

Lee Township Master Plan

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Executive Summary

The Lee Township Master Plan is a basic plan prepared as a foundation for the Township's near and mid-term planning. Although this Plan may include specific land use policies, or may propose specific land use arrangements, it has no regulatory power. This Plan does however provide the basis and impetus needed to support future regulations.

This Plan is expected to be modified and improved as community input (via surveys, committee group discussions and other public meetings) is gathered. Lee Township is a predominantly rural area. It is experiencing very little commercial, residential, or industrial development at the present time. Key issues generally emerge from Township-wide public forums; including public ordinances and zoning support. These will be paramount to the dialogue.

That being said, it is the Township's intent to act in a manner that includes:

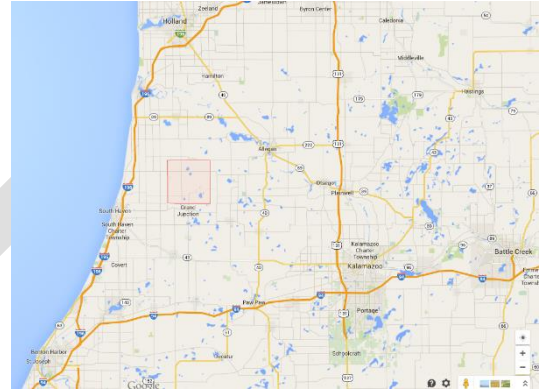
- Maintaining and improving upon the fiscal strengths of the Township
- Promoting a safe and inclusive community
- Improving upon roads and basic infrastructure
- Improving access to necessary services that allow residents to work and thrive
- Protecting the Township's natural amenities- such as lakes and wetlands.
- Encouraging business growth

In its present state, this Plan is a working document. It will serve the Township Board, committees, and public interests in future planning and decision making.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Lee Township is a General Law Township located in Allegan County, in the State of Michigan. At the time of the 2010 Census, the population was 4,015. This is a decline of 100 people since the 2000 Census.

The township is mainly a rural population, with most people living around the lakes and the unincorporated town of Pullman. A small portion of the Allegan State Game Area is within the township, and attracts campers, snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, horse trail riders, hikers, bird watchers and hunters. Lee Township is located inland, approximately 10 miles from the shores of Lake Michigan, and halfway between the cities of South Haven and Saugatuck.

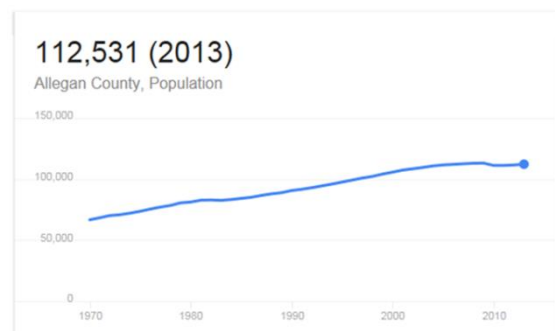


Decades ago Lee Township was home to many summer resorts. Though the resorts are all gone, there are still many seasonal residents living in private summer cottages. The CSX has a line that goes through in a north-south direction. The CSX line also carries Amtrak traffic, but there is not a stop in Pullman. No major highways go through Lee Township.

As of the 2010 census, there were 4,015 people (down 100 people from 2000). There were a total of 1,329 households, with 1,010 families residing in the township. There were a total of 1,940 housing units. The median age of Lee Township citizens is 31.8 years of age. This is up from 28 years of age as reflected in the 2000 census. The gender makeup of the township was 50.6% male and 49.4% female. The racial makeup of the township was 63.6% White, (down from 70.5% in 2000), 27.9% Hispanic, (up from 21%); 4.6% African American, 1.3% Native American, 0.2% Asian, and 2.6% from two or more races.

The median household income in the township was \$41,218, and the median family income was \$40,043. Males had a median income of \$31,786, versus \$24,531 for females. The per capita income for the township was \$13,970. The state unemployment rate in 2010 was 13.8%, and the national rate was at 9.7%. In Lee Township only 6.8% of the population over the age of 16 was unemployed. Unfortunately, 25% of township families, (35.4% of the total population), were living below the poverty line. This included 42.5% of those under the age of 18, and 7.9% of those aged 65 years or older. This is a significant contrast to the year 2000 data that showed those living below the poverty line to be 23.7% of those under age 18, and 17.7% of those age 65 or older.

