

## CHAPTER 8

### FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

At present, Elmira Township is primarily a rural residential, forested and agricultural community. While active agricultural uses have declined from historic levels, the many active farms that remain are highly valued by the local residents. Additionally due to the amount of state land in the Township, some of the forested lands remain as open space.

Through land use planning and land use controls, Elmira Township intends to ensure that existing rural residential, agricultural, and recreational uses can continue, and reasonable growth can be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts. Based on the social, economic, and environmental characteristics of the Township, six general categories of land use have been identified to serve existing and future development needs. These categories are:

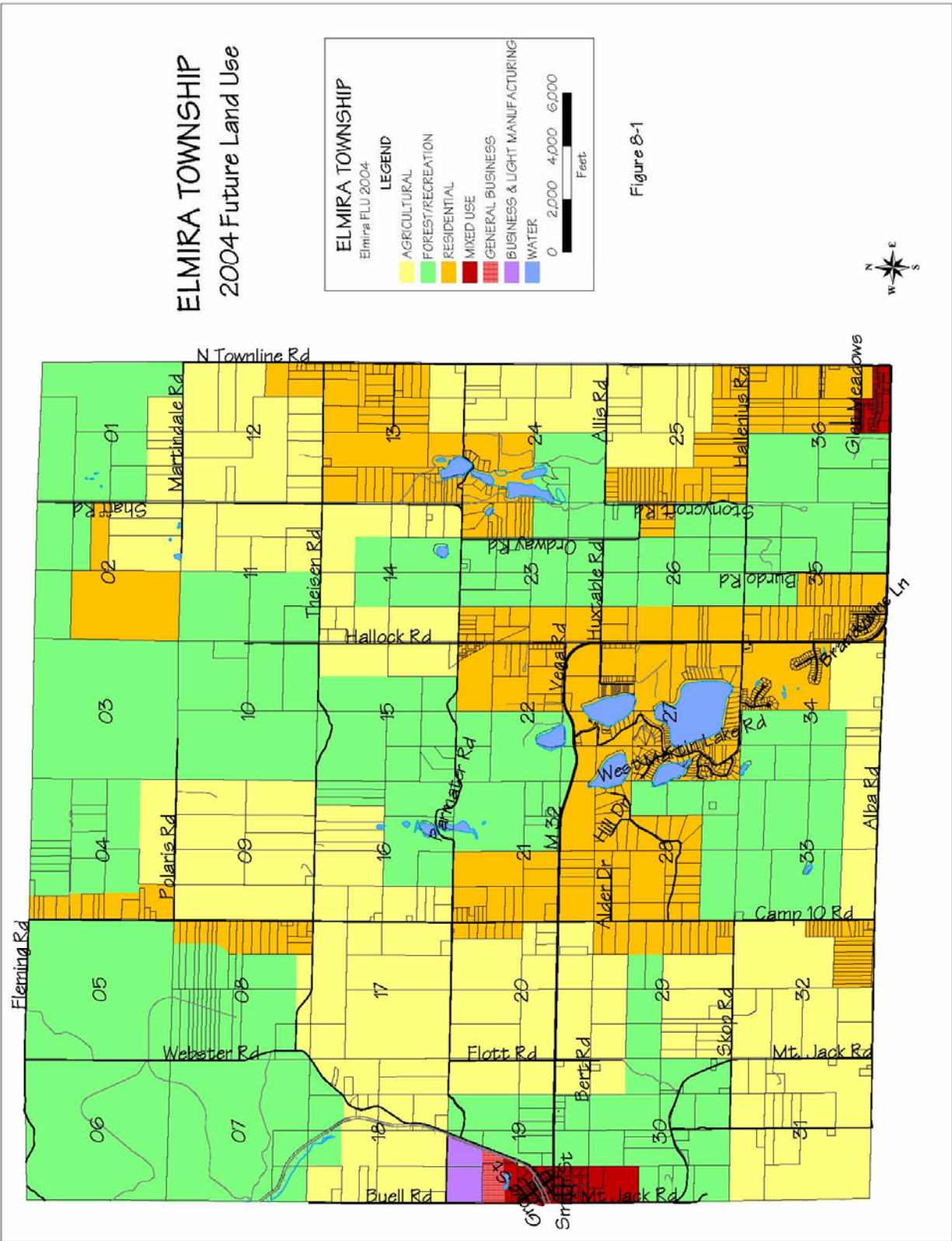
- Agricultural
- Forest-Recreation
- Residential
- Mixed Use
- General Business
- Business & Light Manufacturing

#### **Agricultural**

This category includes land used or appropriate for use for farming, livestock and related activities. Farm dwellings and agricultural accessory buildings are compatible. These areas could serve as potential “sending zones” for the transferring of development rights, thus allowing the permitted density to be transferred from a designated agricultural area to a designated “receiving zone” where higher density is desired or acceptable. This land use category could be compatible with low density residential (two to five acre lot sizes) or clustered housing with committed open space.

