

## CHAPTER 3 – SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

In 1900, Livingston Township was the most populous unit of government in Otsego County, with 1,506 persons. In 1930, following the incorporation of the City of Gaylord and the annexation of Township land, the population remaining in the unincorporated sections of the Township was just 591. Over the next 50 years the Township continued to grow, until in 1980 the population exceeded that of the turn of the century. Population growth then slowed significantly but rebounded to its second highest growth rate in the last fifty years.

### Population Data and Trends

The most important component in any community is the population of the area. The actions of the population directly impact the characteristics and future of the community. The diversity of backgrounds and the similarities among residents merge to give a community its distinct and unique character and personality. The differences and similarities in education, employment, ethnic customs, and socio-economic factors need to be examined to define the “character” of Livingston Township.

This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* is an analysis of these social and economic factors that define the character of the Township. A composite statistical analysis of the population will identify the traits of the community, its needs, and provide direction for the Township’s future.

The total population of Livingston Township in the year 2000 was 2,339 persons. As of July 2003, the Census Bureau estimated the Livingston Township population at 2,422 persons.

### Racial Distribution

Livingston Township's population is relatively similar in racial make-up. Based on 2000 Census data, 2,339 persons reside in Livingston Township. Of the total 2,277 or 97.3 percent are white; two or 0.1 percent are African American; 14 or 0.6 percent are American Indian; 12 or 0.5 percent are Asian; two or 0.1 percent were listed as Other; and 32 or 1.4 percent were listed as Two or More Races.

### Age Distribution

In addition to total population figures, analyzing the age distribution within a community is helpful in planning future programs and activities. The needs of people living in Livingston Township vary according to the age and sex of each individual. A predominantly younger population has different attitudes and requires different activities than an older population.

**Table 3-1** compares the number and percentages in each age category for Livingston Township, Otsego County, and the State of Michigan from the 2000 Census. The median age of residents in the Township is 38.2 years, somewhat older than County and State median age statistics. Those older than 19 years comprise 68.4 percent of the Township’s population or 1,599 residents. Those over 65 years make up 10.2 percent of the population and represent 239 residents.

**Table 3-1  
Age Distribution  
Livingston Township, Otsego County, and State of Michigan, 2000**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Twp. Pop.</b>	<b>Twp. %</b>	<b>Co. Pop.</b>	<b>Co. %</b>	<b>State %</b>
Under 5	143	6.1%	1,445	6.2%	6.8%
5-19	597	25.5%	5,341	23.0%	22.2%
20-24	82	3.5%	1,078	4.6%	6.5%
25-34	242	10.3%	2,808	12.1%	13.7%
35-44	442	18.9%	3,838	16.5%	16.1%
45-54	380	16.2%	3,200	13.7%	13.8%
55-59	112	4.8%	1,236	5.3%	4.9%
60-64	102	4.4%	1,154	5.0%	3.8%
65 & over	239	10.2%	3,201	13.8%	12.3%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,339</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>23,301</b>	<b>100.2%</b>	<b>100.1%</b>
Med. Age	38.2		37.7		35.5

Note: Due to rounding, percent totals may not equal 100 percent.  
Source: DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2000. U.S. Census Bureau.

### County Population

The 2000 population for Otsego County was 23,301 - a 29.8 percent increase from the 1990 population of 17,957. The County has sustained a relatively steady population increase, since the 1930's, indicating the increased popularity of the area. It is felt that the majority of this increase can be attributed to the influx of older retired persons and the younger generation. Retirees are returning or moving to Northern Michigan after spending their working years in large urban areas. The younger generation is seeking progressive rural areas where employment is available and good schools are accessible to their children.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated Otsego County's population at 24,268 as of July, 2003. Based on Michigan Department of Management and Budget data, population projections for the County are estimated at 28,500 persons by the year 2010, an increase of 173 percent since 1970. These projections indicate a heavy influx of new residents, which could create a substantial impact upon the Region and its local governmental units.