Lee Township's declining population between the years 2000 and 2010 is projected by the Census Bureau to continue through the year 2013. This is despite a steady growth in the population of Allegan County. The effect of a shrinking property



tax base on Township revenue, is further constrained by the decline in overall property value. This cycle, if left unchecked will increase the number of abandoned properties and further degrade this community's appeal- continuing the current negative cycle.

This Master Plan for Lee Township is a vision on how the Township will grow and progress over the next twenty years. It is a document developed through investigation of demographic and land use trends, and the vision that local citizens have for the Township. The basic purpose of the Plan is to promote planning and decision making in a manner that is economically viable and environmentally sound, and to promote growth.

The Master Plan will help ensure that Lee Township remains a safe, desirable community by enabling residents, business owners, and developers to make investments with reasonable expectations for the future. In essence, the Plan balances the sometimes competing interests of environmental protection and individual land ownership overall community interests.

Plan Elements

This Master Plan consists of several components, including:

- Background research regarding housing, population, and other current conditions within the Township.
- Public input, an essential part of the Master Plan process, is critical to having an understanding of what the Township residents and landowners think of the issues.
- Development of goals, objectives and strategies that define how the Township will address identified concerns and trends.
- Implementation of strategies that should be evaluated on an annual basis.

When the above components are combined, a picture is created that will serve as a guide for the Township as it faces important decisions now and in the years to come. These decisions may include policy changes, budget allocations, and day-to-day issues; such as site plan reviews, special land use approvals, and rezoning requests.

Planning Framework

Overall, the Master Plan is based upon a number of Township characteristics, each of which must be considered by the Planning Commission and Township Board as the Plan is implemented and updated. These characteristics include:

Community Character: The community's character, as desired by residents and landowners, determines the Plan's goals. A strong emphasis is placed on maintaining Lee Township's rural character.

Community Needs: What are the needs within the community? Is safe affordable housing available? Are public areas, such as parks, being utilized and maintained? Does the Township

have a functional and representative feedback mechanism in place that promotes understanding of the public's needs?

Available Services: Are the existing services adequate for current and future demand? Public services may include fire protection, public water access, roads maintenance, waste disposal, and drains.

Regional Planning: Lee Township does not exist in a vacuum. There are other regional issues such as transportation, environmental protection, and utility plans, which must be considered as well. Sharing copies of the Plan and communicating about it with neighboring township, county, and regional planners, as well as other appropriate entities, will facilitate regional planning and coordination of efforts.

Implementation

The Township Board should continuously strive to ensure effective use of this document. In the most general terms, if the Township's vision drives all decisions, community leaders will be implementing the Plan. What follows are additional practices that will ensure Plan implementation:

Refer To the Master Plan in Ordinance Decisions

One of the principal benefits of having an adopted Master Plan is the foundation it provides for sound decisions.

Encourage Other Decision Making Bodies to Use the Master Plan

The Master Plan should help guide everyday decisions. Working together with entities such as the Allegan County Road Commission, the various school districts, adjacent communities, and other invested parties, can positively impact the management of the Township.

Keep the Plan Current

The vision outlined in the Plan will not occur overnight. The Master Plan is an outline for the future that guides day-to-day decisions. However, even with this in mind, the Plan should not be applied or used rigidly, since changing conditions can affect the original intentions of the Master Plan. Each challenge should be acknowledged and the Plan amended, as necessary.

On the other hand, while the Plan needs to be a flexible instrument, its recommendations should not be taken lightly. Adjustments should be made only as necessary, and justified based upon changing conditions or shifts in community philosophy.

The Master Plan & Ordinances

The relationship of the Master Plan and township ordinances is often misunderstood. Stated concisely, the Master Plan is a *guide* for the future. Ordinances regulate the public health,

safety, and general welfare of persons and property in the present time. The Master Plan is not a binding legal document, however, the Master Plan is the foundation upon which regulations may be recommended, justified, and built.

Chapter 2: Demographic Analysis

In order to adequately plan for its future, a community needs to understand trends occurring in its population. This chapter provides an overview of basic descriptive statistics. This includes housing, employment, and income level statistics. This will provide Township decision-makers with a frame of reference regarding area demographics. Note that most of the data in this section was derived from the 2010 Federal Census.

