

CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Master Land Use Plan is a decision-making tool used by the Township government to coordinate growth and serve as a basis for the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The Master Land Use Plan analyzes land use proposals to facilitate compatible land uses that will foster healthy and effective growth. A Master Plan is not just a matter of determining the specific location for agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses; it is extremely important that land uses are carefully mapped with due consideration for a variety of factors. For example, in land use planning it is common to increase the aesthetic value of residential districts by separating them from major traffic routes and commercial and industrial districts.

The Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility of formulating the Master Plan. Because the needs and desires of the community change, the Plan must be continually reviewed. Preparation of the Plan involves the collection and analysis of data on many aspects of the community. Information includes land use and population characteristics, transportation, public utilities, and surveys.

A Plan that is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the community in the future. Failure to follow the Plan may discredit any attempt to use the Plan as a defense for actions, which may be challenged by property owners or developers.

Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the Plan will lend credibility to the community's attempts to implement controversial decisions on re-zonings or other land use actions. While the courts of the State of Michigan do not recognize the absolute authority of the Master Plan, they do lend much more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those which appear to be taken arbitrarily against an individual property owner.

Implementation procedures that serve to put the Plan into effect are: The Township Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.

### **MASTER PLAN PRINCIPLES**

This Plan is intended:

- To provide guidelines for an orderly process by which public officials and citizens are given an opportunity to monitor change and review proposed development.
- To provide information from which to gain a better understanding of the community and base land use decisions.
- To conserve and protect property values by encouraging placement of barriers between incompatible uses.
- To protect and preserve the unique character of the natural resources and environmental quality of the community.

The following features represent the principles under which a Plan should be developed.

The Plan is flexible; it is not meant as a monument cast in stone, never to be adjusted or changed. The Plan is a general guide to be used by Township government to provide direction for the future. It should be reviewed at least every five years and altered as may be required as general conditions in the community change.

***The Plan is not a zoning map;*** it reflects future land use arrangements in light of the development that exists, but does not depict a “new” zoning district map. Since the Plan and zoning map are intended to be in reasonable harmony, it is likely that future-zoning districts will take the shape of the Plan as rezoning requests are received and reviewed by the Township.

***The Plan allows for orderly*** development, the land use allocations that are to be reflected on the Master Plan Map must be based upon the best available projections of future population levels for the Township, in conjunction with presently accepted planning standards. The Master Plan Map must realistically plan sufficient land area to meet anticipated needs and demands for every residential and non-residential use yet protect the environment.

***The Plan must balance property rights;*** including those of property owners and those of adjoining property owners to enjoy their property. The law requires that all property owners be granted a reasonable use of their property. This does not mean that the use must be that which provides the greatest amount of return on investment. However, it does require that a property owner receive a reasonable return.

***The Plan must encourage public understanding and participation;*** The Plan should be written in a way that aids public understanding of the planning process and describes how goals for the community are to be achieved.

***The Plan must be the result of a general consensus of the community;*** The Plan elements must be clearly understood by all and followed consistently to minimize the possibility of arbitrary decision making. A clear consensus is needed during the planning process to ensure that the Plan will be followed.

The absence of a Plan puts decisions at risk of invalidation if faced with a legal challenge. Decisions made on the basis of a Plan may be afforded additional validity, since the decision was not made in an arbitrary fashion, but follows a rational plan for the community.

### **Principles for Using the Master Plan**

The Master Plan is most effective if created by a Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Township Board.

Once a Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance are adopted, all future rezoning decisions and changes to a district language should be consistent with the Plan, or the Plan amended to account for changing conditions.

***Zoning is not a substitute for a Master Plan.*** The Plan is a long-range guide for community development. Zoning approvals are specific to a piece of property and are always attached to the land. They may not be restricted to an individual. Zoning approvals are always permanent unless the use itself is temporary in nature or a conditional rezoning has been granted.

***Standards are the basis for all decisions;*** all standards must be written into the Ordinance; and approval must be granted if all standards are met. One of the most important standards for rezoning evaluations is consistency with the Master Plan.

### **Future Land Use and Zoning**

The zoning map, which by law is a part of the zoning ordinance, may also have to be reviewed. The relationship of the Future Land Use element of the Master Plan, and the zoning map of the zoning ordinance is a critical one.

The relationship between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood. The Plan is a guide for land use for the future; the Zoning Ordinance regulates the use of land in the present. The Land Use Plan is not a binding, legal document, it is not required to be adopted by the legislative body; the Zoning Ordinance is a law that must be followed by the community and must be adopted by the Township Board.

The primary difference between the two documents is a matter of timing. The Master Plan map shows the intended use of land at the end of the planning period, which could be as long as 20 years in the future; the zoning map shows land as it may legally be used as of today.

## CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Casnovia Township is a rural community located approximately 25 miles north of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan area. The Township is also approximately 22 miles east of the Muskegon Metropolitan area. Two major State roads located in the Township provide easy access to the attractions of Lake Michigan and the Grand Rapids and Muskegon Metropolitan areas.

Casnovia Township has always been an agricultural community. However, the number of self-employed farmers on individual farms has decreased over the last twenty years.