### Township Population

Livingston Township experienced an accelerated growth rate from 1960 to 1980. During the 1960's the Township population increased by 464 persons, while the 1970's saw an increase of 310 persons. According to the 1990 Census, the 1980 decade experienced a slower growth, with an increase of only 52 persons. The Township's 3.1 percent growth rate contrasts

markedly to the current 19.8 percent growth rate for Otsego County. The 2000 Census showed a substantial change in the growth rate in Livingston Township versus the slow growth rate experienced in the 1990 Census. The 33.3 percent growth in the decade of the 1990's was ten times the growth rate from 1980 to 1990. The growth in Livingston Township even out-paced the County's growth rate of 29.8 percent. Otsego County's rate of growth during the past decade was the second fastest in Michigan. **Table 3-2** indicates population trends comparing Livingston Township and Otsego County for the period 1960 to 2000 and includes the 2003 estimated populations.

**Table 3-2**  
**Population Trends, 1960-2000 & 2003 Estimates**  
**Livingston Township and Otsego County**

Year	Livingston Township			Otsego County		
	Population	Increase	% Growth	Population	Increase	% Growth
1960	929	---	---	7,545	---	---
1970	1,393	464	49.9%	10,422	2,877	38.1%
1980	1,703	310	22.2%	14,993	4,571	43.9%
1990	1,755	52	3.1%	17,957	2,964	19.8%
2000	2,339	584	33.3%	23,301	5,344	29.8%
2003 (estimated)	2,422	83	3.5%	24,268	967	4.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Projected Population Growth

As the "Baby-Boomer" generation reaches retirement age, more and more of them are looking at Northern Michigan as a retirement destination. Summer cottages are becoming either year-round or spring, summer, and fall retirement residences. Many retirees spend at least some of the winter in warmer climates. These trends are only expected to increase as the "bulge" in the population reaches retirement age. Consequently, due to Livingston Township's beauty and "up north" character, it is expected that the population will increase in significant numbers in the next ten years.

Considering Otsego County's population growth since 1940, it is not surprising that population projections predict the County's substantial growth will continue to occur into the next decade. Presently three different sets of population projections have been computed for Otsego County, calculated using different methods, as presented below in **Table 3-3**. Projections produced by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) show the County's population increasing by 23 percent from 2000 to 2010 (+5,366 persons). These projections show the County's present population increasing to 28,667 by 2010. Projections from NEMCOG are somewhat higher than Michigan Department of Management and Budget (DMB) for the years 2010 and 2020, and considerably higher than Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) by the University of Michigan for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

**Table 3-3  
Otsego County Population Projections 2010-2020**

<b>Source</b>	<b>2000 Actual</b>	<b>2010 Projected</b>	<b>% Change 2000-2010</b>	<b>2020 Projected</b>	<b>% Change 2010-2020</b>
NEMCOG	23,301	28,667	23.0%	37,800	31.8%
U of M	23,301	24,439	4.9%	26,134	6.9%
DMB	23,301	28,500	22.3%	34,800	22.1%

Sources: NEMCOG, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments; U of M, Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) by University of Michigan for the Michigan Department of Transportation; DMB, Michigan Department of Management and Budget, Office of the State Demographer.

For planning purposes, the important conclusion is that there is a strong likelihood that the population of Otsego County will continue to grow in a robust manner. The fact that Otsego County's population is expected to grow by five to 20 percent between 2000 and 2010 and by seven to 30 percent between 2010 and 2020 shows the critical need for advanced planning of infrastructure and public service requirements. A significant portion of that growth will occur in Livingston Township. The Township's rural appeal will bring in more residential development in the coming years. The Township needs to determine the shape in which it would like to see development in order to optimize land use and preserve the area's natural resources and protect its citizens and environment.

**Personal and Family Income**

One measure of community economic health is the comparative status of family and personal income levels. The earning power and income levels of persons and families in Northern Michigan are substantially lower than in the more urbanized southern section of the State. In effect, the spending capacity is also lower. Therefore, many businesses rely on seasonal tourist trade, which typically operates with lower than average wages and salaries. The ability of wage earners to improve real property, to afford adequate housing, or to pay increasing property taxes, is likewise made more difficult under these conditions. Hence, adequate personal and family incomes are essential to the overall well being of the community.