Housing Trends and Density

Lee Township continues to have a relatively overall low population density. As of the year 2010, Lee had approximately 111 persons and 38.8 housing units per square mile. The largest concentration of population in Lee Township is in the Town of Pullman, around Osterhout Lake, and Lower and Upper Scott Lakes. Residential dwelling are primarily serviced with well water and private septic systems. The exception to this is Pullman's downtown area, which is serviced with a township owned central water supply.

Households

The number of households in Lee Township has remained relatively flat over the past decade, and stands at just over 1,300. The majority of Lee households are married-couples (51.4%), reflecting a lower percentage than the county average, and the same as the state average (see Table IV). The presence of children in Lee Township households is higher than both county and state averages. About 40% of all households have school-aged children- individuals 18 years old or younger. The number of households with a senior citizen is lower than county and state averages, in that about 19% of all households in Lee Township have a senior in them, while the county and state averages are about 23%.

The number of single-parent households (24.6%) in the Township is significantly higher than county and state averages. Non-family households consist of single persons, or unrelated persons, living together. Lee Township's average of non-family households is smaller than that of the county and state. About 24% of Lee Township's households are non-family; while nearly one-third of the state's households are non-family. About 5% of Lee Township's non-family households are senior citizens living alone. The average household size in Lee Township is 3.02 persons per household. This is higher than the state and county averages of 2.56 and 2.72 persons, respectively.

Table IV Household Types

	Lee Twp.	Allegan Co.	Michigan
Married-couple families	51.4%	61.4%	51.4%
Single-parent families	24.6%	13%	16.6%
Non-family households	24%	25.6%	32%
Households with individuals under 18 years of age	39.7%	37.4%	35.6%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	19.2%	23.2%	22.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2010

Age

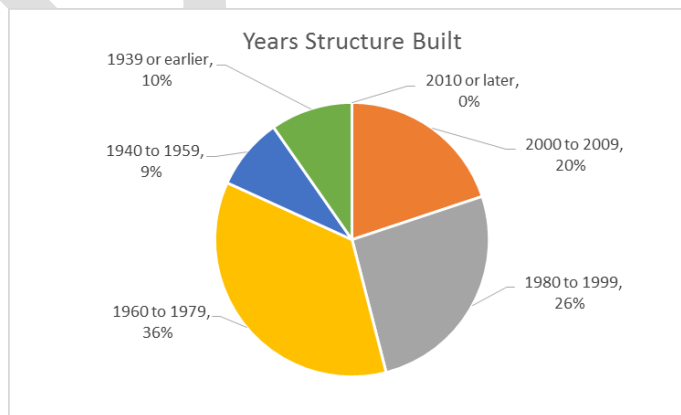
The percentage of school-aged children (18 years and under) in Lee Township is higher than the county and state averages (see Table V). Lee Township has a lower median age than both the county and the state. It also has fewer people age 65 years and older, when compared to the county and state averages. Furthermore, over two-thirds of Lee Township’s population is under 44 years of age; with one quarter under the age of 14. These facts suggest a predominance of young families (with children in lower grade levels).

Table V Age Ranges

	Lee Twp.	Allegan Co.	Michigan
Percent of the population under 18 years of age	32.3%	28.9%	26.1%
Percent of the population 65 years or older	8.5%	11.1%	12.3%
Median Age	31.8 yrs.	35 yrs.	35.6 yrs.

Source: U.S. Census

Housing



In the year 2013, the Township had a total of 1,991 housing units, of which 1,248 are occupied and 743 or 37% are vacant. Sixty percent of the housing stock was built between 1960 and 1999 and is almost exclusively single-family 96.2%. Mobile homes (30%) are considered single-family units in the census data. Mobile homes are scattered throughout the Township and are located primarily on individual parcels. Single-family homes are also scattered throughout the township and are generally located on large-lot parcels. Single-family homes on smaller lots are primarily located in unincorporated Pullman, and are also located along the Township's lakeshores. Of additional note is that 17.9% of the homes are classified as seasonal, and 28.4% are renter occupied. Over 80% of the average rent paid in the township is between \$500 and \$1,000 per month.

Occupied units paying rent	
\$200 to \$299	1.80%
\$300 to \$499	16.40%
\$500 to \$749	35.10%
\$750 to \$999	46.70%

The value of Lee Township homes is lower than the state average of \$94,200. The median home value of owner-occupied homes in Lee Township, as of the year 2000, was \$87,900.

Value of Owner-occupied units	
Less than \$50,000	14.80%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	37.60%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	29.00%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	3.20%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	13.70%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0.00%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	1.80%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.00%

Income and Educational Attainment

The Census measures income in three ways: 1) median household, which is representative of all households (non-family and family); 2) median family, which is representative of all family households, including those with single parents; and 3) per capita income, which averages all incomes among the entire population, including non-workers such as children. In all scenarios, the Township's income levels are lower than those of the county and higher than those of the state (see Table VI). As of the year 2013, over 73.7% of the population had a high school education and about 2.8% had a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to the national average of 85.2% and 22%.

Only 8.5% of the Township's population was on public assistance at the time of the 2010 Census, yet 35.4% of the population (or 1,037 individuals) had income below the poverty level. Of greater concern are the income levels in female-headed households in Lee Township. About 54.8% of all female-headed household incomes were below the poverty level.

Table VI Income Levels

	<u>Lee Twp.</u>	<u>Allegan Co.</u>	<u>Michigan</u>
Median household	\$41,218	\$45,813	\$31,020
Median family	\$40,403	\$51,908	\$36,652
Per capita	\$13,970	\$19,918	\$14,154

Source: U.S. Census

Employment

As is suggested by a “mean travel time to work” of about twenty-six minutes, most workers in Lee Township commute out of the area for employment. Workers are primarily employed in manufacturing, (27.5% of all workers), agricultural (17.2% of all workers), transportation (12.4% of all workers), and education, health and social services, (11.3% of all workers). About 6% of those employed worked in retail trade. At the time of the 2010 Census, 52.2% of all residents, and 39.7% of females age 16 or older, were in the labor force.

Summary

Over the last decade, Lee Township has not grown substantially. Housing vacancies and the number of people living below the poverty line has increased. While over 50% of households are married-couple families, one quarter is single-parent families; most of which live below the poverty line. Additionally, full one third of Lee Township’s population is under the age of 18.

As one would expect, there is a notable dichotomy between the lakefront communities and the rest of Lee Township. Home valued from \$200,000 to \$299,999 rose 26% between 2010 and 2013, while those in our median home value range of \$50,000 to \$99,000 fell 8.3%. This group of homes alone is not large enough to offset the overall decline in property values in Lee Township.

Because of the general lack of commercial services, there is a lack of industry. Thus Lee Township’s sustainability remains highly dependent upon a property a tax base that continues to diminish in asset value. This challenge is compounded by shrinking resident occupancy. The residents that remain in Lee Township appear to do so because of the lower cost of living, which is generally much lower than the county and state cost of living.

Without concerted efforts to increase industry, to increase property values, to raise the quality of life, to increase the level of education, and, to increase the income levels for Lee Township families, one should expect continued, significant challenges in the performance of even the most basic functions of township governance– such as tax collection and ordinance enforcement.

Chapter 3: Community Services

Despite being a rural township with a relatively small population, Lee Township directly provides Fire and First Responder Services to its citizens, and to neighboring townships. Lee Township relies upon an agreement with the Allegan County Sheriff's Department for limited police services. Lee Township provides public water service to residents and businesses within a relatively small area of Pullman. There is a township managed cemetery, a community center, and a volunteer library. Lee Township also supports modest summer dust control and road repair services. There has been no demand, or need, for municipal sewer services.

Public Safety

The Allegan County Sheriff Department and the Michigan State Police provide principal police protection throughout Lee Township. The township contracts with the Sheriff Department; and shares one full time officer. Emergency Services are provided by Lee Township First Responders. Lee Township presently has a contract for life support ambulance service through AMR (American Medical Response). All calls for service are efficiently dispatched via the County's "911" system.

Water and Waste Water Disposal

With the exception of the small public water system in Pullman, the entire township relies on private wells and septic systems for potable water and waste disposal. In addition to hundreds of traditional septic fields within the Township, "raised mound" beds have emerged as a wastewater disposal solution in areas with high water tables. As population density increases and septic systems age, it is important to keep in mind the potential need, and expense, of public water and sewer systems. Failing septic systems can pollute drinking water and surface waters. Run-off from failing septic systems and yard chemicals is often associated with inland lakes that become weed-choked and polluted. Small lake lot parcels also compound the problem as they have limited areas for reserve septic fields.

