

A BRIEF HISTORY

Lawrence Township is located in the southwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula in Van Buren County. It includes the Village of Lawrence within its boundaries.

Before describing Lawrence Township today and making plans for the future, it is important to take a brief look at the history of the area. The area can be described today as a rural residential community.

Van Buren County was organized in 1837, coincidentally the same year Michigan became a state. Originally, Lawrence Township also contained what are now Hartford and Keeler Townships. The post office and the first church, the Congregational Church, were both established in 1837, giving Lawrence an early opportunity to succeed.

In 1840, a Methodist group was formed although they did not have their own building or a specific meeting place. In 1841 the First Baptist Church was organized and a church building with seating for 200 was built in 1853. When attendance declined in the 1920's, the building was sold to the Order of Odd Fellows for a lodge hall. Today, it is the American Legion Post. The Baptist Church on James Street was erected in 1956. The Lawrence Bible Church was established in 1974.

Churches currently active in the Township include the Lawrence Bible Church, the First Congregational Church, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Lawrence United Methodist Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Pentecostal Church, Full Gospel Assembly.

In 1869, the first high school in Van Buren County was built in Lawrence Township. It served the community until 1925 when a new school was built to accommodate the increasing number of students. The current high school was built in 1962, with a large addition and new cafeteria built in 1989.

An elementary school was added a few years after the original high school. The current elementary school was built in 1953, with a large addition and new gymnasium built in 1999.

The women of Lawrence took an active role in many community events. The Gliddenburg Ladies Aid Society, founded in 1887, began as an evening reading circle. Two years later, they began supporting a district minister and started to undertake a number of charitable projects. Women also participated in the Longfellow Club, literary club founded in 1893. The purpose was intellectual stimulation and social enjoyment. The Lawrence Library still has a literature club as one of its annual functions.

In 1921 the Lawrence area businessmen began sponsoring a one day event known as the "Lawrence Ox Roast and Homecoming". It featured county-wide baseball games, country music, and distributed 5,000 ox roast sandwiches. The tradition continued for many years with the Lawrence American Legion Post sponsoring the event through the early 1960's. In 1985, a group was formed to mark the sesquicentennial of Lawrence. The Ox Roast was revived after a 20 year absence and was expanded to a 3 day event held on the Labor Day weekend.

In the early years, Lawrence was thought of as a mill center. In 1863, Roller Mill was erected on the site where an earlier mill had been. By 1912, Lawrence was a booming town with more than fifty business enterprises, four physicians, a dentist, five barbers and a veterinarian. Through the years, Lawrence has had four grocery stores, seven gas stations, three hardware stores, a furniture store, a pharmacy, two sporting goods stores, a gun shop, a hat shop, car dealership and more.

The Lawrence Fire Company was established in 1847. It became the Lawrence Township Fire Department in April of 1924. The Quick Response branch of the Fire Department was established in 1976. On March 31, 2007 the Lawrence Township Fire Department and the Lawrence Township Quick Response were combined into one unit named Lawrence Township Emergency Services.

In 2004, a group of business owners created an association known as the Lawrence Area Business Association – LABA. Any business located within the boundaries of the Lawrence school district is eligible to join LABA. Civic clubs, churches, educational institutions and fraternal organizations are also eligible for membership. The purpose of the Business Association is to encourage and foster the reinvestment and redevelopment of businesses in the Lawrence area. There are currently approximately 50 business organizations eligible for membership in LABA.

Lawrence Township, in cooperation with the Van Buren District Library, built a new library at 212 North Paw Paw St in Lawrence. The building was built in 2004.

BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE

The Master Plan for Lawrence Township, Van Buren County, Michigan was adopted April 17, 2002. The Master Plan for Lawrence Township contains three major parts; (1) An inventory of the existing physical environment, (2) Goals, Policies and Objectives which describe a land use planning agenda for the township over a ten year period, and (3) A future land use map which describes the physical vision for a future land use pattern for the community.

Township Land Use Planning in Michigan

The Lawrence Township Planning Commission is established under the authority of Public Act 33 of 2008 (Township Planning) which states:

A Planning Commission shall make and approve a Master Plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction.

The Master Plan referred to in Act 33 of the Public Acts of 2008 is the basis on which the zoning plan is developed.

Public Act 33 states “the general purpose of the master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.

- (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
 - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.
 - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.
 - (iii) Light and air.
 - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
 - (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
 - (vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
 - (vii) Recreation.
 - (viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.

Mission of the Lawrence Township Comprehensive Development Plan

Lawrence Township is located along I-94 between Paw Paw and Hartford Townships. It is experiencing both permanent and seasonal residential growth pressure because of the availability of vacant land, the attractiveness of the rural environment, and the access to the regional transportation system.

The two predominant land uses in Lawrence Township are agricultural land use (approximately 56.9%) and residential land use (approximately 39.3%) of the total land area. A complete list of land uses categories and associated acreages are listed in the Land Use Section.

The 2000 Census revealed that the 2000 population for the township was 3,341, including 1,059 in the Village. There was a population increase of 9.31% during the 1990s. From 1996 to 2004 in Lawrence Township 143 dwelling units were built, 41 manufactured homes (HUD) were added, and 19 residences were demolished.

In Lawrence Township, approximately 79% of housing is occupied all year and 15% is classified as seasonal or recreational, with 6% remaining vacant.

Because significant acreage within the community continues to be converted to residential use, Lawrence Township desires to establish a development policy which clearly and concisely outlines the location and level of recommended growth. Toward that end, the Lawrence Township Planning Commission has prepared a set of Goals, Policies, and Objectives for **Agricultural Land Preservation, Rural Environment, Residential Development, Natural Resource Management, Mixed Use Development and Community Facilities and Infrastructure.**

The Planning Commission has adopted the following overall Mission Statement and goal for the Master Plan:

The Lawrence Township Planning Commission exists to provide the Township with a plan for the immediate and future development of the land within its boundaries. Using a master planning process, the Commission will create a systematic pattern of land use that takes into consideration:

- **Natural limitations of the environment**
- **Rural quality of life**
- **Tax base which is diversified**
- **Community services which provide for the safety, health and welfare of the citizenry**
- **Community opinion and desires**
- **Present land use**
- **Land use in the townships bordering Lawrence Township**

Goal: The Goal of the Commission is to provide for the orderly, economical and aesthetically pleasing growth and development of the township.

These policy recommendations are contained within suggested geographic areas for future land use which delineate locations for geographic areas of land use including **Agricultural Land Use Emphasis, Rural Land Use Emphasis, Residential Land Use Emphasis, Mixed Land Use Emphasis and Community Facilities.**

The policy recommendations also outline a very specific agenda for action by both the Township Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees concerning proposed research, regulations, projects, programs, and coordination of activities which are directed at creating a more precise land use policy for Lawrence Township which will evolve over the next several years.

THE PLANNING PROCESS IN LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP

This section describes the history of land use planning activities which have included Lawrence Township. It is intended as a historical perspective which can provide a framework for understanding the land use planning process within the Township and assist in formulating recommendations for future studies, land use regulation decisions, new land use regulations, and comprehensive development plans. A brief review of major planning documents follows:

Master Plan for Sewer and Water Facilities, September 1971

Prepared for the Van Buren County Planning Commission by Vilican-Lehman & Associates, Inc. This plan was funded through a grant from the Farmer's Home Administration (part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture). The purpose of the plan was to provide a general guide for utility patterns and needs in the County. It was intended as a guide for both public and private development. It was to be implemented through Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision regulations.

Van Buren County General Development Plan 2000

Authorized by the County Planning Commission after the completion of the Master Plan for Sewer and Water Facilities. This plan was not an in-depth Comprehensive Future Land Use Plan. Its intent was to further relate land use development patterns in the County to the FHA Plan. It was to act as an interim plan until a complete Comprehensive Future Land Use Plan could be developed for the County. A General Development Plan Map was included in the document. It consisted of three main elements: Land Use, Circulation and Public Facilities. It was to be implemented through zoning regulations.

Van Buren County Master Plan, January, 2000

Prepared by the Van Buren County Community Development Department and the Van Buren County Planning Commission, the Master Plan recognized that the County Planning Commission is quite limited in its power regarding local decision making. Its intent, therefore, is to improve coordination and cooperation among the various local, county, state and federal governmental agencies and departments and to guide the decisions of local units of government. It includes the following five sections: population and housing, economy, environment, land use and facilities.

Lawrence Township Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) 2002

Developed by the Lawrence Township Planning Commission, and adopted by the Lawrence Township Board, the CDP included an inventory of the physical environment, establishment of goals, policies and objectives for a ten (10) year period, and incorporated a future land use map. The primary goal of the Planning Commission was "to provide for the orderly, economical and aesthetically pleasing growth and development of the township."

Michigan Township Planning Act Amendment 2002

The Township Planning Act (1959 PA 168) was amended to require communities to review Comprehensive Development Plan every five (5) years to determine need for update or rewrite.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act Adopted 2008

Adoption of the Planning Enabling Act (2008 PA 33) repealed and replaced the Township Planning Act (1959 PA 168), and created a single act to regulate the planning process for counties, cities, villages and townships. The Planning Enabling Act designated a standard title for municipal planning documents: Master Plan (formerly basic plan, comprehensive development plan, land use plan, township plan, and others).

Lawrence Township Master Plan 2008

In compliance with the Planning Enabling Act (2008 PA 33), Lawrence Township Planning Commission reviewed Lawrence Township Comprehensive Development Plan. The need for modification of the plan was evident from this review, and the plan was updated to reduce the number of land use categories from six (6) to (3): Agricultural, Mixed and Residential. The geographic area of the Residential category was expanded to include areas adjacent to Hall Lake, and the Mixed category was expanded to accommodate existing uses without making them non-conforming, and is intended to contain residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, religious, trailer park and other uses.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS UTILIZED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

To assist the reader in utilizing this planning document, the following commonly applied planning terms have been generally defined.

Capital Improvements Program - A locally adopted document which prioritizes public investment for land, infrastructure, equipment, and buildings. This document is considered one of the major implementing tools (along with the zoning ordinance) of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

Cluster development - Grouping houses on part of a property while maintaining a large amount of open space on the remaining land.

Conservation easement - A legal document that restricts the use of land to farming, open space, or wildlife habitat. A landowner may sell or donate an easement to a government agency or a private land trust.

Density - The number of buildings or housing units on a particular area of land (usually measured by acre).

Development Objectives - Development objectives are long range statements of specific activities which must be implemented in order to achieve corresponding policy statements.

Development right - The right to develop land, which is one of several rights that come with land ownership. The development right may be sold or given away separately from other rights. If the development right is removed, the land is still private property, though the uses that are allowed are typically limited to farming or open space.

Farm/Farmland - Land and buildings devoted to the production of crops and/or livestock. The United States Census of Agriculture defines a farm as producing at least \$1,000.00 a year in crops and/or livestock.

Geographic Information System (GIS) - A method of placing data into a computer to create a map or series of maps. Data might include: soils, parcels, roads, waterways, buildings and zoning districts.

Goal - A goal is a very broad and general statement which represents the citizen's view on what they would like the township to be. The goals provide the basic framework for planning, budgeting of tax dollars, and provision of services.

Growth management - The use of regulations and incentives to influence the rate, timing, location, density, type, and style of development in the community.

Housing Unit - A building or portion thereof, designed for occupancy by an individual or family for residential purposes and having kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Keyhole Development - The development of a large parcel of property that has a relatively small, narrow frontage on an adjacent body of water. The access is intended for use by many more persons than similar frontage from a typical lot would allow.

Land trust - A private nonprofit organization that qualifies as a charitable organization under Section 501 C-3 of the Internal Revenue Code. A land trust may receive donations of property, development rights, or money. Donations may qualify as tax deductions. A land trust may also purchase property and development rights.

Land use - The function to which land is put or is classified for future uses; that is for housing, agriculture, commercial, industrial, etc.

Lot - A piece of land divided from a larger parcel.

Master Plan - A document composed of maps and text which describes the present and future residential, business, industrial, community facilities, and physical characteristics of the township. It sets forth policy guidelines and an agenda for future development and improvement of the community.

