

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP

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A MASTER PLAN



ADOPTED
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W I L L I A M S & W O R K S

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. SUMMARY

This Master Plan represents the culmination of nearly two years work by numerous local residents and local officials. It reflects the community's strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. The document outlines the preferred future for the Township and a comprehensive plan to realize it. The Plan is appropriately general, recognizing that planning for the future is a delicate blend of art and science and that sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to the challenges of the future.

This Plan reflects the community's strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life.

The fundamental purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to enable the Township to establish a future direction for the community's physical development. The Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended, specifically gives a Planning Commission the authority to prepare and officially adopt a plan. Once prepared, officially adopted and maintained, this Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and for the development of other areas.

Because of constant change in our social and economic structures and activities, the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long range goals. The Plan will be effective to the degree that it:

- ◆ reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of Gaines Township;
- ◆ realistically interprets and reflects the conditions, trends and the dynamic economic and social pressures that are brought about by change; and
- ◆ inspires consensus and cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the Township toward achieving common goals.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

When Gaines Township began the plan preparation process, it had several objectives. First, it was important to achieve an understanding of the scale and scope of growth and development and the likely future trends in the community. Secondly, the Township sought to define clearly community priorities with regard to growth, development, and land use. Thirdly, the Township saw the planning process as an opportunity to build and strengthen a community consensus about future land use patterns. Finally, Gaines Township sought to address specific issues and neighborhood land use challenges and to develop realistic and effective mechanisms to achieve the plan's objectives.

This Master Plan accomplishes all these objectives. More specifically, this Plan will serve the Township in the following ways:

1. It provides a comprehensive means of integrating proposals that look years ahead to meet future needs regarding general and major aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the Township.
2. It serves as the official, advisory policy statement for encouraging orderly and efficient use of the land for residences, businesses, and industry. It coordinates these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and with other necessary public facilities and services.
3. It creates a logical basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans. It facilitates and guides the work of the Planning Commission and the Township Board as well as other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical conservation and development of the Township.
4. It provides a means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects and policies to official Township planning policies.
5. It offers a means of relating the plans of Gaines Township to the plans of other communities in the West Michigan region.

PLAN METHODOLOGY

The planning process involved four inter-related phases:

- ◆ Data Analysis – A Current Assessment.
- ◆ Goals and Objectives – Creating a Policy Foundation.
- ◆ Plan Preparation – Analyzing the Issues and Defining the Preferred Future, and
- ◆ Implementation Strategies – Getting There from Here

The first phase of the effort involved meeting in focus groups with local farmers, The Right Place, the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), and the Homebuilders Associations. The purpose of this effort was to develop a comprehensive impression of the patterns of growth and the challenges that will affect the Township. In addition the Township formulated a Community Attitudes survey to generate an impression of Gaines Township citizens' opinions about growth and land use planning in the township. This phase culminated in the preparation of the Current Assessment Report. That report served as a technical resource for the Township and the consultant and it represents the essential Community Profile which constitutes Section II (Chapters 2 through 8) of this Plan.

The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the Township's planning and land use regulations. Using the output of the Community Attitudes Survey and focus groups, the planning team began the process of defining goals and objectives for the future of Gaines Township. These are presented in Chapter 9 of this Plan.

The third phase involved drawing together the input from the previous two and preparing a revised Future Land Use Plan which is reflected in Section III of this Plan. From these analyses, the future land use designations and map (Chapter 11) were developed in a series of interactive meetings of the Study Team and Township staff. This process included a special public workshop to gather general community input.

The final phase of the process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the plan. These are reflected in general terms in Chapter 12.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This Plan is organized into three sections, each consisting of one or more chapters. Section I includes this introductory chapter, which outlines the purpose of the plan, the process for its development, and acknowledgements to those involved. Section II is the Community Profile, which presents an overview description of Gaines Township from the perspective of:

- ◆ Natural Features, the Environment and Utilities (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Population (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Income, Housing and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Land Cover, Development Patterns, Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 5),
- ◆ Transportation (Chapter 6)
- ◆ Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (Chapter 7), and
- ◆ Public Input (Chapter 8)

Section III constitutes the Future Land Use Plan, which includes the Townships Goals and Objectives (Chapter 9), the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 10) and the Implementation Strategies (Chapter 11).

The final section of the plan is the Bibliography, which outlines all the various resources consulted in the completion of this Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process to prepare this Plan has involved numerous community residents as well as public officials. The Planning Commission, staff and consultant team appreciate the assistance of all the individuals that have provided input and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged:

SECTION II. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Producing a Master Plan requires a solid foundation of data from both original research and from secondary resources. Analysis of this data can reveal trends and conditions that may be obvious, or not so obvious, to the residents of the Township. It is this data that the other chapters of the Master Plan will utilize to defend the goals that are made for the future. The Gaines Township Current Assessment is one of four phases in the completion of a Master Plan. The entire process will involve the following elements:

- ◆ A Current Assessment
- ◆ A Preferred Future
- ◆ Goal Setting
- ◆ The Future Land Use Plan

Planning for the long-term should be a process that is not carried out in a very specific manner, but at a general level that recognizes the potential for change and provides flexibility. This method will provide a Master Plan that can be useful well into the future instead of becoming obsolete if or when demographic and economic trends stray from the Current Assessment data. This Community Profile provides a “snapshot” of current conditions in the Township with respect to five key aspects of land use planning. Its purpose is to generally define current conditions and trends and, more importantly, to draw some broad conclusions about the implications they will have on the future of the Township.

The key areas of focus for the Community Profile are:

- ◆ Natural Features and the Environment (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Population (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Housing, Income & Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Land Use and Development Patterns (Chapter 5)
- ◆ Transportation (Chapter 6)
- ◆ Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (Chapter 7)
- ◆ Public Input (Chapter 8)

Each section includes an overview of its subject matter along with a brief discussion of the planning trends that are relevant.

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CHAPTER 2. NATURAL FEATURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

It is important to begin an assessment of the community with a description of its natural attributes. This chapter presents a description of the physiographical details, topography, soils, water resources, and woodlands that provide the physical basis of the community and the utility systems that protect and utilize its groundwater.

Gaines Township lies in the uplands of the southern peninsula. It is unique in that four major drainage basins exist in the region. Three of those primary basins are associated with the Grand River Watershed and one drains to the Kalamazoo River Watershed.

The expanding urbanization of the metropolitan area has encroached into the northern and western portions of Gaines Township.

Gaines Township is located in south central Kent County. It is bounded by the City of Kentwood to the north, Caledonia Township on the east, and Byron Township on the west. Leighton Township in Allegan County borders the Township to the south.

Geologic and Glacial Influences

The bedrock formation that lies under Kent County consists of the edges of bowl-like formations that fill the Michigan Basin. The oldest rock is the Marshall Sandstone, which underlies the entire county. It is the uppermost bedrock in the southwest part of the county. The Michigan Formation overlaps the Marshall Sandstone in the southeastern part of the county. The Michigan Formation consists primarily of limestone, gypsum, and dolomite interbedded with shale and sandstone.

The land area of Kent County is the result of continental glaciation, which left the foundation rock buried by many feet of glacial debris. This occurred when ice sheets nearly one mile thick covered the Upper Midwest portion of the United States and Canada. As the glaciers moved south, they carried billions of tons of rocks, which were crushed and ground as they moved. Changes in the temperature caused four major retreats and advances of the glaciers. The deposited materials were thoroughly mixed and redeposited again and again. Kent County was directly in the path of three of the four major advances. The mass of glacial drift that was deposited during the Wisconsin glacial period overlies the bedrock formations. Kent County is situated where the Michigan and Saginaw lobes of the Wisconsin ice sheet met.

Three significant regions in Gaines Township were the direct result of glacial activity. The first is a large outwash plain located in the northwest corner of Gaines, in the Cutlerville region. The second area, which encompasses the western half of the Township with the exception of the Cutlerville area, is comprised of end moraines. The third region encompasses nearly the entire eastern half of the Township and is called a till plain.

The outwash plain located under Cutlerville resulted from meltwater which flowed from the Saginaw Lobe of the Wisconsin ice sheet. As the glacier melted, it created a huge river channel which ran from the origin of the Grand River to the eastern portion of Byron Township then further south, eventually draining into what was to become Lake Michigan. The meltwater carried silt, sand, and gravel. As the moving water lost speed, it also lost its ability to carry materials. It deposited larger boulders first with progressively smaller materials following, ending with the silt and clay.

Topography

The northern portions of Gaines Township consist primarily of low percentage slopes ranging from level to eight percent. The southeast and southern sections of the Township are the areas that consist of rolling hills ranging from eight percent (8%) to forty-five (45%). Map 1 illustrates these general locations and indicates that wide ranges of slopes exist in this area.

The most significant topographical feature is in the area of 92nd Street and Eastern Avenue where the steepest slopes are found.

The most significant topographical feature is in the area of 92nd Street and Eastern Avenue, where the steepest slopes are found. Contours rise from 900 feet to 1,000 feet and reach a high point on Dias Hill of over 1,030 feet. The importance of these topographic features and the resulting drainage is underscored by the fact that Cutlerville and Dutton are in two different drainage basins.

Map 1 describes the slope data in different slope range percentages. With this in mind, the areas in the Township that are considered to be in the 25-45% slope range should be interpreted with care, as it is quite likely that very few slopes above 40% exist in this category. The intent of this data is to give a general overall illustration of the types and location of the slopes within the Township. Further, when slopes percentages exceed 20%, development challenges often present themselves due to the possibility of excessive soil erosion and stability concerns.

Soils

The soils found in Gaines Township today developed as the glaciers melted and retreated.

Understanding soils is vital in determining and evaluating the effect of planning specific land uses in communities as they affect productivity as well as the environment. Soils must be analyzed as to their inherent ability to absorb human activities. For general planning purposes, the soils' ability to purify household sewage effluent, to determine building site development, to provide recreational development, and to distinguish prime farmland areas are of major importance.

With the great variation of land configuration and parent materials in this Township, the 1986 Soil Survey for Kent County identified many soil types. The soils found in Gaines Township today developed as the glaciers melted and retreated. They are the result of climatic forces as well as the geologic deposits, native vegetation, and surface relief.

Soil Classifications

The United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service conducted a soil survey in for Kent County. The general associations that have been identified in Gaines Township are as follows: 1) Ithaca-Rimer-Perrinton, 2) Chelsea-Thetford-Seffridge, 3) Kibbie-Dixboro-Thetford, 4) Houghton-Cohoctah-Ceresco, 5) Kalamazoo-Oshtemo-Spinks, 6) Metamora-Teasdale-Tekenink, and 7) Marlette-Chelsea-Boyer. Each classification has unique characteristics that may be used to help determine the limitations, if any, of the soil.

The Ithaca-Rimer-Perrinton association is well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. Because of the wetness and shrink-swell potential often associated with this soil, it is typically not well suited for building site development. Further, these soils are not typically suited for septic tank absorption fields due to the wetness and low permeability of the soil.

This association is located in by far the largest region. Found as "1" on the soils map, the eastern half, of the Township is a significant till plain. Till plains formed as glacial ice melted faster than it advanced. The load the glacier carried was deposited just as it occurred in the ice. This material consisted of various sized rocks, rock powder, sand, and gravel. In locations where the rock flour predominated, silt loam or clay loam was produced and sometimes-sandy material occurred in increased proportions. The soils derived from these deposits are of a loam or silt

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loam texture underlain by clay. These deposits were neither level nor hilly, but were generally undulating to gently rolling.

Chelsea-Thelford-Selfridge Association: The soils that border the above association in the Cutlerville region are of the Chelsea-Thelford-Selfridge Association. They are classified as being level to gently rolling somewhat excessively drained and somewhat poorly drained sandy soils formed in sandy and loamy materials. They are found in bogs or floodplains. They are typically a sandy soil that may be wet or well drained depending on its location. Well suited for development, limitations exist with septic drain fields and cropland. Being primarily a sandy soil, proper filtration of contaminants may not occur and pollute ground water. They are indicated on the soils map as category “2.”

The Kibbie-Dixboro-Thetford association is a somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soil. Most of this type of soil is used as cropland, some as pasture and some as woodland. The majority of these soil types are suited to cultivated cropland, although water management can be difficult in some areas. Building sites and on site disposal of waste is not generally suited on these soils because of the wetness and slow permeability. This soil type is located in a small portion in the southeastern portion of the township. This soil association formed on nearly level and somewhat undulating slopes. In Gaines it is found east of Hanna Lake and along the Township border in section 25. It is indicated as “3” on the soils map.

The Houghton-Cohoctah-Ceresco association is a poorly drained mucky and loamy soil that is associated with flood plains of rivers, streams, and basin-like areas. This category is found under item “4” on the Soils Map (also under 8 on the map). This association is not generally suited for crops or development due to the wetness, flooding, and unstable organic soils. This soil is located mainly around Hanna Lake.

This association is not generally suited for crops or development due to the wetness, flooding, and unstable organic soils. This soil is located mainly around Hanna Lake.

The soils that form the center of Cutlerville are the result of the outwash plain left by the retreating glaciers. They are defined as nearly level, somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained mucky and loamy soils, which were formed in herbaceous organic material or loamy alluvial deposits. The areas with this type of soil in Cutlerville are areas where mobile home parks and some residential developments are located.

The Kalamazoo-Oshtemo-Spinks association are well-drained loamy and sandy soils. This soil type is indicated on the soils map as category

“5.” They are typically well suited for croplands, pasture, and building site development. Limitations for septic drain fields may exist, as the Oshtemo and Kalamazoo soils do not have the ability to properly filter the effluent. This soil type was formed in nearly level to rolling well-drained, loamy and sandy soils on moraines, outwash plains and till plains. These soils are found in Sections 28, 29, 32 and 33 at the most southern edge of the Township. The majority of this soil association found in Gaines is in the region of sand and gravel mining activities.

The Metamora-Teasdale-Tekenink association is generally a well-drained loamy soil that is often (avoid repetitive “generally” used for cropland and pasture. Depending on the location, this type may or may not be suited for development and septic drain fields. This soil is located in the southwest corner of the Township. This soil type is indicated as “6” on the soils map.

The Marlette-Chelsea-Boyer association are somewhat excessively drained and well drained loamy and sandy soils. It is indicated on the soils map as category “7.” The gently sloping soils are well suited for building development and vary widely for agricultural purposes. The steeper slopes are obviously less suited for development, cropland, and pasture. The less sloping soils are suitable for septic drain fields, although if the soil makeup is too sandy, proper filtration of contaminants may not occur and pollute ground water supplies. This soil is located in the southwest.

Roughly the west half of Gaines is the result of end moraines, which generally run in a north to south direction and are rocky and well drained.

Roughly the west half of Gaines is the result of end moraines. They generally run in a north to south direction and are rocky and well drained. The moraines were formed along halted ice fronts, which deposited unsorted debris consisting of rocks, soil and vegetation. The longer the glacier was stopped in one spot, the greater the deposit. Moraines consist of whatever kind of material the ice was carrying at that particular place. Sometimes this material was sand and at other points clay like materials. The proportions of boulders varied greatly also. The highest area of the township is in the vicinity of 92nd Street and Eastern Avenue. The contours rise to a high point on Dias Hill of over 1,030 feet. This is the result of glacial end moraines, and is the highest point in the southern part of Kent County.