These future land use recommendations acknowledge that clusters or strips of residential development have occurred within areas where agriculture is the predominant land use. One of the goals identified by the county as part of this planning document is the preservation of agricultural land. Otsego County recognizes that the presence of agricultural land contributes significantly to the scenic and rural character valued by the county residents.

Methods which other communities have employed to help protect and preserve agricultural land while protecting a landowner's economic investment include the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), clustering requirements for non-agricultural uses, and tax breaks or incentives for continuing agricultural use. It is recommended that these alternatives be investigated for possible application in Otsego County, as a way to balance economic rights with agricultural preservation goals.



Another approach to help promote cluster residential development and minimize agricultural land loss would be to designate a maximum lot size (or maximum yard space on larger lots) of one acre for non-agricultural residential development along the road corridors. The minimum lot size for agricultural purposes in the remainder of the Agricultural-Resource District would remain intact, or even be increased.

The result will be to preserve land for agriculture by keeping the residential development on relatively small lots adjacent to the road corridors, and leaving the bulk of the parcel in farm use.

## **Forest-Recreation**

The Forest-Recreation category includes existing state-owned land, and primarily forested lands protected by conservation easements or other restrictions such as lands protected under the Commercial Forest Act (CFA). These lands are not subject to intense development pressures due to existing public ownership, restrictions or easement status, consequently only environmental preservation and low intensity recreation related development activities are anticipated on these properties. It is intended that these lands be designated for continued conservation and recreational use. The distribution of the Forest-Recreation designated land throughout the Township is shown on the Future Land Use Map, Figure 8-1.

Uses proposed in the Forest-Recreation area include public and private forestry, wildlife habitat, parks and recreation, as well as similar open space uses. This future land use category is generally compatible with the Forestry-Recreation District in the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance. The parcel sizes vary significantly from smaller road ends providing lake access to larger tracts of land to protect the forests, therefore the minimum parcel size allowed in the Forestry-Recreation District of 88,000 square feet is compatible. The Township encourages the establishment of conservation parklands and open space, including the preservation of farmlands, wetlands and riverine habitats for scenic views, recreation and wildlife protection. The tools include donations, acquisition, cooperative efforts with other units of government and land owners, conservation easements and zoning ordinance provisions that support the use of conservation easements and sound conservation developments.

## **Residential**

The Residential development category is designed to accommodate single family dwellings at densities ranging from one unit per 20,000 square feet (slightly less than ½ acre) to one unit per two acres. This development is located on roads with light vehicular traffic. No municipal water or sewer service will be available. Buffers or physical separation from potentially incompatible uses (industrial and agriculture) may be necessary when located adjacent to this type of development. Additional provisions are recommended to be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a cluster development pattern to avoid or minimize development impacts on environmentally sensitive areas, forests or farmland. This Residential land use category is consistent with the Township's resource goal to "Maintain an ecologically sound balance between human activities and the environment to retain the Township's scenic and rural character."

The Residential future land use category is intended to direct future residential growth to areas of the Township where adequate public services and transportation links can best be provided. The

Residential future land use category is general in nature and is compatible with the low density residential zoning districts of the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance.

### **Mixed Use**

Two primary areas are designated for a mix of commercial and residential development. One area is the unincorporated Village of Elmira, where retail and small business is encouraged. Consistent with traditional villages, Residential Uses on the second floor of commercial buildings in this area are also encouraged. These areas designated for mixed use are shown on the Future Land Use Map, Figure 8-1. The intended business uses are compatible with those allowed in the B-1 district of the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance. The mix of small-scale commercial uses are compatible with and of service to residential uses. The County Planning Commission could be requested to review this matter, to more specifically allow for and encourage the “traditional village” (concept retail on first floor and residential above) in the County Zoning Ordinance.

A second mixed use area is designated in at the eastern border of the Township in the vicinity of M-32 and North Townline Road.

### **General Business**

An area is designated just north of the Village of Elmira, to accommodate more diversified business types, and served by passer-by traffic. This Future Land Use category is consistent with the zoning for the B-2 General Business District of the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance. The area is planned as a transition between the Mixed Use Area (typically small-scale local business), and the Business & Light Manufacturing Area (light manufacturing and wholesale storage facilities), see figure 8-1.

### **Business & Light Manufacturing**

Consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan, light manufacturing and light industrial uses are encouraged in appropriate locations. This area provides for light manufacturing, wholesale storage, wholesale distribution, and is served by an active rail line. The area shown incorporates a bulk cement distribution operation area in the western portion on Webster Road. A business and light manufacturing area is shown on the Future Land Use Map, Figure 8-1. This future land use category is consistent with the B-3 (Business, Light Manufacturing) Zoning District in the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance.