts.

RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Map 2: Natural Features



Goals

- Strive to maintain Schoolcraft Township's rural character through thoughtful, pro-active planning.
- 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.
- Protect the rural community character, natural aesthetics and environmental quality that contribute to the high quality of life in Schoolcraft Township.
- Provide a balanced and sustainable land use plan to support the people and the local economy of the township.
- Meet housing needs of current and future residents by developing housing while preserving rural character.

Policies

1. Incorporate low-impact site design standards and natural screenings between different uses that respect the natural integrity of the land and minimize the loss of scenic views.
2. Maintain 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.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals

- A. Provide a reasonable mix of commercial and industrial services along US 131 that complements the 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 limiting expansion down the roadways.
- D. Update zoning code to reduce non-conforming uses.
- E. Update zoning for parcels currently with split zoning.

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. Encourage multiple use of driveway cuts in commercial areas to minimize traffic entering and exiting US-131.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROJECTIONS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Schoolcraft Township has grown at a faster rate than the county.
- Growth is projected to continue at a similar rate.
- The age profile of the Township shows a higher percentage of people aged 40-61 than the county, with a lower percentage of people aged 25-39 and 67 and older.
- Income is higher than the county, but home values are lower.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This section of the plan examines the changing demographics of Schoolcraft Township and the implication of those changes on planning and policy.

Whenever possible, data are shown for Schoolcraft Township without Schoolcraft Village or Vicksburg Village. Schoolcraft Village resides entirely in the Township, but roughly half of Vicksburg Village is in Schoolcraft Township, with the other half in Brady Township. This issue makes estimating certain data difficult. When data cannot be separated it is noted with an asterisk (*).

Schoolcraft is a growing township. While the rate of population growth has slowed recently, the township's growth has been robust. Table 1 shows the population growth rate slowing to 5.7 percent in 2020, following 20 years of over nine percent growth. The recent growth rate outpaces the Village of Schoolcraft, which had population declines in 2010 and 2020, and the county as a whole, which grew by 4.4 percent in 2020 and 4.7 percent in 2010. The Village of Vicksburg has had more robust population growth, increasing more than 31 percent in 2020.

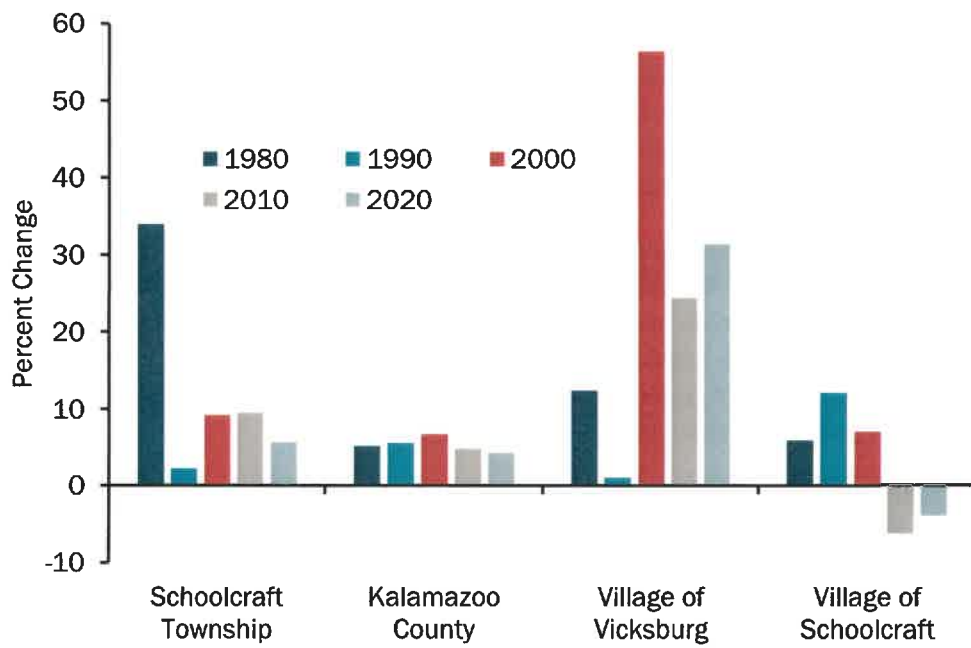
The population growth of Schoolcraft Township is not the whole story. The need for additional housing is shown by household growth, which is also increasing at a faster rate than Kalamazoo County. Shown in figure 2, households increased by 4.8 percent from 2010 to 2020, compared to 3.8 percent in Kalamazoo County.

Table 1: Population Change

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%
2010	4,418	383	9.5%
2020	4,670	252	5.7%

