

CHAPTER 8 – FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Commission developed the future land use recommendations for this *Livingston Township Comprehensive Plan Update* with guidance from the Township Board and with assistance from NEMCOG and a planning consultant. Recommendations are based on an analysis of several factors including: existing land use patterns, social and economic characteristics, environmental conditions, available community services and facilities, existing land division patterns, property ownership, existing zoning, and community goals and objectives. Comparisons were also made to existing land use, existing zoning, and future land use recommendations from communities adjacent to Livingston Township's boundaries. The underlying direction for these future land use recommendations was the citizen survey conducted in 1999. Please see page 1-4, "Efforts of the Livingston Township Planning Commission" and "Description of the Planning Approach". A summary of the survey results is presented in Chapter 2. Appendix A includes a copy of the actual survey instrument, and Appendix B shows a summary of the numerical results of the survey. Results from the survey were transformed into Goals, Objectives, and Policies. These are detailed in Chapter 7.

The recommended future land use plan identifies locations for eight different land use categories: environmental preservation, forestlands, agricultural, residential, commercial, resort, institutional/governmental, and industrial/extractive. These land use categories were designated as a method of implementing the land use objectives and policies of Chapter 7. **Figure 6**, Future Land Use Map, illustrates the intended future land uses by category. It is the intention that Livingston Township be guided by this map as it undertakes its duty to recommend future land use to Otsego County. Each land use category is described below as well as activities anticipated within each of the categories.

Environmental Preservation

A large area with fragile environmental characteristics was identified during the planning process. The area, shown as dark green on **Figure 6**, is located in the eastern portion of the Township where wetlands are adjacent to Mossback Creek and Sturgeon River. The National Wetlands Inventory classifies the area as lowland forests. This area should be protected from the potential of dense development by adequate restrictions. This future land use plan does not restrict privately-owned parcels from all development. Rather, the intent is to restrict the density of development, because hydric soils are not always suitable for the construction of building foundations and septic systems.

Hunting, fishing, and similar recreational uses are suggested in this area. Forestry harvesting should be limited to winter months when the ground is frozen to protect the soil, and appropriate measures should be taken to prevent erosion into adjacent waterways.

Forestlands

Forestlands is the land use category which is the next most restrictive after Environmental Preservation. Forestlands are primarily wooded or forested. They can also be non-forested but with a strong land use influence from nearby forested land. Certain areas of the Township (shown on **Figure 4**) have soils which are capable of producing timber at a rate meeting the National Standards for Prime Timberlands. Much of these identified lands are included in the Forestlands category.

Forested land is a significant cover type in the Township. **Figure 5**, Existing Land Use Map, depicts upland and lowland forests and associated non-forest uplands. The overriding concept for this *Livingston Township Comprehensive Plan Update* includes the desire “to preserve its rural character”. Furthermore, the top two Goals of the Township are to “1. Maintain the general rural character of the Township” and “2. Protect, as much as possible, the existing natural environment, existing farmlands, forests, and scenic beauty”. The future land use plan, therefore, recommends the preservation of the character of these areas as much as possible. This category covers a number of large areas scattered throughout the Township. They are shown as light green on **Figure 6**.

The forestland category includes areas to be used primarily for timber harvesting, wildlife habitat, hunting, and certain forest-related outdoor recreational activities. Intensive recreational uses such as shooting ranges, driving ranges, campgrounds, recreational resorts, and commercial hunting or game reserves may be allowed where compatible with adjacent land uses. Veterinary clinics, kennels, and animal grooming facilities may also be permitted where compatible with adjacent land uses. Residential development is to be limited in density in a way that does not impinge on the overall rural character of the category or destroy significant portions of the forestland. The protection of forested land, wetlands, and non-forested open space is critical to preserving the rural character of the Township. The fragmentation of large parcels is discouraged.

Agricultural

The primary use within the agricultural category is farming of various types and direct farm-related businesses. The category includes active and fallow farm land. Livingston Township has some productive agricultural areas located on good farm soils, although actual farming has decreased in recent years due to economic reasons. The future land use plan recommends keeping these areas in farm use where soils are suitable. Prime agricultural soils are mapped on **Figure 4**. Agricultural lands are also important for their aesthetic values, and the preservation of open space is a major goal of this plan. As in the previous categories, the overriding concept for the *Livingston Township Comprehensive Plan Update* includes the desire “to preserve its rural character”. Furthermore, the top two Goals of the Township are to “1. Maintain the general rural character of the Township” and “2. Protect, as much as possible, the existing natural environment, existing farmlands, forests, and scenic beauty”.

Agriculture includes crop and livestock production, plant nurseries, orchards, vineyards, Christmas tree production, and other land-based growing activities. The category also includes buildings necessary to conduct agricultural activities. Most related activities, such as processing facilities, are considered compatible in this land use category. Veterinary clinics, kennels, and animal grooming facilities may be permitted where compatible with adjacent land uses. Residential development within this category should be limited in density to preserve the overall rural character and prevent the fragmentation of farmland.