School Systems and Parks

Fennville Public Schools and Bloomingdale Public Schools serve the township. However the only school facility located within Lee Township is Pullman Elementary School (which is part of the Bloomingdale school District). Pullman Elementary provides recreational fields, and has open space available for community use. Lee Township also has public spaces, and boat launches on three of the area's largest inland lakes.

Other recreational areas in Lee Township include the Allegan County State Game Area which is operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and provides hunting and snowmobile trails.

Summary

While the Township's population remains small, it provides for the most essential public services.

Chapter 4: Natural Features

Water Features and Wetland Systems

Three inland, all sports lakes lay within Lee Township. These include Upper and Lower Scott Lakes; located less than 1 mile east of Pullman, and Osterhout Lake, which is in the south-east quadrant of

Lee Township. Of these three, Osterhout, is the largest lake, with a total surface area of 168 acres. Lower Scott Lake is 133 acres, Upper Scott Lake is 100 acres and Lester Lake is 60 acres. Residential lots line much of these inland lakeshores.

County Drains

There are several county drains in the Township. This is maintained by the Allegan County Drain Commission. The primary purposes of county drains are to expedite drainage for agricultural production or to alleviate flooding problems. One of the issues with maintaining the formal drainage system is the expense of special assessment districts that pay for drain maintenance. Homeowners of large lots with county drains running through them can be caught by surprise with a sizable assessment levied to clean out what the homeowner thought was a natural creek on their property. To compound the situation, while the homeowner may not want the disruption or expense of a drain cleaning operation on their property, a farmer located upstream may be relying on the neighboring section of drain being cleaned. There are several miles of county drains which make up the following six formal drains within Lee Township:

- Scott Creek and Branch
- Pullman and Branch
- Peterson
- Lee
- Dokey
- Burch & Phillips

Summary

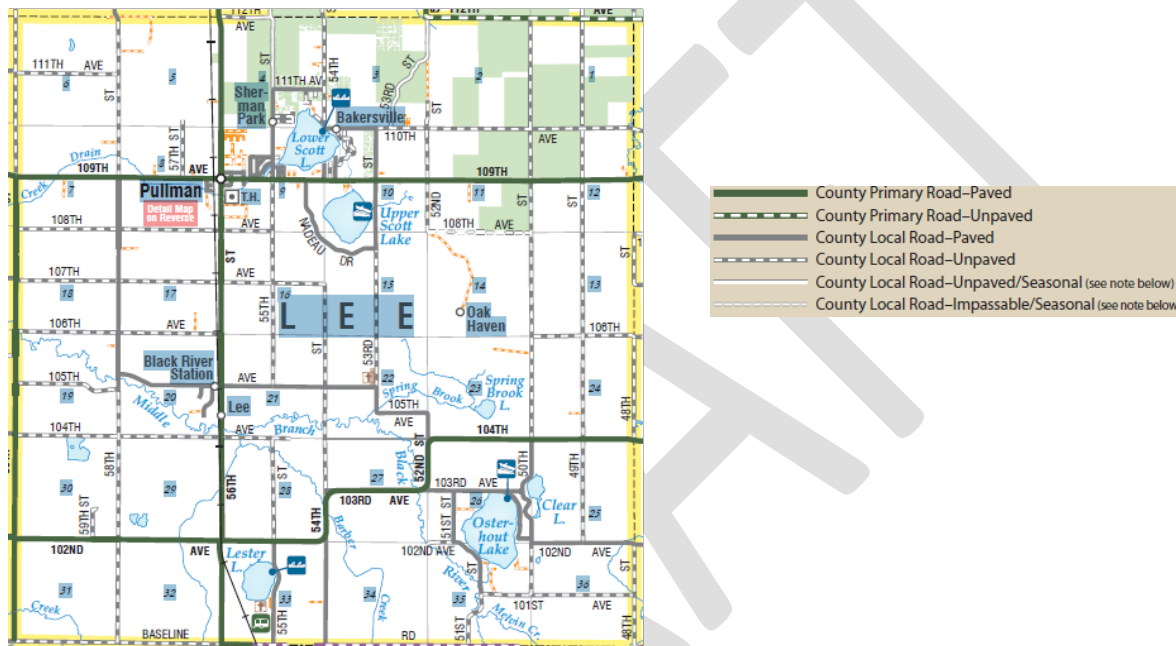
As Lee Township moves forward in making development decisions, it will be imperative to consider all components of the landscape; not only to retain the rural character and beauty of the area, but also to protect wildlife habitats, and to preserve the quality of the surface and ground waters within Lee Township.