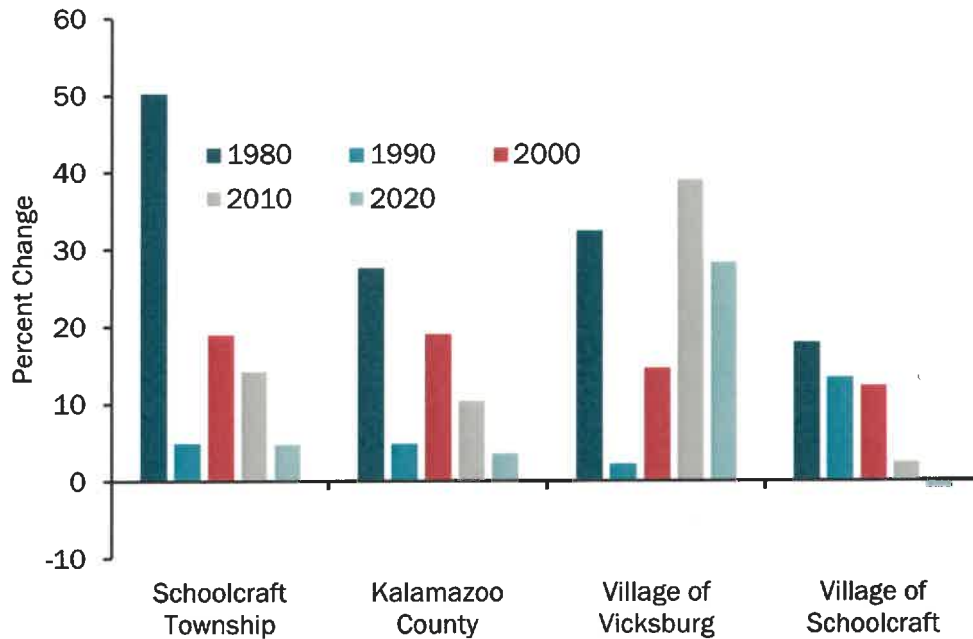
Source: US Census

Figure 1: Population Change



Source: US Census

Figure 2: Household Change



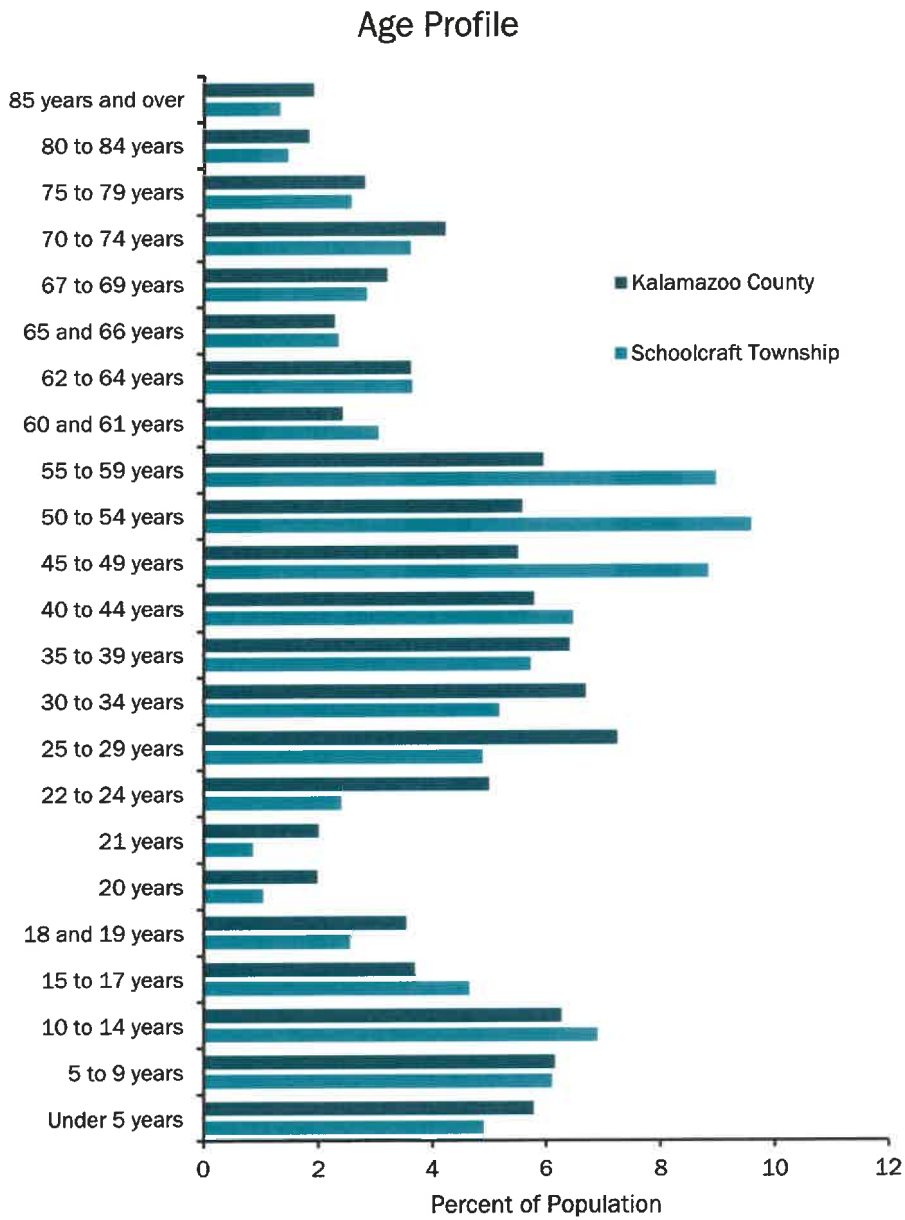
Source: US Census

Age and economic demographics suggest Schoolcraft Township is attractive to the older end of the working-age population. The age profile shown in figure 3 suggests that Schoolcraft Township has a higher percentage of persons aged 40 to 59 than Kalamazoo County. This age group is likelier to be employed, own a home, and have a higher income than the rest of the county. Figure 4 shows median household income is higher in Schoolcraft Township than in the county. The median home value is higher than both villages and the county (though the village values are lowering the value for the remainder of the township). Housing strategies can be tailored to continue to encourage development for working-aged people looking for larger, more rural homes. However, there is also an opportunity to attract younger working-age people looking for more rural living. Responses to the master plan survey suggest that current residents are interested in rural and environmental preservation in the Township. Planning for a wider variety of housing types, at a price point young families could afford, could help attract younger workers while preserving farmland in Schoolcraft Township. Similarly, as the current working-age population ages, there could be increased demand for senior living in the township. Currently, there is a lower percentage of residents aged 67 and older in Schoolcraft Township compared to Kalamazoo County. Increased senior living options would allow residents to continue to live in the community if they cannot remain in their homes. Additionally, according to the resident survey, 39 percent of respondents indicated the township should plan for senior housing, which was the second-most frequent response to the housing-related question. According to AARP surveys, seniors generally want nearby amenities and walkable development; clustered development near the Villages could create attractive places for seniors

while preserving agricultural and undeveloped places. Accessory dwelling units may also give seniors an option to remain in the Township if they sell their homes to family members.

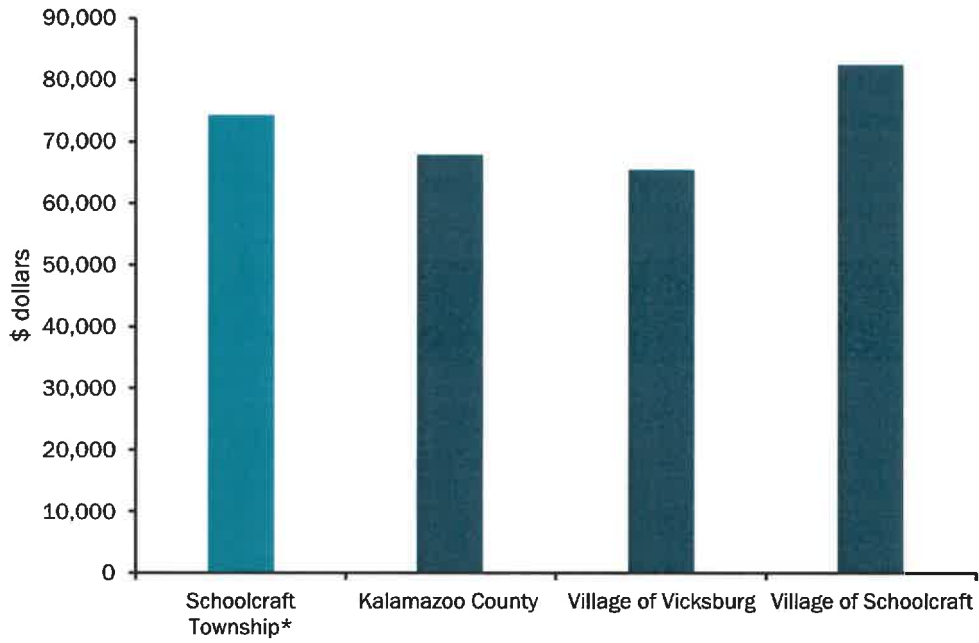
Additional housing options such as planned unit development (PUD), medium density housing, senior living, or others could be considered to meet demand while maintaining rural character. These development types could allow growth in specific locations while preserving as much farmland and natural spaces as possible.