Maximum lot size - The largest size lot or parcel that can be built on in a particular zoning district.

Minimum lot size - the smallest size lot or parcel that can be built on in a particular zoning district. Also, the smallest size lot that can be created by dividing a larger parcel.

Multiple Family Housing - A single building or series of buildings with abutting walls containing more than two residential dwelling units.

Planned Unit Development - A type of development characterized by master planning for the project as a whole, clustering of structures, a mixture of housing types and sometimes a variety of non-residential uses as well which is permitted by the *Township Rural Zoning Act* (P.A. 184 of 1943, as amended; MCLA 125.286c).

Open Space - Land that is either underdeveloped or is relatively free of buildings and other structures. Although open space is often thought of as public parks and playgrounds, it includes all land that acts as a contrast to the man-made environment. In suburban and rural areas, open space preserves ecologically important natural environments, helps to limit urban growth and acts as a land bank for future development.

Planning Commission - An official panel appointed by the governing body of a city, township or county that is responsible for drafting the Master Plan and the zoning ordinance. The planning commission reviews proposed changes to the zoning ordinance and makes recommendations on the Master Plan, ordinances, and development proposals to the governing body.

Platting - The partitioning or dividing of a parcel of land which is recorded, mapped and charted with the County Plat Board in preparation for development. Re-platting is a process of changing the boundaries of a recorded plat.

Policy - A general application of the goals and objectives. These will indicate general uses of land in terms of where people live, work, shop and play.

Prime agricultural land - Farmland that has a gentle slope and well-drained soils and requires a minimum of conservation practices. It is the easiest land to farm.. Class I and II soils, as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, are considered prime agricultural soils.

Purchase of development rights (PDR) - The voluntary sale of the rights to develop a piece of property by the landowner to a government agency or a land trust. The sale price is determined by an appraisal. The land is then restricted to farming or open space.

Sprawl - Residential and commercial development that may take either of two forms: 1) a wave of urban or suburban expansion; or 2) scattered housing, offices, and stores throughout the countryside.

State Equalized Valuation - This is the value of real property (real estate) as determined by the State of Michigan for all land and development within the local jurisdictions and is the basis for local tax assessment of land value.

Street/Road - A public/private way or right of way used for the movement of people and goods that provides vehicular and pedestrian access to abutting properties.

Subdivision - The division of a parcel of land into lots for future sales and/or development. The subdivision of land in Michigan is regulated by P.A. 591 of 1996 entitled the Land Division Act which defines three types of land division: *exempt splits*, *divisions* and *subdivisions*. *Subdivisions* must be platted while *exempt splits* are actually exempt from any review process and *divisions* must go through a simplified approval method.

Transfer of development rights (TDR) - Property rights that may not be used on the land from which they come. TDRs may be sold to be used on a designated site in a receiving (growth) area. When TDRs are sold, the land they came from is then restricted to farming.

Zoning - the division of the community into districts to regulate the use of land and structures create order for the physical development of land, and to minimize potential conflicts.

Zoning ordinance - A set of land use regulations and a map adopted by the local governing body to create zoning districts that permit certain land uses and prohibit others. Land uses in each district are regulated according to type, density, height, and the building coverage per parcel

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population

Over the past 30 years, the State of Michigan has experienced population growth in townships and loss in cities, with more growth occurring in less densely populated areas. Lawrence Township is a perfect example of this trend. Van Buren County as a whole and

Lawrence Township both experienced growth each of the past three decades-with significant growth rates in the 1970s. One factor in Lawrence Township’s growth pattern is its location along I-94. Through the decades of growth, the population of Lawrence Township remains largely white according to the 2000 Census survey. Also, most households are married-couple families. Average household size in 2000 was 2.74. The median age of Lawrence Township residents according to the 2000 Census was almost 35.8 years and 32% were under the age of 20. These numbers suggest a significant portion of households are married couples with children.

Population Trends

As Table 1 shows, population growth trends are significant for Lawrence Township during the past thirty years. Growth at the national, state and regional levels stayed below ten (10%) percent during the 1980s and below twenty (20%) percent in the 1970s, while the growth in Lawrence Township during the decade of the 1970s reached almost 26.44%. Some of the increase can be accounted for by a natural increase in population (more births than deaths within the population), but increases of this size are caused in large part by migration (people moving into the township from other areas).¹

Year	Count	Increase (Decrease)	% Change
1970	2,345	----	----
1980	3,017	672	28.66%
1990	3,030	13	0.43%
2000	3,341	311	10.26%

Table 1A - Township Population Counts 1970 - 2000				Table 1B - Village Population Counts 1970 - 2000			
Year	Count	Increase (Decrease)	% Change	Year	Count	Increase (Decrease)	% Change
1970	1,555	----	----	1970	790	----	----
1980	2,114	559	35.95%	1980	903	113	14.30%
1990	2,115	1	0.05%	1990	915	12	1.33%
2000	2,282	167	7.90%	2000	1,059	144	15.74%

¹The almost zero growth reported by the census during the decade of the 1980s is currently being researched but is consistent with many other reported growth rates during that time.

Table 2 shows population trends from 1970 to 2000 by decade for Lawrence Township and several nearby municipalities.

Table 2	1970	1980	<i>Increase</i>	1980	1990	<i>Increase</i>	1990	2000	<i>Increase</i>
	Population	Population	<i>Decrease</i>	Population	Population	<i>Decrease</i>	Population	Population	<i>Decrease</i>
Lawrence Township	1,555	2,114	35.95%	2,114	2,115	0.05%	2,115	2,282	7.90%
Lawrence Village	790	903	14.30%	903	915	1.33%	915	1,059	15.74%
Arlington Township	1,645	1,884	14.53%	1,884	1,929	2.39%	1,929	2,075	7.57%
Hartford Township	2,211	2,707	22.43%	2,707	3,032	12.01%	3,032	3,159	4.19%
Hamilton Township	1,167	1,586	35.90%	1,586	1,515	-4.48%	1,515	1,797	18.61%
Paw Paw Township	2,592	3,207	23.73%	3,207	3,645	13.66%	3,645	3,728	2.28%
Van Buren County	56,173	66,814	18.94%	66,814	70,060	4.86%	70,060	76,263	8.85%

Growth during the 1970s is in line with that noted throughout the state for high growth in townships which are distant from urban areas. Lawrence Township has direct highway access to employment in Kalamazoo and St. Joseph/Benton Harbor via I-94 which runs almost exactly through the center of the Township but is buffered on all sides by other rural townships.

Influence of Interstate Access

Typically, population growth concentrates along transportation corridors. This is exactly what we see in Van Buren County. Other than the South Haven area, the greatest concentrations of population in Van Buren County are found in the townships, cities and villages along I-94.

The City of South Haven and South Haven Township combined total population in 2000 was 9,059, a decrease from the 9,748 population in 1990. In addition to South Haven, the largest areas of population remained Antwerp Township, Paw Paw Village and Township, and Hartford City and Township along the I-94 corridor in 2000. Also showing notable growth between 1990 and 2000 were Alma, Antwerp, Bloomingdale and Geneva Townships. All of these townships have access to the interstate via state truck-line or paved county primary roads.

The 2000 Census population of Lawrence Township and Lawrence Village totaled 3,341- less than others on the I-94 route. It is nonetheless significant when the population trends over the past thirty years and the township's location are considered. As the adjacent communities become more urbanized, people will continue to seek out remaining rural

environments. This trend suggests that the population of Lawrence Township will continue to grow.

From 1990-1996 Lawrence Township increased in population at a rate equal to or greater than the other townships along the I-94 corridor. Lawrence Township and Village combined population increased between 1990 and 2000 by 23.64%. During that same period, Antwerp Township population increased by 24.99%, Paw Paw Township and Village combined population increased 12.33%, and Hartford Township and Hartford City combined population increased by 9.96%. Growth pressure due to the interstate clearly continues to affect the township. Long range population projections for Van Buren County prepared by the Office of the State Demographer suggest that the trend is likely to continue through the next 20 years and that by 2020, Lawrence Township will be fifth in size in the county, surpassing all others without direct interstate access.

Population by Age

Looking at the makeup of the Township’s growing population by age bracket adds another dimension to the picture. According to the 2000 Census, the population of Lawrence Township (including the Village) falls largely into three categories; the 35-44 age bracket, the 45-54 age bracket, and the 25-34 age bracket. The median age in 2000 was 43 years. Table 3 shows this information.

This represents a shift from previous years when the largest single age bracket was 25-54 years (42.7%) and the next largest age bracket was 5-19 years (24.67%). The median age of the Township’s population in 1990 was 35.8 years.

Table 3 Population by Age						
Township			Village		Township & Village	
Age in years	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total
under 5	134	5.87	92	8.69	226	6.76
5 to 9	176	7.71	85	8.03	261	7.81
10 to 14	202	8.85	102	9.63	304	9.10
15 to 19	185	8.11	85	8.03	270	8.08
20 to 24	95	4.16	71	6.70	166	4.97
25 to 34	260	11.39	138	13.03	398	11.91
35 to 44	348	15.25	159	15.01	507	15.18
45 to 54	359	15.73	129	12.18	488	14.61
55 to 59	134	5.87	50	4.72	184	5.51
60 to 64	94	4.12	37	3.49	131	3.92
65 to 74	162	7.10	49	4.63	211	6.32
75 to 84	107	4.69	38	3.59	145	4.34
85 and over	26	1.14	24	2.27	50	1.50

Ethnic Race and Origin

The ethnic race and origin of the population again adds to the population profile. The three most significant categories statistically in the 2000 census were White which accounted for

1,982 (87%) of the Township’s population, Hispanic origin of 254 (11%) and Black which made up 58 (3%). The County’s 1992 Master Plan notes that a large portion of the population in Van Buren County is made up of settled migrant workers. The two remaining categories of American Indian (20) and Asian (3) each accounted for 1% or less of the population.

HOUSING & HOUSEHOLDS

Households

The 2000 census data reports that 893 (74.8%) of the total 1,194 households in the Township (including the Village) were family households. In those family households were 421 children under the age of 18. 701 of the 893 households were married couple households. The average number of persons per household was 2.74. These numbers support the conclusion that the Township is largely made up of families with children under the age of eighteen. The makeup of the population raises several issues. Families with children need educational facilities and may find other community amenities such as parks and recreation desirable. It may also increase the community’s support for public safety issues.

The following statements are intended to briefly summarize findings of the housing profile. The occupancy rate was 1,194 in 2000. The estimated median value of new single family housing units is \$125,000.00, excluding waterfront property. There have been 219 (171 stick built and 48 pre-manufactured) units built in the township from 1996 to 2006 (see Table 4). There were 1,516 housing units in the township in the year 2000.

New Residences—1996 through 2006

Year	Stick Built	Manufactured	Total
1996	11	1	12
1997	15	8	23
1998	18	9	27
1999	18	2	20
2000	16	6	22
2001	21	5	26
2002	15	2	17
2003	15	4	19
2004	14	4	18
2005	19	4	23
2006	9	3	12

To paint the overall picture of the growth trends in Lawrence Township, it is important to look not only at the number of people and households, but at the dwelling units as well. Housing is an indicator of both growth patterns and the economy. It is also a major land use issue. Seasonal housing statistics, vacancy rates, the age and condition of the housing stock

and the value of homes within the township can all help to identify trends anticipate future growth and help in making future land use decisions.

Number of Housing Units

The trend in numbers of housing units closely parallels the population trend for Lawrence Township since 1970 according to U.S. Census data. The statistical information in this section is for Lawrence Township only—figures for the Village of Lawrence have not been included. Refer to Table 5.

Table 5 - Housing Counts 1970 - 2000			
Year	Count	Increase (Decrease)	% Change
1970	722	----	----
1980	1,024	302	41.83%
1990	1,059	35	3.42%
2000	1,123	64	6.04%

Age of Housing Stock Lawrence Township

When commenting on the condition of the housing stock, factors other than age can be noted. Two which are often cited are the number of houses which lack plumbing facilities and those lacking kitchen facilities. These factors are used to indicate the extent to which the community has homes in great disrepair. In the case of Lawrence Township, however, these could also be indicators of seasonal housing units. The same could be said for other typical indicators such as the type of house heating fuel and the presence of telephone service.

