

An aerial photograph of Union Township, showing a grid of roads and fields. The title is overlaid on the map.

Union Township

Master Plan

June 2011

Crescent Consulting, Inc.

P.O. Box 1184
Midland, MI 48640-1184



Cindy Winland, AICP, PCP

c. winland@crescentplanning.com
(989) 839-2031

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Master Plan	3
Chapter 2: Who are We?	9
Demographics.....	9
Land use	12
Map 1 Existing Land Use	13
Land Features	14
Map 2 Floodplain and Wetlands	16
Map 3 Prime Farmland	19
Community Groups	20
Plans in Progress	23
Chapter 3: Community Input	29
Chapter 4: Rural Meets Urban	35
Introduction	35
Agriculture & Rural Areas	35
Map 4 Existing Agricultural Land Use.....	37
Map 5 Prime Farmland with Residential Zoning	38
The People Say.....	39
Map 6 Development Priority Areas	46
Urban.....	47
Map 7 Existing Land Use	51
The People Say.....	52
Goals and Objectives	53
Chapter 5: Utilities	57
Introduction.....	57

Where are We Now?	57
Map 8 Water and Wastewater Systems.....	59
Map 9 Wastewater System.....	61
The People Say.....	64
Growth and Efficiency.....	64
Goals, Objectives and Tasks	66
Chapter 6: Transportation	71
Introduction.....	71
Where are We Now?	71
Map 10 Parks, Schools, and Trails.....	74
Map 11 Preliminary Draft Of Potential Bike Pathways.	77
Map 12 CMU Bike Paths	79
The People Say.....	80
Goals, Objectives and Tasks	83
Map 13 Aerial View of Bluegrass Road, Showing High Density Development, Scattered Vacancies and Uncoordinated Access.....	85
Chapter 7: Development Opportunities	89
Introduction.....	89
Where are We Now?	89
Map 14 Housing Inventory	94
Map 15 Commercial and Industrial Areas	97
The People Say.....	98
Goals, Objectives and Tasks	100
Chapter 8: Collaboration Opportunities.....	105
Introduction.....	105
The People Say.....	105
Map 16 Tribal Lands	113

Goals, Objectives and Tasks	116
Chapter 9: Looking Forward	121
Introduction	121
Land Use Goal Setting	121
Goals and Objectives	122
Future Land Use Plans	125
Map 17 Future Land Use	128
Chapter 10: Making It Happen.....	131
The Zoning Plan – The Relationship between Zoning and the Master Plan	131
Implementation Plan	132
Policy Governance	133
Chapter 11: Resource Data.....	145

An aerial photograph of a city grid, showing streets, buildings, and green spaces. A large, bold, cyan-colored number '1' is overlaid on the center of the image.

1

The Master Plan



Chapter 1: The Master Plan

GUIDE TO THE FUTURE

Purpose

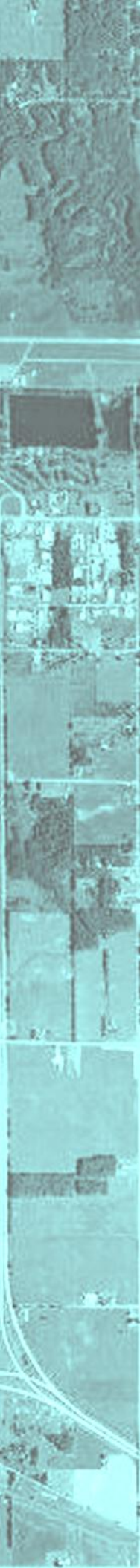
The purpose of this master plan is to guide development within Union Township. The [Michigan Planning Enabling Act](#) (Act 33 of 2008) requires municipalities like Union Township to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans addressing land use and infrastructure for up to twenty years in the future. This plan has a planning horizon of five to ten years and recognizes that Central Michigan University (CMU) and its enrollment plays a central role in the population and needs of the Township.

Union Township is a unique place. It is a traditional six by six square mile township with everything from sleepy rural land on unpaved roads to strip commercial development on five lane streets. It also includes Saginaw Chippewa Indian tribal land, a vibrant public university and the City of Mt. Pleasant residing in its core. This combination of governments, communities, land and visions spill their impact and influence into the Township, separated only by the municipal boundary line. This mix and proximity demands a careful and innovative approach to the future with broad based input from residents and neighbors.

Union Township has used the principles of Smart Growth to inform their study and direction. Each goal can be tied to one of these principles, recognizing that good planning involves looking beyond our borders, our life span and our perceptions.

Embracing change has emerged as a theme throughout this plan. The plan has evolved from thoughtful study of the data; looking for opinions and areas of consensus in the community; and a desire to establish realistic and valuable goals.

Meaningful planning needs to be undertaken in a spirit of openness and a willingness to embrace change. Meaningful results are achieved when the consensus of thought is carried out by each group that uses the Plan as its guide. The Planning Commission, Township Board, staff and stakeholders have the



responsibility to carry out the plan as well as revisit the Plan frequently to be sure it continues to represent the needs of the community.

The Plan is a living document, adaptable to major changes in the conditions facing the Township. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires municipalities to review adopted master plans once every five years. Since the Master Plan serves as a guide, the goals, objectives and strategies presented are general and not set in stone. Circumstances may develop that change the underlying conditions of the Township. The following sections describe the functions and limitations of the Master Plan.

What the Master Plan does...

The Master Plan will do the following:

- Provide a vision for the Township
- Describe the land uses of general areas
- Serve as an overall guide for future decisions
- Provide a framework for evaluating rezoning petitions and site plans
- Be amended as conditions change in the Township

What the Master Plan does not do...

The master plan is limited in the following ways:

- Is not a fixed blueprint of the Township
- Does not fix land-use decisions such as rezoning petitions, which must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account current circumstances
- Does not guarantee that actions will be taken since the plan is a guide and does not have the force of law

Smart Growth

- 1 Mix Land Uses
- 2 Take advantage of compact building design
- 3 Create a range of housing opportunity and choice
- 4 Create walkable neighborhoods
- 5 Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- 6 Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- 7 Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- 8 Provide a variety of transportation choices
- 9 Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
- 10 Encourage community stakeholder collaboration

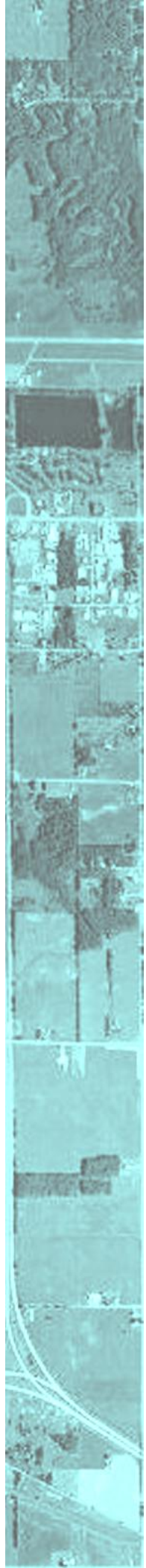
time and may change. As new information becomes available, the master plan must be updated to be useful.

Data, public input and plans about Transportation, Utility Service, Rural–Urban Boundaries, Collaboration Opportunities and Development

The fourth through sixth chapters discuss in detail the data, public input and goals and objectives stated in tasks for each of the subjects listed above. Decision–

Overview

This master plan uses data about Union Township to unroll the intellectual framework for the vision, goals, objectives and plans. *The second chapter “Who are We?”* contains demographic, land use and land feature, (e.g. wetlands and woodlands) data and maps. The chapter also describes the community groups in the Township as well as plans in progress. Additional data on specific issues can be found in *chapters four through six where we look at the issues of Utilities, Transportation, and Urban and Rural and Development Opportunities. Chapters seven through ten focus on the future*, discussing collaboration opportunities, implementation options and the way these desires look on the Future Land Use map. *The final chapter, “Resource Data”,* contains more specific data. The data contained in this master plan is a snap shot in



makers, Township officials, staff and residents should refer to these sections when debating policy changes in these areas.

Community Opinion

The Master Plan was developed using input from a quantitative survey, personal interviews and interactions with community groups. *Community input is highlighted throughout the plan in each chapter as it relates to the issues.* The full results are available on the [Township's website](#). Township officials and staff should use the voices documented as a point of reference as they implement the master plan.

Land Use Decisions

The master plan should serve as a guide for all land use decisions, including site plan review, special land use requests and rezoning petitions. *Chapters seven through nine contain the land use goals and objectives* which should be central to any land use decision by the Township Board and/or Planning Commission. This section also looks at collaboration opportunities and future land use plans to be referenced in land use decisions. These goals, objectives and plans are guides for development, recognizing the inevitability of changing circumstances.

Budgeting and Resource Allocation

The adoption of a master plan is only the first step in guiding the future of development in Union Township. Budgets and the allocation of other resources, such as staff time, will also impact the realization of the goals of the Township. The final chapter, *“Resource Data”*, detail resources. Township officials may use these chapters as suggestions for allocation of resources when developing work plans and budgets.