Figure 3: Age Profile



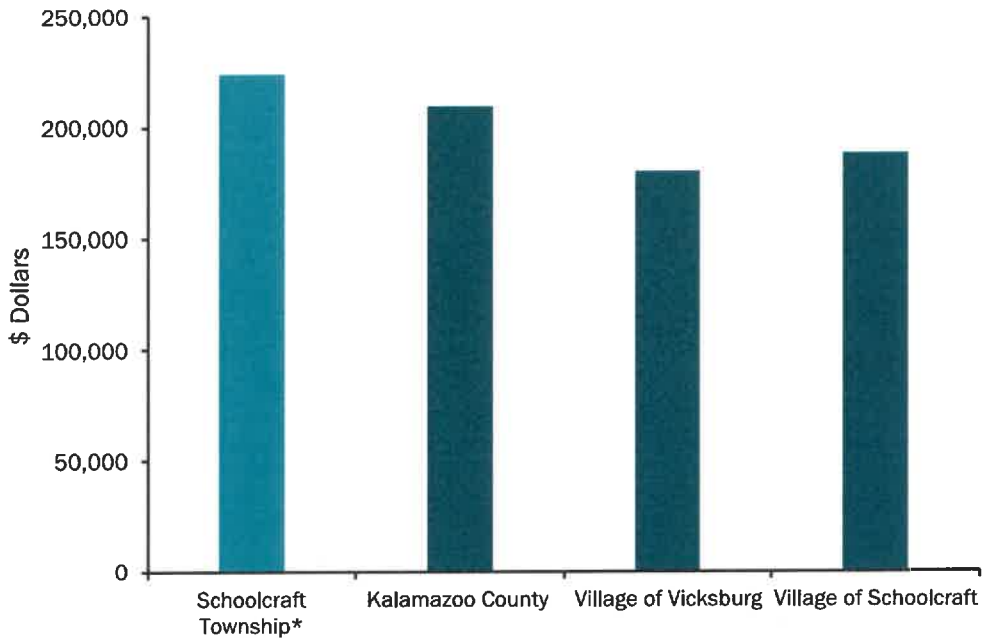
Source: US Census, 2020

Figure 4: Median Household Income



Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2018-2022 Average

Figure 5: Median Home Value



Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2018-2022 Average

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

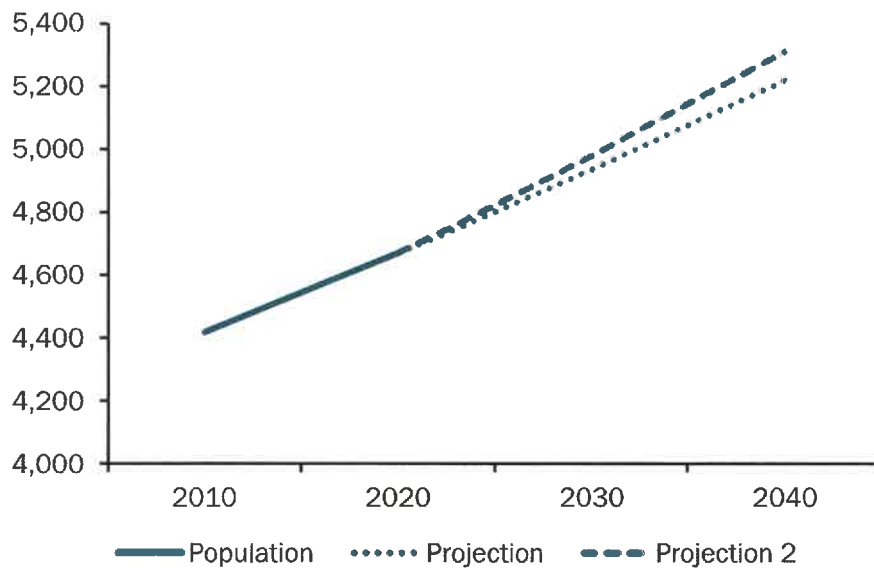
The population of Schoolcraft Township is likely to keep growing. Using some simple projections based on historic growth rates, the population of Schoolcraft Township is likely to increase to between 5,218 to 5,309 persons in the next 20 years. (Projection 1 assumes growth continues at 5.7% each decade, projection 2 uses the average rate over the last 40 years.) At an average persons-per-household rate of 2.5, this means a potential housing demand for 222 to 259 additional units over the next 20 years. Note that this estimate assumes a consistent person-per-household rate and continuing population growth. The person-per-household rate has been falling and potential residents may look elsewhere if housing is not available. In the 2008 master plan, population was projected to reach 4,255 in 2010 and 4,477 in 2020. These estimates were exceeded by roughly 160 to 200 residents, respectively.

Table 2: Population projections

	Population	Percent Change	Projection 1	Projection 2
2010	4,418	9.5%		
2020	4,670	5.7%		
2030			4,936	4,979
2040			5,218	5,309

Sources: US Census and Upjohn Institute

Figure 6: Population Projections



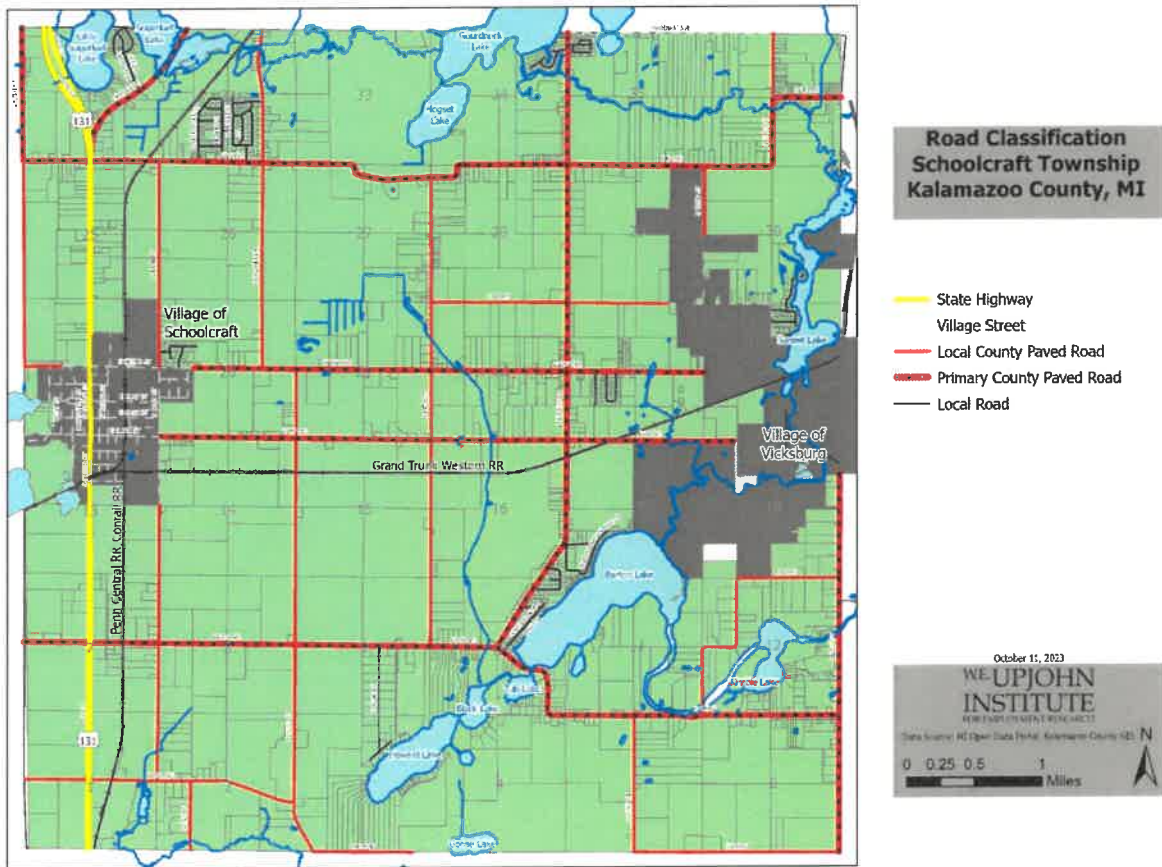
Sources: US Census and Upjohn Institute

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation planning in Schoolcraft Township is managed by the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, including both motorized and non-motorized transportation planning. The 2018 Kalamazoo County Master plan includes transportation goals for the county. The non-motorized plan was approved in 2021. Non-motorized routes include West VW avenue, Oakland Drive, West U Avenue, S 22nd Street, and part of Portage Road.

The township contains two significant rail lines. The Watco Grand Elk Railroad (leased from Norfolk Southern) 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 the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek International Airport (AZO)

Map 3: Road Classification



REDEVELOPMENT

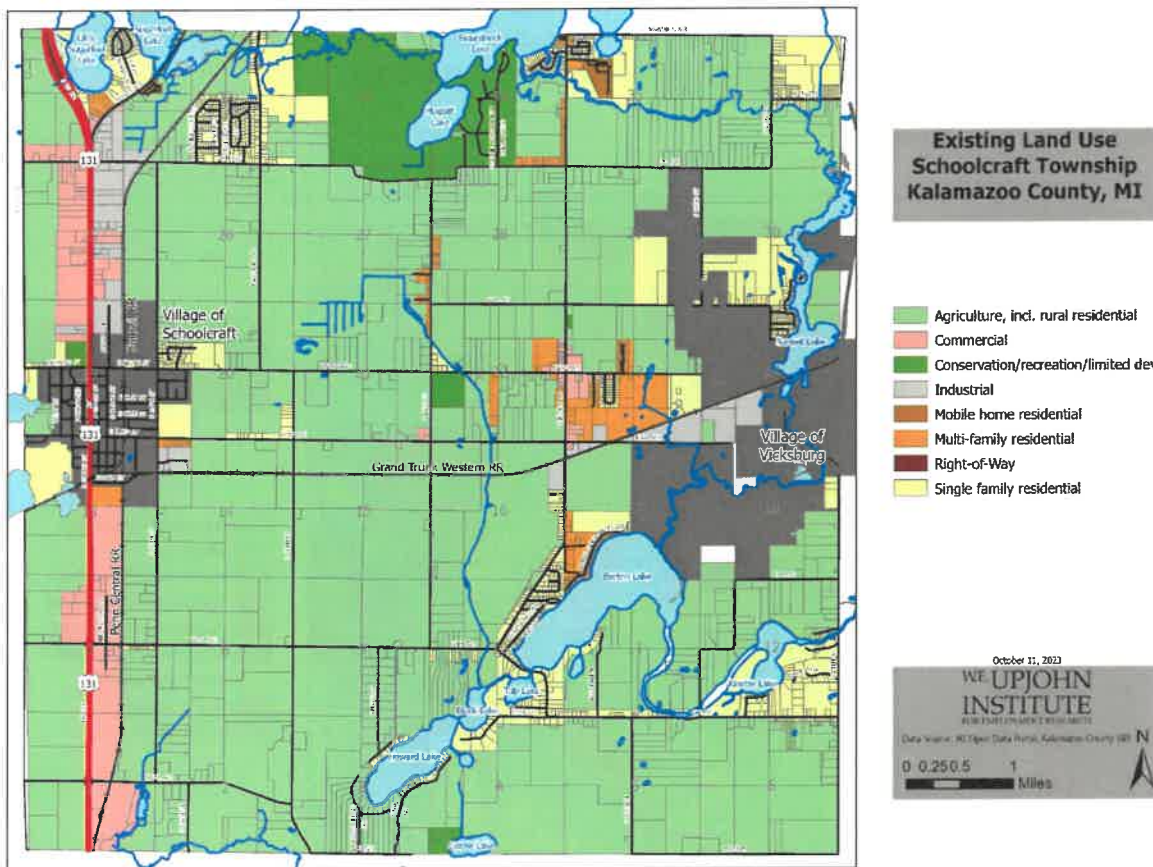
There are no parcels identified for redevelopment. The lack of historic development in the Township has limited redevelopment opportunities. Nonetheless, redevelopment efforts are underway in the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg. If redevelopment opportunities are identified in the future, the Township could partner with Southwest Michigan First and the Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

LAND USE

CURRENT LAND USE

The Current Land use (Map 4) shows development as generally following the Future Land Use established in 2008. The majority of the land is agricultural or rural preservation/residential. Commercial and industrial development is along major highways or roads and generally in proximity to the villages of Schoolcraft or Vicksburg.