Chapter 5: Transportation

Roads

Lee Township’s road system is primarily a grid. The primary east/west route through Lee Township is 109th Avenue, and the primary north/south route is 56th. The township is situated 5 miles from Interstate 196 to the West, and 30 mile to Interstate 131 to the East. Lee Township has many miles of unpaved roads. As in many rural townships, road maintenance, (grading, dust control, paving, and sealing), is a significant township budget expenditure. Residents want washboard-free gravel, and smooth, safe pavement to travel on.

County Road Classification Map



Non-motorized Transportation

There are no on-road or off-road bicycle lanes or pathways in Lee Township, nor are there any planned in the immediate future.

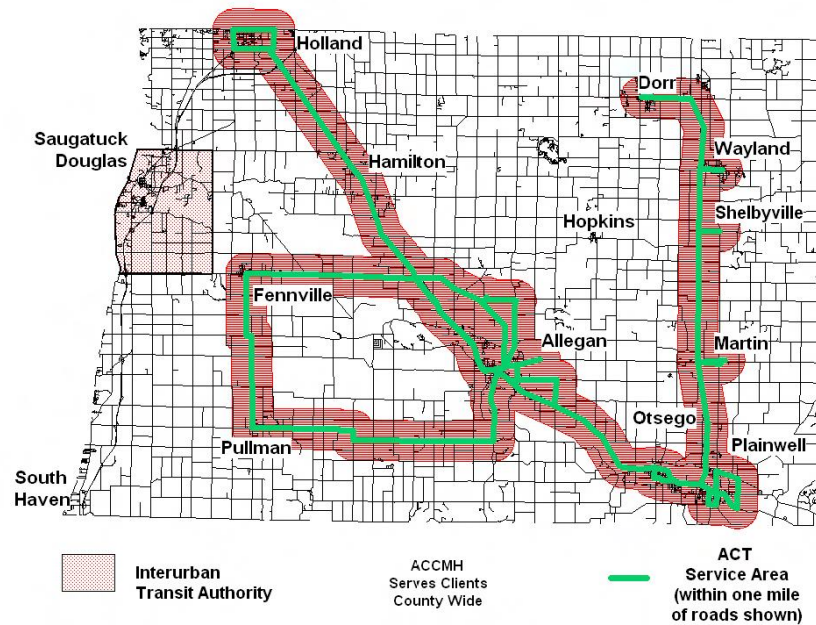
The Kal-Haven Trail, which runs from South Haven to Kalamazoo, is located just south of Lee Township and provides recreational opportunities for walkers, runners, and cyclists. Equestrian riding trails are also available along certain segments of the Kal-Haven Trail.

Due to the rural nature of Lee Township, there are no public sidewalks in the Township.

Public Transit

There is no formal public transit service in Lee Township. There is no rail service presently in Lee Township, although Amtrak rail service runs through Pullman and other parts of Lee Township. Amtrak can be accessed in the neighboring town of Bangor (approximately 15 miles south of Pullman). Amtrak has routes from Bangor that run east to Detroit and west to Chicago. Allegan

County Transportation provides a reservation based bus service which transports any county resident to jobs and services within designated areas of Allegan County (see map below).



Summary

Private road standards and a schedule to upgrade such roads should be continued through Lee Township's Road Committee. The township's proximity to Interstate 196 should be considered advantageous to commercial enterprise.

Chapter 6: Land Use

The predominant land use in Lee Township is large platted agricultural; much of which is dispersed along county roadways. It follows that the primary industry in Lee Township is agricultural operations- including fruit, vegetable and greenhouse production and operations. The single largest tracts of contiguous land are owned by Oak Haven, and, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Several subdivisions are located in and around the unincorporated town of Pullman which is also the township's primary business district.