ECONOMY

Lawrence Township will experience an economic impact with the opening of the Lawrence Business Center on CR 365 between the Village of Lawrence and I-94—a mixed use development including 29 industrial and commercial lots. Agriculture in general, and fruit specifically, also plays a large role in the economy of the county and the township.

Lawrence Township is at a crossroads for development with tremendous appeal as a residential location, an ideal transportation network for commercial and industrial development, natural beauty to attract a tourist trade and land which is home to some of the richest fruit crops in the State of Michigan. The potential exists to promote a stronger economy in one or all of these areas through careful land use planning. In order to make land use decisions for the future, it is important to consider where the local economy has been - both alone and in relation to the region and the state.

Size of Labor Force

The size of the labor force is strongly linked to population trends. As the population size changes, similar changes are expected in the size of the labor force. Variation from this trend is often an indicator of the strength of the economy as participants are encouraged or discouraged depending on wage rates and job availability. Table 6 shows the annual average

size of the labor force for Lawrence Township, Van Buren County, Regional and the State of Michigan. The information was provided by Michigan Employment Security Administration (MESA), Information & Reports Section. A “percent change” category is also included in order to compare the changes in size occurring in each group.

Table 6 Size of Labor Force									
	1970	1980		1980	1990		1990	1997	
	Population	Population	Change	Population	Population	Change	Population	Population	Change
Lawrence Township	925	1,525	64.86%	1,525	1,425	-6.56%	1,425	1,500	5.26%
Van Buren County	21,900	33,075	51.03%	33,075	33,625	1.66%	33,625	35,450	5.43%
MSA (Region)	169,000	196,900	16.51%	196,900	217,700	10.56%	217,700	224,300	3.03%
State of Michigan	3,596,000	4,293,000	19.38%	4,293,000	4,596,000	7.06%	4,596,000	4,879,000	6.16%

In order to compare trends in the size of the township’s labor force with those of the county, region and state, we can look at percentage changes as a common denominator. Over time the township and county trends are quite similar to each other and the region and state trends were also similar to each other. The two sets of trends, however, seem completely independent. The size of the county and township labor forces both increased by more than 50% between 1970 and 1980. During that same time at the region and state level the increases were 16.51% and 19.38% respectively. From 1980 to 1990 the size of the labor force at the local levels reported very little change and as noted above the township’s labor force actually decreased. The regional and state levels reported increases in size of 10.56% and 7.06%. These increases were higher than both the county and township changes. From 1990 to 1997, the percentage change for all four groups was similar ranging from a low of 3.03% to a high of 6.16%.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate is a calculation of how many people in the labor force are not employed. Individuals in the population who are not employed and who are not looking for employment are not considered to be in the labor force. In the economic picture, it is the “supply” side of the equation where the size of the labor force creates the “demand.” Unemployment rates are percentages calculated by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by the number in the labor force. Annual average rates take into account fluctuations experienced during each month of the year.

In Lawrence Township, the annual average unemployment rate was similar to the county, region and state in 1970 (6.0%) and 1980 (11.9%) but has remained higher since 1980. The region, the county and the state experienced peak unemployment rates in 1980. The township rate, however, increased again rising to 13% in 1990. This was the peak annual average unemployment rate for the township and was higher than even the state’s peak of 12.4% in 1980. Others in 1990 fell to 8.9% (county), 7.6% (state) and 6.6% (region). The

decrease in the township's 1997 rate to 8.3% still left it notably higher than the county, the region and the state.

Income

In order to better understand the economic situation of Lawrence Township, earnings must be considered as well as how those earnings compare to the surrounding area. Earnings or income can be measured in several different ways. It can be looked at individually as a "per capita" income, by households of varying types and it can also be considered in terms of who and how many were living in poverty.

When considering economic levels of households and individuals in the community, it is especially important to identify the patterns of poverty which appear in order to address it through future public policy. Poverty is determined in relation to an income figure called the poverty line, an income figure set by the Census bureau. Although the information gathered is valid, it is important to remember that individuals can be living above the poverty line and still be impoverished. For example, a four person household with two children under the age of 18 is below the poverty line only if the annual household income is less than \$20,614.

The poverty rates for Van Buren County and those for Lawrence Township and Village combined are quite similar. Lawrence Township alone has rates that are consistently lower while the Village of Lawrence has rates which are significantly higher. Families overall have lower poverty rates while female headed household families have much higher poverty rates. Although Lawrence Township has comparatively lower poverty rates than the village and the county, poverty is still an issue which needs to be addressed—especially in female headed households.

Employment by Industry-Region

Current employer information is available through the Michigan Employment Security Administration (MESA) for the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek MSA (metropolitan statistical area). This statistical area includes Calhoun, Kalamazoo and Van Buren counties. Regional information of this nature is valuable since residents of Lawrence Township look to the region for employment opportunities. In the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek MSA, there were 208,000 reported Wage and Salary Employees in 1997 according to MESA. This was an increase of 7.9% from 1990. The overall labor force increased in size by only 3% during this time and the unemployment rate dropped from 6.6% to 3.9%. This indicates that in addition to an increase in the size of the labor force, there was also an increase in the actual number of jobs in the region.

Property Valuation of Commercial and Industrial Properties

The Van Buren County Treasurer's office is the source for the information included here, which lends insight into the picture of Lawrence Township's economy

Real property assessed valuations for Lawrence Township are agriculture (11%), commercial (4%), industrial (3%) and residential (82%).

There are 80 parcels (4%) classified as commercial and 52 parcels (3%) classified as industrial. This may change with the advent of the Industrial Park.

The Industrial Park

The Lawrence Crandall Business Centre, located along the west side of County Road 365 between the Village of Lawrence and I-94, will have a significant impact on the economy of Lawrence Township. The project was initiated by Quality Assured Plastics (Annette Crandall, President), which has grown steadily since it began in 1986. The site has been contractually transferred to the village from the township as part of an Act 425 agreement. Phase one of the mixed use development is 110 acres in size and is proposed to include 29 industrial and commercial lots. A CDBG (Community Development Block Grant)/Planning Grant was approved in 1994 to help fund the preliminary engineering costs of extending sewer and water lines to the site. Grant money was sought from MDOT and the CDBG program. A proposed future phase of development to the north is largely residential including areas for condominiums, pre-manufactured housing and single family residential homes. Some commercial development is also proposed as part of this phase along CR 365. The new water tower in the Park will service both the Business Centre and the Village of Lawrence.

Because of the significant impacts that the Business Centre brings to both the Township and the Village, a close working relationship has been started between the Township and Village.

Township officials have become working members of various Village organizations including:

- Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Lawrence Development Financial Authority (LDFA)
- Lawrence Economic Development Committee (LEDC)

The Lawrence Area Business Association (LABA) is also represented on these authorities/committees.

Agriculture

Agriculture in general, fruits and vegetables specifically, plays a large role in the economy of both Van Buren County and Lawrence Township.

In 2002 there were 1,160 farms, down 5% from 1997, in Van Buren County. The average size farm in the county was 152 acres with a market value of production of \$96,724,000. Value of crops, including nursery and greenhouse, was \$84,835,000. Value of livestock, poultry, and their products accounted for \$11,889,000. Market value of production (average per farm) was \$83,382.

Top crop items, in order, were corn, soybeans, forage, vegetables and berries. Livestock inventories, in order, were hogs, cattle, turkeys, sheep and chickens. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Michigan Agricultural Statistics Services reported that Van Buren County was first in Michigan for the productions of fruits, tree nuts, berries and second in production of vegetables.

There is also ongoing lumber/timber activity.

There were 558 farms in Van Buren County in 1992 with over \$10,000 in sales. The 1996 Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service reports that net farm income in 1994 for the county was \$3,410,000.

There were 409 farms in Van Buren County that produced fruit on a total of 21,200 acres of land in 1994. Only *Corn for Grain* with 31,500 acres occupied a larger land area (in 1995). Comparatively, Van Buren County ranked 31st in the state in the production of corn for grain. The 1995 Michigan Rotational Survey of Fruit, however, found that Van Buren County was the second in the state in terms of acres of fruit (following Berrien County). It was identified as a top county in the state for the production of apples, blueberries, grapes, plums, tart cherries and plums. It had 6,560 acres of blueberries in 1995 which was the most in the state. It also produced 11% of the state's asparagus and 19% of the state's cucumbers.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Township land and facilities include the Township Hall, the Lawrence Township Community Services Building, the Lawrence branch of the Van Buren County Library System and three cemeteries. Currently, the only developed recreation areas in the township are facilities and trails behind the ISD. There are several public access sites on lakes. Of these, three are maintained by the State of Michigan.

The Van Buren County Sheriff's Office and the Michigan State Police both serve Lawrence Township. Fire and local Emergency Medical Services are provided by the Lawrence Township Emergency Services. Emergency Medical Services are provided by county contract with Van Buren Emergency Medical Services. Lawrence Township is served by the following four school districts: Lawrence, Decatur, Hartford and Paw Paw.

The County Drain Commissioner oversees the county's drainage system and the County Road Commission is responsible for the road system. Limited public transportation is provided through Van Buren County Public Transit Agency. Sewage and water services are provided by individual on site systems which are under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Health Division of the County District Health Department.

Residents may obtain health care services through a variety of public and private health care providers including Bronson Lakeview Hospital in Paw Paw and South Haven Community Hospital in South Haven.

There are numerous religious institutions in Lawrence Township.

The majority of land use in Lawrence Township remains agricultural (56.9%) with most of the rest of the township concentrated in a residential use category (39.3%).

Community Facilities

Community facilities are public services and service systems which serve the residents of Lawrence Township. The township is not an urbanized area with a large number of facilities and services. It does, however, offer its residents amenities such as fire protection services, schools, a library and the township's administrative offices. Information is also included

about the road system. The community facilities are inventoried and described in narrative form.

An inventory of existing community facilities is important in creating a long-range community plan. Only by knowing what the community has to work with, is it possible to plan for the future. Also, community services enhance the quality of life for area residents. Good land use planning considers community facilities because they affect public health and safety, environmental health and the economic stability of the community.

Township Hall

The Township Hall was built in 1902 and is located at 122 West St. Joseph Street. Because it covers over seventy (70%) of the lot where it is located, there is no room for expansion of the building or parking facilities. The upstairs portion of the building houses the offices of the Township Treasurer, Supervisor and Assessor. Township meetings are held at the Lawrence Township Community Services Building which is located at 205 North Paw Paw Street.

Library

The new Lawrence Branch Library building is located at 212 North Paw Paw Street. It is open 35 hours per week on various days and times. It offers reference and loan materials, as well as large print books, books on tape, and videos. The Lawrence Branch also houses a special collection of literature regarding Michigan; both state and local history is included. In addition to the loaning of materials, the Lawrence Branch has other resources available such as a copy machine, a fax machine, internet access and a computerized listing of available holdings. The Lawrence Branch also offers community programs for all ages including story hour, summer reading, novel groups and an adult writing group that publishes an annual booklet of works with the help of the library.

Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries located within Lawrence Township. All three are maintained by the Township's Sexton. Pioneer Cemetery is located within the Village of Lawrence between 2nd and 3rd Streets. It has approximately 155 grave sites, none of which are available. Prospect Cemetery is located on Territorial Road northwest of Christie Lake in Section 26. It has approximately 118 lots with approximately 5 available. Hill Cemetery is located on Red Arrow Highway in Section 8. It is 25 acres in size with a total of 2,700 grave sites; approximately 1,200 are available. Hill Cemetery includes a Veteran's Memorial with military grave sites available to Veterans and their spouses.

A new site for additional Cemetery/Township use has been purchased across Red Arrow Highway from the existing Hill Cemetery.

Private Utilities

Residents of Lawrence Township are served by a variety of private utilities. Consumers Energy supplies gas and electric service to most of the township. Fruit Belt Electric and Indiana Michigan Power also provide electric service in some areas. Verizon is the primary phone service provider. Comcast provides most of the township's cable service. Adelphia Cable, Bloomingdale Communications (Direct TV), Wild Blue Satellite Internet and Dish Network also provide service in Lawrence Township.