### POPULATION PROFILE

The following information, collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Muskegon County Decennial Population Data, is included as a reference for the makeup of Casnovia Township's 2020 population and economic characteristics. While data were pared down to inform the Master Plan (see Appendices), the data from the U.S. Census Bureau in their entirety are available with the Township Clerk. The narratives below were created using the data from the tables:

- Table 1: Muskegon County, Michigan Decennial Population Data

*From 1970 to 2010 the Township has enjoyed a population growth of 49.2%, most notably between 1970 and 1980 (14.8%) and again between 1990 and 2000 (12.3%). Population decreased between 2010 and 2020 by 2.4%.*

- Table 2: Data Profile: Selected Social Characteristics

*Of the 1013 households, 39 are 65 years of age or over and live alone. The average family size is 3. Households with one or more people under 18 is 381. Of the children ages 3-18, 580 are enrolled in school. The highest percentage of those enrolled in school are in elementary school (41.9%). Of the population 25 years or over, 304 (14.9%) have a bachelor's degree and 1,885 (92.2%) are a high school graduate or higher.*

- Table 3: Data Profile: Selected Economic Characteristics

*Casnovia Township has 2,350 residents that are 16 years of age or older; of which 1,537 (65.4%) are employed. Of those, 1,499 commute to work and 22 people use public transportation. Of the civilian population 16 years of age and older, the highest percentage (40.3%) work in management, business, science, and arts occupations and only 14 work in agriculture. The median household income is \$70,542.*

- Table 4: Data Profile: Selected Housing Characteristics

*Of the 1,087 available housing units in Casnovia Township, 93.2% are occupied. 89.3% are detached, single-family units. Of the available housing units, 59.6% were built before 1980 (22.8% 1939 or earlier). Of the 1,013 housing units occupied, 930 or 91.8% are owner occupied and 38.1% moved in before 2000.*



*The most popular use of heating fuel is propane at 41.5%. The next highest is 18.1% using natural gas. Housing valued below \$150,000 is 41.1%. Housing valued between \$150,000 and \$199,000 is 28.3%.*

## NATURAL FEATURES

Natural features are important factors in determining the development potential and patterns of a community. To a large degree, natural features influence the types of development that are feasible at given sites. Therefore, an assessment of the existing features is essential to ensure that the community develops in the most effective and efficient manner.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The landform of Casnovia Township and the surrounding area is generally gently sloping to hilly. The terrain in the eastern half of the Township is hilly, with the terrain changing to generally sloping in the western portion.

The most noteworthy water sources in the Township are Crockery Creek, which flows south through the western portion of the Township; Ovidhall Lake Creek in the northern portion of the Township; and Half Moon Lake in the eastern portion of the Township.

In addition to these major watersheds, there are other minor lakes which have a minor effect on the topography of the Township.

The Crockery Creek and Half Moon Lake areas are characterized by adjoining broad lowland marsh areas and moderate to steep side slopes rising to upland areas. Lowlands as well as upland areas in the Township have few topographic limitations. The transitional slopes between the wetland and upland areas, however, have some limitations because of fragile eroded soil types and fragile stabilizing vegetation types.

In Michigan, the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act (Act 203 of the Public Acts of 1979) provides for the statewide preservation, management, protection, and use of wetland areas. Wetlands having an area of at least five acres in size, or those that are contiguous with a lake or stream or open waterway are subject to State regulation. The Act requires a permit from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) for activities such as filling, dredging, and draining.

## Floodplains

Floodplains are relatively flat stream valley floors, which are periodically overrun by the stream at high water, after heavy rainfall or rapid snowmelt within the stream's watershed area. The 100-year floodplain within most of Casnovia Township has been determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These areas, subject to a 1 in 100 or greater chance of flooding in any year, are located primarily along the various Creeks or Half Moon Lake. Land within the 100-year floodplain is subject to restrictions on development under provisions of EGLE.

These regulations are intended to ensure that construction within floodplains is protected against flood damage, and will not impede flow of floodwaters and cause more severe upstream flooding. Habitable structures must have the lowest floor level, including basement, located above the 100-year floodplain elevation.

### Woodlands

While regulatory programs apply to certain critical environmental areas, such as floodplains and wetlands, this is not the case with woodlands, even though they also provide important environmental benefits. They are buffers and moderators of flooding, climate, erosion, noise and air pollution. Woodlands are important protective features for watersheds and soils. Forest vegetation moderates the effects of winds and storms, stabilizes and enriches the soil, and slows runoff from precipitation, thereby allowing it to be filtered by the forest floor before percolating into groundwater reserves. By decreasing runoff velocity and increasing groundwater infiltration, woodlands also help to regulate flooding. The major woodlands location within Casnovia Township is in the western half of the Township in the vicinity of the Crockery Creek.

### Groundwater

Almost one-half of the State's population, and all of Casnovia Township's population, rely upon groundwater as the source of drinking water. Despite this dependence, there is little public understanding of the nature and importance of groundwater. Of all of the common misconceptions, perhaps the most dangerous are that groundwater is adequately protected by the earth's surface and that activities on the land surface have little impact on this resource. In reality, groundwater quality can be easily affected by human activities on the surface.

Like most other natural resources, groundwater is more vulnerable in some areas than others. This vulnerability is determined by three main factors: soil type, depth to the aquifer, and general aquifer condition and type. Sandy soils offer considerably less protection from surface impacts than heavier clay soils. Confined aquifers are safer than unconfined ones. Through a better understanding of the nature of groundwater, more effective protection measures are possible.

### Prime and Important farmland

Casnovia Township has a significant land area with soils that are characterized as either Prime Farmland or Locally Important Farmland. Prime Farmland has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It has qualities, moisture supply, and a growing season needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops using acceptable management practices. Locally Important Farmland is land other than prime farmland which is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops.

Most of the Township's Prime Farmland soil types are located in the eastern portion of the Township, east of Crockery Creek and south of the Village of Bailey. This farmland is primarily used for the growing of apples as well as dairy farms.

## SOIL

The Township is composed of three soil association groups, Nester-Ubly-Sims association; Belding-Allendale-Rubicon loamy substratum-Montcalm association; and Montcalm-Nester-Belding-Kawkawlin association. The Montcalm series consists of well-drained sandy soils where the topsoil is a very poor sandy texture from 4 – 8 inches thick. The Nester series consists of well-drained limy clay loam where the topsoil is fair with 7-9 inches of topsoil with low organic matter content. The Belding series consists of poorly drained soils underlain with clay loam or silt clay loam; the topsoil is fair with medium organic matter content.

## VEGETATION

Natural vegetation is the primary type of vegetation within Casnovia Township and throughout the surrounding area. However, woodlots and secondary stands of vegetation consisting of oak, maple, poplar, pine, ash, dogwood, locust, sassafras, and elm cover some of the surrounding area. Eighty percent (80%) of the Township is predominantly farmland. There is a strong correlation between the location of vegetation and the extent of the watershed areas.

## CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Planning goals are statements, broad in scope, that express the community's long-range desires and serve to provide direction for related planning activities. Each goal's accompanying objectives indicate a specific method proposed to attain the goal. These goals and objectives should be viewed as part of the Plan, in the same way as future land use districts are designated; both require support and commitment to achieve the best results.

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Casnovia Township, as identified in Chapter 2, is a rural community that is now developing specific areas which are more appropriate for a mixture of quality residential, commercial, and industrial developments.

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL

THE IMAGE OF CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP IS A RURAL TOWNSHIP WITH DISTINCT LOCATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE; QUALITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT; AND AN ATTRACTIVE, DIVERSE, INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ECONOMY.

#### Community Character Objectives

- A. Plan for maintaining agricultural land for use in animal and crop production.
- B. Plan for quality residential development in areas that are not suitable for farming, and in such a manner that the rural characteristics of the Township are preserved.
- C. Plan for attractive and diverse commercial and industrial development that has minimal impact or need for Township services and is located in specific locations consistent with preserving farmland and the rural character of the Township.
  - 1. Upgrade the quality of development through the zoning and site plan review process by considering adopting ordinances that require a reasonable degree of landscaping and other project amenities.

### AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION GOAL

USE OF FARM/ORCHARD LAND FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WILL CONTINUE ON PRIME FARMLAND SO THAT AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTION AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE TOWNSHIP WILL BE MAINTAINED.

### Agricultural Preservation Objectives

- A. Promote the continuation of farming and agricultural operations.
  - 1. Identify Prime Farm and Orchard Land.
  - 2. Promote cluster residential development through use of a Planned Unit Development Special Use to preserve farmland and to maintain rural open space within the Township.
  - 3. Develop floating zoning districts for wind energy and solar energy that provide guidelines for the implementation of such alternative energy as Special Uses, to ensure there are limited impacts on agricultural operations.

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP WILL CONSIST OF QUALITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS WHICH ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR FARMING AND WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THE RURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOWNSHIP ARE PRESERVED.

### Residential Development Objectives

- A. Promote the construction of high-quality housing.
  - 1. Adopt and enforce an ordinance regulating property maintenance.
  - 2. Enforce nuisance ordinances to regulate such blighting influences as excessive weeds, debris, and junk.
- B. Identify specific areas within the Township that are available for future residential development.
  - 1. Promote residential growth in selected areas through requirement of private roadways.

### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP WILL CONSIST OF ATTRACTIVE, DIVERSE COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES LOCATED ALONG EXISTING MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES SO AS TO MEET THE BASIC RETAIL NEEDS OF THE TOWNSHIP'S RESIDENTS.

### Commercial Development Objectives

- A. Ensure safe and convenient access with adequate parking in all commercial districts.
- B. Encourage the coordinated development of commercial businesses, including shared parking and access, consistent landscape improvements, and coordinated signs.
- C. Upgrade the quality of development through the zoning and site plan review process by considering adopting ordinances that require a reasonable degree of landscaping and other project amenities.

### INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP WILL CONSIST OF AN ATTRACTIVE, DIVERSE INDUSTRIAL BASE WITH LIGHT INDUSTRY AND HEAVY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT LOCATED ALONG EXISTING MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP.

### Industrial Development Objectives

- A. Plan Industrial and Heavy Commercial development in locations that do not create adverse affects for adjacent land uses, and are located consistent with preserving farmland and the rural character of the Township.
- B. Plan for implementation of Township services only in areas desired for use by Industrial and Heavy Commercial development.
- C. Ensure safe and convenient access for truck and employee traffic that does not unduly affect other development.
- D. Provide reasonable regulations that will improve the appearance of Industrial and Heavy Commercial projects by considering adopting ordinances that require a reasonable degree of landscaping and other project amenities.

## CHAPTER 4 TRANSPORTATION

The relationship between transportation and land use planning forms the framework for growth and development. The need for various transportation services is usually the result of the manner in which land is developed. However, the type and locations of transportation facilities can also determine the use, intensity and design of land uses. Due to this relationship, it is extremely important that the Master Plan and Master Plan Map include a discussion of transportation facilities.

### EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The basic function of a Transportation Plan is to provide for the movement of people and goods. This includes provisions for external or regional travel as well as internal or local travel between various activity centers of the community. Roadway systems serving the Township are classified as follows:

**INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS:** Connect major cities in the state and country. They provide large volume and high-speed traffic movement with multiple divided lanes and limited access. While there are no interstate highways that go through Casnovia Township, they are utilized to reach the Arterials that provide access to and run throughout the Township.

**ARTERIALS:** Provide relatively rapid transportation between nearby communities, or between major activity centers of the Township. Arterials in the Township include Canada Road, Bailey Road, M-37, and M-46. Right-of-ways are generally wider, usually between 66 and 120 feet, and speed limits are higher to provide the maximum amount of traffic flow, safety, and efficiency. Canada and Bailey Roads are designated as County Primary Roads, while M-37 and M-46 are State Routes.

Other existing road facilities in the Township are generally adequate. However, these roads are gravel and there are several discontinuities/gaps. Improving the existing road facilities could be planned to encourage residential development in specific areas.

### COMPLETE STREETS PLAN

In 2010, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act was amended to require that Master Plans account for “all legal users” of the transportation system within the municipality. The amended Act, in part, states that the Master Plan must include, “among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for one or more of the following: (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion of streets and provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users.” MCL 125.3807(2)(d).

This Chapter of the Casnovia Township Master Plan, Chapter 4 – Transportation, as well as other provisions throughout the plan regarding roadway improvements and lessening roadway congestion, identify key means to implement complete streets. As a result, the Township is compliant with this amendment.

## CHAPTER 5 UTILITIES

### PUBLIC SANITARY SEWER

The Township worked with Rural Development to install a sanitary sewer for the Village of Bailey. Casnovia Township was able to obtain a 75% cost share grant to alleviate some of the cost for residents within the district. The new sewer system began operating in October 2013 when residents were permitted to hook up. The sewer assessment district is comprised of 67 units, however only 64 units are hooked up and utilizing the system as of November 2022. There is no current plan to expand this system. A plan to upgrade or connect to a new system should be explored.

### PUBLIC WATER

There is no existing public water supply within the Township. Taxing Township residents to build a public water system is not likely in the near future.



## CHAPTER 6 RECREATION

### EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

The Township has one Township Park located on the north side of Half Moon Lake adjacent to “Moore County Park”. Muskegon County owns 120 acres of land within the township at the corner of Trent and Sherman Roads, which is currently being used for mining gravel for use on County roads. In addition to these public areas there are two privately-owned recreational areas within the township. Crockery Creek RV Park is located on Apple Avenue, and White House White Tails, a deer preserve, is located on Trent Road.

The Township’s rural character and lack of a central business district for community activity make recreational facilities difficult to plan. However, the County and Township parks have the capability to provide a recreational location for picnics or afternoons in the park.

### PARKS AND RECREATION GOALS

1. Provide year-round recreation facilities and programs in sufficient quantity and type, covering a wide range of recreational and leisure time opportunities for all age groups and physical abilities.
2. Pursue funding assistance from all available sources for desirable acquisition and development projects.
3. Develop the existing Township property and County gravel pits, as well as County and Township property in the vicinity of Half Moon Lake, for family and group picnicking, natural areas, play apparatus areas, parking areas, shelters, and community meeting spots.

## CHAPTER 7 EXISTING LAND USE

The basic principle of land use planning is that certain land uses may not be compatible with other uses when located in close proximity. Therefore, thorough land use planning is extremely important for a community to grow in the most effective and beneficial manner. The land use plan promotes orderly development of a community. In addition, the Township can plan for services needed or desired in developing areas and be assured that adequate land has been reserved for all necessary uses.

### EXISTING LAND USE

One of the most important steps in the planning process is the collection and mapping of information on land as it is currently used, as depicted on the Existing Land Use map. Land use patterns develop according to geographic location, land use and zoning policies, and environmental, economic, social and cultural influences. The location of a building, the routing of a street or highway, construction of sanitary sewers, and many other factors have an effect on the shape of existing and future land use patterns.

Casnovia Township has a varied existing land use mix, ranging from agriculture to manufacturing. Following is a summary description of the current land use in Casnovia Township, as depicted on the Existing Land Use map in the Appendix.

Casnovia Township is still agricultural in character with a majority of its land acreage devoted to agricultural and open space uses. Over three-quarters of the Township is considered productive farmland, open land, or forested. Residential development is the second most prevalent land use. Homes are scattered throughout the Township along the county roads, with a slightly higher concentration of homes around Half Moon Lake. In addition, the Villages of Bailey and Slocum have been fully developed for residential use with Bailey offering some commercial service to the Township.

The majority of the commercial and industrial land uses are located along the M-37 corridor from Apple Avenue to Moore Road. There is a small area of industrially-zoned properties at the intersection of Canada Road and White Road.

Institutional uses such as churches, cemeteries, and schools are generally located in the Village of Bailey.

Provided below is a summary of the existing land use types that are listed on the Existing Land Use Map found in the Appendix.

#### Agricultural

Land shown in the agricultural category includes lands which, based on Muskegon County's tax assessment of the property, appears to be in active agricultural production.

This category of land use includes land currently or recently in agricultural production for grain crops, forage crops, fruit and vegetable crops, orchards, unconfined grazing of livestock, or nursery stock. It also includes greenhouse operations.

### Intensive Livestock Operations

Large, confined livestock and poultry operations are included in this category. The proximity of residential areas to these large-scale operations may create potential conflicts.

### Low Density Non-Farm Residential

This category of land use includes single-family residential homes where there is between 1–4 parcels per mile, and where there is no agricultural activity taking place within that mile.

### Medium Density Residential

This category includes those residential uses located in close proximity to each other so that there are 5–10 parcels per mile, and where there is no agricultural activity taking place within one mile.

### High Density Residential

This category includes manufactured home parks or areas where there are more than 10 parcels per mile regardless of agricultural activity in the area.

### Commercial

The Commercial land use category includes any parcel where there is a retail store and/or business use within the Township.

### Industrial/Heavy Commercial

This category designates land used for industrial uses such as manufacturing, warehouse/distribution facilities, truck terminals, or other similar uses. This area also includes small manufacturing businesses or job shops including home occupations that are authorized as special uses.

### Mineral Extraction

There are several sand and gravel mining operations in the Township. Land mapped in this category includes areas currently being mined, as well as areas which were previously mined and are now inactive operations.

## LAND USE CONFLICTS

Land use conflicts occur when contrary uses, such as industrial and residential, develop adjacent to each other.

Factors such as increased traffic, noise, and other impacts common to industrial and commercial uses may conflict with the desired qualities of residential homes.

The key element in eliminating land use conflicts is their identification. Some areas of land use conflicts have existed for such a long period of time, these conflicts may not have a negative influence on the current surrounding land uses. These conflict areas should be identified, but eliminating them may not be a high priority.

Normally, land use conflicts will not be present with just one or two impacts; more often they will be present in a combination of impacts. But once they are identified, it is necessary to plan for the elimination or mitigation of the conflict. This does not necessarily mean that the use is encouraged to leave (for example, through the denial of zoning approvals), but appropriate screening or enforcement of Zoning Ordinance provisions may be effective in reducing the impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Other, more objectionable uses may be encouraged to relocate through the denial of expansion requests or strict enforcement of nuisance regulations. However, these actions should not be accomplished with the objective of removing the conflict; they should only be undertaken where clear adverse effects can be documented and strict compliance with review standards of the Zoning Ordinance is maintained.

## CHAPTER 8 FUTURE LAND USE

The Master Plan Map, which is provided in the Appendix, provides a graphic description of the planned future land use pattern for the Township.

The Future Land Use Plan is general in scope. It is not intended to establish precise boundaries between land use categories or exact locations of future uses. However, the planned land use patterns as a whole are guided by the land use goals and policies expressed in the previous chapters. Future development proposals, whether precisely consistent with the Master Plan map or not, should be evaluated based on their conformance with the guiding goals and policies which are the basis for the planned future land use pattern of Casnovia Township.

### Community Character

The goals and objectives, developed earlier in the planning process, should determine the kind of community desired. It is the intent of this plan to preserve agricultural land, therefore the Future Land Use element should reflect that goal, such as a provision for the development of cluster residential parcels.

### Adaptability of Land

Environmental constraints should also be considered. Is the land itself able to accommodate the planned use? Are the soils capable of handling the density of development planned? Are public utilities available?

### Township Needs

What uses are needed in the community? If development of suitable industrial or heavy commercial business were determined to be a community desire, providing appropriate land uses in desirable locations would be an appropriate response.

### Existing Development

How will the planned land uses impact existing uses? Are there some areas that are residential currently that the Township would like to see become commercial in the future? How will planned uses affect those existing uses nearby?

### Agricultural Character

Townships currently on the outskirts of major municipal centers often seek regulations that will help protect their agricultural character. A Township must recognize the desires of those residents who wish to live in an agricultural area, while also acknowledging its position in the region and its proximity to metropolitan areas. As a result, Casnovia Township may have to recognize that it has some responsibility to provide for a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of its present and future residents. Finally, there must be recognition of the property rights of landowners to receive a fair earning from their property, dependent upon the zoning and permitted use of the land.

Accordingly, it is necessary to plan a land use pattern that balances the desire to preserve the Township's agricultural character, yet also provide potential areas for residential growth. Future land use is intended to establish a long-range direction for the Township which will achieve this balance.

New development often brings out concerns over land use. Residents become concerned about losing the rural character of the Township. Community decision makers must keep a balance between land uses and the features that attract them.

Township residents have historically supported a plan to protect the agricultural character of the Township, which is founded on the principles of preserving farmland, developing residential uses with open space, small businesses, as well as maintaining clean air and water. Others may support new features such as additional commercial areas, new industrial development, or increased residential growth. This can often create land use conflicts and divide communities along philosophical lines. In truth though, advocates for development and preserving agriculture have common goals; both seek better land management of specific areas. Development creates the need to focus on transportation and utility corridors, while agricultural concerns revolve around open space and natural features. A successful plan must consider all of these factors. Usually, there are similar values regarding quality of life, protection of the Township's character, and ensuring that development "fits" the Township.

The Township needs to plan carefully for the best management of all of its resources. The Township cannot solve every problem created by development, nor answer all of the concerns of retaining agricultural land. One common sentiment, for example, presents a seeming paradox: people "moved here to get away from" growth in other population centers, and the existing residents demand that the Township not become such a place.

The designation of future land uses is a logical extension of the goals and policies stated previously in this Plan. They are designed to promote orderly development and ensure that appropriate land use is designated for all anticipated uses within the Township. The heart of the Master Plan is Future Land Use. Future Land Use decisions made by the Township should be based on several factors, including the following:

The housing style and location choices of future entrants into the Casnovia Township housing market. This will have a major impact on the amount of land utilized to house the future population of the Township. Of particular note is the low density of rural-character development, in comparison to the density of other land use categories.

Growth and development policies which encourage more clustered development in the township should be considered, in the interest of minimizing a sprawling development pattern which consumes large quantities of land. Encouraging a more compact development pattern also leads to greater efficiency if provision of public services is anticipated, and lessens the amount of valuable agricultural land consumed for new development.

## Land Use Plan

The Master Plan Map, contained in the Appendix, identifies the desired overall pattern and distribution of land use types, expected to occur in the Township as future growth occurs. The projected land use pattern has been developed based on consideration of the following factors:

1. The land use goals and policies contained in the previous Chapter.
2. The existing land use pattern in the Township.
3. Existing and planned future utility service area.
4. The existing and planned road network.
5. The suitability of land based on natural features consideration.

Following is a description of each of the land use category mapped on the Master Plan Map:

These descriptions and recommendations should be used in conjunction with the Master Plan Map. These recommendations will provide an overall framework for the management and regulation of future development, and will also serve as the basis for evaluating requests for rezoning of land.

## FUTURE LAND USE DESCRIPTION

### AGRICULTURAL

Agriculture is recognized as an important land use in the Township and is anticipated that it will continue to be an important activity.

Encroachment of land uses, which are likely to be incompatible with agricultural land uses is discouraged. Residential development should be encouraged to be located as far removed from potentially incompatible intensive agricultural uses as possible. Use of the lot layout flexibility and open space provisions of PUD zoning is encouraged to cluster home sites away from adjoining agricultural uses, and provide open space buffers between the residential development and adjoining agricultural uses.

The uses in this classification should have certain characteristics. They should:

1. Encourage protection of the natural surroundings. Provide open space that is usable, or preserves valuable natural features. The open space may also be used to separate different land uses.
2. Buildings should be designed to permit the preservation of significant views to natural or cultural features. These views should be identified early in the planning of the development. Views should be available to as many residents as possible and not reserved for a single or a few residents.

3. Be planned to preserve valuable or irreplaceable natural features from the effects of development; other natural features may be integrated into the development as part of the open space or common areas.

## RESIDENTIAL

It is anticipated that this area will be limited within the township and will only be in those areas where the land is not suitable for farming, is located in the vicinity of Crockery Creek and Half Moon Lake, and near major surface roads. Densities within these areas may vary, depending on the residential zoning district.

The uses in this classification should have certain characteristics:

1. This classification is intended to be the primary Residential category in the Future Land Use Plan. This class will include residential development along primary roads and in areas considered not desirable for farming.
2. This classification includes high, medium, and low density. It includes all residential uses from single-family to manufactured home parks. This class could also include any planned apartments or similar development desired in the vicinity of M-37 or Apple Avenue in the southeast section of the Township.

## COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

Commercial areas are located in areas near residential areas, along major County primary roads and Township arterials. These areas will have generally service-oriented commercial uses, including small light industrial businesses and contractor businesses. The following factors should be considered when reviewing development within this classification.

1. Access Management. Preserving the traffic carrying capacity of a roadway is one way to prevent costly improvements. Transportation studies have consistently shown that the number, design, and location of driveways can have a great affect on the ability of a road to safely move traffic and provide access for adjacent land uses. The number, design, and location of driveways in commercial areas will affect traffic flow, ease of driving, and accident potential. The most effective means of ensuring proper access management is the site plan review process, enforced through the zoning ordinance.
2. Aesthetics. While aesthetics alone should not dictate the full extent of improving development in commercial or industrial/heavy commercial areas, attention to details such as parking setbacks, and signs will help manage that development and contribute to preserving some of the Township's rural character.



3. Landscape Design. Another important element of any development is landscaping. Landscaping can perform a number of vital functions, including screening, microclimate control, improving aesthetics, and preserving the natural environment. Landscaped setbacks (or buffers) for non-residential uses can improve aesthetics and, if properly designed, help define the locations of driveways. Another advantage of roadside landscaping is reducing the viewshed of the driver, which tends to slow traffic speed if the driver is distracted by looking at their surroundings.