Map 4: Existing Land Use

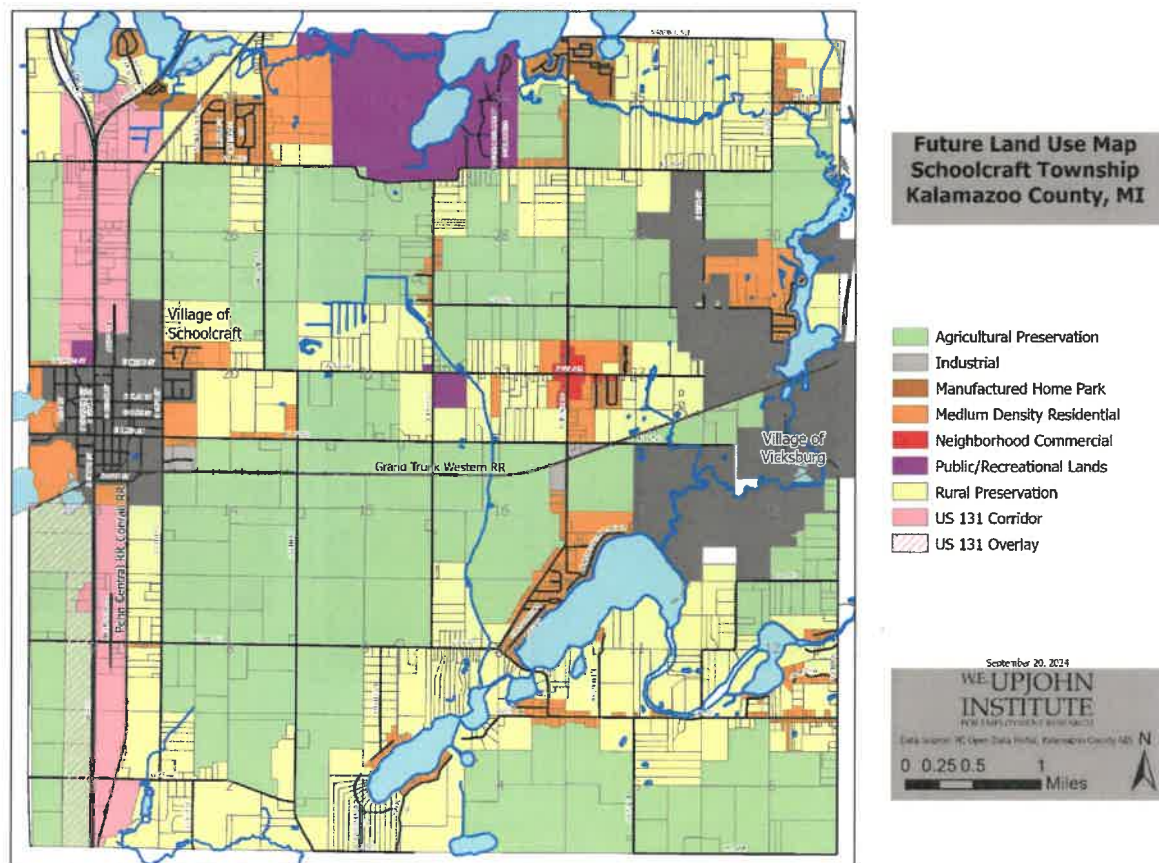


FUTURE LAND USE

The township grew faster than projected in the 2008 plan. Nevertheless, the plan was forward looking in its land use planning. Preserving rural character through a clustered development would allow housing to be constructed in certain spaces while maintaining the overall character of the plan. The Planning Commission has requested a few changes to the future land use based on the 2008 future land use plan and so the current plan maintains that continuity as follows.

The Future Land Use Plan map (Map 5) 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.

Map 5: Future Land Use



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.

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 is compatible with Schoolcraft Township land uses.

RURAL PRESERVATION

Description. Land within the Rural Preservation (RP) 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 habitat.

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 low density residential development respects the character of the land and surrounding area. A proposed base density of 3-5 acres per housing unit allows for larger lots as well as clustered developments that preserve open space.

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 stressed infrastructure.

The small pockets of higher density residential development along South 18th 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.

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 rural preservation 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 landowners 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.

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 is 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.

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 Grand Elk 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.

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.

SURVEY

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Respondents are interested in rural and agricultural preservation
- The majority of respondents are in favor of some level of solar and wind development, in specific circumstances
- The majority of respondents are happy with their internet, but work remains
- Respondents were overwhelming against marijuana dispensaries

DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

The survey was conducted in spring of 2023. There were 44 responses from residents of Schoolcraft Township. Some respondents were residents of Schoolcraft Village or Vicksburg Village and were excluded from the following results.

Respondents agree that short-term rentals should be allowed in the township, 59 percent of respondents either agree or strongly agree short-term rentals should be allowed. The overwhelming majority (70.5 percent) of respondents are satisfied with the township's development. Some would like to see more commercial development, but few want further residential development. For limited additional residential development, residents are in favor (50 percent) of allowing accessory dwelling units. Over 36 percent of respondents would like more development for seniors, though that is followed closely by 34 percent would like no further changes.

Respondents have mixed feelings about more controversial development items. Respondents are in favor of cell phone towers in limited circumstances. Nearly 55 percent believe cell phone towers should be allowed anywhere but residential and 27 percent prefer hidden residential towers. Similarly, 77 percent say solar energy developments should be allowed for personal use on or near homes. Wind energy developments was less decisive. The majority (54 percent) do believe they should be allowed for commercial purposes anywhere, but 41 percent believe they should not be allowed near residential properties. Marijuana dispensaries are unpopular with the majority of respondents.

Preservation and natural resources were key items to respondents. No item in the preservation question received less than 60 percent approval. Residents are satisfied with parks and recreation opportunities. Residents also believe the township should do more to control blight and junk on properties.

The question on residents' satisfaction with internet access had over 18 percent responses in "other" with a written response. Of those, two specified they were happy, two specified they were not. The largest number of responses, however, called for more choices for internet access. The full comments to this question are in Appendix 1.

Figure 7: The Township should allow short-term (30 days or less) rental units such as Airbnb or VRBO

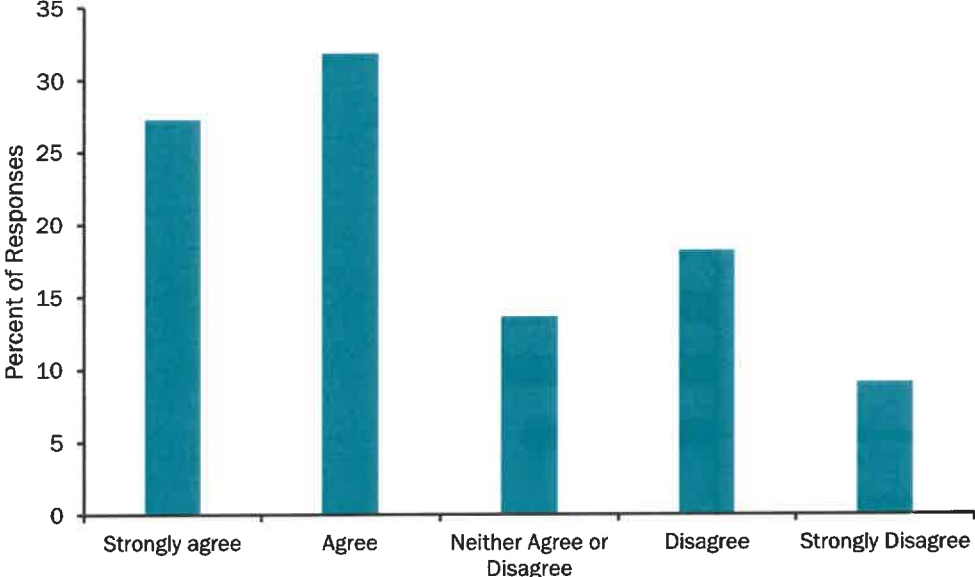


Figure 8: Are you satisfied with the way the Township is developed?

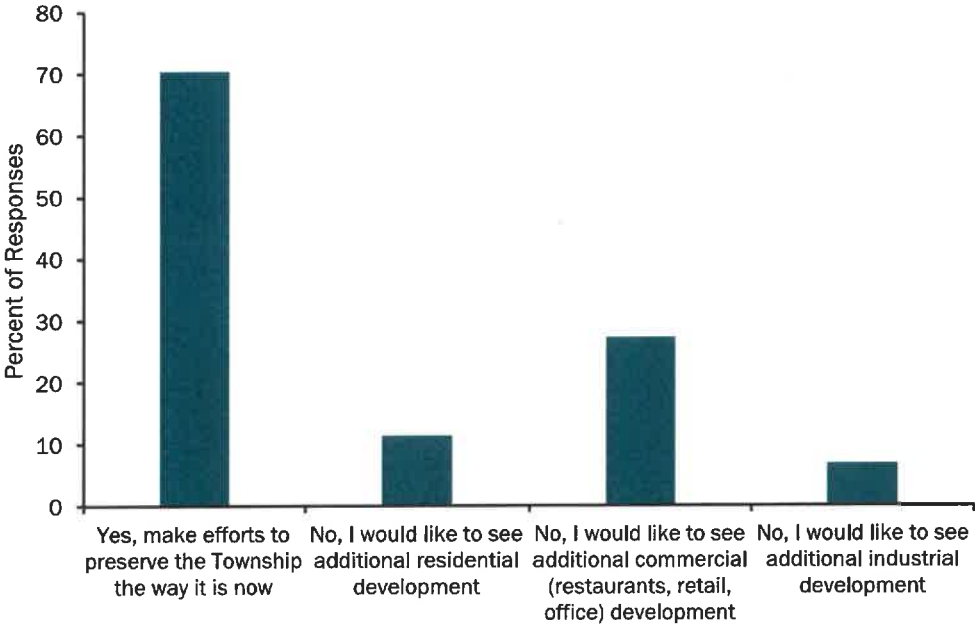


Figure 9: Plans for future housing in the Township should include?

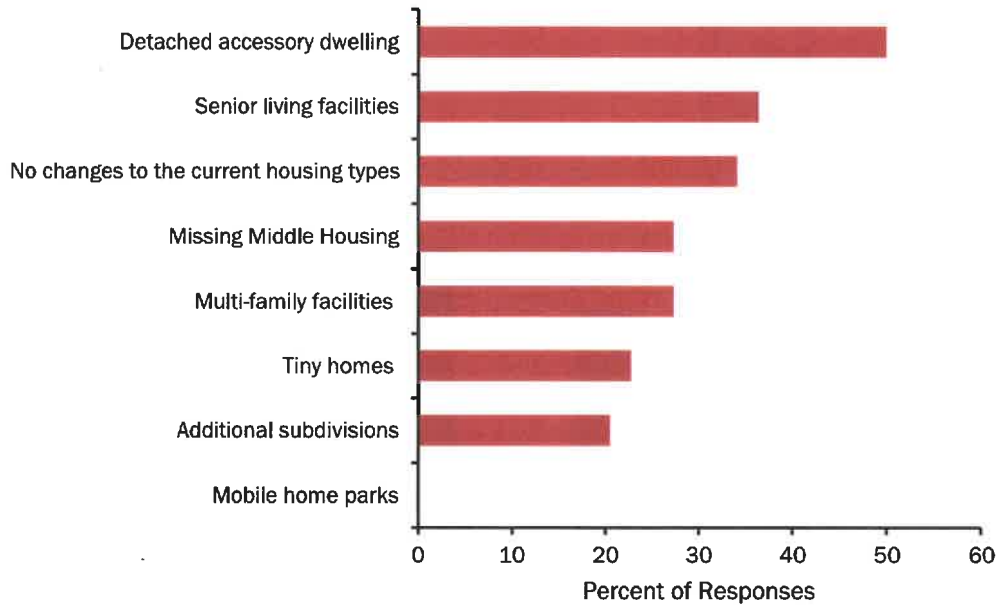


Figure 10: The Township should work to increase access to municipal water / sewer?

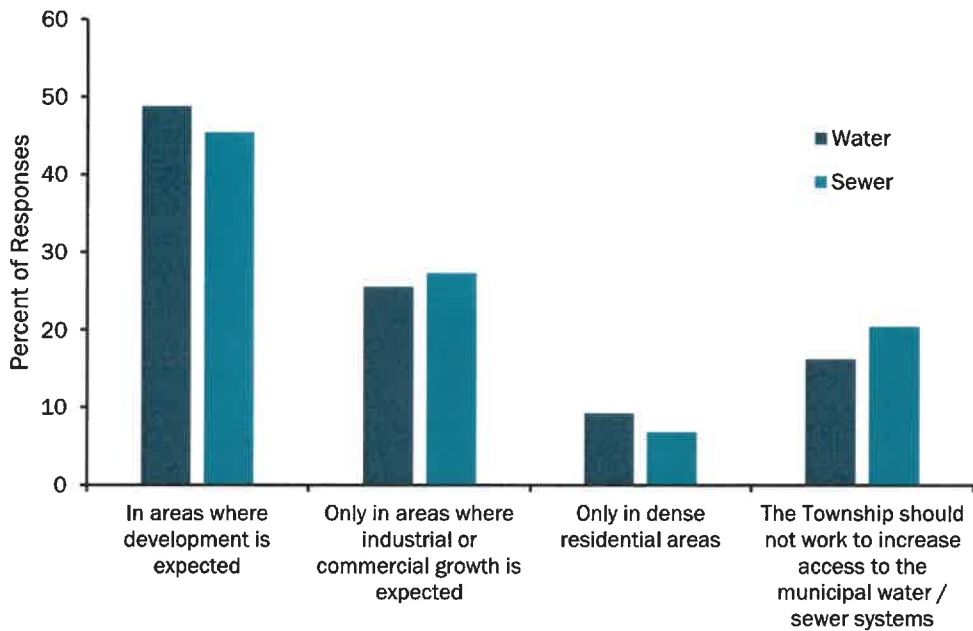


Figure 11: You are satisfied with your internet connection?

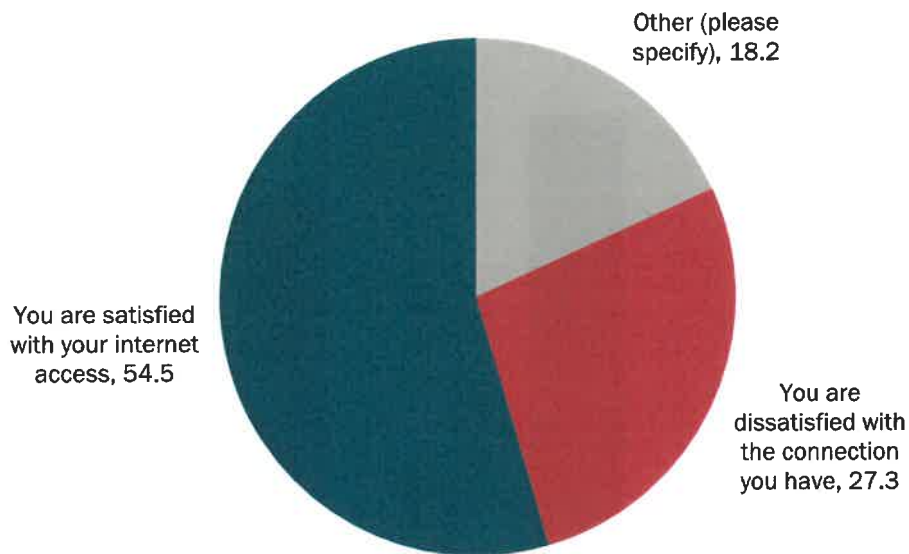


Figure 12: The Township should use its position or resources to preserve?