Recreational Facilities

There are no developed recreational areas in the township, but there are several public access sites maintained by the State of Michigan. They are on Reynolds Lake (Section 24), Shafer Lake (Section 19) and Hall Lake (Section 7). Each site has a gravel surfaced ramp, parking for seven and toilets on site. There is a township owned 66' wide strip of land with lake access to Reynolds Lake at the south end of 46 ½ Street. There are no facilities on site but there is an 8' wide paved lane. The township will continue to maintain ownership of the site but due to size restrictions, additional development of the land as a recreational site is extremely limited. There is also a privately maintained park on the banks called Front Street Park on Reynolds Lake. It was dedicated to the public in 1913 and has received little to no maintenance over the years.

Police Protection

The Van Buren County Sheriff's Department serves Lawrence Township.

In addition to the Sheriff's Department, the Michigan State Police provide a full range of police services across jurisdictional boundaries cooperating with local law enforcement agencies.

Fire Protection Service and Emergency Medical Service

On March 31, 2007 the Lawrence Township Fire Department and the Lawrence Township Quick Response were combined into one unit named Lawrence Township Emergency Services. Fire and Quick Response (medical) Services are provided by the Lawrence Township Emergency Services Department. Their overall service area extends beyond the boundaries of Lawrence Township to the southern twelve sections of Arlington Township to the north.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided by county contract with Van Buren Emergency Medical Services which provides advance life support transport. Lawrence Township Emergency Services is funded by a millage for service.

Public Schools

Lawrence Township is served by the Lawrence Public Schools, the Van Buren Technology Center and the Van Buren County Intermediate School District.

The Lawrence School District has a total of three buildings; an elementary school, a combination middle school/high school and a bus garage. Lawrence is the only school district which has building facilities located within Lawrence Township. As of the spring of 2008, there were 739 students enrolled in the Lawrence Public School District. The school district also offers a special education curriculum and a preschool program.

Along with the services provided by individual school districts, Van Buren County is served by the Van Buren County Intermediate School District and the Vocational Education Center. The Van Buren County Intermediate School District, in December of 2007, had 402 special needs students enrolled on the four building campus. Their services extend throughout the county and include an adult education curriculum.

Private Schools

Although there are no private school facilities located within Lawrence Township, residents may access a full range of private pre-schools, primary, secondary and vocational schools located throughout the area including the Kalamazoo and St. Joe/Benton Harbor metro areas.

County Drains

The county's drainage system is the responsibility of the Van Buren County Drain Commissioner. The Drain Commissioner's office is located at 219 E Paw Paw Street in Paw Paw. The Drain Commissioner is responsible for the construction and maintenance of storm-water systems in Lawrence Township (and throughout the county). In addition, typical duties include inspection, enforcement, response and analysis of citizen complaints on drainage problems. The Drain Commissioner administers the State's Drain Code and is the county agent for public drain infrastructure improvements. The Drain Commissioner submits activity reports to the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners.

The major county drains are shown on a map in the map section of the appendix.

Road System

Lawrence Township is easily accessible from I-94 which is the major east-west freeway across southern Michigan. C.R. 365 connects the Township and the Village of Lawrence directly to the interchange at I-94. I-94 connects with Detroit to the southeast and Chicago to the southwest. Red Arrow Highway (a major County Road) runs east and west through the township.

The Van Buren County Road Commission is responsible for the road system in Lawrence Township. The Road Commission plans for and provides road maintenance, improvements and snowplowing; handles traffic safety issues such as intersection development and the installation of stop signs and traffic signals; and oversees all matters relating to the development of new roads. The Van Buren County Road Commission is located on James Street in Lawrence, Michigan.

Roads throughout the County are classified as either "Primary" roads which are designed to connect traffic county to county or "Local" roads which connect to the "Primary" road system. Subdivision streets are also considered local roads. There are 26.55 miles of primary roads and 50.78 miles of local roads (which consists of 3.7 miles of paved subdivision roads, 23.88 miles of paved roads and 23.3 miles of gravel roads). There are a total of 77.33 miles of county road in Lawrence Township. A road map is included in the map section.

The County Road Commission receives funding from the State government for road maintenance and restricted funds for special construction projects from the Federal Government. State gas and weight tax revenues distributed through Public Act 51 pay most of the maintenance costs on Primary and Local roads. Townships pay the cost of resurfacing/construction projects on local roads. Local road projects are reviewed annually by the Township and priorities for construction are selected by the Township according to the plan and available road funds.

Accident statistics are kept for intersections throughout the County and available to the Township through the Road Commission. Selected traffic count information and accident information on local and primary roads is available through the Road Commission.

Public Transportation

Public transportation service has been provided throughout Van Buren County by Van Buren Public Transit since January 1979. The Van Buren County Public Transit Agency offers residents of Lawrence Township several ways to access the public transportation system. There are no established bus lines with routes in Lawrence Township. However, the Public Transit Agency offers residents throughout Van Buren County public transportation options on weekdays with advance reservations. A special service system by Public Transit is available to disabled residents of Lawrence Township and provides curb-to-curb service.

On-Site Sewage and Water Service

In Lawrence Township, on-site sewage disposal and water supply fall under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Health Division of the Van Buren County District Public Health Department. These services are considered part of the Department's Demand Programs - those where public requests generate action. Specifically they include the issuance of permits for the construction of wells or on-site sewage disposal systems or for the replacement of failed systems. By requiring permits, the Health Department is able to monitor certain environmental aspects of construction and to prevent home construction in areas of known or potential contamination. There is no public water or sewer service available in Lawrence Township, except within the Village of Lawrence. The Environmental Health Division programs also include the regulation of public water supply for wells which will serve groups of persons such as schools and restaurants and includes consultation to users regarding the water quality.

Funding for the department comes from a combination of federal, state and local grant programs, county funding and fees and collections.

Health Care Facilities

Van Buren County is served by two hospitals: Bronson Lakeview Hospital located in Paw Paw and South Haven Community Hospital in South Haven. Public health services are also provided through the Van Buren/Cass District Public Health Department for both children and adults. Programs include free immunizations, Children's Special Health Care Services, a dental clinic, vision and hearing screening for children and substance abuse programs.

In addition, Lawrence Township residents are also served by many area physicians, clinics and dentist offices located in surrounding communities.

There are a number of services provided by the Community Mental Health Center, such as assessment services, counseling and clinical services, case management and supports coordination, 24-hour emergency availability, medical and psychiatric care and a number of adult and family services.

Religious Institutions

Within Lawrence Township, there are numerous religious institutions. The Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses is located on Red Arrow Highway. The Pentecostal Church, Full

Gospel Assembly is located on CR 681. In addition, in the Village of Lawrence are the Lawrence United Methodist Church, Lawrence Bible Church, Lawrence Congregational Church and Seventh Day Adventists.

LAND USE PROFILE

Land use in Lawrence Township is concentrated in agricultural use (56.9%) and residential land use (39.3%) with very little acreage in the commercial, industrial and public land categories. Agricultural land use is concentrated on the south side of I-94 and in the northeast quarter of the township. Over 75% of agricultural acreage is in parcels over 40 acres in size. Residential land use appears as subdivision and small lot development around the Reynolds, Christie, Shafer and Hall lakes, as a corridor along the White and Red Creeks south of the Village of Lawrence and in the northwest quarter of the township. Commercial land uses account for less than 1% of total land area in Lawrence Township. Industrial land uses account for 1.2% of total land area in Lawrence Township. The activities seem to be largely divided between agricultural and mining activities.

Table 7 Lawrence Township Land Use		
Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Agricultural	11,979	56.9%
Residential	8,276	39.3%
Commercial	169	0.8%
Industrial	262	1.2%
Tax Exempt	202	1.0%
Commercial Forest	119	0.6%
Unapproved Split	28	0.1%
TOTAL	21,035	100.0%

Public Lands in Lawrence Township include relatively few facilities which are offered for public use in a traditional sense of recreation areas, schools and churches. A large amount of land in the agricultural zone is being used for residential purposes. The amount of existing commercial and industrial development is small when compared to the areas zoned for each use. Over 40% of soils in Lawrence Township are prime Agricultural Soils as defined by the County Soil Survey and most of these are concentrated on the south side of I-94. In addition to water surface areas, there are 656 acres of wetlands scattered throughout Lawrence Township in small concentrations and random patterns. Almost one-third of the township’s land area is forest land. These are seen especially along riverbanks and in areas west of the Village of Lawrence.

Process

The master planning process is a proactive one which establishes a guide for orderly growth within the community while at the same time making good use of limited public funds and preserving natural resources. The Comprehensive Development Plan culminates in a Future Land Use Map which is developed by “overlying” various types of information about the township. The population, housing and economic profiles presented earlier in the document

are each important “layers.” The Land Use Profile is another which presents information on how land is being used in the township, how it is zoned, as well as the location of prime agricultural lands, wetlands and woodlands. Only by knowing about the past and the present can good decisions be made about where to go in the future.

The Land Use Profile includes maps of current land use, zoning districts, prime farmlands as well as wetlands and woodlands. The current land use maps were developed specifically for this project by Mr. Ted Thar, GIS Technician for the Van Buren County Community Development Office which is part of Michigan State University Extension. Information on assessment or class codes and parcel size was already part of the county’s data base. Information about the location or residences was provided by Lawrence Township’s assessor Anita Ghastin.

Separate land use maps were created from this information to improve visual clarity in map presentation. They are:

- Map #1: Agricultural parcels
- Map #2: Residential parcels by area
- Map #3: Composite Map parcels show all land uses together
- Map #4: Aerial Base Map
- Map #5: Current Zoning
- Map # 6: Future Land Use
- Map # 7: Wetlands
- Map # 8: Woodlands
- Map # 9: Prime Farmlands

The information is also presented in statistical form in tables throughout this section.

Information for all other maps was taken directly from an existing source. The zoning map is the official zoning map of Lawrence Township. The prime farmlands map was generated directly from Van Buren County Soil Survey. The wetlands and woodlands maps were generated directly from 1978 MIRIS (Michigan Resource Information System) data created by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Land Use Classification

For the purposes of this section and the current land use map, land within Lawrence Township was classified into one of six categories. For the most part, land use was identified using the assessment classification code for the property. Agricultural properties were identified as such in the assessment role and include active and non-active farmland, open space, pasture and residential areas associated with an agricultural operation. Residential properties were identified as such in the assessment role and include properties with and without residential structures. Commercial and industrial properties were identified according to the respective assessment classification codes and include active operations as well as any which may have been abandoned. Public and semi-public lands are those lands which are open to community use and include government facilities, schools, religious institutions and both public and private recreation facilities. Lands included in the “Other” category are those which were not classified in another category and include public roads and classified in another category and include public roads and right-of-ways and water bodies.

Agricultural

56.9% of all land use in Lawrence Township is agricultural – 11,979 acres. There is a concentration of agricultural land use south of I-94 with the exception of areas around the lakes and along the river. Large blocks of agricultural land are also seen in the northeast quarter of the township. Individual parcels sizes are smaller on average in the northeast quarter than south of I-94. There is some agricultural use in the northwest quarter of the township, but blocks are smaller and more separated by residential development.

Size in Acres	Number of Parcels	Percentage of Total Parcels	Acres	Percentage of Total Acreage
0.0 - 1	3	1.3%	2	0.0%
1.1 - 10	15	6.3%	100	0.8%
10.1 - 40	92	38.8%	2,735	22.8%
40.1 - 171.5	127	53.6%	9,142	76.3%
Total	237	100.0%	11,979	100.0%

In terms of distribution, 53.6% of agricultural parcels are larger than 40 acres in size, 38.8% are in the 10 - 40 acre range and 7.6% are in the less than one acre to 10 acre range. In terms of acreage, 76.3% of agricultural acreage is in parcels over 40 acres in size, 22.8% is in the 10.1 - 40 acre range and 0.8% is in the 0.0 -10 acre range.

Public Act (P.A.) 116 of 1974 entitled Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, allows owners of property defined as “farmland” by the Act to enter into a Development Rights Agreement with the State of Michigan restricting development options on the farmland. In exchange, the property is exempt from special assessments for as well as use of public improvements including sanitary sewers, water and lights. The owner is also eligible for a credit against the state income tax or single business tax as defined by the Act. Enrollment in P.A. 116 can be understood as an expressed intent by the landowner to continue an existing agricultural operation.

Residential

With regard to location, residential land use appears in several specific places in Lawrence Township. First, subdivision and small tract residential development is clustered around the three largest lakes: Reynolds, Christie, and Shafer. There is also development around Hall Lake. Second, there is a corridor of residential land use along the White Creek in Section 33 and then north along the Red Creek into the Village of Lawrence. Third, the northwest quarter of the township has largely been converted to residential use. These parcels tend to be larger in size than the lakefront lots and are not part of platted subdivision development. There are very few examples in Lawrence Township of a small residential lot being split off from a larger agricultural parcel. Rather, residential conversion tends to occur in blocks of 40 acres or more.

Size in Acres	Number of Parcels	Percentage of Total Parcels	Acres	Percentage of Total Acreage
0.0 - 1	529	37.0%	231	2.8%
1.1 - 10	661	46.2%	2,610	31.5%
10.1 - 40	216	15.1%	3,972	48.0%
40.1 - 171.5	24	1.7%	1,464	17.7%
Total	1,430	100.0%	8,276	100.0%

Commercial and Industrial

There are 257 acres of land in Lawrence Township in the commercial land use category. Commercial uses are located in several general areas of the township including areas on or near Red Arrow Highway in Sections 7 and 8, along CR 365 south of the Village of Lawrence up to and around the I-94 interchange, and in Section 24 as I-94 exits the township to the east. There are also two parcels between Red Arrow Highway and Reynolds Lake along the railroad track in Section 13 and a single parcel on the south side of I-94 in Section 20 with frontage on 56th Street.

There are 136 acres of land in Lawrence Township in the Industrial land use category. There are two blocks in Section 9, west of the village. Three other operations in Lawrence Township own multiple properties in Sections 12, 13 and 24. Other smaller industrial activities are located in Sections 10, 12, 14 and 15. Industrial activity in Lawrence Township seems to be largely divided between agricultural and mining activities.

Public and Semi-Public

Within Lawrence Township, there are 239.52 acres of Public and Semi-Public Land. Although the acreage is large, a closer inventory of properties included in this category reveal that the facilities offered to the public are relatively limited. This group includes parks, churches and property owned by the township itself as well as several semi-public uses.

There are no developed recreation areas in the township, but there are several public access sites maintained by the State of Michigan. Details of these facilities are included in the *Community Facilities Section*.

Religious institutions within Lawrence Township are also detailed in the *Community Facilities Section*.

Public Lands also include properties owned by the township, county, state and intermediate school district. There are two cemeteries owned, maintained and located in the township. Prospect Cemetery in Section 26 and Hill in Section 8 (for details, see Community Facilities Profile). Van Buren County Intermediate School District and the Vocational Center are located in Section 15 on the southeast corner of the village. The Michigan Department of Transportation owns two properties adjacent to the highway, one in Section 19 on the north end of Shafer Lake and one in Section 22. The Van Buren County Road Commission owns property in Section 24 just east of Reynolds Lake, which is used for gravel extraction. The

Village of Lawrence Board of Public Works property extends into Lawrence Township east of the village and north of the river in Section 10.

Two other properties are devoted to semi-public uses: telephone companies in Section 10 and the Pike Lumber Company in Section 1.

With regard to acreage, the four largest properties in this category are the Pike Lumber Company (54.57 acres), the Intermediate School District (123.5 acres), the Board of Public Works (42.23 acres) and the Van Buren County Road Commission’s Gravel area (38.63 acres). These four parcels together total 187.22 acres or 78% of all public lands.

Zoning Districts

There are eight (8) zoning districts in Lawrence Township: A-1 (Agricultural), R-1 (Rural Residential), R-2 (Medium Density Residential), R-3 (Waterfront Residential), R-4 (Multiple Family Residential), O-1 (Professional Office), C-1 (Commercial) and I-1 District (Industrial Manufacturing). A large majority of land in the township is zoned Agricultural.

Table 10 Acreage Comparison		
	Zoning Code	Class Code
Agricultural	19,196	11,979
Rural Residential	1,446	8,276
Commercial	257	169
Industrial	136	262

NATURAL FEATURES

...Man never quite “subdues” or “conquers” Nature but performance must make adjustments to natural conditions. Defiance or ignorance of this fact has ever resulted in disaster or distress.”

J.O. Veatch
Soils and Land of Michigan

When making plans for future land use within the community, it is imperative that the natural environment and features of the area be factored into the equation. Nature has a plan of her own, which must be observed and respected in order for planning efforts to be successful. Natural resources are limited and preservation decisions are an integral part of long-range planning. Natural conditions such as prime farmland, wetlands and floodplains guide land use decisions because they are uniquely suited to agriculture, natural habitats and flooding respectively. Natural conditions can also pose engineering challenges to development such as the extension of utilities, location of a septic system or development of a new road. The costs to overcome these challenges also serve as a type of guide for development decisions.

The two most significant categories of natural features affecting land use and long-range planning are soils and water. Both of these two elements are observed in detail in the

following sections. Initially, brief comments are offered on the area's topography and climate.

Topography

Topography in Van Buren County is the result of a glacial ice sheet which created areas ranging from "nearly level" to "hilly". Lawrence Township's relief includes hilly areas throughout all but the southeast corner which result from the Valparaiso morainic system. (At some places in the county, these hills rise 150 feet above the surrounding areas.) It also includes nearly level and gently rolling areas of out-wash plains which enter the township from the south and run northeastward to an area near the Paw Paw river. Areas of till plains found largely in the southwest quarter of the township are also nearly level or gently rolling.

Climate

The climate in Van Buren County, according to the Soil Survey, ranges from a winter daily average temperature of 25.5°F (average minimum 17.8°F) to a summer daily average temperature of 69.1°F (average maximum 81.1°F). More than half of the annual rainfall comes between April and September which is also the growing season for most crops. The average seasonal snowfall is 91.4 inches with an average of 64 days each year reporting one inch or more of snow on the ground. Sun shines 62% of the time possible in the summer and 32% in the winter. The area has a prevailing west wind.

Vegetation

At one time, most of Van Buren County was covered with forest vegetation. Hardwood forests included beech, maple, elm and oak trees. The swamps were covered by black ash and tamarack. Over time, the forests have been cleared and the land used for farming. Presently, existing forest area consists of small farm woodlots and bands of woodland along streams.

Agriculture

The wide variety of soils and elevations along with the availability of groundwater for irrigation and the effect of Lake Michigan on the climate make the agriculture of Van Buren County extremely diverse. The high sites with good drainage are ideal for tree and vine fruits. Asparagus grows well in coarsely textured and excessively drained soils. Irrigation allows the production of other vegetables and fruit crops on well drained, coarse and medium textured soils and Van Buren County reports the largest number of irrigators in the state. Blueberries grow best in poorly drained, acid sands and mucks. The rest of the agriculture in the county consists of a wide range of livestock, grain crops and hay.

Prime and Unique Farmland

The inventory of Prime Farmlands is created by the Department of Agriculture and the Soil Conservation Service. Its purpose is to identify the extent and location of important rural lands that are being or could be used in agriculture without regard to ownership or present land use. The exceptions are water areas and urban built-up land, which are excluded and considered an irreversible use. Information on prime farmlands in Lawrence Township does include Lawrence Village.

Prime farmland is defined by the Soil Conservation Service as land that has the best combination of characteristics for producing food, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It has the

soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields when treated and managed according to modern farming methods. In Lawrence Township there are 9,338.2 acres of prime farmland. Statistically, this is 41.7% of the township's land area. Most of the prime farmland is concentrated in the southern half of the township. Large blocks of prime farmland are seen on the east and west side of the township south of I-94. The Red Creek which flows south from the Paw Paw River appears to create a buffer area between the two. Prime farmland surrounds Christie Lake on all sides as well as the southern half of Shafer Lake. There are other areas of prime farmland scattered throughout the township north of I-94 with a pattern occurring roughly along the Paw Paw River and east of the Red Creek. There is very little prime farmland in the Village of Lawrence, in Sections 7, 8, 17 and 18 directly to the west of the Village, in Sections 12 and 13 on the township's eastern line and in Sections 34 and 33 along the township's southern border.

Woodlands and Wetlands

Woodlands and Wetlands data is taken from MIRIS data on land use collected in 1978. Although the inventory was made twenty years ago, it is still reasonably accurate since both forest cover and wetland areas change slowly over time.

There are 655.9 acres of wetland areas in Lawrence Township in addition to water surface areas. This is just over one square mile total and is 3.1% of the township's total land area. There are no wetland areas which appear in the Village of Lawrence so the area of the Village has been excluded from these calculations. Water surface areas were also excluded.

Wetland areas appear in small concentrations in a random pattern throughout the township. The largest single area is directly adjacent to I-94 on the south side in Section 23 and is roughly 80 acres in size. By definition, a wetland must be at least five (5) acres in size to be included in the inventory. Other smaller areas with similar soil conditions can also be found through on-site inspection.

There are 6,037.4 acres of forest lands in Lawrence Township. This is equal to almost ten and a half (10 ½) square miles. It is also equal to 28%--or almost 1/3 of the township's land area. There is a large area of wooded area found in Sections 7, 8 and 18 - the areas west of the Village of Lawrence which were not identified as prime farmland. Other forest lands are mapped to some extent in every section of the township, although concentrations are noticeably lighter in the area south of I-94 where prime farmland is concentrated.

SOILS

Soil is defined simply as a natural, three-dimensional body at the earth's surface that is capable of supporting plants. It has unique properties resulting from a combination of different factors including parent material, climate, plant and animal life, the land's topography and time. As a result, it tells us a story of natural history in the area. It also means that each soil type has characteristics which give it advantages and limitations for different uses. Good land use planning involves careful consideration of soil types for several reasons.

Because it has specific characteristics, soil is a limited natural resource. Some uses such as agriculture, forestry, natural habitats and wetlands are dependent on soil types. For them to exist in a region, areas with appropriate soils must be purposely reserved for them. Local land use planning coupled with environmental regulation at the State level are put in place recognizing the long-range public good of protecting these resources over allowing financial gain via private land development. Also, some soil characteristics make them less effective as a filtering system. As a result, some areas are much more sensitive to contamination. Higher intensity developments with a greater likelihood of contamination should be restricted in these areas.

A soil's characteristics also influence its suitability for development. It is true that most soil limitations to development can be overcome through engineering innovation; residential construction can be adjusted to limit wetness in basements or stress on foundations and special on-site sanitary systems can be designed for almost every site. But there is a financial cost to these alterations, a risk that the solutions may prove to be short-term and a danger that there may be negative environmental side-effects.

For all of these reasons, soils are an important factor in land use planning. By considering the soil, land use planning decisions can be made to best protect the area's limited natural resources and the public's limited financial resources as well. Policy implications for the township are especially significant when considering the future land use map. On an individual basis, new residential sites should be carefully selected for suitable underlying soil as well.

Van Buren County Soil Survey

The Van Buren County Soil Survey was made cooperatively by the Soil Conservation Service and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. It has been prepared for many different users. Farmers, foresters and agronomists can use it to determine the potential of the soil and the management practices required for food production. Also, planners, community officials, engineers, developers, builders, and home buyers can use it to plan land use, select sites for construction, develop soil resources, or identify any special practices that may be needed.

The Soil Survey contains an abundance of information regarding soils. There is a general soils map for broad land use planning. There are also a series of detailed soil maps which are more useful in planning the use of small areas. Another section addresses use and management of the soils where field experience and measured data are combined to predict soil behavior in a general text format. A section of nineteen different tables evaluates each soil type for its suitability to different purposes including building site development, sanitary facilities, excavation of construction material, and recreational development. The tables in the Soil Survey indicate whether each soil type has *slight, moderate or severe limitations*. *Slight* limitations describe soils which are generally favorable for the rated use, or that soil limitations are minor and easily overcome. *Moderate* limitations mean that the soil properties are unfavorable, but can be overcome or modified with special planning and design. *Severe* limitations are defined as those which are so unfavorable and so difficult to correct or overcome that major soil reclamation, special designs, or intensive maintenance is needed. For additional information, refer to the Van Buren County Soil Survey.