Soil Maps

Map 2 illustrates the individual soil types as described above. This data was obtained from the Kent County Soil Survey produced by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service.

Soil data, provided from the Water Resource Institute (an extension of Grand Valley State University), provides a wealth of information that has been manipulated to best serve Gaines Township. Soil data also provides information to create an individual septic limitation map (Map 3). The soil slope and composition are the main determinates for this map. Observation of this map indicates that few soils within the Township are easily suitable for on site sewage disposal. While this may be true, new septic system technology and on site soil analysis could prove to allow for a fully functional septic system that will not threaten the ground water resources.

The Prime Farmland Map (Map 4) illustrates the farmland in the Township that has the greatest ability to grow various crops. This data, obtained from the Water Resources Institute, considers many factors including composition, slope, saturation, and nutrient levels to determine the soil status. According to this data, approximately 10% of the soil in the Township is considered prime, 41% is considered prime if drained, and 48% is not considered prime.

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Streams, Lakes, Ponds, and other Water Bodies

The soils surrounding the lake, being typically mucky, are not suitable for on site disposal systems, structural development, cropland, or pasture.

Hanna Lake and Martin Lake are the two lakes within Gaines Township of substantial size. Hanna Lake, approximately 20 acres, is located in Section 26 and has a number of "flag lots" surrounding the northern shore and other larger lots on the southern shore. The soils surrounding the lake, being typically mucky, are not suitable for on site disposal systems, structural development, cropland, or pasture. Small-unnamed tributaries feed the lake.

Martin Lake, located in Section 28, is a very small lake that is apparently privately owned and not developed. Many other small, unnamed, water bodies are present in the Township. They are typically associated with mucky soils.

Additionally, Summer Shores Lake, a manmade lake of approximately 13 acres was created about 4 years ago in Section 6 of the Township. There are ponds and detention basins throughout the newer developments as well.

Gaines Township has a number of creeks and streams that flow in various directions. Plaster Creek, located in the northeast portion of the Township, flows north into the City of Kentwood and eventually becomes part of the Grand River. The unnamed streams in the western portion of the Township are tributaries to Buck Creek located in Byron Township. Buck Creek also flows into the Grand River.

Drainage

The Township is divided into three primary drainage basins of the Grand River Watershed and one primary drainage basin of the Kalamazoo River Watershed.

The Township is divided into three primary drainage basins of the Grand River Watershed and one primary drainage basin of the Kalamazoo River Watershed. Surface drainage from the east half of Sections 30 and 31; the southwest part of Section 29; Sections 32 and 33; and the southwest portion of Section 34 flows to the Rabbit River and eventually into the Kalamazoo River. All other Township drainage flows to the Grand River by way of Plaster Creek, Buck Creek, or the Thornapple River.

The general drainage patterns of the Township flow north to Plaster Creek in the northeastern portion of the Township while the western half of the Township drains to the west into Buck Creek. The southeast portion of the Township drains primarily southeast to the Thornapple River.

Woodlands, Vegetation and Wildlife

Many stands of woodlands exist throughout the Township. Typically these stands are "islands" that are not contiguous to one another and exist primarily due to soil conditions that do not provide for good farmland. The forested lands within the Township accounted for approximately fourteen percent (14%) of the land cover in 2001. In comparison, croplands accounted for approximately forty-six (46%) percent of the ground cover.

Following the intense logging of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rural portions of the Township are characterized by farm fields and other cultivated lands. Remnant second-growth woodlots represent an important resource for their recreational opportunities and their aesthetic qualities in a rural landscape.

The scattered woodlots, open fields, and the few surface water features, such as the streams and wetlands, are habitats that support certain wildlife populations within the Township. Rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, opossum, and deer are commonly found in this area, as are pheasants, ducks, and geese. These particular species are considered important game animals, but they also possess certain intrinsic values within the ecosystem, as well as for the simple enjoyment of observing them in the natural environment, as a recreational activity.

Utilities

The northwest portion of the Township is served by the Buck Creek Sewage Disposal System, which is the primary system for the City of Wyoming.

The availability of public water and sewer systems can greatly influence the options and patterns of development within a community. When services are present, denser residential, commercial, and industrial developments are possible than in areas without these services. Central sewer services also protect ground water resources through eliminating the need for individual septic disposal systems.

Gaines Township currently has public sewer services available in specific areas of the Township. The Buck Creek Sewage Disposal System, which is the primary system for the City of Wyoming, serves the northwest portion of the Township. This system serves sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, a portion of 9, 16, 17, and 18. The Dutton Waste Water District serves the northeast portion of the Township. This District serves all or portions of section 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12 at the current time. Gaines Township could potentially contract with these sewer districts and extend services south increasing development options.

At this time, the water system is capable of being expanded south to the approximate north-south dividing line of the township, or 84th Street.

The water system present in Gaines Township typically mirrors all of the sewer mains within the Township. A few exceptions exist where central water is available and sewer is not. Likewise, there are areas that are served by sewer and not water. As with central sewer systems, central water systems increase development options and influence growth patterns. The current water system that serves Gaines Township is limited in expansion without the addition of a new high-pressure water system. At this time, the water system is capable of being expanded south to the approximate north-south dividing line of the Township, or 84th Street (See Map 5).

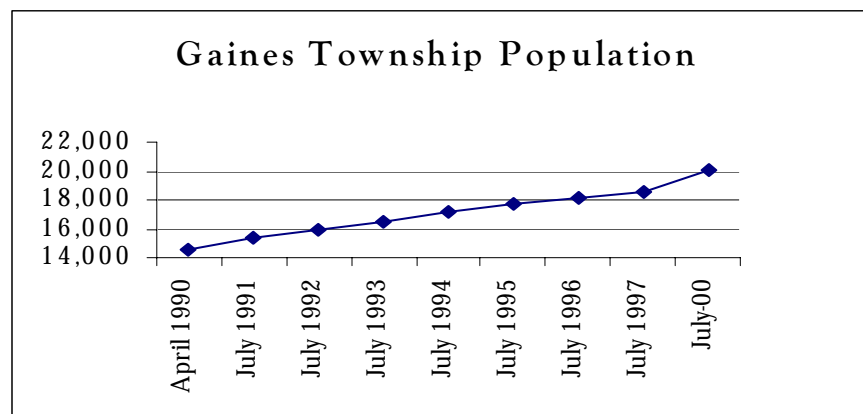
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CHAPTER 3. POPULATION

Understanding the population trends in Gaines Charter Township is an essential component when creating a viable Master Plan. Trends of the past, current assessments, and future predictions are all aspects that will create a vision for the basis of the type and amount of development that will be associated with the population. Further, comparing Gaines Charter Township to the neighboring Townships and Kent County will create a well-rounded analysis.

The population of Kent County, according to the U.S. Census, increased by 13% from 1980 through 1990. From the period between 1990 and 2000, the population increased by 73,704 residents, or 14.7%, illustrating a larger population percentage increase than in the past.

Table 2.1



Source: Michigan Information Center, State of Michigan Budget Office.

Gaines Township is continuing to experience tremendous growth.

In comparison, Gaines Charter Township population increased by 40% between the years 1980 and 1990. This is a much greater increase than between the years 1970 and 1980 of 18%. The percentage growth of 38% between the year 1990 and 2000 illustrates a pace similar to the 40% growth experienced 10 years earlier. Obviously, Gaines Township is continuing to experience tremendous growth.

The neighboring Townships of Gaines Charter Township have all experienced a positive growth rate over the last 30 years. Byron Township, comparable to Gaines Township in overall population, experienced a similar percentage growth rates between 1990 and 2000 of 33%. Caledonia Township, population 7,862 in 2000, and the City of Kentwood, population 45,255 in 2000, have also been experiencing positive growth trends. The growth of these local jurisdictions

surrounding Gaines Township indicates population growth pressures throughout southern Kent County.

Table 2.2

Population Change 1970-2000								
Gaines Township, Kent County, and Surrounding Vacinity								
Area Name	1970	1980	Percent Increase 1970-80	April 1990	Percent Increase 1980-90	2000	1990-00 Growth	Percent Increase 1990-00
Kent County	411,044	444,506	8%	500,631	13%	574,335	73,704	15%
Gaines Township	8,794	10,364	18%	14,533	40%	20,112	5,579	38%
Byron Township	7,493	10,104	35%	13,235	31%	17,553	4,318	33%
Caledonia Village	716	722	1%	885	23%	1,102	217	25%
Caledonia Township	3,126	4,205	35%	5,369	28%	7,862	2,493	46%
Kentwood City	20,310	30,438	50%	37,826	24%	45,255	7,429	20%
Leighton Township	2,354	2,772	18%	3,069	11%	3,652	583	19%

Source: U.S. Census and Michigan Information Center, State of Michigan Budget Office.

Projections

There are methods and models for projecting a particular population. The constant proportion, growth rate, and arithmetic techniques are all used in population projections. Constant proportion determines the population as a proportion of a larger jurisdiction and applies that proportion over the future based on past growth/decline trends. The growth rate method determines the percentage of growth or loss rate of the past and applies it towards the future. The arithmetic method determines the actual population amount (loss or increase) over the past population counts and applies to the future. The population projections presented in table 2.3 are the result of the averaging of all of methods mentioned above. These projections are based on the U.S. Census figures, 1996 Population Estimates (U.S. Census) and the projection calculations prepared by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Table 2.3

Population Projections			
Gaines Charter Township and Surrounding Jurisdictions			
Jurisdiction	Year		
	2000	2010	2020
Gaines Charter Township	20,112	23,771	28,705
Kent County	558,612	621,534	695,636
Byron Township	17,622	21,421	26,021
Caledonia Township	7,110	8,596	10,380
City of Kentwood	45,076	54,014	64,579

Source of original information: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, U.S. Census, Michigan Information Center, State of Michigan Budget Office.

While the population is projected to grow in Gaines Township and the surrounding communities, it may not occur as fast or slow as the projections indicate.

While the population is projected to grow in Gaines Township and the surrounding communities, it may not occur as fast or slow as the projections indicate. Projections should be analyzed on a theoretical basis. They give a general indication of what may happen to the population in the community based on trends of the past. Clearly, Gaines Charter Township should continue to prepare for significant population expansion.

An additional methodology of projecting population is the building permit technique. This technique includes utilizing the average persons per household in the United States (2.59) and the number of new housing building permits obtained from the local jurisdiction. For example, Gaines Township had 284 new single family housing permits issued in 2000. The new population associated with those building permits would be 284 times 2.59, or 736 new residents.

Age Characteristics

Age distribution comparison over time may be used as a tool to measure the amount of change within a community. Further, an age breakdown can help determine the type of housing demands, services, and recreational facilities that may be needed.

Table 2.4

Gaines Township		
2000 Age Distribution		
Age	Population	% of total
Under 19	6,339	31.5%
20 to 24	1,383	6.9%
25 to 54	8,879	44.1%
55 to 64	1,621	8.1%
Over 65	1,890	9.4%
Total	20,112	100.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Dutch was the most common ancestry reported by the residents of the Township.

The prime wage earning and child rearing age is 25 to 54. This age group is therefore important because it represents a large portion of the population (44.1% in 2000) in Gaines Township and represents a population that will require more commercial services, housing stock, recreational facilities, and services for children. The median age for Gaines Township was 32.5 years of age in 2000, further illustrating a generally young population within the township.

The population in Gaines Township is predominantly white and middle-class. Minority races accounted for less than three percent of the population. In Kent County, they accounted for eleven percent. Dutch was the most common ancestry reported by the residents of the Township, followed by German, English, Irish, and French. Approximately 61% of the households in the Township earned between \$25,000 and \$75,000 in 1990. This percentage exceeded the county by 5.5%.

Of the Township residents, 79% have graduated from high school and 12.7% of the population over 25 years of age has a bachelors degree or higher. This percentage is lower than the County and national average, 20.7% and 20.3% respectively.

In 2000, the average household size was 2.64 persons in Gaines Township. The Kent County average was 2.64 and the national average was 2.59 persons per household, indicating that the Township is generally similar in nature to the averages in other areas. With a younger population apparent (32% under the age of 19 years), emphasis on education and recreation may be a goal of the community.

CHAPTER 4. HOUSING, INCOME, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A review of the housing values, income, and economic development can indicate the potential growth of the Township. An expanding population obviously creates the need for new housing. Analyzing trends of per capita income and unemployment of the Township also reveals the availability of jobs and what type of income they may provide.

Incomes

The Gaines Township per capita income in 1990 was \$14,307. In comparison, the 1990 Michigan per capita income was \$19,022 and the Kent County per capita income was \$19,390. Obviously, Gaines Township was lagging behind in per capita in the early 1990s. In 1998, the Michigan per capita income increased to \$26,885 and Kent County increased to \$28,820. This illustrates that Kent County has continued to have a higher per capita income than the State and has even increased that gap. While lack of current data does not allow for a direct 1998 Gaines Township comparison, it is most likely that new development and strong economic times have increased the per capita income in Gaines Township substantially.

Employment

The unemployment rate is a relatively good indication of economic health. A comparison over a period of time will further illustrate the trend of economic health. In 1990, the Michigan Department of Career Development (Office of Labor Market Information) estimated the unemployment rate for Gaines Township to be 3.8% and the Kent County unemployment rate to be 5.8%. The 2000-year to average unemployment rate for Gaines Township is 2.0% and 3.1% for Kent County. Clearly, the Township and the County have both experienced an expansion of jobs. These trends are also typical within the County, as the unemployment rate for all townships have steadily declined over the last ten years.

Table 3.1

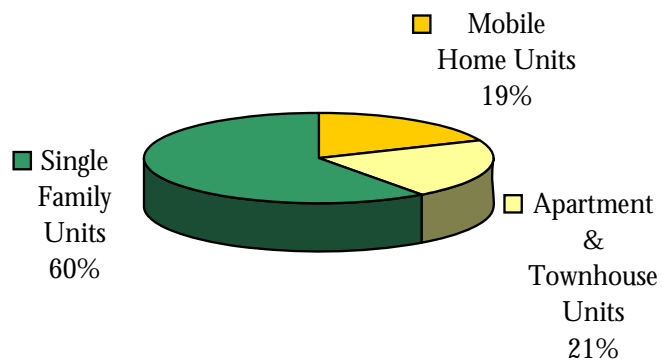
Kent County Area Unemployment Rates (%)			
Jurisdiction	Year		
	1990	1995	2000
Kent County	5.8	3.8	3.1
Gaines Township	3.8	2.5	2.0
Byron Township	4.5	2.9	2.4
Caledonia Township	4.0	2.6	2.1
Cascade Township	3.6	2.3	1.9

Source: Michigan Office of Labor Market Information

HOUSING

Overall housing in Gaines Township is expansive and there are a variety of housing types available to local residents. Single family homes, duplexes, condos, apartments, and manufactured homes are housing options that can be found within the Township. This variety is directly related to the availability of public water and sewer services. Without them, dense development such as an apartment building or manufactured housing community would not generally be feasible. The housing developments over the last ten years have illustrated the variety of housing available. For example, between 1990 and 2000,

2001 Total New Housing Units by Type



approximately fifty-seven percent (57%) of the building permits pulled from the Township were for single-family detached homes. This leaves the other remaining forty-three percent (43%) to multi-family units. Multi-family units include apartments, townhouses, and duplexes.