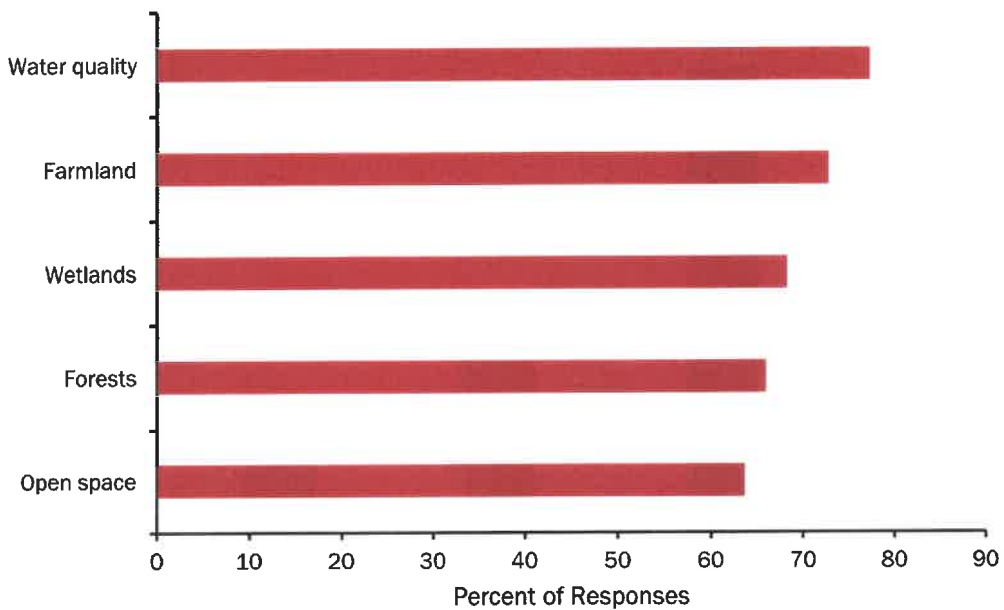


Figure 13: What should the Township do to protect water quality?

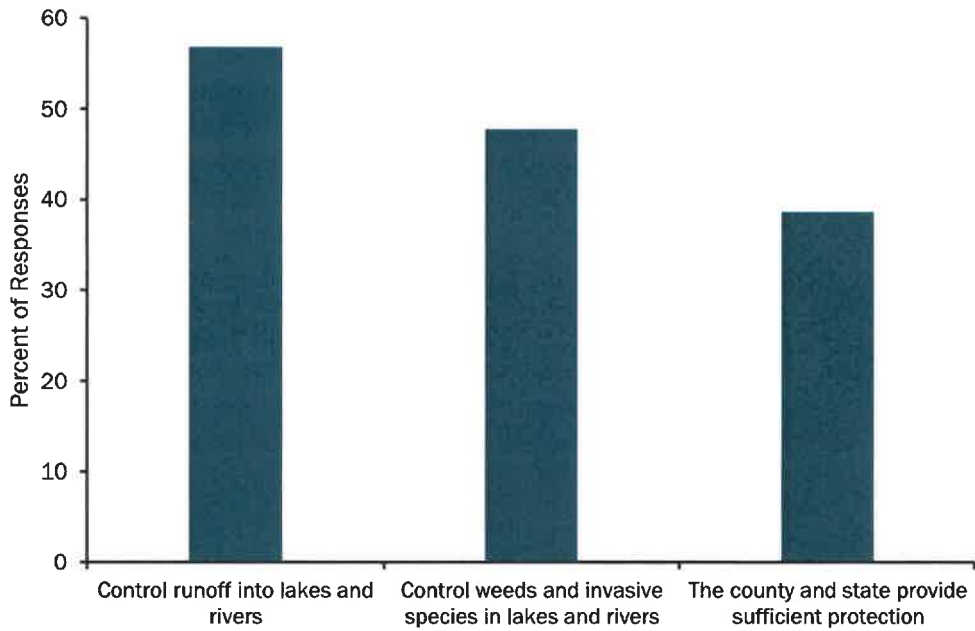


Figure 14: The Township should allow cell phone towers?

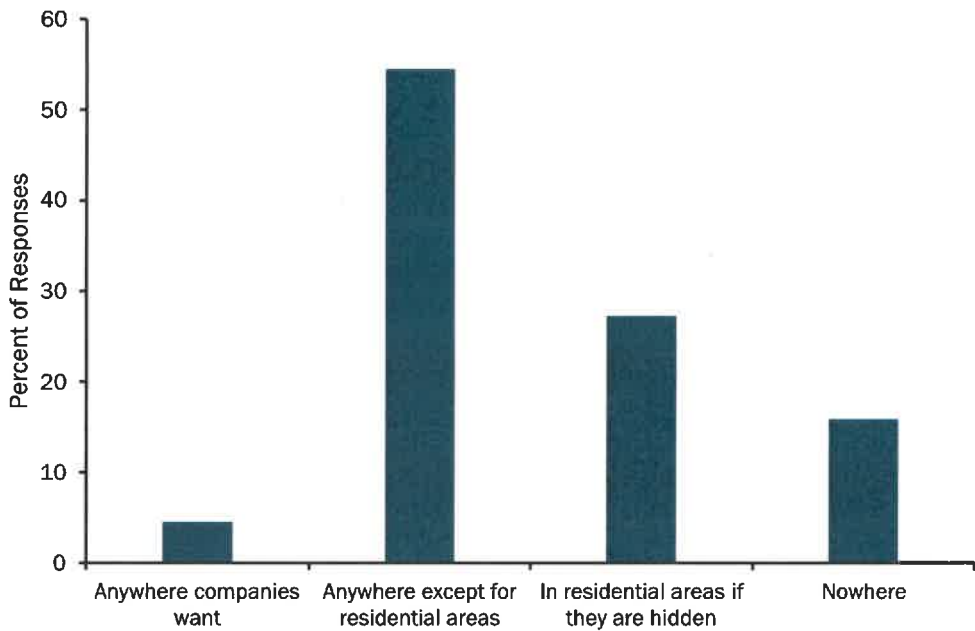


Figure 15: The Township should allow solar panels / wind turbines?

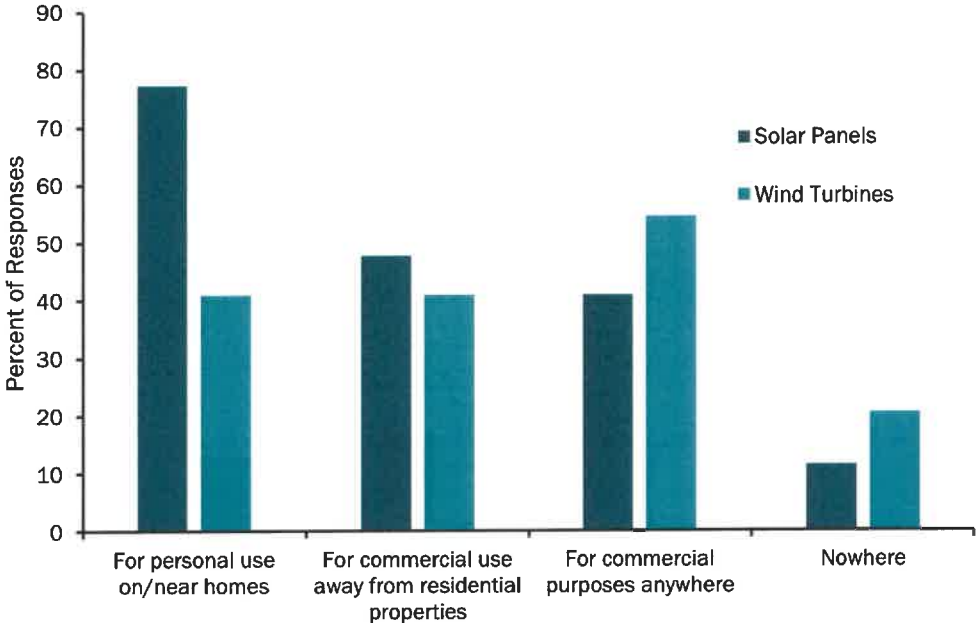


Figure 16: The Township should allow marijuana dispensaries?