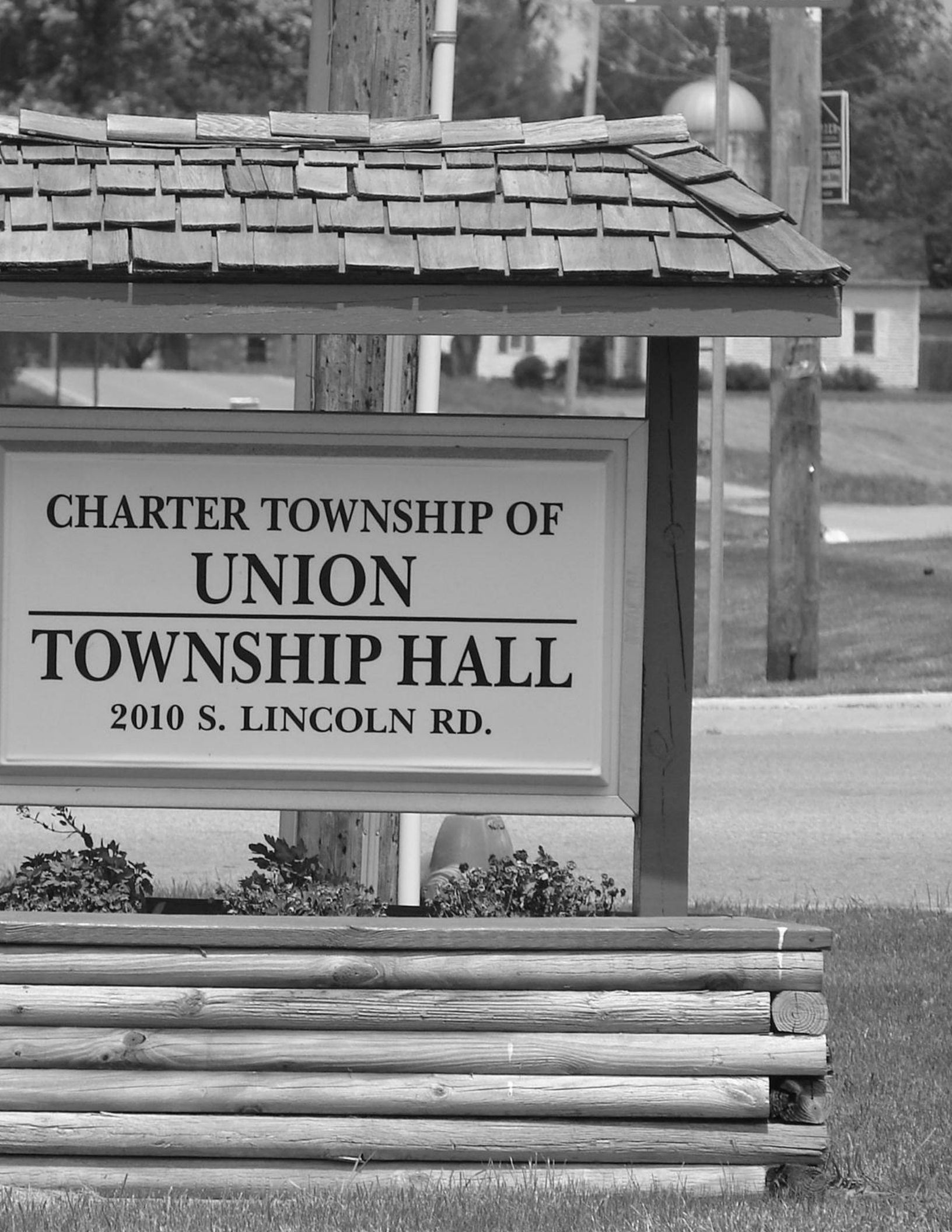




CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF
UNION
TOWNSHIP HALL
2010 S. LINCOLN RD.

Who Are We?

- Demographics
- Land Use
- Land Features
- Community Groups
- Plans in Progress



**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF
UNION**

TOWNSHIP HALL
2010 S. LINCOLN RD.

Chapter 2: Who are We?

UNION TOWNSHIP 2000-2010

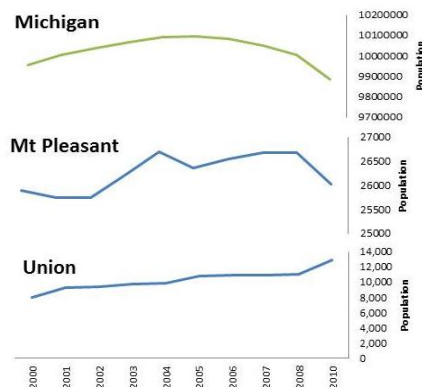
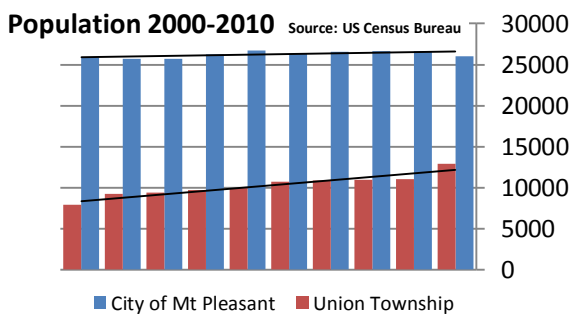
DEMOGRAPHICS

The people living in Union Township influence the development and circumstances within the community. The numbers of residents influence planning for streets, utilities and services. The age, income and length of stay within the community place demands on services and channel growth.

Population – Not like the others

Union Charter Township, with 12,927 residents in 2010, according to the U.S. Census, has the largest population of the 16 townships which make up Isabella County. Union also is the only township that has experienced a population increase of greater than 1,000 people between 2000 and 2010. The U.S. Census figures show that Union gained 4,981 residents in that time period while the other townships have experienced from slight gains of just 13 to 196 new residents as in Lincoln Township.

Union's population trend is more similar to its neighbor, the City of Mt. Pleasant, than to other Isabella County townships as well as that of the State of Michigan overall.



As seen in the chart above, the population in both Mt. Pleasant and Union Township grew steadily in the past decade. The overall population of the State

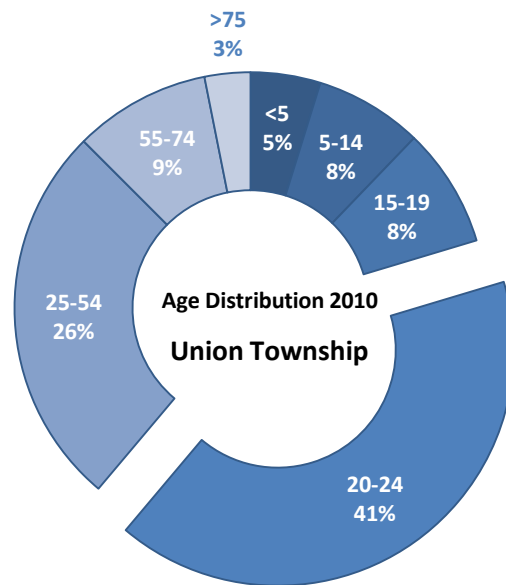
peaked in 2003 and has been on a steady decline since. Union Township is in a unique position of population increase, which may be linked to the growth of Central Michigan University, located in the City of Mt. Pleasant.

In June 2003, all of Isabella County was designated the Mt. Pleasant micropolitan area by the U.S. Census Bureau. A micropolitan designation requires an urban core with a population between 10,000 and 50,000 people, with adjacent suburban communities. The designation opened the door for federal money, particularly for road improvements, prioritized for urban areas.

Age – Both Old and Young

Union Township also differs from statewide trends in terms of the age of the population. Union has seen a shift in its population’s age distribution in the past ten years. In 2000 37% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 54. The 2010 Census shows that now only 26% of the population is in that age range. The largest percentage of the population has shifted to the 20 to 24 year age range.

Unlike the State overall, people ages 20 to 24 account for a significant portion of the population, or 41 percent in 2010. Housing data indicates that these young adults of the millennial generation are Central Michigan University students living in rental housing in Union Township. Young adults, especially students, have different demands on a municipality than adults over 25. Fiber optics, wireless systems and access to technology are important to this generation that has grown up with the internet. Many in this segment have access to recreation amenities at the university so the quality and range of recreation offered by the Township is not as important as it is to older residents with children. Finally, university student populations may remain stable or grow in terms of numbers but usually the length



of time an individual stays in the same community or even dwelling unit is short. The continual influx of new residents can cause stress on a community, affecting the stability and character of neighborhoods. However, students bring growth, inject income, and can become long-term residents after graduation.

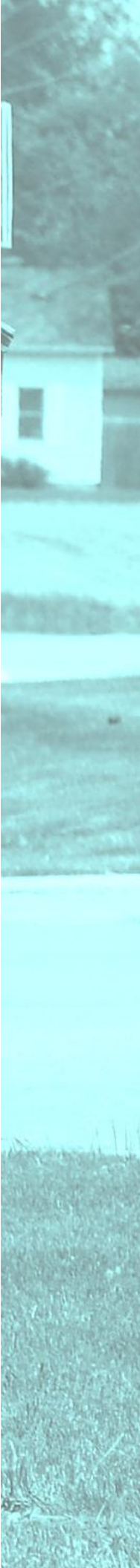
Housing – Stable but Dynamic

Union Township’s housing is mostly single-family houses, at 47 percent of the housing units in the 2000 U.S. Census. Mobile homes and apartment complexes with 20 or more units accounted for 23 percent and 11 percent of the housing units, respectively, in 2000.¹

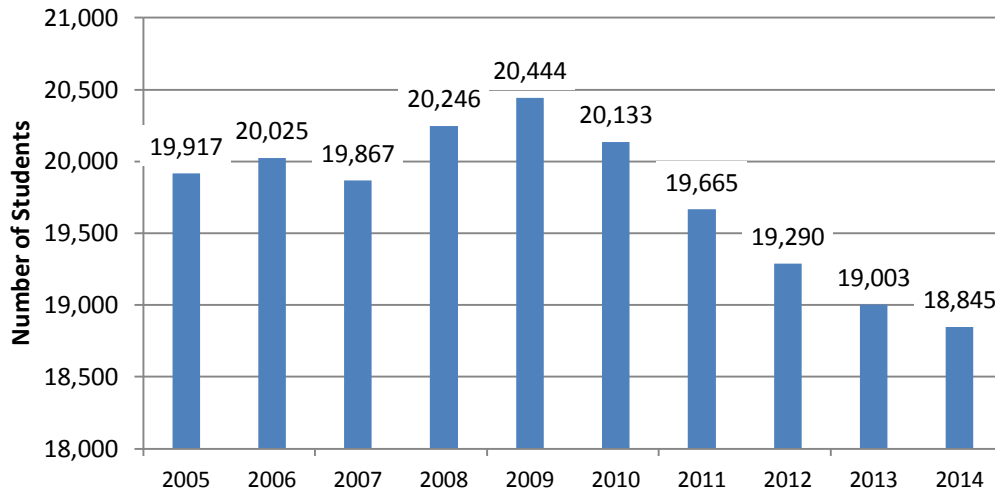
According to the U.S. Census, 1,349 new dwelling units were built in Union Township between 2000 and 2005. The percentages of owner-occupied and renter-occupied units remained the same during this time period, with 59–60 percent homeowners and 39–41 percent renters. Over 56% of the renters in 2000 in Union were between the ages of 15 to 24, similar to those in the City of Mt. Pleasant. In the state of Michigan, renters in the same age range accounted for only 14 percent in 2000. The housing needs of Central Michigan University (CMU) students have impacted the age of the renter population in both Mt. Pleasant and Union Township.

The following chart shows that undergraduate population at CMU has grown in the past ten years but is expected to begin a downward trend. Student demand for housing will continue in the foreseeable future.

¹ 2010 census data for this statistic was not available for use in this document.