Another trend that can be observed from the building permit history is the steady increase of new housing permits issued. For example, the Township issued only 82 single-family permits in 1990, while 284 were pulled for 2000, representing a 294% increase. The average number of new single family permits issued over the last ten years is 102 per year. Multi-family unit trends, typically requiring a larger investment and longer approval process, have not experienced such a consistent increase and have been generally sporadic over the same period.

Table 3.2

Gaines Township Residential Building History				
Year	Units	Permits Issued	Construction Costs	Average Cost Per Unit
1990	230	98	\$17,480,240	\$76,001
1991	146	75	\$13,336,594	\$91,347
1992	254	112	\$20,970,060	\$82,559
1993	308	136	\$24,280,379	\$78,832
1994	236	120	\$16,550,493	\$70,129
1995	186	139	\$14,792,254	\$79,528
1996	233	152	\$19,064,763	\$81,823
1997	275	158	\$19,214,316	\$69,870
1998	292	214	\$21,183,547	\$72,546
1999	270	202	\$21,133,085	\$78,271

Source: Gaines Charter Township Building Department

Table 3.3
Residential Housing Types Thru -
 2001
 Gaines Charter Township

Apartment Development & Location	Acreage	Units
The Crossings/60th & Kalamazoo Ave.	54.5	660
Woodfield /60th on West side of Eastern Ave.	39	480
Woodfield East/60th East side of Eastern	41	408
Bloomfield Townhouses/60th & Kalamazoo Ave	24.5	190
Pine Circle Townhouses/72nd & Division	4	56
D & R Dev./68th & Eastern	2.8	22
Coleman Gardens/Coleman off Division Ave.	1.22	16
In the Pines	2.26	24
TOTAL APT & TOWNHOUSE UNITS		<u>1,856 units</u>
TOTAL SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCES		<u>5,180 units</u>
Mobile Home Units		
Brookshire Mobile Home Park		272
Country Corners		49
Dutton Mill Village		307
Grand Mobile Homes Park		231
Green Meadow Mobile Home Park		156
Kentwood Mobile Home Park		189
Southwood Mobile Home Park		394
TOTAL MOBILE HOME UNITS IN PARKS		<u>1,598 units</u>
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS IN TOWNSHIP		<u><u>8,634 units</u></u>

Source: Gaines Charter Township Planning Department

Economic Development

Gaines Township is currently in a favorable situation for new economic development. The close proximity of U.S. 131, the new Southbelt, public water and sewer, and existing commercial and industrial areas all contribute to a strong local economy and excellent tax base. Further, the Township is a desirable place to live and work.

Attributes that can make an area suitable for industrial development are generally infrastructure, soil stability, vicinity to a central market, demand, and consistency with surrounding land uses. The existing industrial zones in the Township are located primarily in Sections 1, 2 and 11. There is also a small industrial area located in the northwest corner of Section 18. All of these areas are close to existing and future roadways suitable for heavy truck traffic.

One of the largest future industrial developments in Gaines Township will be the new Steelcase Wood Manufacturing Plant.

One of the largest industrial developments in Gaines Township is the new Steelcase Wood Manufacturing Plant. This manufactory is planned to employ approximately 700 new employees initially, and will greatly diversify the local tax base. While creating a large number of jobs for local area residents, it may also increase the housing needs within the area.

Commercial areas, existing in the north half of the Township, are primarily located around the settlement of Dutton and generally along the western border of the Township on Division Avenue. Other commercial areas exist along the northern areas of Kalamazoo Avenue, 60th Street, and 68th Streets. Commercial areas provide local residents with the services that are essential to making a community work efficiently. Commercial development in western Gaines Township is not located in a particular central area as it is spread out mainly along Division Avenue. The Gaines Township zoning map illustrates that the area between Madison Avenue and Division Avenue and between 68th Street and 76th Street (the west half of Section 7) is zoned office-service. Pine Rest Christian Hospital and Spectrum South Campus own the entire site, and currently provide institutional uses rather than commercial.

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CHAPTER 5. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The total land area of Gaines Township is approximately 36 square miles or 23,040 acres divided into 36 sections. The Township is located south of the City of Kentwood and Grand Rapids along the southern border of Kent County. The Township land uses are divided primarily between the north and south; the north being densely developed and served by central services, while the south is typically low density single family homes, agricultural land, mining operations, and isolated stands of forest.

Land use patterns in Gaines Township are characteristic of a changing community. In many parts of the Township, agricultural land uses are interspersed with small centers of population where residential, commercial, institutional, and some industrial activities have located. The community of Dutton in Sections 2 and 11 and Cutlerville adjoining Byron Township, contain a variety of developments that have clustered into these small communities. The northern portion of the Township has experienced considerable growth in recent years. Such developments as Crystal Springs in Sections 8 and 9, Clocktower Plaza and The Crossings in Section 5 and the Steelcase Research Center in Section 1 are all indicative of the extensive private investment that has occurred in Gaines Township in the recent past.

...this growth pattern has initiated a renewed effort to construct the long talked about Southbelt Freeway

The transportation network within the Township also serves to attract different developments. The traditional grid pattern of county roads provides excellent access to virtually all portions of the Township. In addition, the Southbelt expressway will provide even improved access, resulting in further development pressure within the northern two miles of the community. Industrial developments are found in Section 1 along 60th Street between Patterson and East Paris and in the community of Dutton. Strip commercial and light industrial developments characterize Division Avenue, the Township's western border, along its corridor from Grand Rapids in the north to Cutlerville in the south.

Regionally, the southern portion of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan area has been among the fastest growing areas in southwestern Michigan. This growth pattern has initiated a renewed effort to construct the Southbelt Freeway. The Southbelt Freeway is designed as a limited access freeway running east-west between Hudsonville and Cascade Township.

Land Use

The 2001 Gaines Township Land Use Map illustrates a variety of land uses in the Township. This Existing Land Use Map is based on a 1994 inventory converted from township records by the Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University. It is important to note that this is a composite grouping of the land uses and the gross areas reflected below include streets, right-of-ways, and waterways, etc. The land uses have been consolidated into the following categories:

Table 4.1

Gaines Charter Township 2001 Land Use Classification		
Land Use Designation	Acres	Percent of Whole
Agriculture	8,955	39.3%
Commercial/Institutional	644	2.8%
Committed Green Space	535	2.3%
Communications	2	0.0%
Extractive	403	1.8%
Farmsteads	209	0.9%
Industrial	180	0.8%
Lakes and Ponds	62	0.3%
Lowland Deciduous	715	3.1%
Open Field	4,103	18.0%
Residential	3,979	17.4%
Upland Coniferous	83	0.4%
Upland Deciduous	2,502	11.0%
Wetlands	431	1.9%
Total	22,803	100.0%

Source: Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University and the Gaines Charter Township Planning Department.

Higher density residential areas exist in the north half of the Township as public water and sewer is available.

The most predominant land use in Gaines Township in 2001 was agriculture, accounting for approximately 39.3% of land use in the Township. With such a prominent amount of farmland within the Township, the general character of the community is rural with remnants of a strong agricultural lifestyle. The Land Use Map depicts that the largest areas of contiguous agricultural lands are located in the southeastern one-quarter of the Township. The Township may wish to protect and maintain this area as a primarily rural area.

The Residential classification in 2001 consisted of approximately 3,979 acres, or 17.4%, of Gaines Township. This classification consists of single family residential homes, apartments, duplexes, condos, and manufactured housing. Higher density residential areas exist in the north half of the Township as public water and sewer is available. The northeast, southeast, and southwest quarters of the Township are mainly large acreage parcels with residential development existing at a low density.

Commercial areas located primarily in the north half of the Township comprised 644 acres, or 2.8%, of the land area in Gaines Township in 2001. Commercial areas generally exist around the community of Dutton, along Division Avenue, and the intersection of Kalamazoo and 68th Street. Other sporadic areas exist and are not necessarily contiguous to the areas mentioned earlier.

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CHAPTER 6. TRANSPORTATION

As the population expands in Gaines Township, it is a natural cause and effect relationship for the traffic volume to increase. Traffic volumes may also increase due to an overall expanding population in the surrounding townships of Kent County.

A wide variety of two lane county roads serve the interior and southern portions of the Township.

Main routes that provide access are U.S. 131 and Division Avenue for the northwestern portion of the Township. Primarily Kalamazoo Avenue serves the north-central portion of the Township, while the eastern portions can utilize M-37 east of the Township. A wide variety of two lane county roads serves the interior and southern portions of the Township.

The new state freeway, known as the Southbelt or M-6, now under construction along the northern border of the Township will increase the accessibility to and from Gaines Township. Traffic from Interstate 96, Interstate 196, and U.S. 131 will be able to bypass easily the City of Grand Rapids by taking this southern route.

With U.S. 131 providing a path of least resistance from the city centers, residential development has occurred primarily along the northwestern border of the township.

The close proximity of U.S. 131 has made an impact on the pattern of development in the township since its construction. As the population grew in the Cities to the north, residential development stretched out in many directions to areas that were primarily low-density agricultural communities. With U.S. 131 providing a path of least resistance from the city centers, residential development has occurred primarily along the northwestern border of the township. Similar to U.S. 131, the Southbelt may create a path and create demand for new residential and commercial developments in the northern areas of the Township.

A network of county roads that mainly follow the section lines running north, south, east and west currently serves the Township (See Map 7). The majority of these roads are standard two lane roads designed for moderate traffic volumes. If new population continues to settle within the Township and traffic volumes increase, new or improved infrastructure may become necessary in the future

"All Weather Truck Route Systems" are road systems that are not subject to springtime seasonal weight restrictions, have priority for winter maintenance, and are built to a higher standard than typical county roads. It is appropriate for industrial/commercial developments dependent upon a higher standard of road to be located near or on an "All Weather Truck Route System." The roads that have this status are 68th Street, 84th Street, 100th Street, and Division Avenue.

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CHAPTER 7. PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

In the 1995 Community Opinion Survey distributed by the Township Planning Department, residents requested additional opportunities for recreation. Recognizing that the quality of life for Gaines Township residents will be enhanced through a combination of public and private recreation facilities the township created the Parks and Recreation Committee in 1999. The committee is comprised of Township Board members, Planning Commissioners, Township residents at large, and the Township engineer. Understanding the need to provide recreational opportunities to their growing population, the committee set to work creating a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Several recreation facilities within Gaines Township are in the planning stages. While the township does not currently own or fund any recreation facilities, it is working to identify a desired township trail system.

Publicly Owned Facilities

The following is an inventory of Kent County Park facilities taken for the County parks recreation plan that are within a 15 mile drive of Gaines Township:

Brewer Park, 90 acres. Playgrounds, frisbee golf, picnic areas and vault toilets. Forty-three of these acres were recently purchased with the assistance of Gaines Township. This addition includes soccer fields and a pavilion for recreational use.

Caledonia Lakeside Park, 58 acres. Fishing, playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, shelter house, and restrooms.

Coldwater River Park, 6 acres. Fishing, picnic areas, and vault toilets.

Creekside Park, 32 acres. Walking/biking, playgrounds, soccer, ball diamonds, picnic areas, open shelter, and restrooms.

Douglas Walker Park, 81 acres. Playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic area, and shelter house.

Dumont Lake Park, 19 acres. Playground, swimming beach, picnicking, and boat launch.

Dutton Shadyside Park, 18 acres. Playgrounds, tennis courts, ball diamonds, picnic area, and restrooms.

Gun Lake Park, 4 acres. Playground, swimming beach, picnicking, boat launch, and fishing.

Hager Hardwood Forest, 95 acres. Playground, picnicking, museum, arboretum, and ballfield.

John Ball Park and Zoo, 100 acres. Playgrounds, picnic areas, open shelter, restrooms, and zoo.

Johnson Park, 254 acres. Fishing, winter sports, playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, shelter house, and restrooms.

Kent Trails, 15 linear miles. Kent Trails system is the result of the County purchasing the abandoned Penn Central Railroad right-of-way. This trail provides a continuous-paved, trail for, cross-country skiing, walking/biking, and skating.

Paris Park, 60 acres. Trails on natural area.

Palmer Park, 346 acres. Nature trails, walking/biking, cross-country skiing, fishing, playgrounds, 18 hole golf course, club house, ball fields, picnic areas, and restrooms.

Ruehs Park, 3 acres. Fishing, playgrounds, picnic area, and vault toilets.

Spring Grove Park, 16 acres. Playground, picnicking, shelter, and ballfield.

STATE- OWNED REGIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- a) The three state game areas in the county are: Rogue River State Game Area with 5,587 acres, Cannonsburg State Game Area with 2,331 acres, and Lowell State Game Area with 840 acres. The primary function of these game areas is to provide opportunities for public hunting and to manage wildlife habitat. There are no other state-owned recreational facilities in the county, except for about fifteen public access sites to certain rivers and lakes in the county.
- b) Township residents have available three state parks located on Lake Michigan (ranging about 25 to 45 miles from Gaines Township) and the Grand Haven State Game Area, about 40

miles away. Other than the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area located about twenty miles south of Gaines Township, these three state parks represent the closest state parks to the Township and are even more popular due to their location on Lake Michigan.

- c) The Allegan State Game Area and Saugatuck Dunes State Park located between 25 and 30 miles from Gaines Township also offer Township residents the resource-based recreational opportunities characteristic of state-owned facilities.

Other important regional facilities located outside of Gaines Township increase the opportunities for and diversity of recreation in this area. They include the 143-acre Blandford Nature Center, the 133-acre Howard Christiansen Nature Center, the 195-mile and multi-county West Michigan Snowmobile Trail, the 10.5-mile Egypt Valley Cross-country Ski Trail, and 176 miles of signed bicycle trails in Kent County.

Gaines Charter Township currently has an active board that is representing the Township's interests in Parks and Recreation. The 1999 Parks and Recreation Plan for Gaines Township provides a detailed analysis of the existing facilities and future goals and objectives of the Township in this matter.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Existing Community Facilities:

Schools: One of the most important facilities for the community is the network of educational facilities in the township. Gaines has their fair share of elementary schools, high schools and middle schools, including the following, both parochial and public:

Byron Center Elementary School: Eastern
Cross Creek Charter School: 1410-76th Street
Cutlerville Christian Elementary School: 522-68th Street
Dutton Christian Elementary School: 6950 Hanna Lake Ave.
Dutton Christian Jr. High School: 6729-Hanna Lake Ave.
Dutton Elementary School: 3820-68th Street S.E.
East Kentwood High School: 1850-60th Street
Explorer Elementary: 2307-68th Street
Faith Reformed Christian School: 3596-76th St. S.E.
Pinewood Middle School: 2000-60th Street
South Christian High School: new 120-acre campus
Southwood Elementary: 630-60th Street

Townline Elementary School: 100-60th Street S.E.