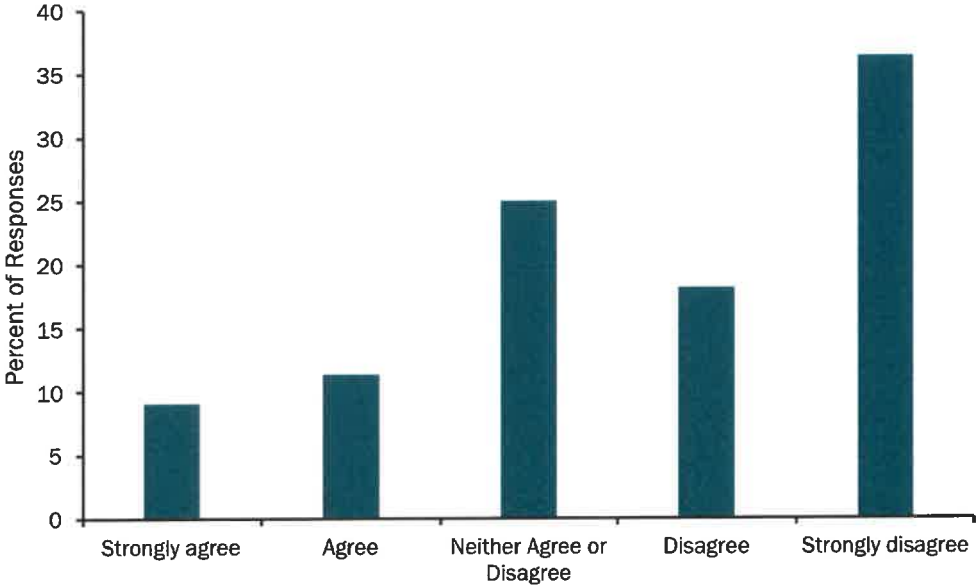


Figure 17: You are satisfied with the park and recreation opportunities in and around the Township?

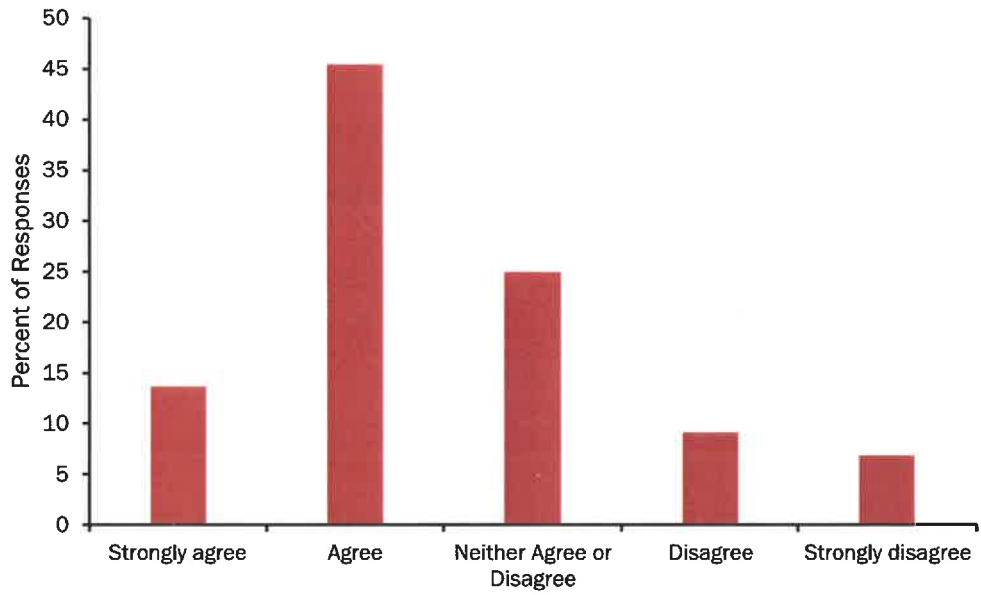
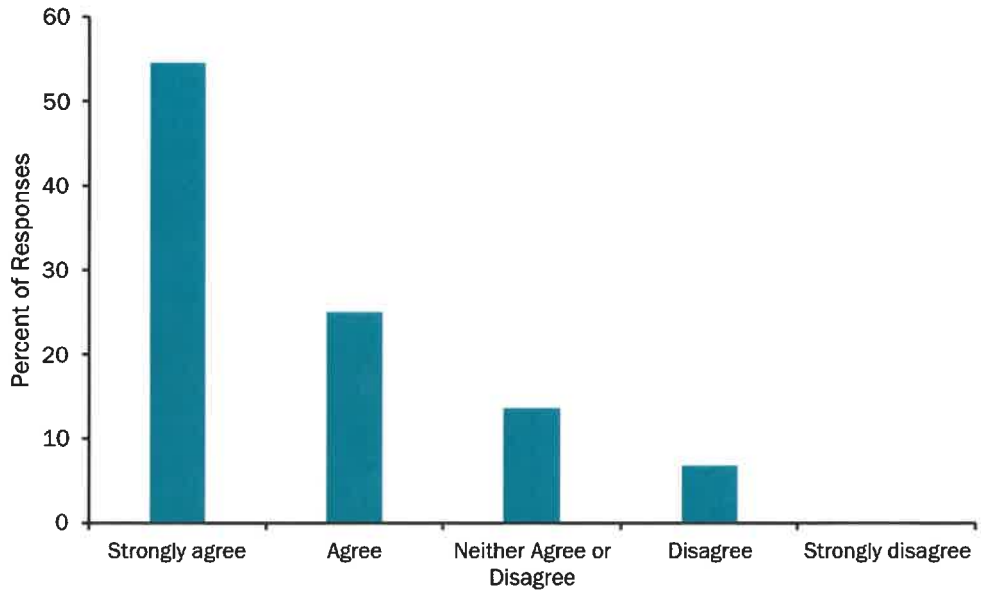


Figure 18: The Township should do more to control blight or junk on properties?



APPENDIX 1: FULL SURVEY RESULTS

The following are the full results of the online survey. Comments have not been edited and residents of the Schoolcraft Village or Vicksburg Village have not been excluded.

Q1 The Township should allow short-term (30 days or less) rental units such as Airbnb or VRBO

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	25.9%	14
Agree	27.8%	15
Neither Agree or Disagree	18.5%	10
Disagree	20.4%	11
Strongly Disagree	7.4%	4
TOTAL		54

Q2 Are you satisfied with the way the Township is developed?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, make efforts to preserve the Township the way it is now	68.5%	37
No, I would like to see additional residential development	13.0%	7
No, I would like to see additional commercial (restaurants, retail, office) development	25.9%	14
No, I would like to see additional industrial development	5.6%	3
Total Respondents: 54		

Q3 Plans for future housing in the Township should include (Please check all that apply)

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mobile home parks	0.0%	0
Tiny homes (less than 400 square feet)	24.1%	13
Additional subdivisions	22.2%	12
Multi-family facilities (apartments, condos)	27.8%	15
Missing Middle Housing (cottage courts, duplexes, townhomes)	29.6%	16
Senior living facilities (assisted or independent)	38.9%	21
Detached accessory dwelling (mother-in-law unit)	44.4%	24
No changes to the current housing types	35.2%	19
Total Respondents: 54		

Q4 The Township should work to increase access to municipal water supply:

Answered: 52 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Only in dense residential areas	7.7%	4
Only in areas where industrial or commercial growth is expected	23.1%	12
In areas where residential, commercial, or industrial development is expected	51.9%	27
The Township should not work to increase access to the municipal water systems	17.3%	9
TOTAL		52

Q5 The Township should work to increase access to municipal sewer system:

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Only in dense residential areas	5.7%	3
Only in areas where industrial or commercial growth is expected	24.5%	13
In areas where residential, commercial, or industrial development is expected	49.1%	26
The Township should not work to increase access to the municipal sewer systems	20.8%	11
TOTAL		53

Q6 The Township should use its position or resources to preserve (Please check all that apply)

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
	Farmland	72.2%	39
	Open space	64.8%	35
	Water quality	77.8%	42
	Wetlands	70.4%	38
	Forests	66.7%	36
	Other (please specify)	5.6%	3
Total Respondents: 54			
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)		
1	Property Owners rights		
2	Cemeteries and parks		
3	No it should use any of our resources.		