CMU - On Campus Total Enrollment (historical and projected)



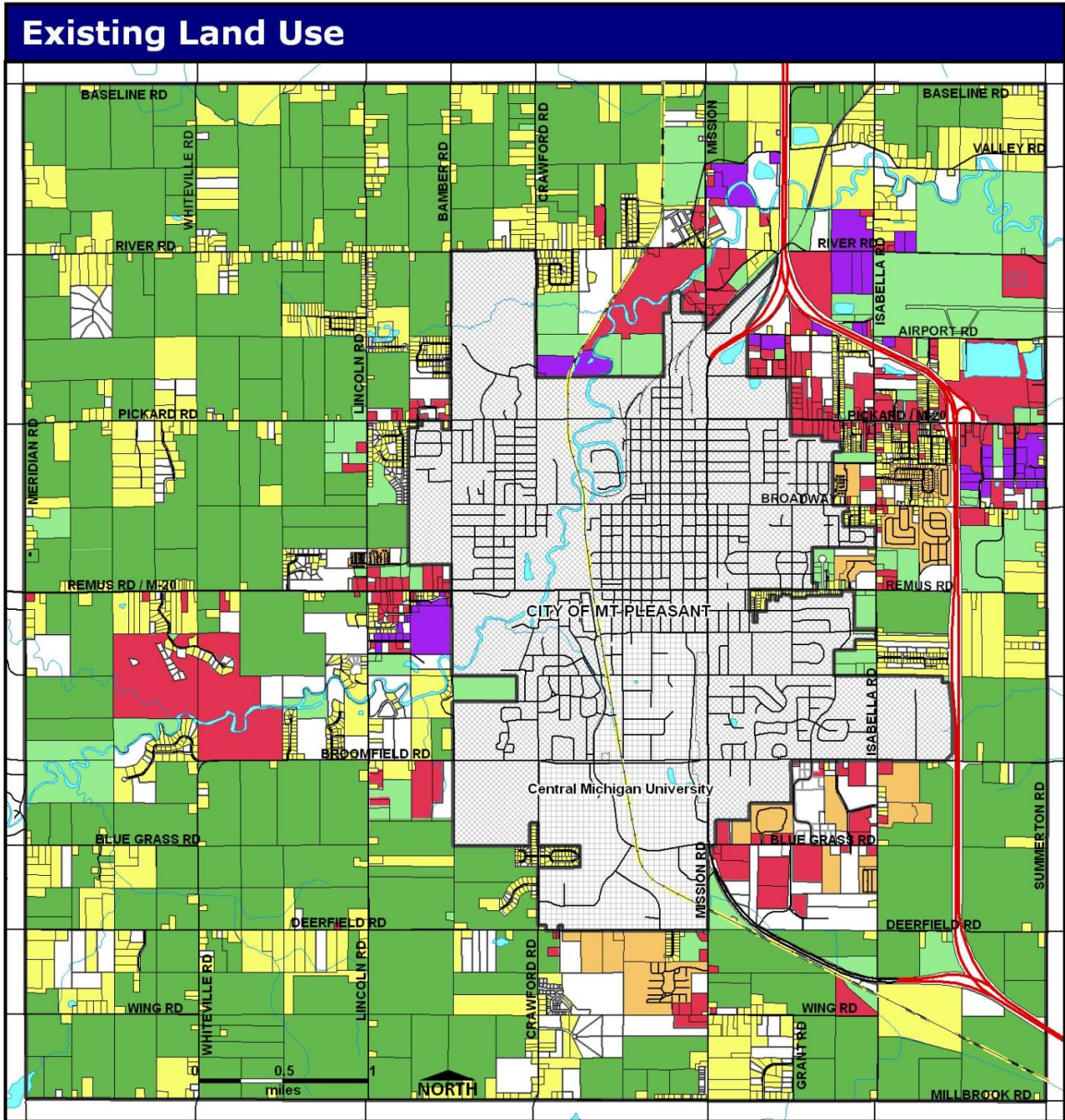
(Demographic data obtained from the [US Census Bureau](#).)

(CMU Enrollment data from [CMU Admissions](#) Website.)

LAND USE

The land pattern in Union Township in February of 2010 is a traditional pattern of higher intensity uses, such as commercial and industrial, ringing the borders of the City of Mt. Pleasant, while residential and agricultural uses dominate the further corners of the Township. Industrial uses are in the northern or eastern part of the Township, near access to the freeway. Commercial also runs in strips near highway interchanges along major roads such as Pickard, Remus, Bluegrass and Mission Roads. Public and civic uses, such as parks, are mostly adjacent to the city and natural features.

Map 1 Existing Land Use



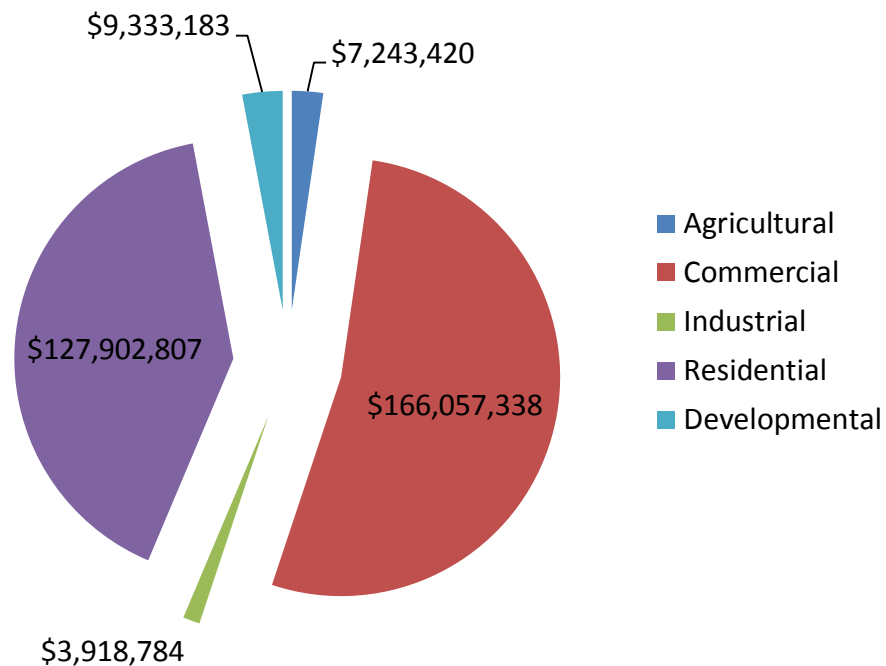
Parcels by Land Use Class

- | | |
|--|---|
| Agricultural | High-Density Residential |
| Commercial / Office Service | Public / Civic / Exempt |
| Industrial | Vacant |
| Residential | |

Existing land use information was developed from Union Township property data, land use/land cover data, and aerial imagery. Additional land use data, collected in the field, was provided by Matt Robinson (CMU Geography Department Senior Honors Project).

Compiled by Union Township GIS Department, October 2010.

Taxable Value by Property Type, 2009



Source: Union Township 2009 Property Assessment Database

Based on building permits by zoning district, the areas with the largest growth between 1990 and 2003 are the agricultural zones and the one and two-family low density (R-2A) housing districts. Over four thousand building permits were issued in this 13-year time period, 29 percent of which were in the R-2A district and 23 percent in areas zoned agricultural. Moreover, the tax base of Union Township is heavily dependent on residential and commercial land uses.

LAND FEATURES

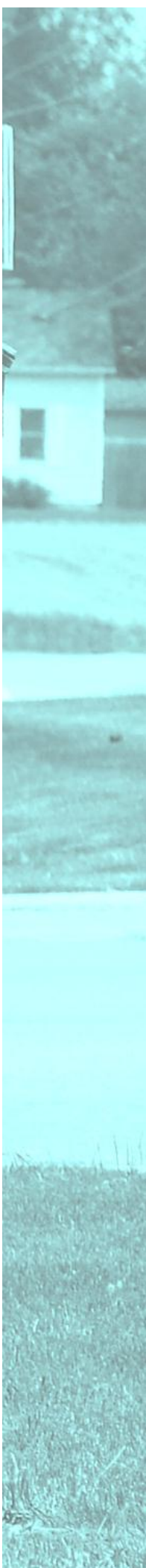
Land features are aspects which affect what type of activities and buildings can happen. The Chippewa River flows across the Township, bringing natural beauty to the community while limiting construction in its floodplains and wetlands. The

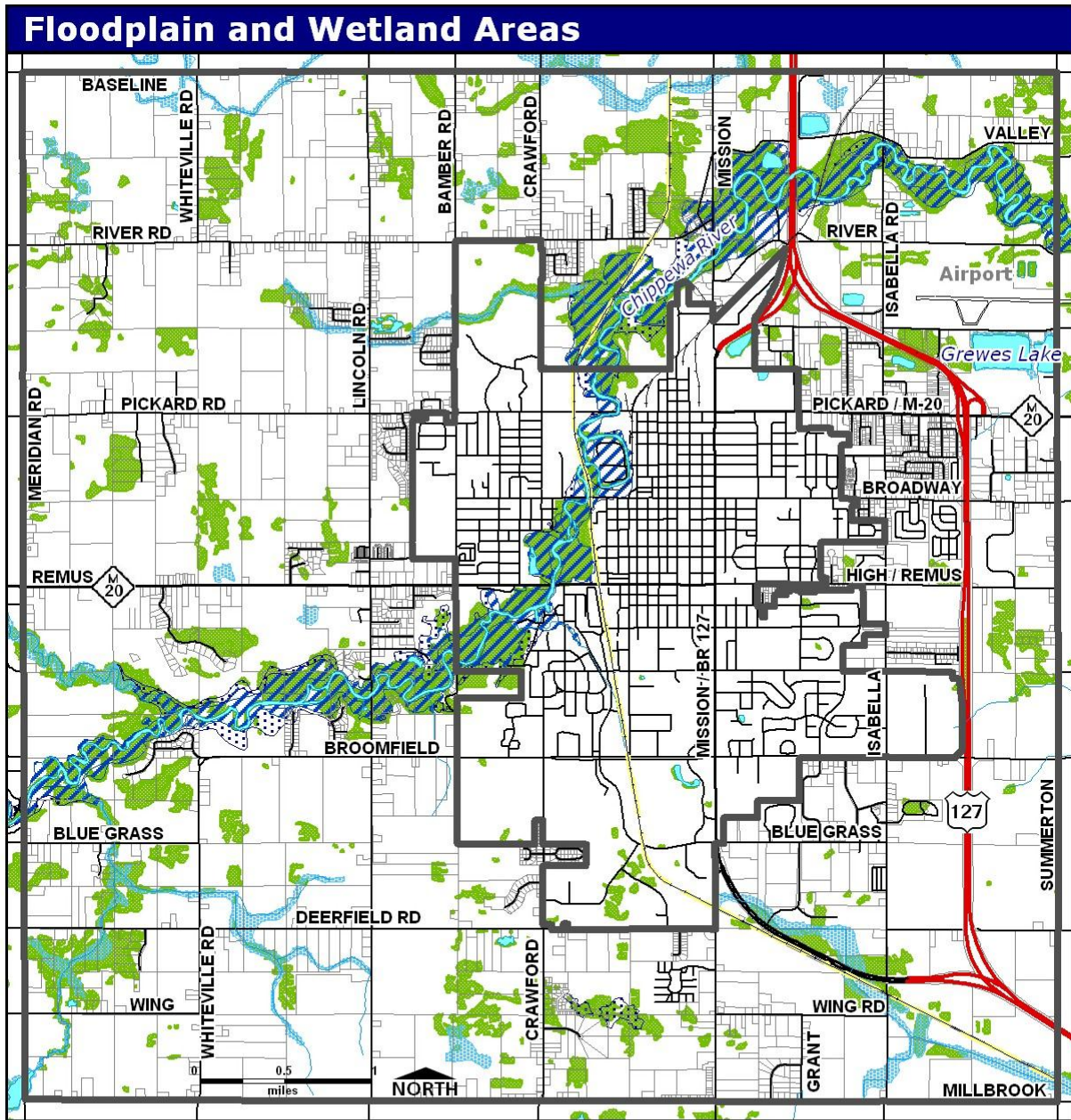
Township is also rich with soils fertile for farming but has areas, especially along the river, where agriculture would be difficult. The soil and water resources in the Township pose choices for the community.