Hospitals:

Spectrum Health- South Campus: 80-68th Street
Pine Rest Christian Hospital: 389-68th Street
Crystal Manor- Alzheimer Center: 1175-68th Street
Adult Foster Care centers: too numerous to list.

Public Facilities:

Gaines Charter Township Hall
Gaines Charter Township Public Library
Cutlerville Fire Station
Dutton Fire Station
Kent County Sheriff Dept. – South Sub-Station
Plus numerous recreational facilities

Churches

Gaines Charter Township is the proud home of a number of churches, of various denominations. While the Christian Reformed Church and R.C.A. have a strong presence in the community, 13 other congregations make Gaines Township a place of worship.

CHAPTER 8. PUBLIC INPUT

In the early stages of the planning process, the Planning Commission desired and obtained input from a variety of sources. A long standing concern in the Township is the preservation of farmland in the community for the long term maintenance of this valuable resource and this diminishing life style.

Area farmers, who have been active in the community generally all of their lives, were invited to an open meeting to discuss their concerns, future plans, farm challenges, and the role the Township needs to play in land use controls. Following is a summary of comments from this group.

- ◆ Increased traffic on rural roads hinders the movement of farm machinery.
- ◆ Development pressure creates higher prices for raw land making farming almost impossible.
- ◆ Commodity prices are low, forcing farmers to plow crops under and not harvest.
- ◆ The land farmed is my 401k retirement; do not force me to lose money on my investment to preserve rural character.
- ◆ If the Township desires open fields, purchase my land but do not adopt regulations that prevent me from making money.
- ◆ We live on the fringe of a large metro area and farming activity is not a long-term land use option that makes economic sense.

In addition, the Planning Commission desired input regarding the trend of industrial development in the metro area. Ms. Birgit Klohs of the Right Place Program attended an open meeting to discuss her views and observations on this subject. The Right Place Program is an economic development agency whose purpose is to create jobs in the greater Grand Rapids area. Her main points for the area included the following.

- ◆ A need for a cluster of life science related businesses related to the VanAndel Institute.
- ◆ Information technology companies and advanced manufacturing show promise for the area.
- ◆ Existing industrial parks are filling quickly, and more land is needed to meet the growth.
- ◆ Need to designate additional land for light industrial opportunities.

On April 12, 2001 during a Special Meeting Session of the Township Planning Commission, Ms. Judy Barnes of the Greater Grand Rapids Home Builders Association presented principles of smart growth to the board. She listed some of the techniques of smart growth that can make for better land use such as clustering, multi-use zoning, varying price points within a development, and building narrower streets. Ms. Barnes suggested that affordable housing is a viable option and would like to see areas where smaller lots and smaller homes are permitted.

Summary Report of Community Attitudes Survey

The Township distributed a community attitude survey to all property owners and occupants in the late winter of 2001. The response rate was calculated at 23% return. A copy of the survey is in the appendix. In general, one of the most significant statistics was that 49% of respondents thought the Township was growing too quickly, yet 41% thought it was growing about right (question 13).

This was complemented with the fact that the 89% of respondents agreed that a Master Plan should be developed to identify goals and help guide new development in the Township. Another 69% wanted stronger measures to guide growth. This is an excellent indicator that the Gaines Township Planning Commission is acting in a direction that is generally in accordance with the residents' opinions by developing a master plan.

When conducting a survey of this type, it is important to evaluate demographic and lifestyle information to assure responses reflect a broad mix of township residents. In addition, this information can better clarify the "market", and can help Township staff and officials better predict relationships of supply and demand relating to township services in the future.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS:

- 96 % of the respondents are residents of the Township.
- Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ (71%) of those responding live in the N.W. sector of the township.
- 45 % of respondents were between 36 and 55 years of age.

LIFESTYLE PREFERENCES OF RESPONDENTS:

- 32% live on lots of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre.
- 26% percent live on lots of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 acres of land.
- A full 97% of respondents own their own homes.
- 42% of respondents have lived here for 10 years or more and 42% plan to stay.

- 66% of respondents are employed, and 61% of those households have two adults in the work force.

Employment

Place of employment, question #10, indicated that 12% of the primary respondents work at home. In comparison to other jurisdictions, this number is quite high. This may indicate that people are continuing to become more independent with their work and stay at home. With this in mind, it may be necessary to review the Township home occupation standards. A majority of the respondents worked in the Grand Rapid metro area and traveled 11 miles on average to work.

Housing and Neighborhoods

When thinking about the positive attributes of Gaines Township and why people live there, question #9 is a key identifier for attribute protection. Of all the choices listed, suburban lifestyle was the most common reason people live in the Township. Not far behind that were rural lifestyle, safe area, close to work and good schools. The correlation between the suburban lifestyle and question #2, where 71% of the respondents live in the more developed higher density northwest quadrant of the Township, makes it apparent that suburban style of living is desirable. With that noted, respondents also want that type of lifestyle with extra amenities such as open space as question #19 indicates the vast majority of respondents, 91%, thought the Township should preserve natural areas.

In terms of desired future development, the majority of respondents wanted single-family lots to be in the range of ½ acre to 5-acre lots. This conflicts with the respondents' preference for suburban style living, yet supports the rural character and open space amenities desired. At the same time, 83% thought mobile homes and 77% thought apartments also should be discouraged.

When asked how the Township could improve the appearance of neighborhoods, the majority of responses were related to creating or enforcing zoning ordinances, which would allow zoning inspections and force residents to clean up trash, junk, junk cars as well as impel them to maintain clean yards. Many suggested the installation of sidewalks and curbs would improve the appearance of neighborhoods throughout the Township.

Economic Development

Respondents said that expanding industrial development was not important and 31% thought office development was not important.

In terms of commercial and industrial area appearance, the survey asked questions about signage. When asked about signage, 86% said we should not permit billboards or large signs greater than 32 sq. ft. Another 51% thought we should not allow pole signs, and 77% did not want signs close to the road.

Township Services and Facilities

Several respondents expressed a desire for the Township to provide snow removal, a recycling center with leaf drop off sites, as well as pick up sites. Regarding impressions of overall quality of Township services, the majority of respondents thought the Township was doing a good job with the newsletter, office hours, zoning enforcement, fire protection, building code enforcement, police protection, and parks and recreational facilities.

From the survey distributed in 1995, Township staff and officials already understood recreational opportunities were an important priority for township residents. The most desired recreational facility was bike/walking paths, at 33% of respondents, followed by 30% wanting nature trails, and 29% stating they would like neighborhood parks. Many write-in responses were for swimming pools, some for golf courses and some for ice rinks.

Write-In Responses

When asked to identify other Township priorities not listed on the survey form, 48 suggested planning related issues such as sidewalks and curbs, preserving rural characteristic and/or agricultural land, stopping sprawl, and controlling growth. Others suggestions included small town design criteria, control over developers, clustered housing, and conversely, 5 acres lots for homes, less rental property, less commercial such as strip malls, gas stations and restaurants, the elimination of mobile home parks, and industrial traffic.

The opinions and preferences quantified by the survey played an important role in the creation of goals and objectives for the Township. These goals will define the future vision of Gaines Township and act as the heart of community decision making for many years to come.

SECTION III. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

With the "snap shot" of the community provided in the preceding chapters, it is possible to draw some broad conclusions in regards to the future of Gaines Charter Township. This section of the Plan builds on the Community Profile presented in Section II and extends the Community's vision into the future.

The Future Land Use Plan begins with the broad policy foundation upon which the Plan is formed. This foundation is found in Chapter 9, which includes the goals of the Township and the objectives or milestones that support them. From the general goal and objective statements, the Plan examines three important issues that are likely to impact growth and development in the Township. These are:

1. The new state freeway, known as the Southbelt or M-6, now under construction along the northern border of the Township will increase the accessibility to and from Gaines Township. This may have numerous implications for the Township, especially in the northern area of the Township where interchanges exist. Increasing the access to Interstate 96, Interstate 196, and U.S. 131, may make the Township even more of a desirable place to live and increase development investment.
2. Productive farmland within the Township could continue to decrease due to new developments, higher taxes, low commodity prices and land splits.
3. The Township may need to re-evaluate infrastructure, including roads and public water and sewer facilities, because of increased traffic volumes and development.
4. Significant growth pressure has emanated from the developed northern cities, the airport and quality residential areas.
5. There is a desire to maintain the small town feel of village centers within Gaines Township.

Based on the goals and objectives of the Township and the analysis of these five key issues, the future land use plan is presented in Section III. That section includes the Future Land Use Map, a description of the general land uses planned for the Township. Finally, this section concludes with a series of implementation strategies that outline a course of action to realize the vision of this Plan.

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CHAPTER 9. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on an analysis of the information gathered regarding the Current Assessment, comments from citizens, and the results of the Community Survey, a series of nine broad goal statements were developed, each supported by more specific objectives. This Plan is founded on the policies outlined in the following statements. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or condition of the Township about twenty-five years into the future. They are intentionally general but all are felt to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

Goals also express a consensus of community direction of public and private agencies, groups, and individuals.

Goals are general in nature and are statements of ideals toward which the Township wishes to strive. They represent the ultimate purpose of an effort in a way that is broad. Goals also express a consensus of community direction of public and private agencies, groups, and individuals.

Objectives are more specific and are intended to present a means to attain the stated goals. Objectives take the form of more measurable standards, or the general way in which the goals can be attained. In some instances, they are specific statements, which can be readily translated into detailed design proposals or action recommendations.

Together, the following goals and objectives provide the foundation of the Gaines Charter Township Master Plan and a framework for implementation strategies.

General

To achieve a balance between the development of the Township and preserving the natural features within the Township and the creation of quality housing stock which will continue to elevate Gaines Township as a premier community within the Grand Rapids metro area.

Objectives:

1. Develop Township ordinances and policies that will preserve and enhance the natural features of Gaines Township while permitting smart development of the Township.

2. Develop Township ordinances and policies that will establish design principals and requirements that create high quality residential and non-residential development that attempts to minimize negative impact to existing residents and natural features.

Land Use

Coordinate design and development within the Township to insure that land uses are located in a compatible manner that meets the needs of the Township residents, preserves the natural features of the community, and promotes efficient land use.

Objectives:

Provide planned areas within the Township for new commercial development for those types of commercial uses which cannot be located in the village centers and serve the regional market.

1. Promote preservation of natural features and innovative land use concepts such as cluster developments by decreasing the density of dwelling units in outlying areas of the Township.
2. Encourage development of appropriate standards for transitions between incompatible non-residential uses and residential neighborhoods.
3. Encourage the retention of viable village centers that serve the convenience needs of the population within the trade area. Encourage a concentration of smaller, specialty type retail shops in established business areas and provide design criteria to promote walkability while maintaining the rural character of these commercial areas.
4. Promote quality dwelling unit types and sizes for all age groups and income levels.
5. Provide planned areas within the Township for new commercial development for those types of commercial uses that cannot be located in the village centers and serve the regional market.
6. Provide adequate buffering between industrial uses and residential uses and improve development standards for industrial developments.

7. Provide opportunity for high-tech, fiber optic, medical facilities, and other similar types of uses promoting a diversity of the local and regional economic base and land use mix.

Circulation

Provide a comprehensive circulation system for the Township that provides appropriate access to all locations within the community in an efficient and effective manner.

Objective:

Improve roads that can provide truck access to the identified industrial areas and around residential areas and principal shopping districts.

1. Develop policies for the creation of a comprehensive road network, which includes all necessary major and minor collectors to adequately service the arterial network and allow for multiple connections between Township destinations and beyond.
2. Improve roads that can provide truck access to the identified industrial areas, around residential areas, and principal shopping districts.
3. Require developments fronting on major arterials to create a secondary road network, which collects residential traffic and allows access to the arterial network at coordinated locations.
4. Participate in the exploration of alternative types of transportation systems for the benefit of the local and regional population base.

Non Motorized Transportation Network

Provide recreational and transportation opportunities for the citizens and visitors of Gaines Township by developing an interconnected trail network throughout the Township. The Township Parks and Recreation Committee has developed a plan for the creation of a non-motorized transportation network throughout the Township. Map 8, illustrates the Non Motorized Transportation Development Area.

Objectives:

1. Connect many of the parks, community facilities, and business districts with residential areas.

2. Connect existing trail segments and provide a link to regional trails for an integrated network.
3. Design trails for multiple users, including cyclists, walkers, in-line skaters, and cross-country skiers.

Community Facilities

To provide residents with quality and necessary infrastructure, recreational, educational, and public safety services in the appropriate locations to insure efficient and effective service for all residents of Gaines Township.

Objectives:

1. Provide public and private sites for recreation together with a variety of facilities to accommodate Township residents.
2. Provide a system of community facilities designed for education, recreation, health-care, and police-fire protection. Locate the facilities to balance convenience to users, cost efficiency, and compatibility with surrounding areas.
3. Develop a community facility plan for the entire Township, which will attempt to ensure all future residents will be provided with service in all appropriate locations.

Community Character and Design

To insure that all development within Gaines Township is designed and maintained to the highest quality, which will minimize the impact on the existing natural resources while at the same time enhance those resources and develop a cohesive image for the community.

Objectives:

Preserve the natural character and design of the land in the Township to enhance the Township's development opportunities.

1. Require residential development to be visually attractive, and environmentally responsible.
2. Encourage businesses to improve and maintain their properties in a manner that promotes the aesthetic appearance of the district.

3. Maintain and improve the public infrastructure within the village centers and neighborhoods such as sidewalks, lighting, parking, and other amenities.
4. Develop standards for non-residential land uses, which will require a high quality of design and mitigate any negative impacts those uses will have on any adjacent residential areas.
5. Develop standards that emphasize and maintain a unique character within each of the village centers.
6. Preserve the natural character and design of the land in the Township to enhance the Township's development opportunities.

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CHAPTER 10. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Gaines Charter Township Future Land Use Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. Its importance is continually reinforced as it is frequently the first resource consulted when considering newly proposed land use changes. The Land Use Plan also provides the most fundamental resource for developing Township zoning, design criteria, and other regulations.

The intent is to foster orderly patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features.

The intent of the Future Land Use Plan is to foster orderly patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features, promote high quality and appropriately scaled residential, commercial, and industrial development, provide efficient transportation connections, and enhance quality of life for local residents. The Township must accomplish these goals while accommodating approximately 3,600 additional housing units by the year 2020. To this end, the Planning Commission has established a general limit for growth that is defined by the limits of wastewater service area.

By encouraging relatively intense development within the growth boundary near existing development and utility systems, the Township will be able to accommodate the anticipated growth while maintaining high quality residential and commercial development. This plan also recognizes the major influences of the new Southbelt Highway (M-6) on the immediate area and the region.

This plan generally conforms to and complements the broad development framework outlined in the previous Gaines Township Land Use Plan adopted in 1988. However, since then, many changes have occurred in the community and it is appropriate for the Township to adjust its planning documents in recognition of those changes. In response to these changing factors affecting the community, this Master Plan recognizes the following underlying ideas that are ongoing in project review in planning the future of Gaines Charter Township.

MAJOR ISSUES OF PAST AND FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS

SOUTHBELT FREEWAY (M-6)

Decisions by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to establish an alignment for the Southbelt right-of-way will influence land uses in the northern part of the Township. MDOT has completed construction on the segment from I-96 to M-37 in Cascade Township, with the bridges and roadway in Gaines Township slated for completion in the next few years. Additionally, the construction of M-6 as a major east-west highway has compounded development pressure as growth continues to push south down US-131 beyond Kent County and east and west adjacent to feeder roadways.

The Southbelt alignment creates conditions more favorable for industrial and service development than for residential development in selected areas. Planning for this highway is not new to the Township bringing to reality the past planning efforts of the Township. Refinement of some future land use designations adjacent to the highway and in response to adjacent roadway improvements may be necessary.

The provision of sanitary sewer and water service to existing and future growth areas is a major concern in the Township.

The US-131 development corridor will continue to be a major land use factor in Gaines Township. This corridor coupled with the mining operations in the southwest portion of the Township and the industrial growth in the northern portion of Leighton Township to the south provides an opportunity for new industrial growth in this area of the Township.

RAPID RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH

Gaines Township has experienced significant growth pressure emanating from the developed northern cities, the airport area, and quality residential areas. The surrounding communities of Byron Township, Wyoming, Kentwood, Caledonia Township, and Leighton Township are developing at or toward the Gaines boundaries placing pressure for new growth in the Township. This growth pressure is not anticipated to subside in the coming years given the overall health of the local economy and regional improvements.

This growth pressure is not anticipated to subside in the coming years given the overall health of the local economy and regional improvements.

Past planning efforts have long established the development pattern of Gaines. This northwest to southeast pattern will be encouraged to continue in the future with the objective of maintaining a rural character in the southeastern and central portion of the Township.

As a rural community with an urbanizing segment, the promotion of high tech and medical uses is highly desirable. A complex of this nature in a planned industrial area utilizing the residual amenities of a mining operation is encouraged.

AGRICULTURAL PRESSURE

Local farmers have strongly expressed their opinion regarding the difficulty of continuing farming given the growth in the Township and surrounding area. Increased traffic, higher taxes, low commodity prices and rising production costs all contribute to a demanding occupation.

UTILITY SERVICES

In recent years, the City of Grand Rapids has been reviewing and revising its policy on providing sewer and water services to outlying communities. The Township is a customer of the City of Wyoming utility system. As a customer of these systems, Gaines Township is in the process of evaluating utility policies to address the objectives of the service providers.

Sewer and water service do not currently serve much of the existing development in the Township. A policy of mandatory service for new projects or the development of major collector or trunk lines should be considered to avoid long term environmental problems. The provision of dry utility lines for new projects may be a desirable option for new projects where existing lines are not immediately available but are contemplated in the future.

The provision of sanitary sewer and water service to existing and future growth areas is a major concern in the Township.

RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Opportunities to preserve quality open space and sensitive environmental areas need to be evaluated on a proactive, project-by-project basis. As projects of all types come forward, the applicant and Township will work cooperatively to retain open areas and preserve natural features to the maximum extent possible.

When planning for village center areas, the Planning Commission will consider community identity when considering development proposals and site plans. This will include the evaluation of factors such as the arrangement of site features including proximity of building to the street, location of parking, landscaping, preservation of natural areas, and other design features.

Recreation facilities, either large or small, enhance the character of a community. Development of these facilities needs to be a continuing formalized process. Each time a project is reviewed for approval, the site

should be considered for its relation and possible contribution to the parks and recreational facilities network.

FUTURE LAND USE DISTRICTS

The over-arching intent of this plan is to foster efficient patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features and rural character while accommodating the anticipated growth.

The Gaines Township Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. This Plan constitutes a viable and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of growth through the designation of land use districts. The over-arching intent is to foster efficient patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features and rural character while accommodating growth. The following describes each of the future land use designations as illustrated on Map 6.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RUR)

The RUR area can be seen providing a large area of low density rural development from the more urban/suburban area of the community.

The RUR area is intended to function both as a transitional area between residential and rural/agricultural zoning districts and as a low density/low intensity development area where only limited development can or should occur. This land use designation is intended primarily to address the need for scattered single-family development in relatively rural and low density patterns. This area is not intended to be served with public utility systems that would promote greater densities. Agricultural land uses such as field crops, blueberries, vineyards, and hobby farms may also be anticipated in these areas. Concentrated animal feeding operations, however, will be incompatible with nearby residential uses.

To further the Township's commitment to open space and preserving community character, residential development in this land use district should be very sparse. A minimum lot size of approximately 2 acres per lot is appropriate, as ample space for future on-site sewage disposal must be required in these non-sewered areas.

Innovative new projects that preserve natural amenities will be considered on the urban fringe area in the Rural Residential area. Types of projects could include cluster developments proposing rural features to the motorist driving by and a more urban setting to the resident of the development. The project would contain extensive open space with dwelling concentrated to gain maximum benefit of natural features and open space area. Scenic easements or natural area buffers should be

encouraged in coordination with cluster design to retain rural character from the road.

It is also intended that overlay zones or planning areas may exist for this area to accommodate the need for flexibility as described above.

Due to the unique dual functioning of this planning area, a great deal of flexibility is required in formulating appropriate regulations. For the most part, there should be no urban services and very few cultural facilities due to the sparse development intended here. A rural view from the road (long setbacks, natural buffers, and landscape areas) should be encouraged to maintain the rural/country atmosphere of this area of the Township. However, where the RUR is at the urban-service fringe, there may be a need for adjustments based upon a site specific analysis of service boundaries, topography, soils, arterial access, and so on. There is also a need for flexibility in reviewing and approving large single use projects such as recreational facilities and mineral removal operations. Each of these uses would be appropriate in many locations throughout the RUR area, but only in a highly discretionary manner such as planned developments or special uses.

One or several zoning districts may provide uses in the RUR area. Examples of overlay regulations or recommendations include wetland zones, “cluster” style development zones, or mineral removal zones.

Logically then platting is not a primary consideration for this area. Private drives rather than a local-to-collector street network, can be encouraged to limit random residential access on main arterials. In addition, provisions should be made for “non-platted” developments to ensure appropriate on-site retention of storm waters.

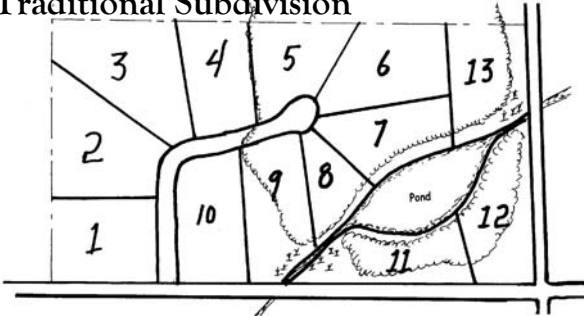
Agricultural activities should be allowed in the RUR, though not necessarily promoted. It must be recognized, therefore, that the RUR area is most to hold the greatest conflict between residential and agricultural operations, so care should be taken to encourage such non-residential uses in those areas which are likely to be the most remote from residential locations.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LDR).

A significant portion of the Township lends itself to suburban style single-family neighborhoods. These communities are relatively homogenous in form and developed in density patterns ranging from minimum lot areas of about 10,000 square feet to one-half to one acre per dwelling, (for a net density range of 1 to 4 units per acre). The low-density residential (LDR) area is intended primarily for residential

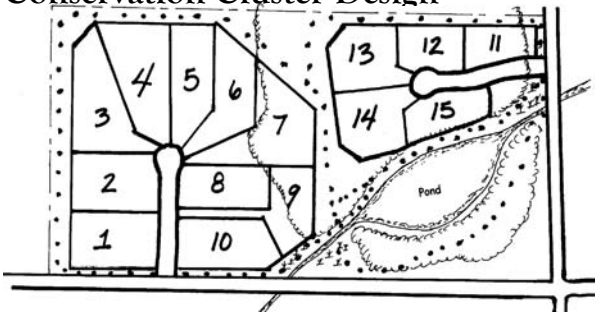
development, both platted and unplatted. The LDR area shown on the Land Use Plan occurs as a transition area between Rural (RUR as described above) and Medium Density Residential (MDR as described in the next section).

Traditional Subdivision



The Michigan Legislature enacted Act 177 of the Public Acts of 2001, effective December 15, 2001. Act 177 requires certain provisions, to be known as “open space preservation” provisions of the zoning ordinance. Act 177 requires the Township to allow the developer the option to develop on a cluster basis, preserving no less than 50% open space *as specified by the township*. The Act is directed specifically towards low-density residential zoning districts. The open space preservation provisions will apply to zoning districts with 2 or less units per acre in areas not serviced by utilities and 3 or less units per acre in areas that are serviced by utilities.

Conservation Cluster Design



The Low Density Residential District is the perfect match for the State’s required open space preservation development option. Clustering of any type that preserves 25% or more of the significant natural features or open space should be encouraged in this land use district.

A conservation cluster approach to development can be used to preserve important natural features, establish open lands for walking or recreation and reduce infrastructure costs when compared to a “by right” approach to development. This hypothetical example results in about 1/3 of the site as permanent open space and nature trails, about 10% less infrastructure and two “bonus” lots.

Rezoning considered for this area should include low-density uses such as detached single-family housing and very low density clustered condominium housing. Other uses related to residential, but with minimal off-site impacts, should also be considered for this area. Such uses include churches, schools, parks, playgrounds, and so on. Though platting, including public water and sewer, are expected for this area, there are likely to be some homes initially developed on sites with private wells and on-site sewage disposal systems. Therefore, extreme caution should be exercised in making LDR areas available prior to the provision of public water and sewer. Building limitations should be considered where soils are incapable of supporting septic systems or ground water is no longer potable.

Attached units within this density range should be considered in some unique areas, but only through discretionary review with standards designed to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses. Permitted non-residential uses such as churches, schools, etc., must also have a set of development specifications such as minimum lot areas and setbacks.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (MDR).

In proximity to more intense land uses the Township will encourage medium density residential development. The medium density residential (MDR) is intended for platted residential and related uses just as the LDR area, but at slightly higher densities. The MDR has been located to form some of the central residential development for Dutton. It has been drawn to reflect both existing development in the Dutton area and as the first urbanized transitional use from commercial uses to lower density residential.

The medium density residential may be single family or two-family homes configured for families with children or for “empty-nester” families. Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this development form. These neighborhoods are scaled for public transit or for passenger car travel with good pedestrian connections to commercial and institutional land uses nearby. In all cases, public or properly licensed private utilities will be required in developments in the medium density land use designation.

The primary land use within this area will be single family, two-family, and small scale multi-family homes developed in density patterns ranging from four to six dwelling units per acre or in conservation clusters that result in the preservation of significant open space and somewhat greater overall densities. Small neighborhood commercial nodes may be encouraged in appropriate locations. These should be restricted to uses intended to serve the immediate neighborhood.

Residential platting should be the most common form of development, though it is expected that there will be dwelling clusters or site condominiums as well. Also, other non-residential uses, such as churches, schools, medical emergency stations, and other uses related directly to residentially developed areas, should be considered for this area.

Minimum lots should be considered at about 10,000 square feet or a net residential density of 4 to 6 dwelling units per acre. The predominate housing type will be single-family units, as the Townships existing multi-family and mobile home housing stock is disproportionately high. In an effort to achieve a more balanced housing market in the Township, single-family housing products will be encouraged.

However, attached housing such as condominiums, and two, three or even up to four-family units could be considered within the recommended density range. These clustered residential uses, as well as non-residential uses, should be considered through discretionary methods such as special use approval. Planned Development's should be guided by very thorough specifications for development designed to afford maximum protection from the encroachment of business or the overcrowding of dwellings.

Also, as discussed for the LDR area, there are a few areas which are currently non-sewered and are either unsuitable for on-site sewage disposal or may be non-buildable due to floodplain, wetlands or other natural impediments to development. Since Gaines Township is committed to preserving unique aspects of the environment and protecting citizens from potential hazards arising there from, many areas within the MDR area will be restricted from development in accordance with pertinent environmental protection regulations.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (HDR)

A primary goal of this Plan is the development of high quality and aesthetic forms of development that increase density while creating a very attractive living environment for residents. The high density residential designation is key to this goal. The primary purpose of this designation is to establish human scale, walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to commercial and recreational services with good amenities and design that works with the area's natural features. These neighborhoods have good pedestrian connections to commercial and institutional land uses nearby. In all cases, public or properly licensed private utilities will be required in developments in the high-density land use designation.

Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this relatively intense development form.

The primary land use within this area will be single family detached and attached homes developed in clusters or in multi-unit buildings. Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this relatively intense development form. Innovative design techniques will be considered to accommodate mixed uses that complement one another.

The high-density residential (HDR) area is intended for the highest residential densities possible in the Township. Overall, residential densities from six to twelve dwelling units per acre will be achieved. Housing will typically be constructed in larger developments or projects

including detached single family; condominiums; two, three and four family units; apartments; and mobile home parks. Also, due to the transitional nature of this area, it is often found next to commercial uses, this area should include very low impact non-residential uses, particularly those commercial and institutional uses which are clearly related to residential activity.

This planning area will also accommodate the Township's highest density housing type being low to mid-rise apartment complexes at densities as high as 10 units per acre.

Single-family detached projects, condominiums and some mobile home parks could offer housing at the lower range of six (6) units per acre. Other mobile home parks, attached condominiums, and some apartments could develop at densities around eight (8) units per acre. This planning area will also accommodate the Township's highest density housing type, low to mid-rise apartment complexes at densities as high as 12 units per acre.

There are three general areas of high-density residential: (1) Section 5 and 6, north of the proposed Southbelt Freeway; (2) the east side of Division Avenue from 60th Street to 79th Street; and (3) the Dutton area north of 68th Street. All of these areas have been located to recognize existing high density development along the Southbelt, along Division Avenue, and in the Dutton/Steelcase development area, respectively.

It is important to recognize, however, that very high-density residential use brings with it great demands for services, infrastructure, and tolerance towards amore diverse population. Further, each area proposed for new zoning must be thoroughly analyzed for the ability to absorb this use at the time it is requested. This planning document does not anticipate such a "managed growth" system for new zoning but one is strongly recommended for future planning efforts as new planning techniques and legal authority unfold for this purpose.

OFFICE/SERVICE (OFC).

This land use designation seeks to broaden the Township's role in economic development and training in the region by fostering service, medical, technical and related office uses both to serve the area's residents and in support of the growing industrial development in the Township. The Township's location at the new Southbelt interchange and its commitment to rational and balanced growth will work together in support of this use.