Intensive agricultural uses, such as animal feed lots and forest processing operations, should be allowed only after special consideration. The mining of gravel or sand should be allowed where the resource exists; however, this plan recommends reclamation of these areas when production ceases.

The Future Land Use Map, **Figure 6**, shows the agricultural category as light yellow in color.

Residential

The two most important policy statements for residential development identified in Chapter 7 are, “1. Residential development should be designed in accordance with the capacities and limitations of the natural environment” and “2. Base residential development on the physical and environmental constraints identified in the plan, while maintaining the overall rural character of the Township”. The residential land use category, primarily designed to accommodate single-family dwellings on a range of lot sizes, is shown as light gold on the Future Land Use Map.

The residential category is intended to preserve existing residential development where land has already been subdivided into smaller lots and to expand specific areas for future residential growth. In addition to areas identified for residential development on the Future Land Use Map, this document recognizes that rural residential development has occurred, and will continue to occur, in certain locations within the forestlands and agricultural categories of the Township. However, this plan recommends that residential development in the forestlands and agricultural areas should be kept at a very low density.

The third policy statement to achieve the plan’s residential objectives is, “To maintain housing options, an adequate number of rental units should be allowed.” Therefore, two-family or multiple-family developments are recommended within the residential category when not in conflict with adjacent land uses. The clustering of residential development and the provision of common open space is encouraged where soil conditions are suitable for building foundations and septic systems. Community, institutional, or recreational uses are recommended in these areas if designed to be compatible with the residential setting. Home-operated businesses are also recommended in these areas provided the residential character of the neighborhood is preserved.

Where residential areas are adjacent to lakes or streams, special waterfront protection requirements are encouraged. Less dense development, waterfront setbacks, preservation of natural vegetation, erosion prevention, and limitation on water access by back lot owners are suggested methods of protecting the community’s water resources from degradation.

Because of the comparatively dramatic relief of the Township’s topography, there is, and will be in the future, a tendency to construct homes on hillsides. The reason for doing so is the extra value of a home with a view. It is recommended that homes proposed for construction in comparatively steeply sloped areas, especially locations where the slope is ten percent or more, be closely monitored and stipulations made to safeguard any erosion or runoff from such activities. Steeply sloped areas are mapped on **Figure 3** in Chapter 4.

Commercial

The primary commercial objectives of Chapter 7 are to limit future commercial growth in conformance with the wishes of Township residents and to resist any efforts to further convert existing agricultural, forestry, and residential properties to commercial uses. Areas designated for commercial development are partially developed for commercial purposes at the present time. These areas are shown in red on the Future Land Use Map and include: properties adjacent to Old-27 in Section 33 and 34, the south ½ of Section 28 between Old-27 and the railroad except for an industrial property, the portion of Section 33 west of I-75, the south ½ of the southeast ¼ of Section 32 except for an industrial property, the northeast ¼ of the southeast ¼ of Section 32, portion of the south ¼ of Section 31, and small area in the south portion of Section 3.

Recommended uses for commercial category on the Future Land Use Map include: retail stores, business and personal services, professional offices, food service, lodging facilities, and similar uses. For the area in Section 33 west of I-75, light manufacturing or warehousing uses are recommended. Any commercial uses adjacent to residential areas should provide a landscape buffer to protect the integrity of the residential neighborhood.

Resort

Resort is a category of land use established to provide for the unique economic opportunities of commercial endeavors like golf courses and ski areas. Land within this category may be developed for recreational activities needing considerable acreage and which are outdoor-based. In addition to the recreation facilities themselves, related development, such as housing, dining, and retailing are consistent with the intent of this category.

Chapter 7, Recreation-Open Space, mentions “recreation facilities such as golf and skiing” as “primary attractions for visitors from Southern Michigan and other states”.

Institutional/Governmental

Although institutional and governmental uses are recommended in several other land use categories, the Future Land Use Map identifies certain larger sites. Livingston Township recognizes that these facilities provide a wealth of services to its residents. Therefore, this plan supports the continuation and expansion of these facilities if needed. Shown as rust color on **Figure 6**, they are Otsego County Fairgrounds on the west side of Old-27 in Section 33, Gaylord High School and Alpine Center on the east side of Old-27 in Section 27, DNR and DEQ buildings on the north side of M-32 in the southwest corner of Section 32, and the 40-acre Township-owned parcel in Section 32. Livingston Township Hall, located in Section 16 along Old-27, is also included in this category.

Industrial/Extractive

Industrial areas are those where wholesale activities, warehouses, manufacturing, mechanical repair shops, other medium to heavy commercial activities are permitted. Extractive activities are sand and gravel surface mining.

Under the industrial objectives in Chapter 7, industrial activities are to be directed to the Gaylord Industrial Park. Other than several existing industrial sites, no further industrial locations are recommended in the Township. Extraction activities often need to occur in other land use categories where the resource exists. However, the overriding theme of preservation of rural character, the promotion of a satisfying quality of life, and the maintenance of a viable local economy need to direct extractive activities.

Existing industrial and extractive sites are shown in purple on **Figure 6**.

Hold Page for Figure 6
Future Land Use Map