Natural Features – Water and Wetlands

Union Township is rich with water features such as the Chippewa River, creeks and lakes. These waterways and bodies provide scenery and recreation opportunities. Building in the floodplains, the area shaded with slanted lines in the natural features map below, is limited by state and federal laws. Three of the large parks in the Township encompass some of the floodplain. The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy uses conservation easements to protect sensitive natural area along the river. The community will need to plan appropriate uses in these areas that comply with existing regulations and may partner with organizations to protect areas.




Wetlands, low lying areas saturated with moisture for part of the year, are shown in a blue hatch mark in the natural features map below. Union Township is dotted with wetlands, with a chain of large wetlands between US Highway 127 and the eastern township border. Also known as marshes, fens or swamps, wetlands play a key part in the natural cycle of water purification and recharge. The residents of Union Township depend on wells for drinking water so protection of wetlands is a factor for public safety. Wetlands also absorb water during floods, lessening the impact.






Floodplains by Zone 2010

FEMA Flood Hazard Zones (Base Flood Elevation = BFE)

-  A 100-year 1% annual chance flood w/ no BFEs
-  AE 100-year 1% annual chance flood w/ BFEs
-  X500 500-year 0.2% annual chance flood hazard

 River, Creek, or Drain

 Lake or Pond

 Wetlands

Map Produced in November 2010 by:
Union Township GIS Department

This wetlands map is for very general reference purposes only. Actual delineated wetlands are determined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. ([MDNRE](#))

Due to instability of wet soil, buildings cannot be constructed safely in wetland areas unless the area is drained or specific construction techniques are used. The US Army Corps of Engineers regulates wetlands associated with navigable waterways such as the Chippewa River. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment has authority over construction in wetlands over five acres in size or those associated with a water body. The master plan will need to address appropriate activities in wetland areas, per state and federal law but also for the protection of the wetlands and the groundwater. The most recent floodplain maps are available at the [FEMA website](#).

Prime Soils – The Best Place to Farm

Union Township has prime agricultural soils that are rich with nutrients and the best moisture content to grow crops. The prime farmland in Union Township is shown in shades of brown below, the darker areas requiring drainage. The prime farmlands are located primarily in the northwest portion and the southern half of the Township. Much of the prime farmland adjacent to the City has already been developed as commercial and residential uses.

Prime farm land is designated by soil type and characteristics that are suitable to local growing conditions. These soils are known as soils of local importance, a category higher than the general “prime farmland.” The categories shown on the Prime Farmland Map indicate:

- Areas of [prime farmland](#) – as categorized by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) based on soil type and characteristics.
- Areas of prime farmland if drained – as categorized by the USDA. Current drainage status is not mapped and unknown. Many areas that are completely developed are still classified as prime farmland due to soils conditions. This is relevant in the event that large areas are vacated and to be consistent in the classification of land throughout the Township.

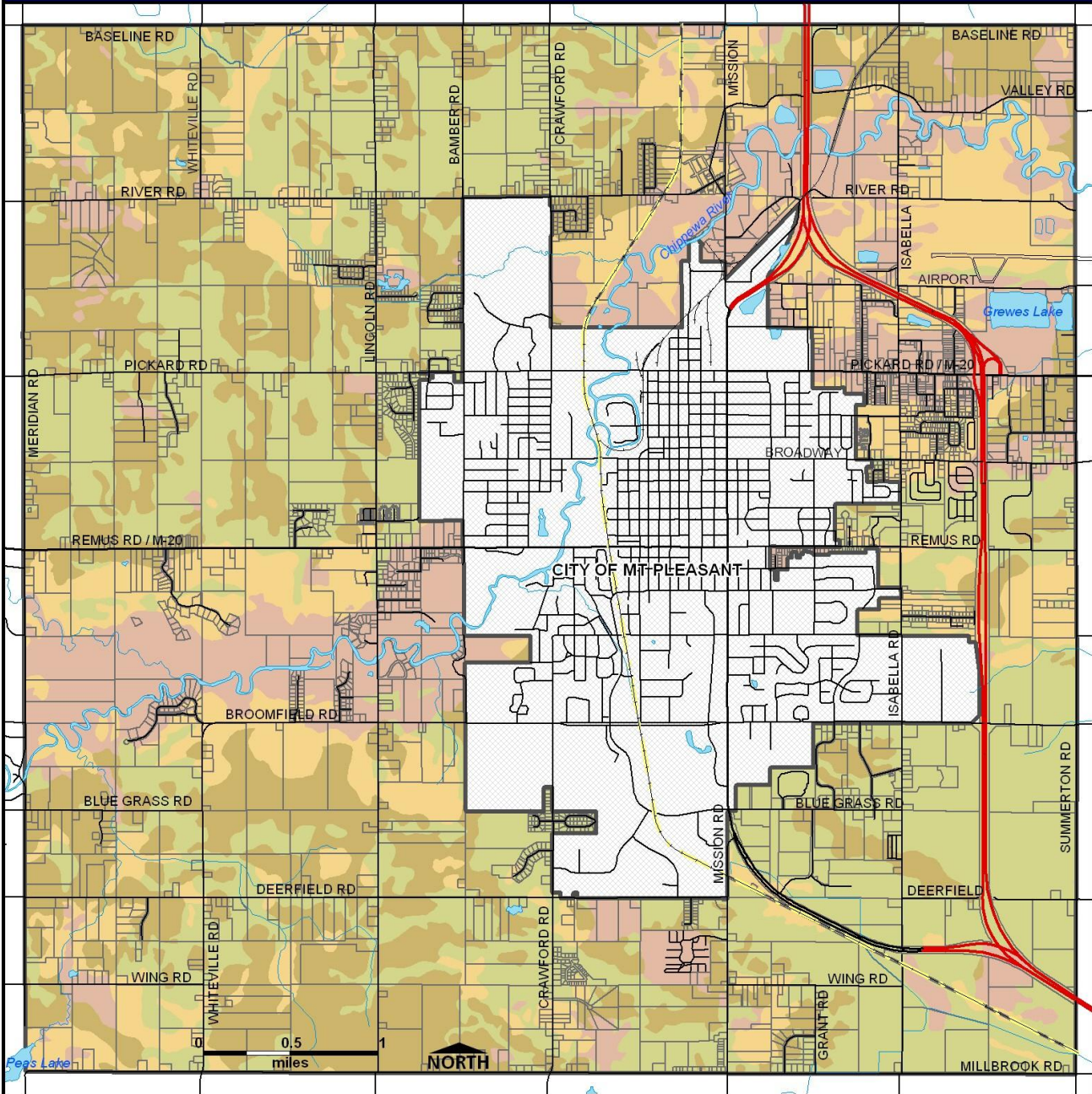


- Not prime farmland. This is land that is in the flood plain or largely wetland, developed or undeveloped.

This list identifies all the land in the Township with respect to farmland capability.



Prime Farmland by Soil Type



Farmland Classification by Soil Type

- All areas are prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained
- Farmland of local importance
- Not prime farmland

Source: Soil Survey of Isabella County Michigan, 1985. USDA / NRCS Soil Conservation Service (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>). Map produced October 2010.

The darker lot outlines, in aqua and orange, are non-agricultural land uses. While prime agricultural soils exist adjacent to or within the City of Mt. Pleasant, the land is most often not farmed. Pockets of non-agricultural uses are found in the corners of the Township on prime soils. Non-agricultural uses on prime agricultural land have two impacts. First, the new structures and paving permanently degrade the quality of the soil, with the exception of residential parcels larger than ten acres. Second, farms function best as businesses in large blocks of consolidated agricultural land. The noise and odor created by agricultural enterprises is often in conflict with suburban-style development. The community will need to plan for specific areas for primarily agriculture and associated uses to maintain the viability of the farms.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

The following groups, municipalities or entities directly impact the future of Union Charter Township. All of these groups have been consulted as part of the Master Plan process. Continued conversation and partnership with these groups will be vital to successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Nation



The [Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Nation](#) is a band of Chippewa Indians (or Ojibwe) located in central Michigan. The tribal government offices are located on the Isabella Indian Reservation, near Union Township. There are 2,767 enrolled members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, many who live on the reservation while others live throughout the country. The tribe owns and operates Soaring Eagle Casino in Chippewa Township, and Saganing Eagles Landing Casino in Standish. They also hold land on the Saganing reservation near Standish, with a community center in addition to the recently completed Eagle's Landing casino on the Saganing reservation. Besides its gaming enterprises, the tribe owns other businesses and community operations including the Sagamok Shell Station, a tribal museum called the Ziibiwing Center, a substance abuse facility, a community clinic and health facilities. The tribe has recently opened a new Elders' Center. Educational programs include an elementary

school, as well as a presence in the local public schools through Native American advocates and tutors. The Saginaw Chippewa Tribe is the largest employer in Isabella County and gives more than \$64 million annually to local and state governmental services.

Central Michigan University



[Central Michigan University](#) is located in the City of Mt. Pleasant but many of its students, faculty and staff live in Union Township. The campus encompasses 872 acres with 94 major buildings. There are seventeen residence halls housing more than 5,000 students and five apartment complexes providing 536 housing units for married and single students, both graduate and undergraduate. Buildings currently in use on campus range in age from Grawn Hall, constructed in 1915, to the Education and Human Services Building opened in the fall of 2009.

Central Michigan Normal School and Business Institute was established as a private institution in 1892. After it became a state-supported normal school in 1895, the institution was known variously from 1895 to 1927 as Central Normal School, Central Michigan Normal Training School, and Central State Normal School. In 1927 the name became Central State Teachers College. Subsequently, in 1941 the name was changed to Central Michigan College of Education. The words “of education” were dropped in 1955, although the school remained predominately a teacher-education institution. The present title, Central Michigan University (CMU), was adopted in 1959.

During the 1970s the university developed into a regional institution, still emphasizing teacher education but broadening its other programs. The change in CMU’s profile to reflect its maturing status as a comprehensive university with strengths in a broad range of disciplines has continued through the 1980s and 1990s.

Central Michigan University is governed by an eight-member Board of Trustees appointed for eight-year terms by the governor of the state of Michigan with the

consent of the state senate. The board is empowered with general supervision of the university, control and direction of all the institution's funds, and such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by law.

Union Township Economic Development Authority

In 2010, the Township board voted to consolidate the oversight of two Downtown Development Authorities, the East DDA and the West DDA into one authority that also now is charged with overseeing economic development activities for the entire Township, not just the two mostly commercial strips on M-20 on the east and west sides of the community. The new Union Township [Economic Development Authority](#) (EDA) is charged with working with the Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC), the regional economic development agency on exploring economic development opportunities. In 2011 it is anticipated work will be concluded on an economic development plan that will include collaborative relationships with the City, County, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, Central Michigan University and the MMDC.

Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce



The mission of the [Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce](#) is to enhance a diversified business environment that fosters a progressive and economically viable community. Established in 1909, the Chamber is the unified voice for the business community, and consistently provides valuable programs, products and services to help strengthen the area economy.

Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC)



[MMDC](#) is the economic development agency for the region, providing confidential assistance to both existing and new industry. The organization has a broad-based 64-member Board of Directors, six primary clients, and 30 corporate sponsors.

City of Mt. Pleasant



The [City of Mt. Pleasant](#) was incorporated over 100 years ago and is located in the center of Union Township. It is the county seat of Isabella County. According to the American Community Survey for 2006–2008 by the U.S. Census, the City of Mt. Pleasant had a population of 24,422. The average age was 22, with almost 30 percent of the population between the ages of 20 and 24. The median household income was \$27,427 but the family median income was \$56,458, indicating that families residing in Mt. Pleasant enjoy higher incomes and the CMU student population deflated the household income figure. The population of the City of Mount Pleasant has been on the rise since 2000 and is expected to continue to increase.

The City has a council–manager form of government, in which a City Manager is appointed by the City Commission. The Commission is made up of seven non–partisan members, each elected at–large. The Mayor is a member of the Commission and is selected on an annual basis by his or her colleagues.

PLANS IN PROGRESS

The following plans were in process when this master plan was being developed. Each document will affect policies and/or land uses in and around Union Charter Township. These plans should be consulted during land use decisions in the future and reviewed when the Master Plan is updated five years after adoption per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

Policy Governance Initiative

Union Charter Township is in the process of changing the method of governance to the [“Policy Governance”](#) system of management and operation. Policy Governance® is an integrated board leadership paradigm designed to empower boards of directors to fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organizations they govern. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, and to

rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; to truly lead its organization.

Policy Governance separates issues of organizational purpose, i.e. the end results, from all other organizational issues, i.e. the means, placing primary importance on those results. Policy Governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose, and only limit the staff's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.

Sidewalk and Pathways Committee

In conjunction with the Master Plan process, the Union Township Sidewalk and Pathways Committee is prioritizing non-motorized routes for development. The committee is part of a regional effort including CMU, the City of Mount Pleasant, four townships to the north of Union Township and the Bay Region office of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Law Enforcement Study

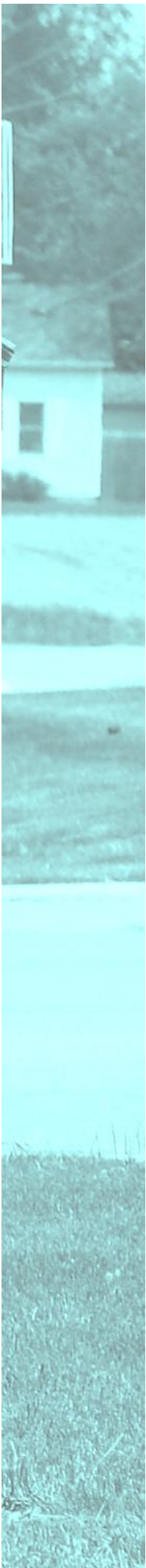
Union Township recently completed a law enforcement study to determine policing needs and how to meet those needs. The study was an analysis and review of the "call-for-service," which are only the 911 calls received from Union Township residents by Isabella County Central Dispatch. The Isabella County Sheriff's Department, Central Michigan University and their campus police chief, and the chairman of the Isabella County Board of Commissioners received a presentation on this study.

Union Charter Township 2010-2015 Master Plan for Parks and Recreation

Union Township is in the review stage of an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan in early 2010. The plan sets goals for intergovernmental cooperation on areas of common interest, improvements to the non-motorized network, development of new parks to meet residents' needs, improving river access for residents, and increasing organized activities for children and youth.

CMU Long Range Plan

Central Michigan University periodically produces a long range plan that outlines future improvements investments and strategy for the University. A revision to the current plan has been in progress for several years and is expected to be released in late 2010.





3

Community Input



Chapter 3: Community Input

Union Township represents several distinct groups of residents with widely varying needs and concerns. The community input effort was tailored to gather opinions from each of these groups in several ways.

In late summer, 2009, the Charter Township of Union contracted with the [Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies \(CARRS\)](#) of Central Michigan University (CMU) to complete a telephone interview study of township residents. The purpose of the study was to explore residents' views about township services and needs. Findings would be useful to the Township's staff in their strategic planning and Master Plan efforts.

Two samples of randomly selected telephone numbers were used in this telephone interview study. One was a list that attempted to reach only students and the other to reach only nonstudent residents. The result was a set of responses to the same questions for each group.

As a result of the telephone survey, it became clear that the opinion of agricultural land holders had not been heard. Only six percent of the respondents to the telephone survey owned agricultural land, yet over 90% of the respondents noted that they support protecting farm land. This meant that 94% of the respondents were expressing opinions about land they did not control. While preserving farm land and open space is a valid desire no matter who owes the farm land or open space, the Township felt it was important to ask the agricultural land owners, those who would have the most influence on the future of farm land and open space, their opinions about development.

This group was identified through assessing records. Land owners were invited to a lunch or dinner session where the planning consultants conducted a facilitated discussion about the future of farm land, the need for preservation and the desire of the property owners for the future use of their land. To the surprise of the Planning Commission, the agricultural land owners felt that it was too late to preserve agricultural land because the largest tracts had been compromised



financially by water lines to pocket subdivisions and uncontrolled growth of non agricultural uses. Their preference was to control the future development so that it would be logical, but not to deter continued residential growth into the farming community. This response was in opposition to the telephone survey results and ultimately directed the future land use decision more heavily toward development opportunities, in a controlled fashion, than would have happened had the Township not sought out this group.

The Township also conducted interviews of community groups, university representatives, tribal representatives and agricultural interests to learn about specific land use and development issues that impact each group. Details of all the interviews are contained in Chapter 4.

At the end of the drafting process the Planning Commission hosted an open house, featuring key aspects of the Plan and inviting residents to visit the display area for each part of the Plan and offer input about it either to the host of the display or by answering written questions provided at each station. The Township Board participated in this function also, as it was held immediately prior to a Board meeting and introduced for the Board and attendees to review and give their input. Approximately 16 people attended the open house.





4

Rural Meets Urban

Introduction
Agriculture & Rural Areas
The People Say
Urban
The People Say
Goals and Objectives



Chapter 4: Rural Meets Urban

INTRODUCTION

Union Township has a unique cross section of land uses – from very dense commercial and residential development to rural farming uses. Each of these uses contributes to the character of the Township. As the economy and demographics change over time, so will the landscape of Union Township. In this chapter, we address changes to farming, local food systems, and managing the urban–rural interface in the Township.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL AREAS

The Current State of Farming in the Township

According to the [2007 U.S. Agricultural Survey](#) conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farming is growing in Isabella County in terms of sales. Data from the same census at the zip code level show the following trends for the 266 farm operators in the 48858 zip code:

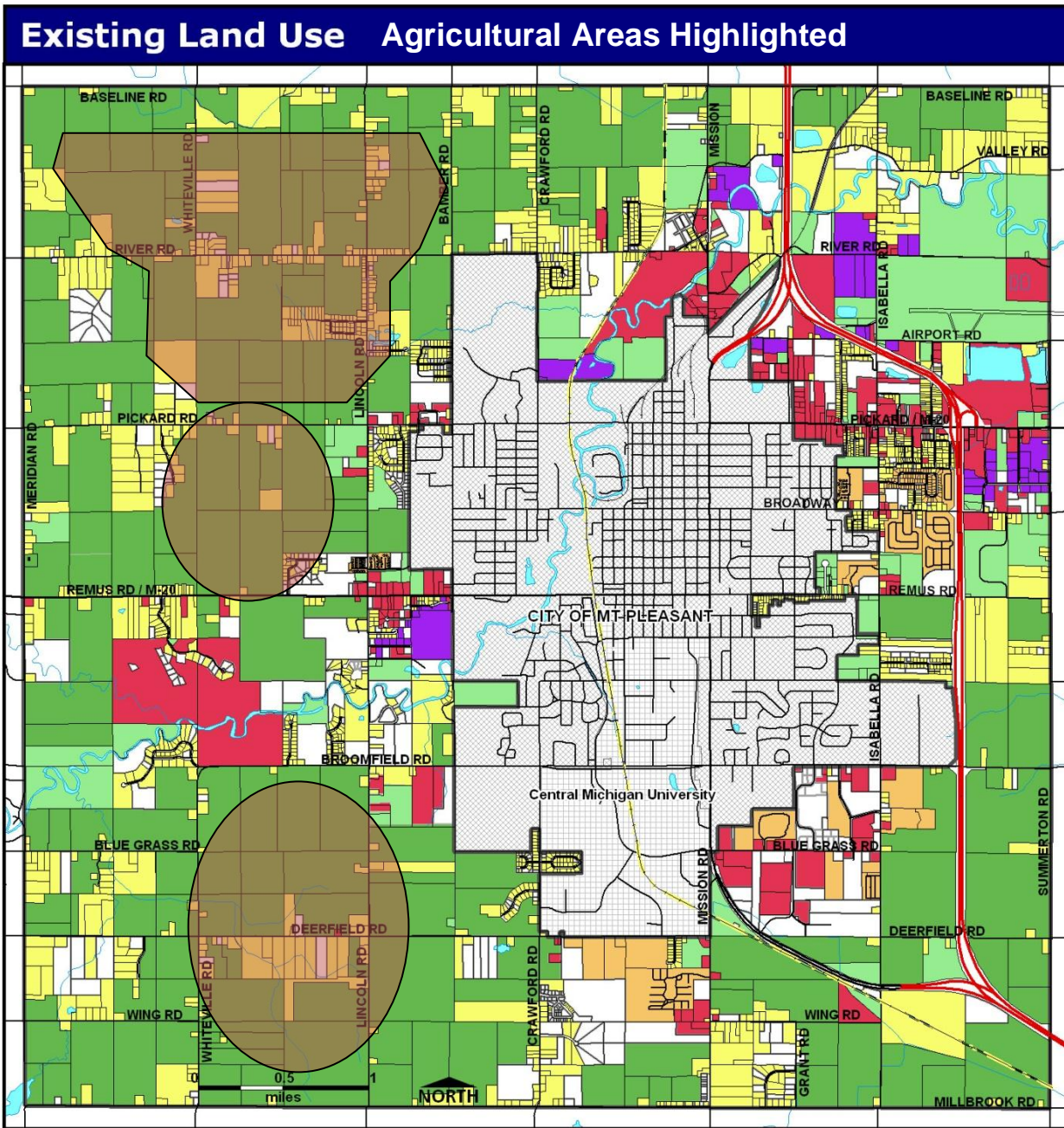
- 98 farm operations with crops have sales less than \$50,000, 35 had sales between 50K and 250K, while 16 operations had over \$250,000 in sales.
- Farm operations with animals mostly take in less than \$50,000 in sales (90 of the 110 operations with animals). However, 11 operations took in more than a quarter million in sales.
- For almost half of the farm operators, farming is their primary occupation (130 of 266).
- 41 % of the farms have two or more operators.
- Over 82% (220 of 266) of principal farm operators live on their farm.
- Farm operations tend to be medium–sized farms (83 under 50 acres, 171 between 50 to 999 acres, and only 12 with 1,000 acres or more)



- Only 29 farm operations in the zip code sell directly to consumers
- Orchards are small – only 5 operations each with less than 15 acres.
- Only 6 operations grow vegetables with sales – 3 are over 15 acres, 3 are between 15 and 100 acres.
- Most operations grow commodity crops – corn, hay, soybeans, wheat – which are fed to animals or usually sent out of the community to be processed.