Observations

Building Site Development

Soils with severe limitations for the construction of residences with basements are found in three distinct areas of Lawrence Township. First, a fairly wide and solid band of soils with severe limitations are found on both sides of the Paw Paw River. Second, severely limited soils are seen along the Brush Creek with another wide band on the east side of the creek covering most of Sections 11, 14 and 23. This trend changes dramatically south of 64th Avenue. Soils with severe limitations continue along the creek bed but the width becomes quite narrow and soils on both sides of the creek appear in small, mixed patches. The third area of severe soil limitations for basements is found in the southwest corner of the township covering all of Section 31 as well as half of Sections 30 and 32.

Soils with slight limitations are found in two specific areas of Lawrence Township. The largest single area of slightly limited soil appears east of the Brush Creek and south of I-94 in Sections 35, 26 and the west half of 25. This area appears on the map as a large “C” shape and surrounds much of the north, west and south sides of Christie Lake except for areas of more limited soils adjacent to the water. This area currently contains large, agricultural parcels and is also an area of prime agricultural soil. The other area where soils with slight development limitations are noted in several veins along the Paw Paw River mostly in and to the east of the Village of Lawrence, in the middle of areas with severely limited soils.

Areas with moderate soil limitations are mapped mostly in the area west of the Brush Creek and south of the Paw Paw River with the exception of the areas noted previously with severe soil limitations. Other areas are along the north border of the township in Sections 3, 4 and 5 and along the east border of the township. All of these areas have soils with slight and severe limitations appearing in random spots.

Sanitary Facilities

The soils map of limitations for sanitary facilities is very similar to that of basement limitations. Areas of soils with severe limitations appear in the same three areas and same general patterns. If anything, the areas of severe limitations are slightly larger. This is especially true along the west line of the township. Also, a block of severely limited soils is mapped in the southeast corner of the township. Again there are two solid areas of soils with slight limitations for sanitary facilities—in the heart of prime agricultural land around Christie Lake and along the Paw Paw River. Soils with moderate limitations appear again mostly in the area west of the Brush Creek and south of the Paw Paw River. The area is smaller than described above for basement limitations due to the expansion of the area with severe limitations.

Conclusions

In Lawrence Township, soils which are especially well suited to development in general are at odds with other land use issues. The area with slight soil limitations around Christie Lake south of I-94 and east of Brush Creek is an area of prime farmland with large parcels being used for agricultural purposes. The areas with slight soil limitations along the Paw Paw River are just that—along the river. Residential development along the river raises several environmental protection issues as well as the land use issue of the layout of individual land divisions. Also, this area still contains areas of prime agricultural land and larger agricultural parcels.

In the northwest quarter of the township where a concentration of residential development exists, there is mixture of soils with slight, moderate and severe limitations appearing in random patterns. Lawrence Township contains a wide range of soil types which are scattered in small areas throughout the township. Due to mapping limitations, it remains extremely important that on-site analysis be done in all instances to obtain accurate information.

WATER

Water is one of the most significant natural features to consider when planning for the physical development of a community. Water works its way through a repetitious cycle of renewal-falling as rain or snow, being absorbed into the earth's physical body and then evaporating back into the air. It appears in different areas of the community with a variety of environmental and regulatory significance in each instance. Watershed areas are identified for areas sharing a common drain. Aquifers serve as an underground source of fresh water for a specific region. Wetlands are areas where water and land meet which offer a combination of environmental and aesthetic benefits to an area. Flood plains are areas adjacent to open water bodies which are prone to flooding. For each of these areas, there are statutes or guidelines and departments or organizations in place to protect water as a natural resource in its natural condition. This part of the chapter explores these four separate instances where water can be incorporated into land use planning in terms of both its role in the environment and its local significance in relation to regional, state and federal regulatory issues.

Watersheds

A watershed is a physical area of land which is drained by a common source-a river or river system. Because water naturally flows downhill, watershed boundaries are drawn by connecting the points of highest elevation around a body of water. All of the land found within the "raised" boundary, then, drains to the body of water at the low point of the watershed.

Because watersheds are formed by physical boundaries, political boundaries have no significance. Watersheds contain all or parts of many different political jurisdictions. Lawrence Township has one major watershed-the Paw Paw River Watershed. It covers the middle third of Van Buren County and goes into Kalamazoo County to the east and through Berrien County to the west into the St. Joseph River before ending in Lake Michigan.

Organizations such as the USDA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Agricultural Extension Agencies may sponsor the formation of watershed associations to address issues of water quality because contamination in one area will quickly affect the larger area. One such organization is the Dowagiac River Watershed which is coordinated through the Cass County Conservation District. Its organization is entitled MEANDERS (Meeting Ecological Agricultural Needs in the Dowagiac River System). There is also an effort underway to create a statewide watershed organization.

Groundwater

The earth has an overall water supply which remains fairly constant through the centuries and which is recycled repeatedly through a natural filtering system. Less than one percent is

usable, fresh water-an extremely valuable natural resource. Of all fresh water, 97% is located underground and is known as groundwater.

Water repeatedly travels through a cycle of air, land and water. Water falls to the earth in the form of rain or snow. Some of it goes directly into surface water bodies, some is absorbed by plants and some sinks down into the soil. Water that filters through the soil eventually gets to an aquifer. The top of the aquifer is called the water table and is at the same level as nearby lakes and streams. The aquifer itself, lying just below the water table, is a layer of porous sand or rock in which all of the empty spaces are filled by water. Aquifers hold water like reservoirs and allow it to move from place to place. Water moves slowly in a given direction, quite unlike the underground river it was once imagined to be. To complete the cycle, groundwater returns to the surface either naturally via lakes or springs or it may be pumped to the surface through a man-made well.

Aquifers are our main source of clean, freshwater including drinking water. The water is clean because the sand or rock making up the aquifer layer provides an additional filtering system. As a result, both individual and municipal wells take water from the aquifer for household and regional water supplies.

Care must be taken above the ground in order to assure a plentiful, clean water supply. Contamination from any one source can enter the aquifer and affect all of the water within it. Also, the rate at which water is removed from the aquifer by wells needs to be balanced with the rate at which the aquifer is replenished so that the water level (and therefore the water supply) remains constant.

Agricultural operations with the capacity to withdraw over 100,000 gallons per day (70 gallons per minute) are required to report to the state the water withdrawals and water conservation practices used on their farms. This was mandated by Public Act 148 of 2003, now Part 327 of P.A. 451 of 1994, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. The Michigan Department of Agriculture is required to combine all reported agricultural water withdrawal information at the township level and report the township totals to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

County and local agencies play an essential role in establishing and implementing a comprehensive groundwater protection program for the community. While there are both state and federal regulations in place which address groundwater protection strategies, the programs have gaps and overall lack funding and adequate staff. The burden of effective groundwater protection is shared by the county health department and the local government which has broad legal authority to regulate groundwater protection. The specifics of each local program will depend on the resources and political support.

An effective local strategy includes both a partnership with state and federal regulatory agencies and local land use control measures. As part of the state's program to address groundwater contamination through non-point source pollution, a series of "Best Management Practices" were introduced. Best Management Practices (BMPs) are defined as structural, vegetative or managerial practices used to treat, prevent or reduce water pollution. These may include secondary containment requirements, blocking of interior floor drains, density restrictions for un-sewered development, minimizing impervious surfaces and

requiring compliance with applicable state regulations. At the local level, BMPs can be implemented through the zoning ordinance (usually through site plan review standards) or through a separate Hazardous Substance Ordinance.

The threat of groundwater contamination is a real one. Lawrence Township residents have a 100% dependence on groundwater for drinking water. Also, there are many soils in the township which are very leachable—contaminants will flow through quickly and not be well filtered. The aquifers in the area are unconfined - they do not have continuous confining layers to stop the spread of contamination once it reaches the aquifer. In addition, site contamination impacts property values, poses a threat to public health, can be costly to the community and impacts the community's image. At the County level, the Van Buren County Health Department's Environmental Health Division has a well permit program. Through this program, a permit is issued for each new well in the area and a water quality check is done once the well is installed. There have been no water quality issues identified through the program. However, staff of the Health Department acknowledge that they don't check every well; inspections are performed only if the homeowner calls. Here is an example of how the local building permit process can be used to assure that an inspection is performed by the Health Department. There is not a separate sampling or monitoring program in place.

At the state level, the Underground Storage Tank Division of the DEQ is responsible for keeping track of Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST sites). The LUST site list is done by the county with a city identification (but not township)—there are 95 open sites in Van Buren County. Three of these are listed in Lawrence: Earls Grocery on Red Arrow Highway, Eric & Jim's Service on CR 365 and Lawson Self Serve on W. St. Joseph. Others may be located within Lawrence Township but listed by a different city. A list of sites is included in the appendix of this document. The Environmental Response Division of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regulates sites defined as "contaminated" by State Statute (Part 201 of P.A. 451 of 1994). There are no recorded "201" sites for Lawrence Township on this list. Remembering that groundwater contamination does not stop at municipal lines, it is clear that great care must be taken through sound planning practices to assure that township residents continue to enjoy a plentiful, quality water supply.

Wetlands

Wetlands are those areas where land and water meet. They are areas commonly called swamps, bogs or marshes but can also be low-lying forest or meadowland where water is not visible above the land surface. Wetland areas are identified by the presence of water and by plant species and soil conditions. Typical wetland vegetation includes trees such as cottonwood, red and silver maples and northern white cedar; shrubs such as alder and cranberry and plants like cattails and bulrushes. Wetland soils tend to be dark or dull and moist to the touch and often have a high organic content. There are approximately 5 million acres of wetlands in the State of Michigan—75% of which are forest area.

Wetlands are an important part of our ecosystem. They provide rich habitat areas for fish and wildlife, sedimentation control, water purification and flood control. They also provide scenic natural environments for recreation and tourism enhancement.

Wetland maps are available through both the U.S. Dept. of Interior (Fish and Wildlife Service) and the MDNR. The Dept. of Interior offers the National Wetland Inventory maps

which are created by interpretation of aerial photographs for the purpose of identifying wetlands. The MDNR offers the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) which is a digitized computer mapping of land cover types. It has several categories which pertain to wetlands but is not specifically intended to locate wetlands. Either map alone cannot be used to delineate wetland areas definitively, but can be a good general guide. Supplementary data from the Van Buren County Soil Survey and site specific aerial photos can be used as additional indicators. To obtain specific wetland delineation, a qualified professional must perform an on-site investigation. Wetland locations along with statistical data and the MIRIS map are included in the Land Use Profile of this document.

Wetlands are regulated by state statute (Part 303 of P.A. 451 of 1994) and administered by the Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality. Activities which disturb wetland such as dredging, filling, draining or development on a wetland are extremely limited and usually require a permit. Development is restricted within a wetland as a protective measure for environmental concerns and also because wetlands present several serious constraints to construction. Wetland soils are unstable which is costly to overcome from a construction standpoint. Even with specialized designs, cracked walls and foundations are common due to flooding and settling both in and around wetlands.

Although regulations of wetlands are done at the State level, Van Buren County and Lawrence Township must coordinate with the MDEQ to make administration of the Act effective. By being aware of possible wetland areas, the development official can steer developers to the MDEQ when development sites are likely to be regulated wetland areas. Specific administrative procedures can be written into the Township's Zoning Ordinance to give the local official more authority in this area. Obvious wetland areas can be protected locally by incorporating them into the Zoning District Map and the Future Land Use Map as low intensity development areas, open space or park areas. The Township has the legal authority to adopt a local wetlands ordinance should a need be identified. By carefully supporting existing state legislation, Lawrence Township can preserve a valuable natural resource within its community.