The Scott Lakes, and Osterhout Lake, have single-family residential development along their shorelines. Lower Scott and Osterhout Lake have the highest density of development. Pollution from failing or inadequate septic systems and agricultural run-off in these areas has been particularly damaging to surface waters. Allegan County has recently banned the use of phosphorus based fertilizers that are used on crops and lawns. These chemicals are known to increase the nutrients and thus accelerate the vegetation growth in the lakes. While the state and county have strengthened septic system requirements, these rules are typically only applied to

new or significant construction. Many of lakefront cottages have septic systems that are over their useful lifespans.

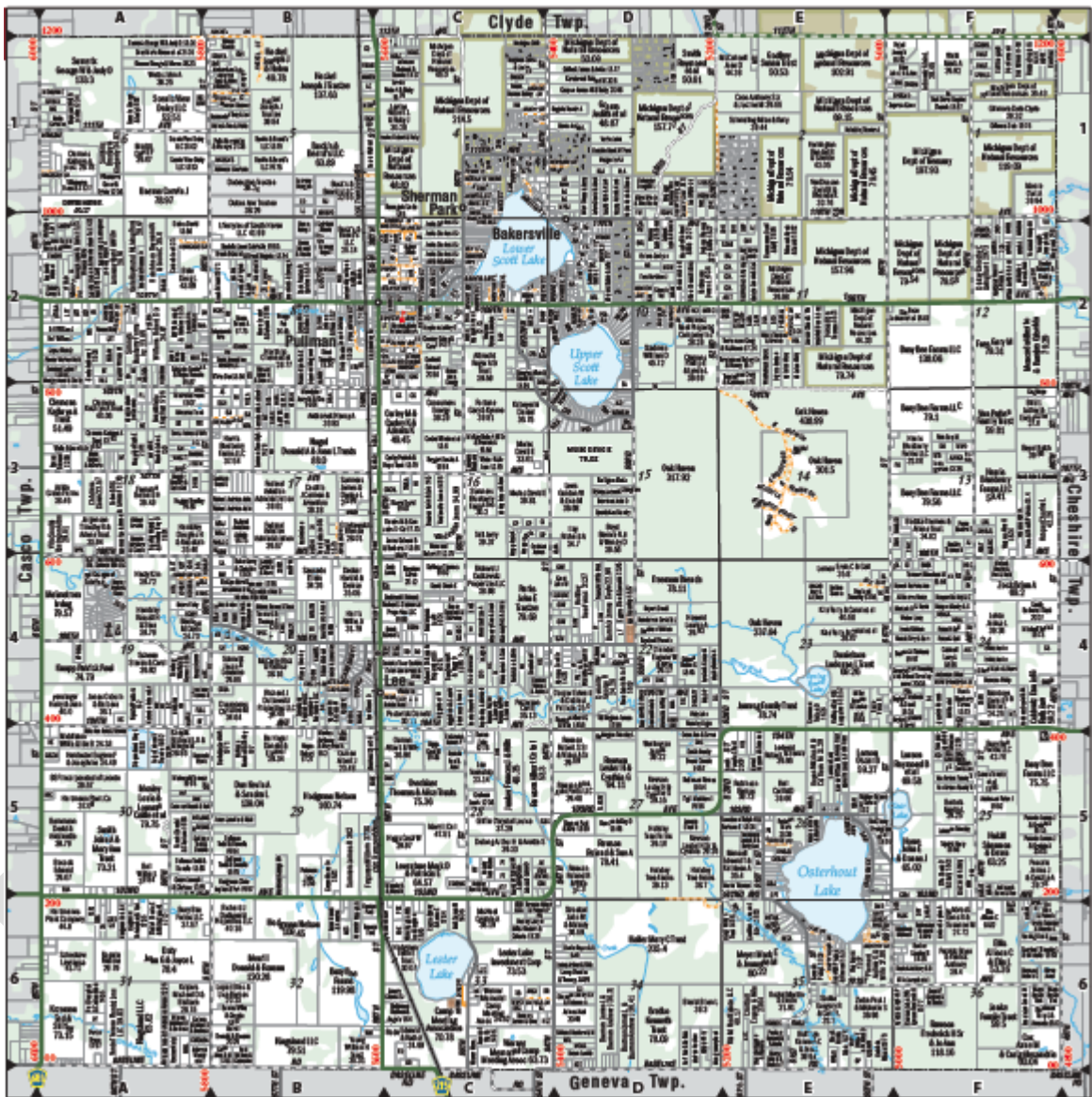
With the exception of the US Post Office, Lee Township owned buildings and cemetery, and Pullman Elementary School, the current commercial land use within the township is comprised of a small number of sole proprietor and family owned businesses. Other institutional land uses are limited to area churches.