The following maps show the location of existing farmland and prime agricultural soils in the Township. The first map shows the areas that are still primarily agricultural in use. The second map is the same prime farmland base map with the residential zoning shown in yellow and orange, drawing attention to the large amount of land that is still in agricultural use and largely prime farm land that is zoned or used for single family residential. Permissive residential zoning and development along with extending water lines across agricultural land area the two primary actions that the agricultural community identified as the cause of the major losses in farmland over the past two decades.

A look at the statistics and the reality as shown in the maps indicates that farming is largely comprised of smaller tracts of land, concentrated in commodity crop production. As a percentage of land, active farmland comprises approximately 20% of the Township. It is important to remember that township boundaries are artificially placed lines that do not take into account adjacent land uses outside of the Township. In the case of Union, there is an active and thriving farming community to the south and west that may serve to support the smaller tracts of land that we see in Union Township. Some communities choose to plan outside their borders to avoid conflicting land uses, however in the instance of agricultural land at the borders of the Township this is not an issue.



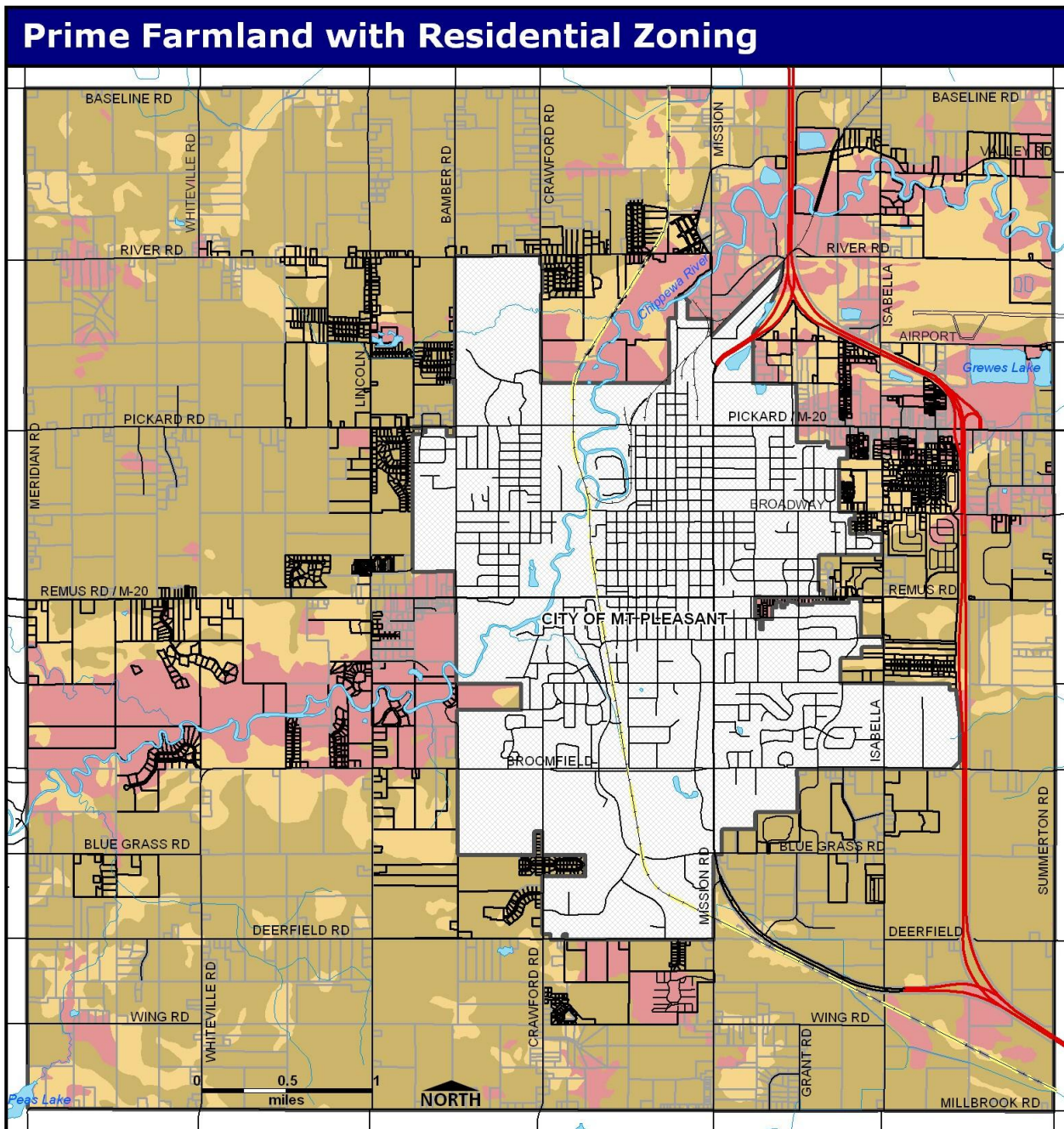
Parcels by Land Use Class

- | | |
|--|---|
| Agricultural | High-Density Residential |
| Commercial / Office Service | Public / Civic / Exempt |
| Industrial | Vacant |
| Residential | |

Existing land use information was developed from Union Township property data, land use/land cover data, and aerial imagery. Additional land use data, collected in the field, was provided by Matt Robinson (CMU Geography Department Senior Honors Project).

Compiled by Union Township GIS Department, October 2010.





- Farmland Classification by Soil Type**
- Prime farmland or prime farmland if drained
 - Farmland of local importance
 - Not prime farmland
- Residentially Zoned Property**
- Not a residentially zoned property
 - Property zoned residential

Source: Soil Survey of Isabella County Michigan, 1985. USDA / NRCS Soil Conservation Service (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>). Map produced October 2010.

THE PEOPLE SAY...

Survey Results

Survey respondents stated that they valued agricultural land and open space. While this was a strong sentiment, only 4% of those responding stated that they live on agricultural land. In the Views of Community Issues survey, “protecting existing farmland in the Township,” “developing more affordable housing for low income, working people,” and “growth in industrial development in the Township—that is, factories and manufacturing” receive definite or probable support from at least three quarters of residents.

Table 4.1 Support for Change

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Curbside recycling	57.1	17.5	8.5	16.8
Protect existing farmland	46.5	44.0	7.4	2.1
Develop more low income housing	36.1	39.1	14.9	9.9
Growth in industrial development	33.9	40.6	14.4	11.1
Creating cohesive neighborhood	22.3	24.4	34.0	19.3
Growth in commercial development	20.9	46.2	21.8	11.1
Develop more upscale housing	8.3	27.3	36.0	38.5
Develop more rental housing	2.5	10.9	30.3	56.3

The student sample also expressed support for preserving farmland, with 94% either definitely or probably supporting it.

However, as the table shows, support for preserving more land as “open space” (i.e.-undeveloped) was somewhat low. The student sample reflected this as well.

In the midst of strong support for farmland and unclear thoughts on open space, at least 65 percent of residents would like to see “rapid” or “moderate growth” in both the Township and the county in the next 10 years. The stakeholder interviews added a more personal and focused dimension to the agricultural discussion.



Table 4.2 Agreement with Proposed Changes

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Reduce noise and controlling parties	31.3	41.8	23.0	4.0
Limit advertising signs and building appearance	28.9	52.2	14.4	4.5
More activities for teens 13 to 18	28.4	44.2	23.2	4.3
More land as 'open space'	27.5	46.7	20.1	5.7
More activities for 12 and younger	24.9	46.5	23.2	5.4

Stakeholder Interviews

Large agricultural land holders and farmers in Union Township stated that their impression of the way agricultural land is treated is that farm land is just land waiting to be developed and not a use in and of itself. As remedies for this outlook among residents and law makers, they offered the following as important goals for the future:

- Agriculture Education
 - It is important to teach citizens about production agriculture and confined animals feeding operations (CAFO's).
 - Accurately portray the nature of farming. Discuss the nuisance characteristics of farming that the residents who move in next door don't like. Discuss the protected status of farming under the Right to Farm Act.
 - Impress upon people that there will not be any more land. Once farmland is gone it cannot be reclaimed. Adopt and encourage all possible preservation techniques such as [PA 116](#) tax deferment, cluster zoning, and preservation of development rights opportunities.

They had several, more specific suggestions regarding land use in the Township:

- Preservation

- Participate in Isabella County's Preservation of Development Program through Master Plan component.
- Show prime soils and farmland as a category on the Master Plan map and honestly strive to prevent development there.
- Zoning
 - Zone land to encourage higher densities and therefore less land use for residential.
 - Don't allow large acre splits for residential development on agricultural land.
- Infrastructure
 - Don't develop or improve more roads.
 - Keep infrastructure that is in place now in good condition and encourage infill rather than Greenfield development.

To further inform the discussion of agricultural land preservation, the Township Planning Commission held two informal discussions with groups with people who owned 10 or more acres of active farm land. A summary of the primary thoughts expressed includes:

- There is affection for agricultural land – 94% of survey respondents want to “preserve” it. Yet there isn't an understanding of agricultural land among this same group (i.e., township residents who do not live on agricultural land). People tend to think of rural land as a little slice of “Utopia,” not as a business enterprise with characteristics that can be messy, smelly or noisy. These characteristics are incompatible with residential uses but they must be supported, just like rail spurs in industry, for example. Farmers recognized the emotional and aesthetic appreciation of their land, but also pointed out that this appreciation doesn't take into account the reality of the farming business.
- There is ignorance about agriculture – New residents need to understand that the door does not slam behind them. There will be more and more development that follows them into agricultural land and then it won't remain the “Utopia” according to their standards. By permitting residential to locate among farm land we all lose.



One forthright farmer stated: Farming is a “noisy, stinking business” and there is no way that it will ever be compatible with residential uses so let’s not try to make it that way. New arrivals to agricultural land should have a statement on their deed that describes the nature of farming and all the nuisance characteristics that they can expect to live with and not complain about.