Flood plains

Flood plains refer to those areas which are adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams and ponds that are prone to overflow and flood their banks. Land within the 100-year floodplain statistically has at least a 1 percent chance of flooding in any given year and therefore a 100 percent chance of flooding within a 100 year period. Flood plains differ greatly in size depending upon factors such as the permeability of the soil and the volume of water within the water body.

A floodplain contains three basic components. First, there is the channel which is the area of normal stream flow. Second, there is the floodway which is the 100-year flood plain. The third piece of a floodplain is the flood fringe-the land between the floodway and the outer limits of the areas known to be subject to possible flooding.

A floodplain has the natural significance of being an area likely to flood-thereby endangering life and property. In 1968 the U.S. Congress passed the National Flood Insurance Act (NFIA) creating the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and gave floodplains a regulatory significance as well. The NFIP shifted the financial burden of funding flood disaster from the government (and therefore the taxpayers as a whole) to those most likely to

need the dollars through the establishment of self-funding insurance program. Flood insurance which had not been available before was made available and was made a requirement of receiving a mortgage from any federally backed lender for structures located in the 100-year floodplain. The program is administered at the local and state levels and imposes strict limitations on any type of development activity within the 100-year floodplain. Communities “participate” by adopting local floodplain management ordinance and must be “participating” in order for residents to be eligible for the insurance. Lawrence Township is not a participating member of this program but could opt to join at any time.

Although federal floodplain regulations are not in place in Lawrence Township, there are State regulations which still apply. A permit from the State Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is required for all activities within the floodplain that reduce storage capacity. And although there is no federal floodplain map for the township, there is still a 100-year floodplain. An on-site determination of the floodplain boundary is available by request to the MDEQ. The building code has floodplain requirements in it as well. Floodplain regulations can also be incorporated into the Township’s Zoning Ordinance. It is the local code administrator who assures that the permits are secured when required.

Conclusion

Watershed boundaries tie together a collection of municipalities sharing the same drain. Special watershed organizations promote best management practices in order to prevent contamination to the river or river system. Groundwater-and specifically the regional aquifer-is the major source of the area’s water supply. Best Management Practices for all types of land use can be promoted through both education and regulation to help protect this resource. Wetlands exist throughout the township and offer many natural benefits including water purification, flood management and unique habitats. Through coordination with the State Department of Environmental Quality, Lawrence Township can continue to protect this natural resource. Floodplains are areas prone to flooding as defined by state law. They need to be carefully protected both to prevent flood damage and to comply with state regulation. Lawrence Township can best protect its water resources through education initiatives for residents and by working with the building official to assure careful administration of the local building code. Water is a significant natural feature and resource to be considered and protected through the master planning process.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Solid waste disposal, waste reduction and recycling issues are regulated through Part 115 of Public Act 451 of 1994 as amended. The Act requires that each county have an approved Solid Waste Management Plan for their geographic area which addresses waste disposal capacity for its residents, as well as waste reduction, recycling, reuse and recovery issues and enforcement issues. Van Buren County adopted an update in June 2000.

Waste Disposal

In Lawrence Township, residents use a private subscription service for solid waste pick-up. Individuals contract directly with a commercial hauler for collection services.

There are currently no landfills sited in Van Buren County. Solid waste generated in the county goes to a facility in Berrien, Kalamazoo or St. Joseph County. Disposal capacity is not a concern for Van Buren County at this time due to the ability of each of the receiving landfills to continue to accept waste.

General Challenges:

Traffic and Road Wear: When households contract individually for waste collection services, the number of different trucks going up and down roads to service houses on the same street increases.

Costs: Since economy of scale is lacking for a waste haulers working in rural settings and often several companies will service residents on the same street, the collection service prices for households may be more expensive than if one hauler serviced all households in a geographic area.

Waste Reduction

The single most effective way to reduce the amount of waste placed out for collection by households is for residents to pay for the amount of trash they throw away (known as volume based waste collection or “pay as you throw”). Nation wide data supports this statement and residents may find this service to be already available. With this type of system, residents purchase trash bags from the hauler and are only charged for the bags. The cost of trash collection is equal to the number of bags the resident placed out each week. In this manner, the resident has control over their own costs by reducing the amount of waste they put out.

In the more rural areas, and because trash collection is not a community based issue in very rural areas, it is hard to (a) make sure residents know about this option, (b) get them to try a waste collection process different from the way they have always done it, and (c) address the issue without removing the residents desire to exercise their own prerogative. As population increases, however, and if there is a consistent and evolving commitment that waste reduction is important discussion of such systems may be warranted.

Recycling

Residents in Lawrence Township have very limited opportunities to recycle. Curbside recycling services are currently not available to Lawrence residents through private subscription services. This is likely due to the fact that it is not economically viable for a company to drive down the road and service only one or two houses (because others either do not recycle, recycle at drop off sites or have another hauler). There is also no drop off sites in Lawrence Township. In a rural setting, drop off recycling centers tend to be the most viable option-both economically and otherwise. There is a drop off site in Paw Paw which can be used by Lawrence Township residents. It is operated by a commercial hauler and users are charged \$2.50 per visit regardless of the amount of materials recycled. Its hours of operation are limited to Tuesday and Saturday.

Yard waste is banned from disposal in landfills. Therefore, residents need to either compost materials in their back yard, or take the yard waste to a composting site (or farmer who is interested). The resident in the subdivision is the most challenged as they lack the wide-open fields of the farmer, yet must do *something* with their yard waste. Currently there is a drop-off site for leaves and brush in the Village of Lawrence (for Village residents only).

General Challenges

Drop off or Curbside

The market for recycled materials collected continues to be low. Until such time as the markets improve, curbside collection in rural areas bears a cost that is often prohibitive to the resident, but which must be paid in order to support the infrastructure necessary to carry out the collections, process materials and broker them to users. Drop off centers do not have the collection costs infrastructure requirements that curbside systems do, and thus may present the best option, currently, for collection of recyclable in the present economic situation. Curbside systems are best considered in areas where population densities are high and a hauler is able to secure all accounts within a single area. In this fashion, cost effectiveness can be achieved which will both affect the price to the resident and willingness of the hauler to provide the service.

Buying and Using Recycled Content Materials

While there are factors outside local or state government control influencing currently depressed recycling markets, citizens and governments can, nonetheless, have some influence on this challenge by focusing heavily on purchase and use of products made with post consumer materials. Nowhere is this more the case than in the construction industry. As new housing is contemplated and subdivisions are proposed, local governments have the opportunity to become educated about construction material purchase and use that specifies recycled content. Use of such materials can be accomplished without additional costs and frankly has more bulk impact on creating demand for recycling than adding a few households to the household recycling roster. While townships do not specify bid content, or control development directly, there is no question about their influence on both their own citizens with regards to education and collective demands as well as on developers entering this county by asking that they come prepared to consider recycled content in their construction.

Construction and Demolition Recycling

Recovery of construction materials during the course of new construction happens when a landfill which disposes of construction material first sorts it and removes that which can be recycled. These types of recovery efforts can recover up to 90% of materials intended for the landfill. Recovery of construction materials is not currently done within Van Buren County where there are no landfills sited. Again, it is acknowledged that Townships cannot, per se, direct the decision to recover unused construction and demolition materials during the course of subdivision development and housing construction. But certainly, it can be an aggressive forum for education at the local level and use its influence with the county and region where appropriate.

Subdivision Services

As new subdivisions are constructed, there is often focus on playgrounds, lighting, utilities, grounds keeping, etc. Rarely is there consideration of waste handling and recycling services. New zoning regulations addressing subdivisions also fail to address or consider this issue. This is an opportunity for townships to engage developers in a discussion aimed at inserting such considerations into regulations.

County Resources

The point of contact for residents and the township on these issues and challenges is the Resource Recovery Agent for Van Buren County. This department is funded by Van Buren County and MSU Extension. The job of Resource Recovery Agent can be broken down into three main areas: (1) the Solid Waste Management Plan; (2) recycling; and (3) Natural Resource Education (largely school programs). The job of Resource Recovery Agent is increasingly focusing on recycling and specifically business recycling. There is also a Resource Recovery Committee which will work on the update to Solid Waste Management Plan and will continue as a committee to implement the policies and objectives of the plan.

GOALS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

The following text restates the Mission Statement and presents the Goals, Policies and Objectives for the Master Plan for Lawrence Township. The Lawrence Township Planning Commission will annually review the Goals, Policies and Objectives to evaluate, reprioritize and establish appropriate time frames.

Mission Statement: Master Plan

The Lawrence Township Planning Commission exists to provide the Township with a plan for the immediate and future development of the land within its boundaries. Using a master planning process, the Commission will create a systematic pattern of land use that takes into consideration:

- ◆ **Natural limitations of the environment**
- ◆ **Rural quality of life**
- ◆ **Tax base which is diversified**
- ◆ **Community services which provide for the safety, health and welfare of the citizenry**
- ◆ **Community opinion and desires**
- ◆ **Present land use**
- ◆ **Land use in the townships bordering Lawrence Township**

Goal: The Goal of the Commission is to provide for the orderly, economical and aesthetically pleasing growth and development of the township.

To assist in understanding the use of various terms within the Mission Statement, the following definitions are provided;

GOAL - A description of the 'vision' for the future that Lawrence Township strives to attain.

POLICY - an official policy commitment by the governing body which outlines general statements about how a goal is to be achieved.

OBJECTIVE - A description of specific actions and reasonable timelines which are designed to implement the policy statements.

The overall Mission Statement and the Goals, Policies and Objectives in the specific functional areas of, Agricultural Land Preservation, Rural Environment, Residential Development, Natural Resource Management, Non-Residential Development and Community Facilities and Infrastructure will be the policy basis for the Future Land Use section of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

GOAL: AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will place primary emphasis on the preservation of agricultural land through appropriate land use strategies and regulatory controls.

Policy 1: Lawrence Township will take a leadership role in educating township residents on the impact of residential development on agricultural land and the benefits of creating a comprehensive agricultural land preservation strategy.

Objective 1: Provide information regularly to township residents about the benefits of creating a comprehensive preservation strategy and current planning commission activity.

Policy 2: Lawrence Township will support the research, discussion and adoption of appropriate policies and regulations which will reduce the rate of loss of existing prime and unique farmland to development.

Objective 1: Identify within the Master Plan for Lawrence Township the locations of prime and unique farmland and land currently enrolled in the State of Michigan's PA 116 farmland preservation program.

Objective 2: Define and identify on the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan two separate categories of agricultural land use in order to clearly identify areas intended for long term agricultural preservation.

Objective 3: Research, discuss and adopt new land use regulations which discourage residential development in the primary agricultural zoning district (Quarter Quarter Zoning District, Purchase of Development Rights, Transfer of Development Rights).

Objective 4: Participate in regional activities which research and recommend feasible tools for reducing the loss of agricultural production acreage (Transfer of Development Rights, Purchase of Development Rights, Sliding Scale Zoning District, Quarter Quarter Zoning District, Agricultural Buffer Zones, etc.).

GOAL: RURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will encourage the preservation of natural resources and open space which are essential parts of a quality rural environment.

Policy 1: Initiate and support efforts by various public and private organizations (Michigan Farm Bureau, Regional Planning Commission, etc.) to reduce the consumption of land area for residential development.

Objective 1: Research, discuss and adopt new land use regulations which discourage residential development within significant natural features of Lawrence Township (wetlands, flood plains, prime agricultural soils, etc.).

Objective 2: Adopt new land use regulations which provide incentives for clustering or grouping new residential development and maximizing open space.

GOAL: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will place secondary emphasis on accommodating low density residential development at a reasonable growth rate through the application of appropriate land use strategies and regulatory controls.

Policy 1: Lawrence Township will encourage the discussion and adoption of feasible policies and regulations within the Master Plan which encourage the maintenance and continued development of Lawrence Township as a low density single family detached residential community.

Objective 1: Recommend a residential density pattern within the Master Plan which identifies areas for low density residential development not to exceed one dwelling unit per acre.

Objective 2: Define and identify on the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan two separate categories of residential land use in order to distinguish between existing areas of concentrated residential land use and other residential areas.

Objective 3: Research, discuss and adopt provisions in the zoning ordinance which provide for more than one residential zoning district in order to recognize existing areas of concentrated residential land use while providing for other residential land use patterns.