Summary

While there does not appear to be a large demand for land within Lee Township, what demands that do occur will likely continue to be for single-family, residential development. Additionally, there are only a handful of family owned businesses within the township that have existed and persisted over several decades. All other businesses tend to turn over and/or close within 2 to 5 years.

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Lee Township
Allegan County, Michigan



Chapter 7: Township Land Use Policy

Currently Lee Township's role in Land Use Policy is limited to building code enforcement, land division review, and in managing the small number of ordinances that the township does have in place to insure the peace and safety of its residents. It is the purpose of this Master Plan to determine if future land use policy is necessary, and if so, what role the Lee Township Board will perform in such policy.

Areas of consideration may include:

- Industrial Development - cannot likely be accommodated in Lee Township at the present time due to non-existent provision of municipal water and waste-water systems.
- Commercial Land Uses
- Productive and Prime Agricultural Lands
- Low-Density Residential Development – 10 to 20 units per 40 acres, or 2.5-5 acre minimum lot size.
- Medium Density Residential Development - 1 unit per acre.

Chapter 8: Goals, Strategies and Implementation Measures

During the Master Plan process, the Township will develop the following:

- **Community Vision.** The Master Plan will set forth a vision statement that identifies the desired future vision for Lee Township as developed through the public input process. A complete vision statement follows:
***EXAMPLE ONLY-** Lee Township should remain an uncongested, rural community where residents are surrounded by peaceful elements of the natural environment. Future development should blend with the character of the natural environment rather than overpower it. Agricultural land uses should remain economically viable because they are accommodated in developmental design, and not overtaken by it. Commercial and light industrial developments may be elements reflective of the future character of Lee Township. These developments would replace those businesses lost in the past 2 decades. A defined and conveniently located commercial area will continue to provide local commercial needs for Lee Township residents. Large complexes, of multi-family developments, are not appropriate for the township, but rather small-scale, multi-family housing may provide affordable, safe housing for families, and when possible, should be located near recreational areas. Major suburban infrastructure is neither needed nor anticipated in this planning cycle.*
- **Goals and Objectives.** The Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan are to articulate Lee Township's desires for the near future, and to incorporate the vision into Lee Township Board's decision making and governance.
- **Public Input Process.** A public input process is needed for completion of the Master Plan. This will include public meetings and solicitation of public opinion to insure that the plan reflects the interests of Lee Township residents and landowners. It is the desire of the Township board to engage the community in work sessions and standing committees to participate in the strategic planning process.

In order for the Master Plan to be implemented successfully it must be guided by specific goals, objectives, and strategies. In basic terms, community goals represent a sort of "wish list", and take the form of broad directives. These broad directives are carried out through the development of specific strategies. The development of goals and strategies is an interpretive process that is designed to take stated community desires and distill them into a program of

actions which is to recorded in a Master Plan. The Plan must point to attainable implementation measures, if the stated goals are realistically expected to be accomplished. The goals and strategies presented in this section of the Plan establish the guiding principles and priorities that will allow community decision makers to achieve Lee Township’s community vision.

Goals: Overall aims, desired end situations or ideals for achievement. A goal is typically broad and long-range.

Objectives: Specific targets intended to achieve the Plan’s goals and ultimately the community vision, over the Master Plan’s planning horizon.

Strategies: Task-oriented steps to address objectives.

Community Vision

Public meetings (visioning), work sessions, and community participation should reflect what Lee Township residents and landowners place the greatest value on.

Goal Categories

The following goal categories may help foster and implement Lee’s vision:

- Economic Development
- Public Safety and Quality of Living
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Roads and Infrastructure

1. Economic Development

Goal: Create a multi-year plan to encourage economic and business growth that allows residents to work and thrive.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. To be determined

2. Public Safety

Goal: Develop a multi-year plan for public safety that promotes quality of living and a safe and inclusive community.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. To be determined

3. Natural Resources and the Environment

Goal: Protect and preserve the natural resources and features that are important components of Lee Township’s character.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. To be determined

6. Roads and Basic Infrastructure

Goal: Develop a multi-year plan for road maintenance and improvements to basic infrastructure.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. To be determined

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