- But it is too late to save farming in Union – Farmers feel that it is too late to adopt or promote any bona fide agricultural preservation techniques in the Township. The land is too fragmented now and there are few tracts of agricultural land that could be preserved according to the PDR guidelines. Conservancy programs won’t accept the current undeveloped or agricultural land because of the fragmentation due to residential development.
- And because it is too late, potential solutions won’t work – An urban growth boundary (UGB) would not have a significant impact due to the existing fragmentation. If we have an UGB we need to adopt a different fee structure for those who choose to develop outside the boundary so they are paying an accurate and fair amount of the utility burden. The Township also needs to make it much more difficult to get a parcel rezoned outside the UGB. It’s too easy now.

There needs to be an alternative way to assess sewer and drain fees. Assessing by the frontage puts an undue burden on the land owner between the scattered developments. Usually this burden falls on a farmer.

- Farmers need the freedom to sell their assets: Land owners need to keep the ability to sell and subdivide since farming is no longer viable due to fragmentation of land. There has been “leapfrog” residential development, which is development that has occurred in the midst of active agricultural land instead of adjacent to existing residential development. These islands of new residents that either require or request municipal services have caused water lines to cross large tracts of undeveloped and/or active agricultural land. This causes huge tax increases on the surrounding agricultural land and in some cases utility assessments on land that has no need for those services. There is no way the Township can make it economically feasible for agricultural land owners to tie up agricultural land and prohibit non agricultural development.

- Farmers reminded us to think regionally: Life is bigger than just our township. We need to adopt the County’s philosophy about agricultural land. Save the large parcels with good soil, use some as a buffer and allow the rest to develop. Divide agricultural land into three categories to mirror [Isabella County’s zoning ordinance](#). Use that as a guide for future development.

Community Based Food System

A [community-based food system](#) (CBFS) is one way to preserve smaller farms, despite fragmentation. CBFS moves food from production to processing, distribution, consumption and waste in a manner that meets the needs of the community and provides social, economic and environmental stability on the local and regional level. These food systems operate at a regional level, often stretching through three counties. A community based food system incorporates two of the major goals of the Union Township Master Plan

1. It recognizes that farming has many faces and the Township can play an active role in preserving smaller farms and agricultural interests.
2. It promotes a sustainable community.

Farmers growing for a community based food system raise fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat and dairy products for sale to people living within 100 miles of their farm. Often, they sell directly to consumers through farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) operations or U pick events. The food is usually organic, filling a market niche. Very few farmers operating in the Union Township zip code meet this profile. However, as farmers retire or sell land in prime agricultural areas, new producers could be encouraged to start or expand local food producing operations. More study of the local food system, perhaps through the development of a community food profile is needed. (See the final chapter of this plan for community food profile food development guidelines). Also, a coalition of partners interested in creating a community based food system would be essential. Potential allies include Isabella County, other neighboring counties, the City of Mt. Pleasant, the Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market, the Chippewa Tribe, Michigan State Extension, the Mid-Michigan Food Bank, and the Central Michigan



Health Department. Large food buyers in the area, such as Central Michigan University, local school districts, hospitals and restaurants, should be part of any community based food initiative since institutional buyers can create markets for local food.

Union Township can increase farmers' ability to sell to the public by allowing explicitly for agricultural tourism. The Michigan Department of Agriculture has developed a [zoning guidebook for agricultural tourism](#).

Decision-Making

After reviewing the available parcel, soil and land use data, along with the citizen survey results and farmer interviews, the Township has taken the stance that because of previous development, true farmland preservation as a goal is not attainable. While unpopular with strict preservationists, in Union Township this is a realistic approach to a once burgeoning community, that combined with political will, spawned significant sprawl into active farm land and must now look at the reality it faces. Instead, it is more valuable to establish rules for orderly development that will avoid future "leapfrogging" and further fragmentation. It is the Township's desire that any new residential development be placed adjacent to existing residential or commercial development, be adjacent to existing water and be located on a paved road. In this way the large land owners do not pay for leapfrog utility expansion and associated services.

In addition to its general development policies of current land, the Township is committed to promoting mixed uses in specific suburban areas to encourage walkability and a more dense population that doesn't rely on individual vehicles for everyday needs. These additional uses in residential districts will be promoted through changes in zoning regulations.

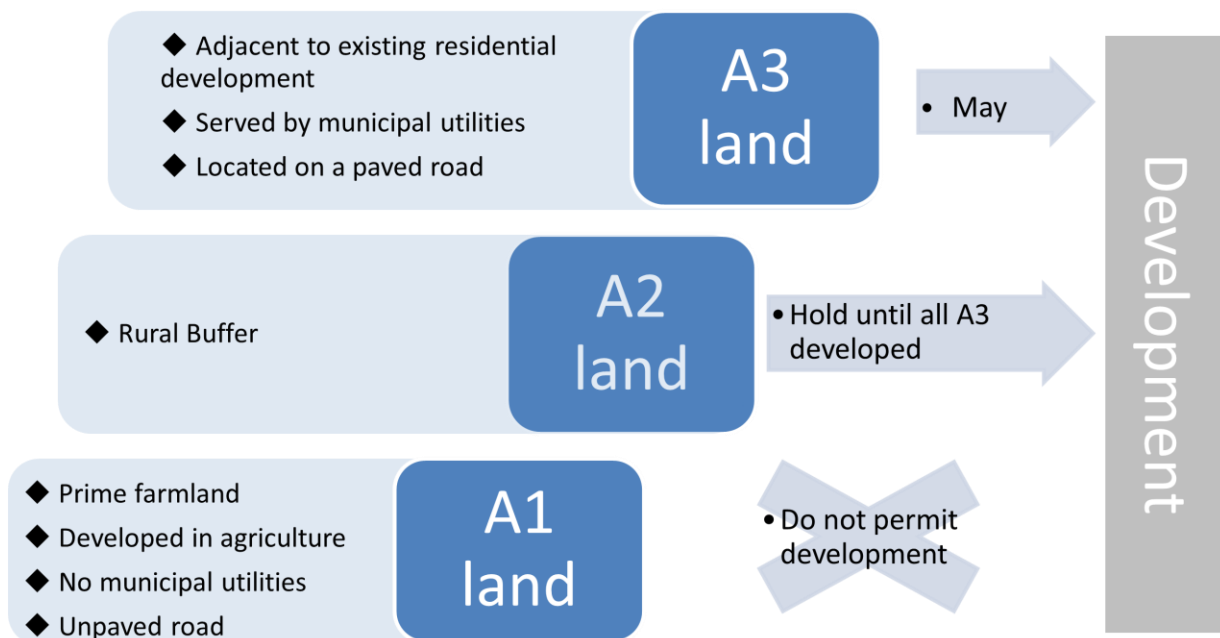
The Planning Commission used the Isabella County's zoning ordinance approach to prioritize lands for future development. The Commission has established three agricultural areas: A1, A2, and A3 based on soil conditions, existing development and location of utilities. A1 areas should be the last to be developed, A2 should function as a sort of "Rural Buffer" and A3 is land that could be permitted to be developed according to a strict set of rules. The following map shows the areas

that have been classified as A1, A2 and A3 areas according to these criteria. These designations are reflected in the Future Land Use map.

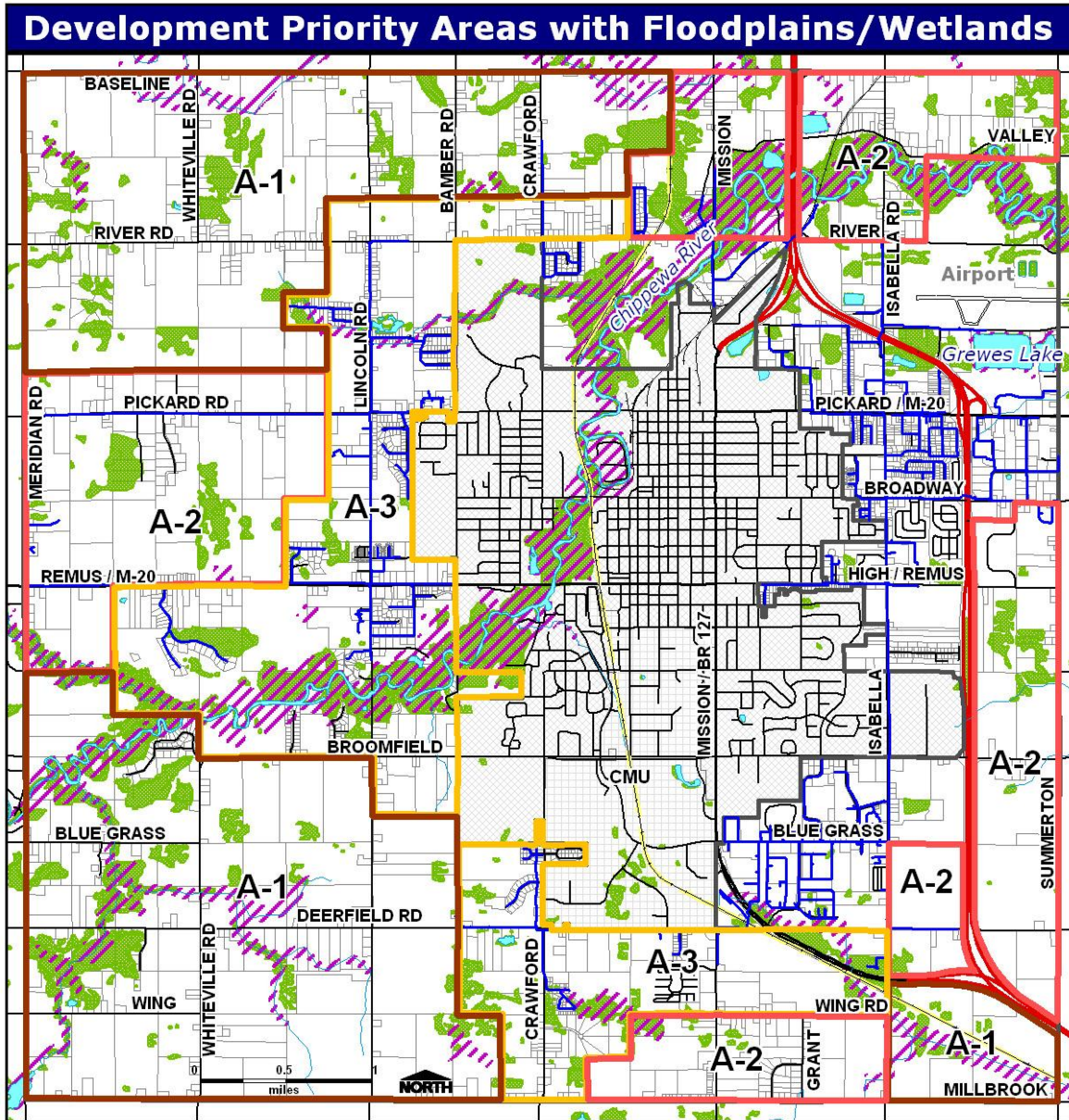
The decision making process and rules for permitting new residential development are depicted in the following schematic. The process requires that the Planning Commission answer four questions before granting residential zoning to a parcel or area:

- Is the area in the A3 designation?
- Is the area adjacent to existing residential development?
- Is the area serviced by municipal utilities now?
- Is the area located on a paved road?