Prohibiting parking in the required front yard allows adequate space for landscaping and presents a uniform appearance along the roadway. In addition, landscaping between dissimilar uses may soften adverse effects. In general, landscaping should be planned in clusters, rather than spaced evenly along the roadside. Clustering maximizes the impact of landscaping when viewed at high speeds, and serves to highlight site features such as driveways and signs. Finally, parking lot landscaping, both within the lot and around the perimeter, serves to break up the view of large expanses of hard features, such as asphalt.

4. Architectural Guidelines. Of all the development guidelines, architectural quality can be the most challenging to regulate. The variety of uses that are likely to occur in an area make enforcement of a consistent set of architectural guidelines difficult. Innovation and unique design should be allowed to flourish. In keeping with the landscape guidelines, architectural design should, to the extent possible, consider the natural features of the land. Incorporation of wetlands, orientation of buildings to woodlands and water bodies, and other techniques to combine the natural and built environments, should be highlighted in the design and placement of buildings.
5. Lighting. Lighting is a significant concern in commercial and industrial areas. High levels of background lighting can affect the view to the night sky and create “light trespass” onto adjacent properties. There is a need to balance the requirements of safety, which require higher levels of illumination, and the potential impact of that lighting. Limiting the height of lighting and requiring “cutoff” light fixtures can be effective in restricting light levels, and properly directing that lighting to the areas that are most in need.

## CHAPTER 9 IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This Master Plan sets forth goals and objectives, which the Township seeks to have realized in the years ahead. As the Township's population grows along with that of West Michigan in general, increasing amounts of land will be converted from agricultural and undeveloped use to more intense residential, commercial and industrial use. Ensuring that this growth is consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan may require fine-tuning of the Township's development regulations.

The Master Plan itself is not a source of regulatory authority. It is a policy document, which identifies the future conditions the Township seeks to achieve in its future development. The Zoning Ordinance, through its various zoning districts, governs the permissible uses of land in various geographic areas of the Township. Other regulations adopted by Ordinance affect the Township's future growth, including Private Road Ordinances, Land Division regulations, and a variety of regulations which may affect specific types of land use activity, such as ordinances regulating mineral extraction or salvage yards. This Chapter identifies areas for possible modification and improvement of the Township's Zoning Ordinance, and other regulations affecting new development, to help ensure that the vision expressed in the Master Plan is realized in the future.

### ZONING ORDINANCE

Pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Act 110 of 2006, Casnovia Township has a Zoning Ordinance to regulate the development of the Township. The Zoning Ordinance stipulates permitted uses and building regulations for specific zoning districts. The Zoning Ordinance is designed to provide for orderly development of the Township by implementing the Master Plan and containing design controls to reduce land use incompatibility. Since the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance are so intricately related, it is extremely important that both are reviewed together. Once the Master Plan is completed, the Zoning Ordinance will need to be reviewed to ensure that it is consistent with the Master Plan.

A comprehensive, technical review of the Ordinance will be necessary to discover the areas requiring revision. Even if no other part of the Zoning Ordinance is written by a planner or attorney, there should be a professional evaluation of the Zoning Ordinance from both a planning and legal perspective.

During the course of this review, the Zoning Map should also be examined to evaluate the amount of land encompassed by various zoning districts, the appropriateness of districts in relation to their surroundings, and other consideration, as may have been determined during the development or update of the Master Plan

### Zoning Districts

Once the Master Plan land use classifications have been determined and mapped, they should be implemented through the creation of appropriate zoning districts.

Zoning districts represent the separation of the Township into geographic areas within which specified uses are permitted. Each district identifies uses permitted by right and uses permitted by special land use approval.

Before deciding on the appropriate zone districts, several aspects of the Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed, beginning with an examination of the Master Plan's future land use classifications.

Since the Master Plan designates future land use, rezoning decisions should be consistent with the provisions of the Master Plan. This is not to say that all rezoning requests that are consistent with the Future Land Use Plan should automatically be approved. However, if all of the preconditions of the Plan are met, approval of the request should logically be forthcoming. If, however, a rezoning request is different than that land use shown in the Plan, it should not automatically be rejected, particularly if the plan has not been reviewed in some time. Each request should be evaluated with respect to the Plan, with the consideration to conditions that may have changed.

#### RELATIONSHIP OF MASTER PLAN CLASSIFICATIONS TO ZONING DISTRICTS (ZONING PLAN)

Complementing the text of the Land Use Plan is the Master Plan Map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of use permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its map.

In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the Zoning Ordinance map (available in the Appendix), as shown in the table below, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and manmade features of the landscape, such as topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, and access. Consequently, while the land use classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a use is determined by the consistency of the proposal with the map and text of the Land Use Plan; the compatibility with surrounding uses and infrastructure, and the Zoning Ordinance, including its regulations regarding lot size, height, area, bulk, location, etcetera for each of its Districts; and, the capability of the property supporting the use related to the Zoning Ordinance.