Policy 2: Lawrence Township will, through education and research at the township and regional level, encourage the adoption of new land use regulations which provide incentives for clustering or grouping new residential development and maximizing open space.

Objective 1: In conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission and other Townships within the county, recommend a series of amendments to the zoning ordinance such as innovative cluster regulations, conservation planning, open space linkages, smaller parcel size and higher open space requirements.

Policy 3: Lawrence Township will provide within the zoning ordinance an appropriate regulatory tool for site condominiums.

Objective 1: Research and adopt an appropriate set of regulations for site condominium development to assure that reasonable development standards and public improvement requirements are met.

GOAL: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will conserve environmental assets and natural resources by minimizing negative impacts in environmental resources such as groundwater, wetlands, wildlife habitats, wood-lots and the drainage system.

Policy 1: Lawrence Township will promote educational and regulatory efforts to protect regional groundwater resources and surface water quality.

Policy 2: Lawrence Township will research and implement an appropriate set of activities, procedures and regulations to address the issue of wellhead protection within Lawrence Township.

Objective 1: Consider and adopt Best Management Practices as developed by the State of Michigan where appropriate in the site plan review process to prevent point source pollution.

Objective 2: Investigate the possibility of adopting a wellhead protection program where appropriate for public water supplies such as schools within the township.

Objective 3: Incorporate the Environmental Permits Checklist as developed by the MDEQ into the site plan review process.

Objective 4: Investigate and adopt regulatory measures to assure that wells which are abandoned or replaced are properly sealed.

Policy 3: Lawrence Township will encourage low density land use patterns in sensitive areas.

Objective 1: Encourage and support efforts by private land owners to adopt wildlife habitat preservation strategies through organizations such as the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation.

Objective 2: Through education and research, develop a series of potential amendments to the Zoning Ordinance which encourage innovative development designs to protect unique or sensitive environmental features. They may include cluster regulations, smaller parcel size along with open space requirements, conservation planning and open space linkages.

Objective 3: Consider incorporating an environmental assessment into the site plan review requirements of the zoning ordinance when appropriate.

Policy 4: Lawrence Township will take a leadership role in issues of waste management, waste reduction and recycling where it appears that a community approach is beneficial.

GOAL: MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will encourage non-residential development within Lawrence Township to develop primarily as an agri-business support to the agricultural preservation strategy of the Master Plan. It will also include limited areas of commercial development to provide local services and will recognize existing industrial activity within the township.

Policy 1: Lawrence Township will regulate agri-business development through the Special Land Use provisions of the Lawrence Township Zoning Ordinance.

Objective 1: Review the Special Land Use provisions and the Agri-business definition within the zoning ordinance and revise as needed.

Policy 2: Lawrence Township will limit the size and location of commercial development areas in the township in order to provide for local services while maintaining the rural atmosphere of the community.

Objective 1: Identify within the Master Plan's Future Land Use Map specific locations for commercial land uses.

Objective 2: Research and consider adding development standards to the zoning ordinance to assure that commercial development within Lawrence Township is harmonious with the community's rural atmosphere.

Policy 3: Lawrence Township will recognize existing industrial land uses as conforming uses within Lawrence while limiting additional industrial development somewhat in favor of agri-business.

Objective 1: Rezone existing industrial land uses to the Industrial Zone.

GOAL: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Lawrence Township Master Plan will provide minimal yet efficient and effective public services to Lawrence Township residents which support the community's rural quality of life and low density residential character.

Policy 1: Lawrence Township will cooperate with the County Road Commission to encourage regulation and improvements as appropriate to maximize traffic safety.

Objective 1: Encourage appropriate traffic safety improvements:

County Road 681 and Red Arrow Highway, the corner of W. CR 365 and CR 215 south, the corner of 64th and 46th St.

Objective 2: Develop tools which encourage cluster residential development proposals and access management techniques to minimize driveway access onto the county road system.

Objective 3: Develop tools which assure that private roads meet or exceed construction and design standards for the equivalent public road.

Policy 2: Lawrence Township will continue to provide police protection through the County Sheriff's Department.

Objective 1: Periodically assess the need for purchasing additional police protection hours from the County Sheriff.

Policy 3: Lawrence Township will work cooperatively with the joint Township and Village Recreational District.

Policy 4: Lawrence Township will provide good stewardship of public resources by incorporating township and other public properties into the land use planning process.

Policy 5: Lawrence Township will not consider the provision of a public sewer or water supply system for reasons other than a threat to the public health.

FUTURE LAND USE PATTERNS IN LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP

This section contains a recommended pattern of future land use for Lawrence Township which recognizes existing development trends, addresses the Mission Statement of the Comprehensive Development Plan, and applies contemporary land use planning principles.

Regional Perspective

The future land use pattern for Lawrence Township is also based on the following assumption...that there will continue to be substantial demand for residential land use.

The future land use pattern for Lawrence Township also recognizes that development should be encouraged and directed adjacent to the Village of Lawrence, in select locations along Red Arrow Highway, and in proximity to the I-94 interchange (CR 365). Limited residential development with maximum resource protection will be expected adjacent to the existing lakes within the township, rural residential development north of I-94 and agricultural preservation encouraged south of the I-94 corridor.

Future Land Use Categories

The following definitions apply to future land use recommendations for specific geographic areas within the Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The categories of future land use are **Agricultural Land Use Area, Mixed Land Use Area and Residential Land Use Area.**

Agricultural Land Use Area:

Rural Residential will be eliminated, since it is so similar to the Agricultural District as to make it redundant. The Agricultural Land Use category in Lawrence consists of both large tract farming operations, intended to protect open space and preserve agricultural use, and residential uses. The Agricultural Land Use area will allow large space operations such as airports and gravel pits, recreational uses, religious uses, as well as more tightly grouped residential uses. Unless constrained in some manner, the use area shall extend to the full dimensions of the parcels involved.

Mixed Land Use Area

Mixed use areas are designed to take advantage of existing uses without making them nonconforming. It is intended to allow residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, religious, mobile home parks and other uses. Incompatibilities between specific uses will be controlled with buffer strips, green zones and other screenings where necessary. The use area will extend 660 feet from the street front.

Residential Land Use Area

Residential use is designed to facilitate higher density uses, where setback restrictions become necessary to preserve sight lines, safety and property values. It shall also include all land bordering lakes, and unless constrained by streets or other impediments shall include the full dimensions of the parcels.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Several population projections have been prepared for Van Buren County and Lawrence Township through the year 2020. The Office of the State Demographer prepared a projection in January, 1996, for every county in the State of Michigan. The State of Michigan also produces, through contract with the University of Michigan the REMI (Regional Economic Models, Inc.) employment and population forecasts for Michigan counties. Both of these sources were used to produce the chart below. Specifically, the township estimates show 4.3% of the estimated county population which was the average of the population ratios from the 1970 (4.2%), 1980 (4.5%) and 1990 (4.3%) U.S. Census data.

Table 11 Population Projections for Lawrence Township (including Village)

	Census 1970	Census 1980	Census 1990	Census 2000	Projected 2005	Projected 2010	Projected 2015	Projected 2020
1	2,345	3,017	3,030	3,341	3,588	3,774	3,965	4,151
2	2,345	3,017	3,030	3,341	3,465	3,535	3,614	3,696

1. Source: Office of the State Demographer
2. Source: Preliminary REMI forecast.

New home construction can also be used as an indicator of population increase. The housing profile presented information of the number of new houses built in Lawrence Township from 1996-2006.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The Master Plan is a statement, illustrated by graphics, of goal and policy objectives concerning the future physical development of the community. Positive actions are required on the part of both public and private interests, acting in concert, to ensure the Plan's proposals are realized. Private actions include investments in homes, stores, factories, farms and the care of these investments. Public actions include investments of time, energy and funds to adopt the Master Plan and its "Tools" to implement the same. Following is a brief explanation of the three major tools utilized to implement the Comprehensive Development Plan.

Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance is the major tool available to local government to implement the land use element of a Master Plan.

Lawrence Township's Comprehensive Development Plan indicates areas for each of the following land use emphasis: agricultural and open space, rural, residential, mixed land use development and community facilities and recreational. Each emphasis is located on the future land use map and anticipates different densities. The Master Plan provides very general land allocations, and on the Zoning Map these general areas are translated into precise land use boundaries through the application of specific land use decisions. The purpose of zoning is to regulate the use of land and buildings to protect areas of uniform development from the adverse effects of disruptive land uses, which would tend to lower economic value, efficient operation and the physical and social amenities of the surrounding properties. A disruptive land use can be residential, commercial, industrial or rural land use.

The Zoning Ordinance should be thought of as being part of the Comprehensive Development Plan. Obviously, however, they are distinct legal entities with distinct separate functions. Also, the Comprehensive Development Plan and Zoning Ordinance are distinctly related due to the very essence of what each accomplishes.

- 1) The Master Plan sets the framework within which the Zoning Ordinance operates, according to the laws of the State of Michigan, and
- 2) The Zoning Ordinance is one of the tools, which enables the Master Plan to be implemented.

The zoning of a specific property may or may not reflect the existing use. The Plan should act as a guide to the actions of the Planning Commission and the Township Board in reviewing and acting on zoning applications and amendments. The elements of the Master Plan will be thrown out of balance if the Plan and Zoning Ordinance are not carefully coordinated. The Land Use Plan of the Master Plan is comprehensive in a way no zoning map can be in that the Land Use Plan relates and coordinates the elements of township development, permitting a well planned community.

The Zoning Ordinance is adopted by the Lawrence Township Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Lawrence Township Planning Commission, while the Master Plan is adopted only by the Lawrence Township Planning Commission and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. Although not required by law, this endorsement of the Plan by the elected officials ensures that there is general agreement on the planning and development policies of the township.

Subdivision Regulations

A second tool used to effectuate the Master Plan is the Subdivision Control Ordinance (SCO) and site condominium regulations. These regulatory devices set minimum standards for the division of land into parcels for residential properties and other uses. They are designed to insure that economic value of sites is not impaired because of unwise land subdivision design (lots, streets, and open space) and construction of substandard streets and utilities which the community will be required to maintain later at taxpayer's expense. Well-planned subdivisions don't just happen. The provision of adequate lot sizes, street widths, utilities and usable dwelling lots, will increase the value of the entire development, allowing for greater economic benefits for the owners and lower maintenance costs for the community. The character of an area is set for many years to come by the initial design of streets and lots and will be a measure of quality, or its opposite, for a development.

Zoning works in conjunction with the SCO and site condominium regulations to set minimum lot sizes and setbacks. Also, zoning protects developments from harmful land use encroachments adjacent to and within the development, which would lessen its desirability as a place to live.

Capital Improvements Program

Public improvements are investments made by the community in facilities, which will benefit the township and the county. Public capital improvements include schools, libraries, park and recreation areas, fire and police stations, township offices, storm sewers and the road system. As such, the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is an essential part of the Master Plan. It is the purpose of the Master Plan to provide the basis within which the CIP can be properly executed. The CIP:

1. enables the proper relationship and coordination between one capital improvement and the others;
2. measures the necessity of one versus another; and
3. determines Township financial capability in any given year to afford these capital improvements.

The CIP establishes a short-range priority schedule of needed public improvements in accordance with budgetary capabilities. This tool should be very exhaustive in scope by assessing future needs and programming improvements. In projecting the needs of the Township within a CIP, it is necessary to consider the budgetary limitations. The CIP should be planned realistically within budgetary restraints.

The compilation of a Capital Improvements Program is, according to State Law, a joint responsibility between the Planning Commission and the elected officials. Specific

budgetary actions may become the responsibility of Lawrence Township and should be itemized within the CIP document.

The CIP is actually a short-range program, which is utilized to effectuate the Master Plan in increments of five or six years. It indicates improvements, which will be required and establishes priorities for the most desirable economical sequence to fulfill the Master Plan objectives; this is the CIP's whole purpose. But, unlike the zoning ordinance and subdivision control ordinance, which are reviewed and updated every five years, the CIP is reviewed and updated every year and projected again for the next five or six year period.