Q7 How satisfied are you with the internet access in the Township?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
	You are satisfied with your internet access	53.7%	29
	You have access but the speed is not sufficient	0.0%	0
	You have a fast connection but cannot afford the connection	3.7%	2
	You are dissatisfied with the connection you have	24.1%	13
	Other (please specify)	18.5%	10
	TOTAL		54
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)		
1	Township Clerk doesn't utilize the Township Website to keep residents aware of Public Notices		
2	do not have access to internet		
3	More than two choices that exist now. I believe competition is good for the consumer.		
4	Generally are are satisfied.		
5	We are utilizing a mobile hotspot which is affordable and has pretty good speeds, long term the township should be pursuing and accelerating the adoption of fiber lines-which have been allocated funds in recent federal legislation		
6	I have NO access, unsatisfied		
7	We have internet through cell service but really would like the support of the township in leveraging fiber optic internet access		
8	We should do more to increase competition		
9	Midwest fiber optic internet is OUTSTANDING		
10	Not enough competitive choices		

Q8 What should the Township do to protect water quality? (Please check all that apply)

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Control runoff into lakes and rivers	58.5%	31
Control weeds and invasive species in lakes and rivers	49.1%	26
The county and state provide sufficient protection	37.7%	20
Total Respondents: 53		

Q9 The Township should allow cell phone towers (Please check all that apply):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Anywhere cellular companies want	3.8%	2
Anywhere except for residential areas	56.6%	30
In residential areas if they are hidden	32.1%	17
Nowhere	13.2%	7
Total Respondents: 53		

Q10 The Township should allow solar panels (Please check all that apply):

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
For personal use on/near homes	77.8%	42
For commercial use away from residential properties	48.1%	26
For commercial purposes anywhere	33.3%	18
Nowhere	11.1%	6
Total Respondents: 54		

Q11 The Township should allow wind turbines (Please check all that apply):

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
For personal use on/near homes	42.6%	23
For commercial use away from residential properties	53.7%	29
For commercial purposes anywhere	16.7%	9
Nowhere	31.5%	17
Total Respondents: 54		

Q12 To what extent do you agree or disagree the Township should allow marijuana dispensaries?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	7.4%	4
Agree	9.3%	5
Neither Agree or Disagree	25.9%	14
Disagree	20.4%	11
Strongly disagree	37.0%	20
TOTAL		54

Q13 To what extent do you agree or disagree you are satisfied with the park and recreation opportunities in and around the Township?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	14.8%	8
Agree	42.6%	23
Neither Agree or Disagree	25.9%	14
Disagree	11.1%	6
Strongly disagree	5.6%	3
TOTAL		54

Q14 To what extent do you agree or disagree the township should do more to control blight or junk on properties?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	51.9%	28
Agree	29.6%	16
Neither Agree or Disagree	13.0%	7
Disagree	5.6%	3
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
TOTAL		54

Q15 Are you registered to vote?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.0%	54
No	0.0%	0
I don't know	0.0%	0
TOTAL		54

Q16 Where is your primary place of residence?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Schoolcraft Township	81.5%	44
Vicksburg Village	9.3%	5
Schoolcraft Village	7.4%	4
Outside the area	1.9%	1
TOTAL		54

Q17 Which best describes your type of homeownership?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single family homeowner	96.3%	52
Single family renter	0.0%	0
Multi-family renter (apartment)	0.0%	0
Multi-family owner (condo)	3.7%	2
TOTAL		54

Q18 How long have you lived in the Township?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than one year	0.0%	0
One to five years	11.1%	6
Six to ten years	7.4%	4
Ten to fifteen years	11.1%	6
More than fifteen years	70.4%	38
TOTAL		54

Q19 Do you live on any of these types of lots?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Farm/Agriculture	13.0%	7
Waterfront lot	18.5%	10
Residential	75.9%	41
None of the above	3.7%	2
Total Respondents: 54		

Q20 How many members of each age-group live in your household? (Excluding yourself)

Answered: 49 Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER
Under 17	2	32
18 to 24	1	4
25 to 34	0	0
35 to 44	1	14
45 to 54	1	14
55 to 64	1	26
65 and older	5	91
Total Respondents: 49		

Q21 What is your age group?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.0%	0
18-24	0.0%	0
25-34	1.9%	1
35-44	16.7%	9
45-54	16.7%	9
55-64	33.3%	18
65 and older	31.5%	17
TOTAL		54

Q22 What other comments would you like to make regarding the Master Plan update?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 32

#	RESPONSES
1	We believe that sewer and water supply would be a tremendous benefit to all as it would help preserve our natural surroundings and get rid of septic and the long term risk with having septic.
2	The township has the worst zoning ordinance in the county. Most requirements should not apply as too many properties as currently zoned are non-conforming. The planning commission should be ashamed of this document and its enforcement.
3	We need sewers! Cannot attract or sustain businesses without them.
4	Since M-Dot is going to be doing work along US 131, a sewer system needs to be built at the same time. No reason to dig twice! Even if not connected, get the pipes in there!
5	Love living in our beautiful wildlife, forest, farmland, lake and water ways, country settings.
6	Noise abatement plan for U avenue between US131 and Portage Road.
7	The township should work with the rail companies on 2 fronts. 1) to establish quiet zones or no horn zones (possible with local crossing audible devices such as in the village where the highway crossing is I believe Jackson, MI did similar and many others) . With work from home the future and model it would help greatly as well as increase quality of life of all nearby. 2) come up with a solid plan to fulfill the right of way access/ easement for bike & pedestrian trails from the village to portage and vicksburg. This was a top item on the village master plan I helped submit and should be pursued.
8	I love the rural, quiet, relaxed feel to our township. I love the open spaces and the agriculture. I do not want our township to have any high density housing.
9	Improved access to community mental health services,
10	We want natural gas in W Ave West if Portage rd
11	We would like natural gas on W Avenue West if Portage Rd.
12	Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.
13	I think sewers are a must, especially near lakes to control water quality. I would also like a public water system. As the community grows these items are essential for water quality and to attract residents and business.
14	As I live out in the country and have plenty of land, I do not need to have the burden of city sewer, that would devastated many of my neighbors that are on fixed income

- 15 The township needs to publish the monthly minutes from each meeting more promptly. The township does a terrible job of communicating events in the township. Relying on the south county news is NOT sufficient.
- 16 I would be highly disappointed and dissatisfied if yet another dispensary was opened. Schoolcraft is NOT the place for this type of establishment. We need more family friendly attractions to continue to move our small town in the right direction and to grow positively. Bring in sewer directly in town and on the outskirts north and south so our current businesses can grow and thrive.
- 17 Thank you for asking for my input.
- 18 Allow privacy fences to be 7' in height rather than current 6' allowed in fence ordinance.
- 19 We need water and sewer but ABSOLUTELY NOT THROUGH THE VILAGE OF VICKSBURG, one outside of schoolcraft to help all
- 20 What is the anticipated future land use direction? Do you have growth boundaries identified? If utility scale solar comes in, do you have an ordinance regulating this use?
- 21 I don't think we should invest in anything else. I think the over spending on the park is ridiculous! It's hardly used and the light stays on at the snack shack to nowhere servicing no one ! Taxes are too high for us that live in both the township and the village. You guys sit up there in your air conditioning, leaving the lights on wasting our hard earned money. Please stop wasting our hard earned tax dollars.
- 22 As residents of Barton View Estates we do NOT want public sewer. We purchased a home in the country, not on a lake, to avoid public utilities. Just a reminder of the way the majority of the residents & those with homes not on the lake in this area feel.

APPENDIX 2: IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES

The following are implementation techniques established since the 2008 master plan and remain guiding principles for development in Schoolcraft Township.

Agricultural Preservation: 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 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 presence of prime farmland soils are 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.

The current Schoolcraft Township Zoning Ordinance allows minimum lot sizes of 3 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; the willingness and cooperation of farmers is required. Rather, these techniques are intended to permit larger blocks of land to remain set aside for farm use.

Exclusive Use Zoning:

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. 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.

Exclusive Use Zoning. Exclusive use zoning for agriculture is 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.

Planned unit development. Another powerful tool for maintaining agriculture land use 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: The Township acknowledges the need and desire for low density residential development in a rural living environment. Therefore, existing farms within the rural preservation 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 3-5 acres (0.2-0.33 units per acre). This density limit 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.

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.

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: Expansion of the existing interior medium density residential 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 medium density residential 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. 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.

Neighborhood Commercial: Future neighborhood commercial uses are limited to the VW Avenue and Portage Road intersection. Rezoning to commercial designations 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: 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: 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 Grand Elk 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.