**Terminology**

**Table of Master Plan Terms & Zoning Ordinance Map District Terms**

<b>Master Plan Map Terms</b>	<b>Zoning Ordinance Map Districts</b>
Agricultural/Open Space	Agriculture
Small Lot Residential	R-1 Residential
Large Lot Residential	R-2 Residential
Medium Lot Residential	R-3 Residential
	Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Commercial/Industrial	Commercial (C-1)
Commercial/Industrial	Industrial (I-1)

**Relationship of Master Plan Map Terms to Master Plan Chapters**

Several Chapters of this Land Use Plan identify the goals and policies regarding future land use in the Township. While the goals and policies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan Map terms as provided in the table below.

<b>Master Plan Map Terms</b>	<b>Land Use Plan Chapters</b>
Agricultural Conservation	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Rural Conservation	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Low Density Residential	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Manufactured Home Park	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Medium to High Density Residential	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Commercial	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)
Industrial	Existing Conditions (Existing Land Use) & Land Use Plan (Future Land Use)

**OTHER IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

In addition to the Township Zoning Ordinance, the following regulations, state law, and state and federal programs can play an important function in land use implementation:

## Residential Development and Agricultural Uses

The increased proximity of residences to agricultural operations can cause conflicts arising from the noise, odors, chemical use, and other aspects which are typical of agricultural operations. Increasing residential development in agricultural areas can increasingly put constraints on agricultural operations.

The Future Land Use Map encourages separation of these two classes. Possible zoning techniques to minimize agricultural/residential conflicts include:

1. Special Use zoning for non-farm uses in agricultural areas, which would limit non-farm uses such as single-family residences to areas free of potential agricultural conflicts, and require Township authorization.
2. Large lot zoning in agricultural areas, which would increase the minimum lot size for farm activities in agricultural areas from the current 3-acre requirement to a larger, undetermined acreage requirement.
3. Prohibiting new or expanded intensive livestock operations in areas of significant residential development.
4. Agricultural Preservation through PUD Authorization – Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning provides flexibility in the size and layout of lots in the design of new development, allowing reduction in individual lot sizes, in return for setting aside other land within the development as permanent agricultural land, while potentially retaining the same overall dwelling unit density as permitted through the underlying zoning district. The flexibility provided in a PUD authorization can be used to protect land by reducing the size of home sites and placing them on less agriculturally productive areas of the development site. This avoids the disruption and alteration of valuable farmland, which could result from the expansion of roads and homes into those areas. The flexibility of PUD regulations can also be used to provide buffers within a development that provide physical separation between home sites and adjacent agricultural operations. While not an assured means of preventing conflicts between residential and agricultural uses, buffers in a PUD may lessen the severity of such conflicts.

A database should be developed and maintained which tracks the number of building permits issued for new dwellings in the Township by land section. If it is found over time that encroachment of non-farm uses into primarily agricultural areas is occurring at excessive levels, the Township should consider implementing additional regulatory measures or changing the measures currently in effect.

## Land Division Regulations

Land Division regulations can serve as a way to establish review and approval procedures and design standards for new parcels within the Township. Once enacted by the Township Board, these regulations will ensure that new parcels are developed with the proper lot size and in the proper area for future development.

## Private Road Standards

Casnovia Township's attractiveness as a place to live depends in no small measure on residents' ability to travel efficiently and safely to their jobs and other destinations. The design of new development along a private road can have a major impact on the continued safety and efficiency of travel in the Township. The proliferation of an excessive number of driveway connections increases the likelihood of accidents along the roadway, and reduces the roadway's traffic-carrying capacity. The Township Private Road requirements address construction standards and review procedures that can help promote safe driving conditions, as well as the ability to promote cluster developments.

## Landscape Standards

The quality and appearance of future development in Casnovia Township will significantly affect the overall image and character of the community. In particular, the appearance of the M-37 Corridor and Apple Avenue area tend to create a first impression for anyone traveling through the Township. The incorporation of landscape improvements into new development will help maintain an attractive appearance throughout the Township. Landscaping also is an important site design tool used to provide buffering and separation between potentially incompatible land use types.

CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION: P.C. 23-\_\_\_\_

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE UPDATE FOR THE  
CASNOVIA TOWNSHIP MASTER LAND USE PLAN

WHEREAS, Casnovia Township Planning Commission recognizes that it has been several years since the Master Land Use Plan for the Township has been updated, and

WHEREAS, Changes have occurred within the Township regarding the population and desires of the residents of the Township, and

WHEREAS, The Casnovia Township Planning Commission obtained information regarding the desires of the citizens through a public hearing and

WHEREAS, The Casnovia Township Planning Commission has prepared an update to the Master Land Use Plan and has reviewed the various chapters of the plan in detail, and

WHEREAS, The Goals and Objectives provided in the Master Plan have been reviewed and are consistent with the desires of the citizens of the Township as expressed in the public hearing.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Casnovia Township Planning Commission hereby adopts this Master Land Use Plan for Casnovia Township to set forth goals and objectives for the development of land within the Township.

This Resolution was adopted by unanimous vote of the Planning Commission at a Regular Planning Commission meeting held on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 2023.

Planning Commission Members  
Rick Sible, Chairman  
Jeannette Mansfield, Vice Chair  
Ron Swanson, Secretary  
Jason Jorgensen, Board Liaison  
Craig Montgomery  
Nels Nyblad

# MASTER PLAN MAP



# 2020 CENSUS TABLES