Data from the U.S. Census show that Otsego County's income is rising at a faster rate than the State's (**Table 3-4**). From 1989 to 1999, Michigan's median household income rose by 10.9 percent, while Otsego County's rose by 19.5 percent. Although Otsego County's median household income is still less than the State's rate, it is only less than the State's figure by 8.5 percent. This is unusual in Northeast Michigan, where the median household income of most counties is much lower than the State rate. All other Northeast Michigan counties also have much higher poverty rates than Otsego County. The reason for this is probably not because wages are so much higher in Otsego County than in other Northeast Michigan counties. It is more likely due to the fact that employment opportunities in Otsego County are less subject to seasonal fluctuations than in other nearby counties. Generally speaking, individuals who have steady, year-round employment will tend to have higher overall incomes than those who are laid-off for part of the year.

**Table 3-4  
Median Household Income for Otsego County, and State – 1989 & 1999**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1989 (in 1999 \$*)</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>% Change **</b>
Otsego County	\$26,356	\$34,206	\$40,876	19.5%
Michigan	\$31,020	\$40,260	\$44,667	10.9%

\* 1989 income converted into 1999 dollars.  
 \*\* Percent change from 1989 (using 1999 dollar conversion) to 1999 income.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Places of Employment**

Livingston Township is primarily a rural residential area where a majority of the residents commute on a daily basis to places of employment outside the Township. The proximity of Gaylord to the Township and the fact that the City is a primary economic center for the immediate vicinity, make it logical that Gaylord is the major source of employment for Livingston Township residents.

A listing of the top ten major employers for Otsego County is found below in **Table 3-5**. The County's top two employers are public entities (the schools and the hospital). One of the County's top employers (Treetops Sylvan Resort) is subject to some seasonal employment variances between the summer and winter months, although it is not as much as is found at many other Northeast Michigan resorts. Two of the County's major employers (Wal-Mart and Glen's Market) utilize a large number of part-time employees. With the exception of H&H Tube Manufacturing in Vanderbilt, all of the County's major employers are located in or very near the City of Gaylord.

**Table 3-5  
Otsego County Major Employers – 2003**

<b>Employer</b>	<b># of Employees</b>
Gaylord Community Schools	450
Otsego Memorial Hospital	425
Reptron	400
Treetops Sylvan Resort	350 summer 300 winter
Coopers-Standard Automotive, Gaylord	325
Wal-Mart	253
Georgia Pacific	252
Tandem Transport Corp.	243
Glen's Market	165
H&H Tube Manufacturing	150

Source: "2002 Michigan Industrial Directory" and "2002 Michigan Services Directory" by Harris InfoSource; Northeast Michigan Council of Governments.

## Employment and Unemployment

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth publishes monthly and annual employment data. Employment data on the civilian labor force is presented in **Table 3-6**, comparing the Township, County, and State for the years 2000 through 2003.

**Table 3-6  
Civilian Labor Force Comparisons  
Livingston Township, Otsego County, and State of Michigan, 2000 – 2003**

	Township				County				State (in 1,000s)			
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003
Labor Force	1500	1475	1450	1450	13900	13850	14200	13700	5172	5158	5001	5042
Employment	1450	1400	1375	1375	13300	13000	13100	12575	4989	4886	4691	4674
Unemployment	50	75	75	75	600	850	1100	1125	183	271	310	368

Note: All numbers rounded to the nearest 25.

Source: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

The unemployment rate for Otsego County has traditionally been higher than that of the State, although not as high as other counties in the Northeast Michigan Region. **Table 3-7** compares the unemployment rates for the Township, County, and State for the last four years. The statistics show a general increase in unemployment for all jurisdictions in recent years.

**Table 3-7  
Unemployment Rate Comparisons  
Livingston Township, Otsego County, and State of Michigan, 2000 – 2003**

Jurisdiction	2000	2001	2002	2003
Livingston Township	3.1%	4.4%	5.2%	5.9%
Otsego County	4.4%	6.2%	7.8%	8.2%
State of Michigan	3.5%	5.3%	6.2%	7.3%

Source: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.