The office/service (OFC) areas are intended for professional and business offices. The areas proposed for this designation have been

identified as ideal because of their proximity to transportation corridors along Kalamazoo Avenue near the new Southbelt connection. A group of large parcels is identified as OFC at the intersection of Hanna Lake Road and 60th Street. The improvements to 60th Street to a 5-lane roadway will change the character of this area. Adjacent land use of high density residential to the east, M-6 to the south, and the Bailey's Grove project to the north demanded an alternative use for the area. The proposed designation will provide an opportunity for an office complex in the Township given the slated improvements in the area.

Zoning regulations should acknowledge this by providing ample standards for parking, driveways and pedestrian safety.

One of the most important features of this type of land use is the need for adequate neighborhood access. Zoning regulations should acknowledge this by providing ample standards for parking, driveways and pedestrian safety. Also since this land use area is so closely related to the residential areas they are intended to serve, conflict with adjacent residential properties will occur. These conflicts can be minimized by:

1. Require screening, green belting, and berming for properties that abut sensitive residential properties.
2. To allow transitional activities in the HDR (high density residential) area where such properties directly abut the OFC area. As suggested in the HDR recommendations above, such uses should be the least offensive activity.

LOCAL RETAIL (LR).

The Local Retail (LR) areas are intended for neighborhood commercial businesses and business offices. They are designed to provide goods and services primarily to meet the needs of the immediate neighborhood. Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area's natural features and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflicts. Innovative techniques will be encouraged to include a mix of office and residential uses with local retail land uses. In those locations where mixed commercial and residential can be accommodated effectively consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan, planned developments will be encouraged.

There are three locations in the north part of the Township where this designation can be found; 68th and Division, 68th and Eastern, and in Dutton. This planning area is located to serve the neighborhood commercial needs of large residential growth centers in Cutlerville and Dutton. Development and redevelopment of these areas must be

sensitive to the existing residential neighborhoods in terms of noise, landscaping, lighting, and signage. Uses in these areas need to serve the adjoining neighborhood, not conflict with the residents.

Similar to the Office/Service area, one of the most important features of this type of land use is the need for adequate neighborhood access. Zoning regulations should acknowledge this by providing ample standards for parking, driveways, and pedestrian safety.

Specifically, local retail designation areas are intended to retain and build upon the unique character within village centers such as Dutton.

Local retail land uses can be thought of as a source of identity and often considered landmarks in a community. Unique design features such as outdoor seating, awnings and heightened landscape standards should be encourage in local retail areas.

Also since this land use area is so closely related to the residential areas they are intended to serve, some degree of conflict with adjacent residential properties is likely to occur. These conflicts can be minimized by:

1. Require screening, green belting, and berming for properties that abut sensitive residential properties.
2. Allow limited transitional activities in the adjacent residential area where such properties directly abut the LDR area. Such uses may include parking or storage activities with extensive screening and landscaping.



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GENERAL COMMERCIAL (GCM).

The general commercial (GCM) areas are intended for more generalized commercial activities including all OFC uses, highway commercial, regional and community based retail, and general business activities that service other businesses as well as the public. These areas are located in several Township locations: Division Avenue strip between the Southbelt and 76th Street; the corner of 79th and Division; as a “PD” at the southwest corner of 84th and Division, on either side of the Southbelt interchange at Kalamazoo Avenue, and along 68th Street in the Dutton area.

Each GCM area is suited for particular commercial activities. The areas along Division in Cutlerville and 68th Street in Dutton are both commercial strips developed in less restrictive times. These require special consideration for a broad range of use types with lenient development restrictions to avoid excessive nonconformity. On the other hand, the area on the south side of the freeway interchange will offer new commercial activities of area-wide scope. Uses should be primarily highway oriented to “regional access.” Development standards should be aimed at minimizing the effect of the highway as well as offering an attractive entrance to the Township.

The intersection of 84th and Division is designated for general commercial development on the north corner and as a Planned Development (PD) on the southwest corner. The application of planned development standards should be employed on both corners to avoid the traditional commercial look of the intersection of two busy streets. Consideration should be given to the setback from the street, landscape material, building materials, lighting, signage, access, delivery area, access, storm drainage, and overall site improvements. Given the close proximity of Brewer Park, pedestrian access should also be a consideration.

The general commercial areas (GCM) are intended for a full variety of commercial uses, short of manufacturing and processing operations. In addition to special use regulations, future zoning should account for special circumstances related to all commercial uses allowed. Such development standards as uniform setbacks related to street type, zero lot line, condominium ownership, access control, parking, signage and minimum requirements for lot area, lot width, floor area, building height, and so on. Special areas will require specifically tailored regulations depending upon the area and type of zone. The Cutlerville Division Avenue strip and the Dutton 68th Street strip, for example, must include a set of regulations aimed at recognizing the existing “small lot” and diverse nature of businesses.

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL (LIN).

The two industrial parks are expected to generate small industrial sites for a variety of light industrial uses.

The light industrial and heavy industrial land use designation are intended to further the Township’s role in providing employment for area residents and manufactured goods and services to meet the needs of the larger West Michigan region. Facilities will be developed with appropriate utility and transportation connections and in harmony with the area’s natural features. Industrial uses to be promoted will include

manufacturing and transport operations with minimal impact on the environment or on the surrounding community.

The light industrial (LIN) area is intended for low impact industrial operations, which do not generate significant obnoxious off-site effect such as noise, vibration, odor, etc. In Cutlerville, LIN areas include some of the Division Avenue strip on both sides of 76th and a large tract between Brewer Park and Division Avenue (between 79th and 84th). Due to their “frontage” lot character, the Cutlerville LIN areas will function best for small service oriented industries and light design machining or manufacturing businesses.

In Dutton, on the other hand, there are two different types of LIN: large expanses of property owned by, or in direct association with, Steelcase Inc., and two small industrial parks. The Steelcase LIN’s are large in the northwest ¼ of Section 1. There are also adjacent properties held by parties other than Steelcase in the southwest part of Section 1 and to a depth of ¼ mile along the west side of East Paris Avenue.

Uses recommended for this area, therefore, include only those industrial activities, which create a minimum of off-site effects.

These properties are expected to include research facilities. The two industrial parks are expected to generate small industrial sites for a variety of light industrial uses. Also of note, the Land Use Plan map indicates an area of just over 320 acres, which would be LIN if and when an arterial extension is developed to connect East Paris south of 68th Street to 76th Street. With such an extension, the outlined land area in Section 12 would no longer serve as a buffer to intensive development from the north, but instead provide good industrial potential all the way to 76th Street. If, on the other had, this extension is never developed, then the RUR designation for this land area would provide an extremely useful use buffer between the developing north and the undeveloped south.

The most important characteristic of the light industrial area is its low use intensity. LIN areas are intended to provide a safer, cleaner industrial environment. Uses recommended for this area, therefore, include only those industrial activities, which create a minimum of off-site effects. Industries that traditionally cause excessive noise, vibration, odors, visual blight, environmental pollution, or area involved in potentially hazardous processes, should be avoided or allowed only on a discretionary basis.

LIN areas can also be developed as “industrial parks” within which certain low-traffic commercial and quasi-public uses such as post offices, technical schools, and municipal buildings could be permitted. Two

industrial parks have already been developed in the Dutton area (Dutton Industrial Park off 68th and Hanna Lake Industrial Park off Hanna Lake). Another opportunity exists for park development in the acreage along Division Avenue between 79th Street and 84th Street and the Township should encourage this use.

The park approach better coordinates the development of larger areas. Street access, on-site traffic control, utilities, site drainage, lighting, signage, landscaping, and many other aspects of industrial site development can be organized to function with the entire area as opposed to being haphazardly situated to meet the immediate needs of individual landowners. Also, industrial park development lends itself to “PD” or planned development zoning procedures since the site can be rezoned exactly as planned by the developer and the Township retain the power to coordinate development with the surrounding area.

Where industrial parks and “PD’s” cannot be encouraged, a more traditional set of zoning specifications must be developed to allow reasonable variety of uses meeting the low impact criteria. Such a district should specify at a minimum the following general types of regulation: (As recommended in Industrial Development Handbook (ULI, 1975):

1. Mandatory site plan review.
2. Listing of permitted and special uses.
3. Minimum park size and minimum lot area.
4. Minimum ratio of ground coverage to lot size.
5. Required yards and landscaping.
6. Highway access (two) for park and street frontage for lots.
7. Building height limits and structural exceptions.
8. Sign requirements and outdoor lighting.
9. Off-street parking and loading standards, including location, design and number of these facilities.
10. Restrictions on outdoor storage.

HEAVY INDUSTRIAL (HIN).

The heavy industrial (HIN) area is intended for most all industrial uses, particularly those which could cause greater impacts on the surrounding area due to the processing and handling of products and materials.

There are two areas of HIN: one small area in Cutlerville between 76th and 79th Streets and a large area meandering through Sections 1, 12, and 11 in Dutton. The first location in Cutlerville is an isolated area of

previous heavy industrial zoning. Cutlerville’s residential/institutional character make it a poor location for heavy industrial uses so there has not been extensive HIN use planned for this area. Dutton, on the other hand, may include residential uses to the west, but to the east has ample undeveloped property in suitable locations for all industrial uses. Steelcase, Inc owns most of this land area, which connects to Dutton Industrial Park to the west of East Paris and to the south of 68th Street. With the proposed Southbelt, the airport, M-37 improvements, sewer and water, and adjacent industrial use, this has become a prime location for industry on a regional basis. This industrial area also fits well in relation to residential uses to the west since the isolated location will substantially minimize the industrial impacts.

Due to the location of the HIN area, zoning regulations need not be overly restrictive. Though parks can include heavy industries, it is more often the case that a park setting includes industries of lesser off-site impact, (see LIN discussion above). If parks are considered for this zone then they should be approved on a discretionary basis through “PD” or special land uses.

The typical heavy industrial zoning district pyramids so all uses permitted by right in the light industrial zone may be brought into heavy industrial. However, other uses, particularly those of greater off-site impact must be considered as permitted uses. Most recommendations applied to light industrial zones could be adapted directly to heavy industrial zones as well

PUBLIC QUASI-PUBLIC (PUB).

All of the PUB designations exist and include churches, schools, parks, Township complex, cemeteries, and recreational facilities.

The public quasi-public areas (PUB) are similar to OFC areas in that they too are intended for serving the needs of large residential growth centers in Cutlerville and Dutton. All of the PUB designations exist and include churches, schools, parks, Township complex, cemeteries, and recreational facilities. No new specific areas of PUB are considered for this plan.

Most uses in the PUB area are allowed in the office/service, the GCM general commercial area or on a limited basis in the residential areas. Such uses can also be allowed by “PD” regulations. Residential areas should include parks, playgrounds, and low impact institutional uses such as nursery schools, elementary schools, junior and middle schools, and churches.

Office-service and commercial uses should include all other public quasi-public uses. Large land consuming public uses such as golf courses should be considered as special uses in the rural zones or as “PD’s.”

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

A key element to this description is compatibility to the proposed project with existing development in the area and the preservation of natural features and the provision of water and sewer utilities.

This land use designation is intended to provide flexibility in developing desired land uses to address the community’s residential, office, commercial, and industrial needs in certain locations of Gaines Township. Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area’s natural features, adjacent land uses and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflicts. Innovative techniques will be encouraged to include a coordinated mix of uses with effective buffers and screening from surrounding land uses. Internal circulation and access management techniques will be used to effectively move vehicular and pedestrian traffic. A key element to this description is compatibility of the proposed project with existing development in the area, the preservation of natural features, and the provision of water and sewer utilities. The intensity of development for each project will need to be based upon the developable land area, not the total land area.

There are three areas of the Township designated for development using the Planned Development idea. The stars on the Future Land Use Map at the intersection of 84th and Division Avenue indicate the need to employ the Planned Development standards. This is further explained in the General Commercial description.

The other two areas center on the intersection of 100th Street and Division Avenue. There is a mixed use PD and General Commercial PD at the intersection and a large industrial area spanning from Division Avenue to Kalamazoo Avenue. Consideration for rezoning in these areas need to give primary consideration to utility services, existing land uses and buffer areas, coordination of development, existing environmental features to be preserved, and the construction of the future road. The Township Planning Commission also finds this area to be highly desirable for use as a high tech/medical area to serve the growing needs of the metro area. It is not the Township’s intent to construct this road, but for new development projects to build the road as necessary to gain access from Division Avenue to the east. Industrial or high tech traffic generated from this area needs to be directed to the new road and west to Division Avenue to minimize the impact on existing rural areas.

VILLAGE CENTERS

Gaines Township can anticipate steady growth through the next twenty years. Based on the current zoning and the scale of growth, development will likely follow major arterials in relatively low-density patterns. The result will be a fairly typical emerging suburban landscape of less than desirable strip commercial and residential development, primarily on large un-platted parcels. The Township has an opportunity to guide development in more desirable patterns.



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The Gaines Township Master Plan seeks to encourage compact and livable forms of development in part as a means to preserve open lands and natural features and to promote efficient and human-scale development. A key element of this strategy is the effort to concentrate residential and commercial development in the immediate vicinity of existing or potential future local retail and commercial nodes. Dutton village could benefit greatly from additional mechanism to protect its unique community character and build upon the mixed-

use area on 68th from Hanna Lake Road to Hammond Avenue. The commercial center that is emerging in Cutlerville would be another example of a prime area for a village center.

Plans should encourage higher density residential and neighborhood commercial land uses in the Village Center areas, all designed to complement the natural terrain and with careful attention paid to pedestrian connections. The Township is committed to a human-scale atmosphere that minimizes conflicts with the regional traffic corridors. As such, access to roadways should be managed off connector streets. Design techniques and identity enhancing landscaping will be encouraged to improve safety while building community character.

NATURAL AREA BUFFERS

Typical of many developing townships, potentially conflicting land uses have arisen in close proximity to one another. Conflicts need not develop, however, if effective borders and edges can be maintained. In several areas of the community, natural area buffers may be incorporated within larger-scale developments. These are intended to consist of negotiated easements and/or deeper setback standards. To the greatest

extent possible, the lands and vegetation within these areas would be left undisturbed (non-manicured landscaping/native and indigenous species) to screen the more intense development patterns that are anticipated within the area of concentrated growth and to retain a rural character within some developing neighborhoods.

The Natural Area Buffers as a land use designation can be used to identify locations of the trails network and future park and trail development areas.

BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (BTPD).

This future land use is planned for the southwestern corner of the township. It is intended to provide flexibility in developing a mix of technology-related office and industrial business opportunities using performance standards. Stretching from Division Avenue to Kalamazoo Avenue across sections 31, 32, and 33. A future road is planned to be located at the centerline of the sections from Division to Kalamazoo. This road will be essential for the development of BTPD projects.

Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area's natural features, adjacent land uses and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflicts. Techniques will be encouraged to include a coordinated mix of uses with effective buffers and screening from surrounding land uses. Internal circulation and access management techniques will be used to effectively move vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Compatibility of the proposed project with existing development in the area, the preservation of natural features, and the provision of water and sewer utilities will be critical to facilitating projects in this district.

Future Land Use Map

MAP 8

CHAPTER 11. IMPLEMENTATION

In order for the Future Land Use Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Gaines Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Gaines Township Board of Trustees, the Planning Commission and the Township staff. This is done through a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures which are described in this chapter.

The private sector is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is therefore important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

1. EVALUATE AND REVISE THE ZONING ORDINANCE

Description. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan. In many of the strategies, reference is made to evaluations and updates of the Ordinance to conform with this Plan. This strategy contemplates a complete evaluation of the entire Ordinance including all of the other, more specific, recommendations included in this Master Plan. This will include a revision of the Zoning Map to support the future land use map, and a revision of some zoning classifications to better conform to the future land use designations in this Master Plan. In addition, the Ordinance should be evaluated for flexibility to address innovative development techniques and for its ability to control inefficient development patterns. In this connection, the Zoning Ordinance should be amended to permit open space/cluster development in all districts such that flexible, open space development becomes the norm in the Township as opposed to the traditional subdivision of land.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission and Staff may implement this strategy. This is an extensive task and it is likely that outside support will be needed. Any resulting amendments to the Ordinance will require the review of the Township's legal staff and ultimately the adoption of the Township Board.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; Land Use-2, Land Use-5 & Community Character and Design-5.

2. INVENTORY KEY NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

Description. A key aspect of the Township's Master Plan is the preservation of the natural beauty and important features of the community. The purpose of this strategy is to prepare an inventory of important natural features and to identify the likely trends or conditions that may threaten them.

The idea of protecting woodland areas around the Township has been discussed on many different occasions. Rapid growth and increasing demands upon natural resources have had the effect of encroaching upon, despoiling or eliminating many of the trees, other forms of vegetation, and natural resources and processes associated with natural woodlands. An inventory of these resources would aid in their protection.

Wetlands are another natural resource that provides benefits to the entire community beyond the understanding of many individuals. The State of Michigan regulates and protects this resource but there are limits to the level of protection they provide. Once an inventory has identified the wetland resources, the Township should explore a local ordinance geared to supplement the State law.

Using automated or manual mapping, the Township may develop a set of mapped exhibits that would serve as a guide to future land use decisions. In some areas, it may be appropriate to develop overlay zoning or other preservation mechanisms. These inventories must eventually be field-verified, and with modern global positioning systems (GPS) this process can be accomplished fairly efficiently. In addition, as private property owners submit site plans for consideration, independent and professionally-prepared natural features determinations may be collected for incorporation into this inventory.

Standards for the preservation of such features will need to be developed which are effective, yet which permit some reasonable use of private lands. These would be structured to permit proposed buildings to be shifted on a site to preserve features. In addition, as recommended in the Grand Valley Metro Council's Blueprint, it is clear that in some instances, the best mechanism for preservation is acquisition. The Township should work with the Grand Valley Metro Council and the

West Michigan Land Conservancy to build a larger trust for this purpose.

Responsibilities. The Planning staff should take the lead in preparing the inventory. Outside support may be needed in structuring a consistent approach to completing the inventory and to complete wetlands designation work.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; Land Use-1; & Community Character and Design - 6.

3. DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR NATURAL BUFFERS AND SCENIC EASEMENTS

Description. Developing mechanisms to encourage and require scenic easements and natural buffers within developments will enhance open space and maintain a rural character.

The Township could use its PD mechanism to provide for natural area buffers while preserving the right of property owners to realize an appropriate yield from their lands. The PD ordinance will be evaluated for the flexibility to promote the preservation of open lands and natural area buffers. With regard to larger tracts of natural features, the Township will consider the formation of a nonprofit conservancy or the use of existing conservancies in the area to accept title or easements. The use of a non-profit conservancy may be important to provide tax incentives, in some instances.

In addition to buffers and open lands, this strategy will also include the formation and implementation of a long-range plan to create non-motorized connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, parks and schools. These pathways will help to relieve some of the traffic and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts at critical intersections. More importantly, they will add a further amenity to the Gaines Township Community.

Responsibilities. The Planning staff should take the lead in preparing the standards for natural buffers. Outside support may be needed on a case by case basis when landowners or developers select to use conservation easements. The Township Planning staff should coordinate with the Grand Valley Metro Council and other regional agencies to plan for regional network of natural areas particularly relating to non-motorized and recreational facilities.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; Land Use-2; Land Use-6; Non-Motorized Transportation-1; Community Facilities-1; Community Character & Design-1; & Community Character and Design-6.

4. CREATE A RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER ORDINANCE

Description. Conservation cluster and open space design techniques should be promoted to enable a reasonable yield for development purposes while seeking to preserve the rural character and natural features of the area.

Where conservation cluster developments are proposed, the Township may utilize a new cluster mechanism to implement a development that is consistent with this Plan. The first step would be to conduct a site analysis to identify those features on the site that should be preserved and those portions that may be developed without impact. Based on the underlying zoning density, a set of performance standards will be developed to mitigate possible impacts. These may include buffer/filter strips from stream or wildlife corridors, isolation from steep slopes, tree protection and other appropriate techniques. To the extent development can be accommodated within a portion of the site without impact on the important features, some additional density may be permitted. Conservation easements should be strongly encouraged as a part of such a development to assure that the undeveloped portions of the site remain in a natural state.

Responsibilities. The Planning staff should prepare a draft outline of a conservation cluster ordinance for the Planning Commission to review. Staff may want to consult outside parties to research and evaluate possibilities for residential clustering policies.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General-1; General-2; Land Use-1; Land Use-4; & Community Character-6.

5. DEVELOP PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR THE PD DISTRICT

Description. In an effort to encourage high quality development in the PD district, it is appropriate to formulate performance standards. Performance standards are a useful way for the Township to define what is expected from new developments and what is not acceptable, beyond the criteria explained in the zoning ordinance. These standards would

include provisions to assure compatibility of the neighboring uses while recognizing that in some cases, industrial and residential districts can work well together. It should allow for all existing uses and any future uses as long as the applications meet the suggested performance criteria.

These standards should address issues such as landscape, noise, outdoor storage, buffering, and smoke and dust mitigation. In addition, the performance standards should define expectations for water and sewer connections for new development in the PD District. The Planning Commission might want to consider outlining their expectations for infrastructure and access to new projects.

Responsibilities. This strategy may be implemented by the Planning staff and the Planning Commission. It will require the review of the Township's legal staff and ultimately the adoption of the Township Board.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; & Community Facilities-3.

6. BROADEN SEWER AND WATER POLICY TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT

Description. Policies that direct the location of public water and sanitary sewer services often have the effect of steering growth. The Township policy that encourages new development to connect to existing or proposed sewer lines will generate greater development interest in those locations where those services currently are available. It will also improve the likelihood of development in proximity to existing sewer lines.

In order for this technique to be effective, the Township must recognize that capacity limitations exist for both public water and sanitary sewer. The capacity issue is relevant in terms of growth management as the anticipated development in the northern half of Township is expected to consume the currently available capacity of public water and sewer.

The provision of sanitary sewer and water service to existing and future growth areas is a major concern in the Township.

The Township is currently and should play an active role in exploring the future capacity needs and options for wastewater with respect to Buck Creek Sewage Disposal System and the Dutton Waste Water District. This proactive effort will allow Gaines Township to gauge the level of growth realistically allowable within the existing capacity limitations, and at the same time resolve future needs.

In addition, the Township should be receptive to alternative opportunities for water and sewer management. The Township should understand that new technology offers some alternatives to public sewer and water services and these methods should be given due consideration during the planning process.

Finally, to assure that on-site wastewater systems continue to function properly, the Township should require periodic inspections. Some communities require that drainfields and septic tanks be inspected for proper operation at time of sale.

Responsibilities. Township staff may assume lead responsibility for this policy. The Township will need to continue and expand its efforts in conjunction with the County Board of Public Works as the entire community works to expand wastewater treatment capacity. The County Health Department may be asked to assist in the inspection of on-site disposal systems.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; & Community Facilities-3.

7. PREPARE A SUB-AREA PLAN FOR THE DUTTON VILLAGE AREA

The village would consist of neighborhood commercial, and a range of housing formed in a compact and walkable community.

Description. The area surrounding the intersection of Hanna Lake Avenue and 68th Street presents the community with important challenges and opportunities. It should continue to incorporate a mix of commercial and residential land uses planned to complement one another and to manage the relatively heavy traffic through this intersection. A small “village-like” center is suggested at the 68th/Hanna Lake intersection. The village would continue to serve several purposes and broaden its potential for high-quality village-scale development. It would offer an attractive residential alternative to either low-density rural residential housing or more traditional subdivisions.

Encouraging a more compact and concentrated community around village centers will help to relieve some of the growth pressure expected in the more sensitive and low density areas.

An important element in the Dutton sub-area plan is to preserve the identity of the village area. Without some mechanism in place to accomplish this, the village may eventually become absorbed by the residential and/or commercial growth around it. The new southbelt will form an effective boundary on the north and rural residential land uses and zoning will have a similar effect on the south. To the east and west, however, it will be necessary to establish regulatory mechanisms to preserve the identity of the village. Natural area buffers can work well to define the edge of the village center.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission will take the lead in implementing this effort. The Road Commission and all property owners should participate. To maintain the momentum of the effort, outside consulting support should be considered.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; Land Use-2; Land Use-3; & Community Character 1-6.

8. PREPARE A SUB-AREA PLAN FOR THE CUTLERVILLE VILLAGE CENTER

Description. A “village center” has been proposed at the corner of Division Avenue and 84th Street to include existing commercial uses, new local retail, more concentrated housing and potentially public and recreational uses. Some of these uses are in place and others are planned. The intent is to establish a walkable and human scale development with its own identity and good non-motorized connections to the remainder of the community. This strategy would call for a detailed land use plan to be developed cooperatively by the Planning Commission, others from the community, and property owners. Such a plan would include general agreement on land use types and intensity, some architectural guidance (i.e., façade treatment, signage, lighting, and landscaping), circulation patterns and well-defined and controlled vehicular access points.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission will take the lead in implementing this effort. The Road Commission and all property owners should participate. To maintain the momentum of the effort, outside consulting support should be considered.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; Land Use-2; Land Use-3; & Community Character 1-6.

9. PREPARE A CORRIDOR PLAN FOR KALAMAZOO AVENUE

Description. This strategy recognizes that the Township will experience significantly increased traffic along Kalamazoo as the Southbeltline interchange is completed. This increased traffic will foster growth and

development pressures along Kalamazoo and other roadways near the Southbelt. Land use policies may govern and direct the types of uses to be encouraged, but the form of some uses should also be directed through a corridor plan. This would take the form of a set of development standards that may be instituted through overlay zone, consistent PD standards, or similar mechanisms. The purpose will be to establish harmonious and complementary standards for building elevations, landscaping, lighting, access management, building massing, viewshed protection, and related elements of design. The first step will be to develop the corridor plan generally and then identify appropriate mechanisms to implement it.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission will take the lead in implementing this effort. The Road Commission, East Kentwood High School, administration of Crystal Springs and Crossings developments and affected property owners should participate. To maintain the momentum of the effort, outside consulting support should be considered.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General -1; General-2; Land Use-2; Land Use-5; Land Use-6; Circulation-2; Circulation-3; & Community Character-4.

10. ESTABLISH CONSISTENT STANDARDS FOR CALCULATING DENSITY

Description. The Township does not have an adopted method of calculating densities. It is important to have a consistent basis of evaluating unit densities for proposed project to have an objective basis of comparison. This will ensure all proposed projects receive fair and uniform evaluation and consideration. In addition, it will protect against the possibility of projects building-out at densities greater than allowed.

There are several ways to calculate densities. The first is a gross area density. This takes the entire property, including that within public right-of-way, into consideration for the total area to be divided. In this situation, if a developer owns 10 acres, the density of his or her proposed project would be based on all 10 acres.

A net area calculation of density removes non-buildable lands from the calculation. Often this assumes a 10-15% reduction in area for road right-of-way. In other cases, townships have chosen to eliminate wetlands, forested areas or other important natural features from the net

area calculations for density. The methodology may vary between zoning districts as long as the process for calculation is clearly defined within the zoning ordinance.

Responsibilities. It will be important for the Planning Commission to take an initiative to recommend the Township adopt a consistent methodology for calculating densities. Planning staff may assist in researching options for different zoning districts. It might be helpful to request the assistance of a consultant to provide examples of other townships' density calculation methods for different land uses.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General-1; General-2; Land Use-1; Community Character 1; & Community Character 6.

11. IMPROVE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT BENEFITS

Description. Prepare a program of public service announcements, speaker's bureau, and school curriculum on the importance of the careful management of the Township's open lands, natural areas, and farmlands. The theme may be directed at explaining that it is possible and desirable to have both development and rural character, but effective management is needed. The speaker's bureau would periodically target service clubs, neighborhood and community organizations, and other interest groups.

Responsibilities. The New Designs for Growth organization has undertaken this role to date with significant success. However, the support and involvement of the public and parochial schools, along with the Township Planning Department, may provide the further in-kind support in bringing data and resources together and in continually reinforcing the theme with the general population and with school-age children.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General-1; General-2; & Land Use-1.

12. PROMOTE THE PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR).

Description. Under Acts 569, 570, and 571, the State of Michigan has now established a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program which enables farmers to realize the value of their lands for development purposes without taking that land out of production. However, implementation of the program will require ongoing financial support from the State. In addition, it is possible for the local units of government to expand the program by supplementing the appropriation for local PDR applications. A program for screening applications for the PDR program must be developed and keyed to the identification of farmlands for preservation. Development rights should be valued based on the current development potential of the lands.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission or the Township Board may implement this strategy. Since funding is likely to be limited, a predictable and systematic approach for processing PDR applications should be developed. This may be done in-house or through the services of private consultants.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General-1; General-2; Land Use-1; & Community Character-6.

13. PROMOTE TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Description. Michigan does not permit the transfer of development rights at this time. However, a proposed bill is pending before the State Legislature. Gaines Township may be a good candidate for TDR in the short term, given the strong housing market and some acceptance of higher densities. Therefore, the purpose of this strategy is to work with the State Legislature to develop enabling legislation that will permit TDR in those cases where it will work in Gaines Township. The implementation of a TDR program will require careful oversight by the Planning Commission. The essential work called for by this strategy will involve an eventual revision of the Zoning Ordinance to designate TDR “sending” and “receiving” zones.

Responsibilities. This activity should be the responsibility of the Planning Commission. Other units of local government will need to be involved in the development of such a statute. The Michigan Association of Counties, the Michigan Townships Association, the

Michigan Farm Bureau, and the Michigan Municipal League will be able to provide valuable guidance and support for the Township.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: General-1; General-2; Land Use-1; & Community Character-6.

14. IMPROVE NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Description. The Township has been working toward improving opportunities for non-motorized transportation and recreation. The Committee has identified broad corridors in the Trail Plan in order to develop a true “trail network.” It is the intent of the Township that the trail follows the best and most logical route in the corridors – not the route that is left over after development is established. The Township will accomplish the actual construction of the trail network by working with developers as development projects occur. The Township understands that there may be a need for the Township to fund, design, and construct some areas of the trail network, as there will be gaps in the system.

To reach the desired trail network, the Township will perform the following activities:

- Construct the trail in the initial corridor from the Township Hall to Brewer Park.
- Prioritize the construction of the remaining segments of the trail network.
- Create a mechanism to encourage or require developers to participate in development of the trail network.
- Set standards for the trail design, characteristics and management.

Responsibilities. This activity should be the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Committee. The Committee will need to work with planning and engineering staff and may require the assistance of the Michigan Department of Transportation in some instances.

Related Goals and Objectives. This strategy supports the following goals and objectives: Non-Motorized 1-3.

Revisions to the Master Plan

The Master Plan should be updated periodically (minor review every one to two years, major review every five to ten years) in order to be responsive to new growth trends and current Township attitudes. As growth occurs over the years the Master Plan goals, land use information, population projections, and other pertinent data should be reviewed and revised as necessary so the Plan can continue to serve as a valid guide to the growth of the Township.

Adopting the Master Plan

This Master Plan has been prepared with the oversight and extensive input of the Planning Commission, staff and the input of township residents. The Planning Commission has been instrumental in the overview of the document and provided substantial input. This coupled with extensive public input including a citizen survey and several public input sessions were the primary public input elements of this plan. The adoption of the Plan will be coordinated with the Township Board prior to the required public hearing.

Effect of Adoption

Michigan's new Coordinated Planning Act encourages Township Board members to vote to adopt newly created master plans. Since the elected representatives of the citizens may adopt the Master Plan, within the township, the Master Plan is more than merely a guiding document. State law provides that the Township Board must refer matters dealing with the construction, location, or character of public streets, public structures, public utilities or public land to the Planning Commission for advice and recommendation before taking final action. If the Township Board does not concur with the recommendation of the Planning Commission, it must obtain a vote of not less than a majority of its membership in order to override that recommendation.

Policy Implementation of the Master Plan

After the Master Plan has been adopted, the Planning Commission must use its persuasion to bring about the adoption of ordinances which will carry out the policies of the plan. Only elected officials can adopt these laws. After the adoption of the Master Plan, revisions to the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance should be sent to the Township

Board for consideration. The Planning Commission should meet with the Township Board to review the policies and the provisions within them. After the Township Board and the Planning Commission reach an agreement, the Planning Commission will introduce the ordinances and schedule a public hearing to obtain additional comments, points of disagreement, or additional ideas. The Planning Commission will then make the final corrections to the ordinances, or the maps which are part of the ordinances, and vote to recommend their adoption by the Township Board.

The Township Board will place the ordinances on its agenda and consider them at its regular public meeting. The Township Board will hear any further comments or suggestions from the public prior to taking final action. If it desires, the Township Board may refer the ordinances back to the Planning Commission for final advice upon any questions raised by the public at the Township Board meeting prior to final adoption.

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The following sources were consulted in the preparation of this Master Plan. Where conclusions or specific data was drawn from a source, it is noted in parentheses or in footnotes within the text. In all instances, the reader is encouraged to consult the sources noted below.

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APPENDIX A

1. LETTER TO RESIDENTS
2. GAINES TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SURVEY
3. SURVEY RESULTS

APPENDIX A

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

1. Majority of respondents are residents to Gaines Twp. (96%)
2. The average amount of time they have lived here is 16 years.
3. The majority of respondents live in the N.W. Section of the township. (71%)
17% responded from the N.E. Section of the township.
8% responded from the S.W. area and 4% from the S.E. area.
4. 23% of respondents were in the 36-45 years of age category.
22% of respondents were 46-55 years of age and 66 years of age or older.
17% of respondents were aged 56-65 years.
14% were aged 26-35 years.
and 2% were aged 18-25 years old.
5. 32% of respondents lived in a single family home on less than ½ acres.
26% of respondents lived in single family home on lots of ½ acre to 2 acres.
10% of respondents lived in either condominiums or lots of more than 5 acres.
9% of respondents live on lots of 2-5 acres or in mobile homes.
3% live in apartments.
6. 97% of residents responding to survey own their homes.
7. 42% of respondents have lived in the Township for 10+ years
26% have lived here for 2 to 5 years.
17% have lived here for 6 to 10 years.
14% have lived here for less than 2 years.
8. 42% of respondents plan to stay here indefinitely.
26% plan to stay for 2 to 5 years.
17% plan to stay for 6-10 years.
14% plan to stay less than 2 years.
9. 29% of respondents live here because of the good neighborhoods.
24% of respondents live here because of the rural lifestyle.
23% live here because they perceive the area to be safe.
22% live here because it is either close to work or close to shopping.
19% live here because of the quality of housing.
12% live here for the suburban lifestyle.
5% live here because it is close to shopping.

4% live here because of access to the freeway.

The “other” category was based on “write in” responses, which follows:

25 responded “close to family.”

20 responded “for the golf courses.”

16 responded “because it was affordable.”

12 responded “because of the farm land and open space.”

The remainder had various reasons including the schools, churches and that they grown up here.

10. **66% of the respondents are employed, 61% of those households have two adults employed.**
24% are retired with 22% of households other adult also retired.
6% are semi-retired with 3% of household other adult in semi-retirement.
4% or respondents are not working but of those households 14% of remaining adults are employed.
11. **44% of respondents to survey work in Grand Rapids.**
31% work within Kent County.
12% work at home; 15 % of second adults work at home.
11% work elsewhere, out of Kent, Allegan and Barry Counties.
3% work in Allegan County.
12. Types of property respondents own in Gaines Township, question 12, were not tallied.
13. **49% of respondents thought Gaines Township was growing too quickly.**
41% though it was growing about right.
14. **Opinions about following Statements:**
91% Thought township should preserve natural areas.
89% Thought township should develop a Master Plan & identify goals/objectives.
69% Thought township should take stronger measures to guide growth.
39% Thought township should add commercial/ but 34% thought they should not.
36% Thought township should encourage high tech industry, but 31% thought they should not.
34% Thought the township should encourage industrial land but 40% thought they should not.
22% Thought township needed broad range of housing prices but 45% thought they did not.

15. 40% of respondents rated township guiding and directing growth as Good.
 31% of respondents rated the township efforts as Fair.
 19% of respondents had no opinion.

16. Encouraging types of housing:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Single Family Homes on 5+ acre lots:	60%	24%	16%
Single Family Homes on 2-5 acre lots:	70%	17%	13%
Single Family homes on ½ ac to 2 acre lots:	80%	11%	9%
Single Family homes on less than ½ acre lot:	47%	41%	12%
Condominiums	47%	37%	16%
Mobile Homes	8%	83%	9%
Apartments	11%	77%	12%
None	13%	42%	45%

17. Services respondents would be willing to pay additional taxes for:
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| More Road Repairs | 34% |
| More Police Protection | 32% |
| More Fire Protection | 29% |
| More Parks | 27% |
| Community Swimming Pool | 24% |
| Community Center | 22% |
| Sidewalks | 20% |

18. Commercial Development Respondents would like encouraged:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Sit Down Restaurant	68%	22%	20%
Neighborhood Center	44%	42%	14%
None	26%	37%	37%
Gas/Convenience Store	25%	59%	15%
Regional Shopping	24%	63%	13%
Fast Food	16%	71%	13%

19. Township Priorities:

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Open Space Preservation	60%	14%	2%
Improved Traffic Flow-EW	40%	23%	6%
Improved Traffic Flow-NS	30%	30%	8%
Enforcing Zoning Rules	35%	25%	5%
Appearance of Neighborhood	32%	27%	7%
Pedestrian Trails	31%	26%	9%
Increase open space requirement	31%	21%	5%
Increase sense of community	27%	37%	8%

Improve Police Protection	23%	34%	6%
Improve Fire Protection	23%	34%	6%
Improve Parks and rec. facilities	23%	32%	8%
Improve Library services	17%	36%	10%
Housing opportunities for seniors	16%	36%	12%
Extend Sewer lines	15%	35%	19%
Housing for young families	14%	35%	14%
Extend Water lines	14%	34%	19%
Expand office development	4%	29%	31%
Expand Industrial development	3%	23%	41%

19-q The “write in” responses in this category regarding the importance of township priorities asked *how we could improve the appearance of neighborhoods*. The responses follow:

- 71 Responses were related to eliminating junk and trash in yards.
- 53 Responses were related to enforcing consistent zoning rules.
- 48 Responses suggested creating rules and forcing individuals to maintain their own properties.
- 40 Enforce junk car rules.
- 24 Suggested sidewalks and curbs are installed throughout the township.
- 23 Respondents wanted more trees planted.
- 15 Suggested creating streetscape planning and landscape rules.
- 15 Eliminate and/or reduce the number of RV’s permitted on properties.
- 10 Responded they wanted cars kept off of lawns and sidewalks.
- 9 Suggested hiring a full time zoning inspector to enforce the ordinances.
- 8 Suggested creating entrances to developments and including streetlighting.

Many more diverse responses included such planning items such as encouraging open and green space, underground utilities, allowing less multiple family housing, regulating signage, providing common area, requiring larger building sites, better spacing, etc. By far the most responses dealt with increasing regulations and providing enforcement of everything from demolishing homes, providing services for lawn wastes, reducing the number of autos allowed per household, clean up slums, require vacant lots be cleaned and cleared, etc.

19- t. The “write in” responses in this category regarding the importance of township priorities asked for “*other priorities*.” The responses follow:

- 48 respondents addressed planning issues such as:
- 12 respondents would like sidewalks along all streets.
- 11 respondents wanted the rural characteristic and/or agricultural land preserved.

10 respondents thought we should stop sprawl and control growth.

The remaining respondents wanted such things as small town design criteria, control over developers, clustered housing, and conversely, 5 acre lots for homes, less rental property, less commercial such as strip malls, gas stations and restaurants, the elimination of mobile home parks and industrial traffic, the encouragement of small business ownership and finally, a medical care facility.

15 respondents addressed issues concerning traffic, road design and road repairs.

11 respondents thought we should keep the township clean and neat by regulating the appearance of properties including planting flowers and painting fireplugs, etc.

22 respondents had issues regarding community services provided by the township such as snow removal; recycling center and leaf drop off sites or pick up. Others wanted easier mailbox accessibility and a unified zip code. Still others wanted community facilities, which included a place for teens, recreational opportunities including a community pool and nature/bike trails.

8 respondents wanted more rigid zoning enforcement for R.V.'s in neighborhoods, animal control, car repairs, etc.

20.	Signs to be permitted:	Yes	No	No opinion
	Billboards	6%	86%	9%
	Large Business Signs > 32 sq. ft.	13%	76%	11%
	Small Business Signs < 32 sq. ft.	64%	35%	11%
	Close to road	12%	77%	11%
	Setback from road	60%	25%	15%
	On ground	42%	40%	18%
	On pole	33%	51%	16%
	On building	65%	21%	14%

21. Type of recreational facility most like developed in Township.

Bike/Walking Path	33%
Neighborhood Parks	29%
Basketball Courts	28%
Ball Fields	27%
Soccer Fields	22%
Tennis Courts	21%
Nature Trails	30%

21. The “write in” responses in this category regarding “Other” types of recreational facilities follow:

- 29 respondents wished for a swimming pool.
- 7 respondents wanted more golf courses and driving ranges.
- 6 respondents wanted an ice rink.

The following ideas received three votes each:

Skate Park, Shooting Range, Hunting and Fishing area, Open Space, and Bike/hike Trails.

The following ideas received two votes each:

ATV trails, Fitness Center, Soccer Complex, Kids playground, Racquetball Courts, Roller Hockey, and dog friendly spaces.

The following ideas were also included:

Frisbee Golf, Volleyball Courts, Community Recreational Center, Horse Path, RV Campground, Movie Theatre, Softball Fields, and a Teen Center,

22. Respondent’s impressions of overall quality of services:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Township Newsletter	14%	63%	5%	18%
Office Hours	11%	68%	3%	18%
Zoning Enforcement	3%	49%	14%	34%
Fire Protection	16%	68%	3%	34%
Building Code Enforce.	6%	49%	8%	37%
Police Protection	12%	72%	4%	12%
Parks and Recreation	7%	65%	14%	15%

23. This question asked respondents to write down their ideas concerning the future of Gaines Township and the Master Planning Process. It generated numerous responses related to different several different aspects of the township. They have been tallied into five different categories. The most relevant to the question relate to those in the Planning and Master Plan chart and the answers related to residential development.

1. Planning/Master Planning:

Plan to preserve rural characteristic and farmland	48
Control urban sprawl	37
Balance Growth	8
Preserve land values in area.	3

Strong tax base	3
Open space enhances the township	8
Open space wastes land	1
Encourage trails through wetlands and along Southbelt	6
Improve traffic flow	10
Curtail industrial development	6
Increase industrial development	1
Include technology infrastructure plans in master plan	1
Encourage commercial development	1
Control commercial development	18
Allow marketplace to control or lead growth	4
Balance-Take advantage of revenue from Southbelt	2
Provide for better-controlled drainage.	2
Extend both East Paris and Breton Avenues	3

2. Responses Related to Residential Growth:

Limit low end housing	4
Reduce housing development	10
Keep lot areas large, 2-1/2 to 5 acres	5
Provide for Sidewalks and streetlights	6
Establish uniform architectural and landscape standards	2
Encourage Planned Developments	1
Control residential development	13
Plan slow growth without special uses or PD's	1
Avoid multi-family dwellings to protect property values	23
Provide housing for all people	5
Extend water & sewer to existing developments only	1
Walkable communities	1
Consider quaint "small town" type development	7

3. Information for the Township Board to Evaluate:

Provide more recreational facilities, and park land	5
Provide senior citizen programs/senior housing	2
No more taxes	9
Encourage a Post Office with our own identity.	1
Change tax structure so that those with kids pay, not us.	2
Enhance library	1
Lower Farmers taxes	6
Provide Saturday office hours for Tax collection.	1
Keep roads in good repair & enforce traffic speed limits.	21
Township Board misusing tax \$ with purchase of 80 acres	1
Township board needs more members	1
Provide leaf and yard waste collection or pick up service.	5

4. Directive Responses and other comments:

Ban Adult stores	1
Keep proliferation of RV's out of residential areas	1
Changing building codes causes problem for builders	1
Prohibit new sand and gravel mining pits	2
Zoning enforcement follows "good old boy" network	3
Add sit down restaurants	4
Add left turn lanes where needed	9
Control property maintenance	5
Clean up businesses with poor curb appeal	1
Enforce zoning rules about junk cars & trash.	7
Clean up Division Ave between 60th & 76th w/Byron	1
No more zoning regulations	5
Enforce current zoning	1
Careful Planning to avoid look of Kentwood	11

5. Other Comments of Encouragement:

Good luck in master planning. It is not an easy job.	1
Continue Careful Planning as have been	13
Keep Master Plan flexible	5
Don't change Master Plan	1