If the answer to all four questions is “yes” then the area is suitable for residential zoning. When the area shown as A3 is fully built out, land is A2 will then be considered for development using the same criteria with the first question now being replaced with “is the land in the A2 designation?” Land in the A1 designation should not be developed until all A2 and A3 land is developed. It is unlikely that the A3 areas will be developed using this system during the lifespan of this Plan.



Map 6 Development Priority Areas



— Township Waterline

Development Priority Areas

- A-1 Agricultural (No Development)
- A-2 General Buffer (Develop After A-3)
- A-3 Developable Lands

Floodplains / Wetlands

- Floodplains
- Wetlands

Map Produced in October 2010 by:
Union Township GIS Department

In the areas of the Township where there is no A-1, A-2 A-3 development designation, the Future Land Use map mirrors the zoning classifications. The zoning classifications have been grouped into the broad categories of residential, commercial, and industrial, instead of the more detailed divisions shown on the zoning map. Rezoning decisions in these areas have similar guidelines:

Areas to be rezoned to commercial must be adjacent to developed *and* occupied land. The purpose of this is to discourage new commercial structures while others remain vacant or there are opportunities for infill development.

New industrially zoned areas must be adjacent to developed *and* occupied land.

Mixed commercial and residential uses are encouraged as part of the Township's walkability and sustainability goals, so commercial and high density residential for example, are welcome mixed uses. The zoning ordinance will require modifications to encourage mixed uses and offer incentives for reusing existing buildings.

URBAN

The Current State of Commerce and Industry in the Township

Union Township has several large commercial areas along major transportation corridors near the boundary of the City of Mt. Pleasant.

On Pickard Rd., from the City boundary east to the Township boundary, there are several large "big box" commercial establishments and other intense commercial uses. There are several large vacant sites and buildings of various ages. Setbacks and ages of non-vacant buildings vary considerably and some of the existing commercial uses are low-density and run down. The Township has made significant investments to improve the streetscape and pedestrian amenities along this corridor, including sidewalks, lighting, street trees, and a pedestrian path through the US 127 underpass.



On Remus Rd., near Lincoln and the western City boundary, there is a mixture of new and older commercial uses. This commercial area generally serves both students and the high density residential uses (apartments, duplexes and condominiums) in the vicinity.

The Bluegrass Rd. corridor contains a mixture of large scale commercial and high density residential uses. There are also several large vacant commercial sites, ripe for redevelopment. The residential areas are largely geared toward students, and so the surrounding commercial areas are geared toward serving those students. There are big



box sites and strip malls, which are not necessarily connected to the student housing via non-motorized pathways.

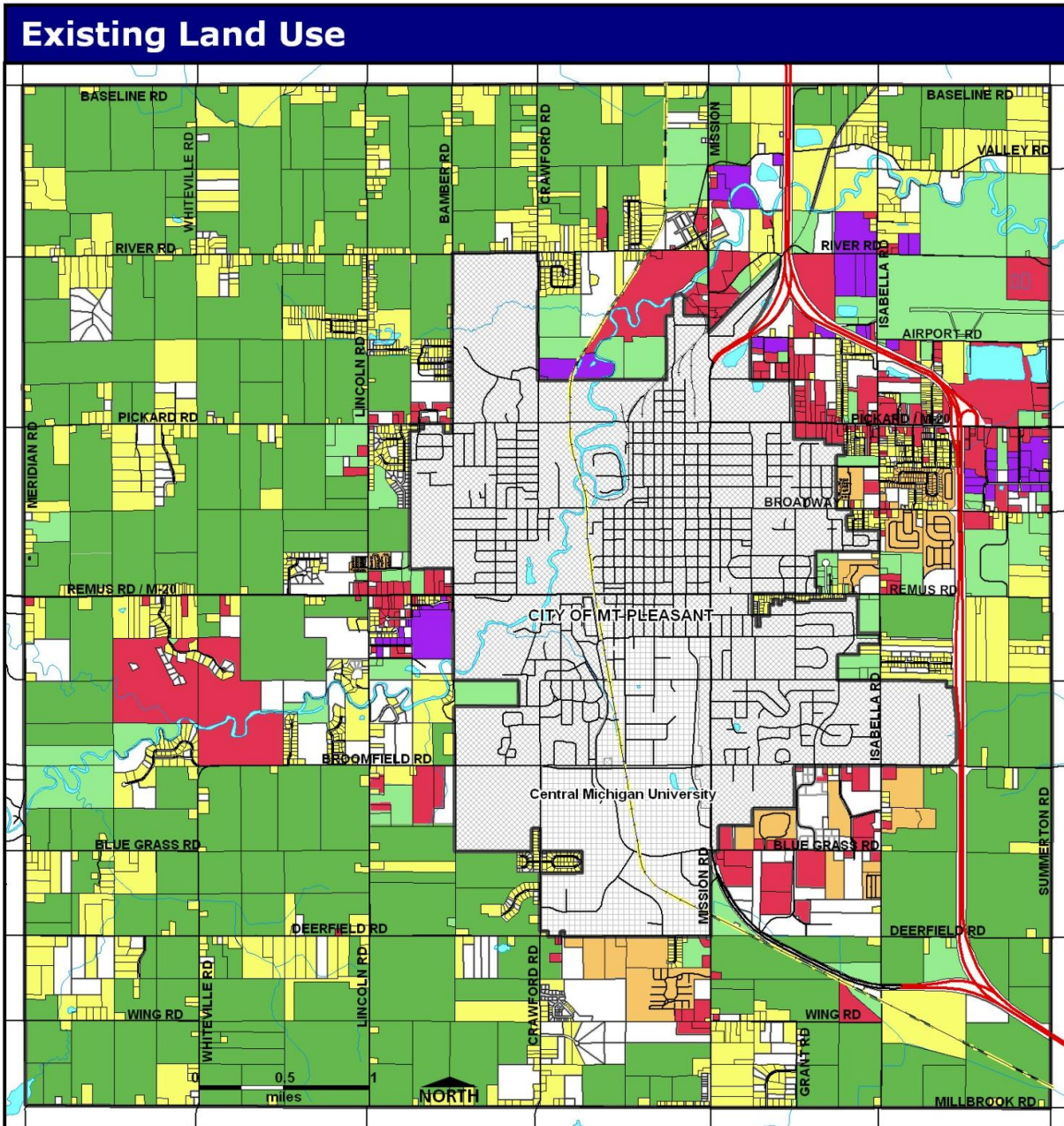
Industry is concentrated near the northern City boundary on the east side of the Township. Most of the industry is concentrated between Isabella Road and the eastern Township boundary, and north of Remus and south of Pickard. Industries located here could be classified as lighter in nature, with little or no external impact on the surrounding area.

Existing Land Use (ELU)Category	Acres of ELU	% of ELU	Acres of Zoned Land Use	Zoning Land Use category	Acres of Zoned Land Use	% of Zoned land
Agriculture	9,038	49%	10,431	Agricultural (AG)	10,431	58%
Low Density Residential	3,369	19%	4,903	Low Density Residential (R1)	2,379	13%
				Medium Density Residential (R2A, R2B, R5)	2,524	14%
High Density Residential	464	3%	561	High Density Residential (R3A, R3B, R4)	561	3%
Commercial/Office Service	1,346	8%	1,400	Office Service (OS)	62	<1%
				General Business (B4)	323	2%
				Highway Business (B5)	779	4%
				Auto Highway (B6)	66	<1%
				Retail and Service Business (B7)	170	1%
Industrial	302	2%	684	Light Industrial (I1)	341	2%
				Heavy Industrial (I2)	343	2%
Public/Civic/Exempt	1,541	9%	0	NA	0	0
Vacant	1,841	10%	0	NA	0	0
	0	0	79	Triabal Trust lands	79	<1%
Total	17,901	100%	18,058		18,058	100%

This table shows that there is roughly the same amount of land zoned for a specific use as is actually developed on the ground now - or an existing land use. The exception to this is the industrial land, where there is over twice as much zoned as developed. The chart does not show that much of the residentially zoned land is in areas that are adjacent to or developed as agricultural uses.

The Prime Farmland Map with Residentially Zoned Property shows this situation using Prime Farmlands as the base information with lots that are zoned residentially overlaid on the farmland with black lines. An examination of the aerial photos also shows the development of subdivisions among active farmland. Public/Civic/Exempt and Vacant land, comprising 1,541 acres or 9 % of the land use is primarily zoned industrial, agricultural or High Density Residential.

There is a difference of 332 total acres between the Existing Land Use and the Zoned Land Use in this chart. This difference represents road rights of way and water courses that are included in the zoning classifications and not in the Existing Land Use calculations, as they are based on parcels rather than land mass.



Parcels by Land Use Class

 Agricultural	 High-Density Residential
 Commercial / Office Service	 Public / Civic / Exempt
 Industrial	 Vacant
 Residential	

Existing land use information was developed from Union Township property data, land use/land cover data, and aerial imagery. Additional land use data, collected in the field, was provided by Matt Robinson (CMU Geography Department Senior Honors Project).

Compiled by Union Township GIS Department, October 2010.



THE PEOPLE SAY...

Survey Results

According to the results of the Community Issues survey, growth in both industrial and commercial development ranked fairly low in the support rankings compared to other priorities. The student sample ranked growth in commercial development higher (approximately 80% expressing definite or probable support). Not surprisingly, support from students for growth in industrial development was relatively low.

Table 4.3 Support for Change

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Curbside recycling	57.1	17.5	8.5	16.8
Protect existing farmland	46.5	44.0	7.4	2.1
Develop more low income housing	36.1	39.1	14.9	9.9
Growth in industrial development	33.9	40.6	14.4	11.1
Creating cohesive neighborhood	22.3	24.4	34.0	19.3
Growth in commercial development	20.9	46.2	21.8	11.1
Develop more upscale housing	8.3	27.3	36.0	38.5
Develop more rental housing	2.5	10.9	30.3	56.3

As the following table shows, residents are very concerned with the appearance and amount of signage in commercial areas, perhaps explaining some of the resistance to supporting commercial growth.

Table 4.4 Agreement with Proposed Changes

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Reduce noise and controlling parties	31.3	41.8	23.0	4.0
Limit advertising signs and building appearance	28.9	52.2	14.4	4.5
More activities for teens 13 to 18	28.4	44.2	23.2	4.3
More land as 'open space'	27.5	46.7	20.1	5.7
More activities for 12 and younger	24.9	46.5	23.2	5.4

Respondents were asked: “What do you believe is the most important issue affecting the quality of life in Union Township?” The issue of jobs and the economy ranked among the top three general categories of responses. Examples of these comments are: “to financially survive, more jobs needed,” “job availability,” and “not enough decent paying jobs to provide a decent lifestyle.” This is consistent with residents’ support of growth in industrial development.

Stakeholder Interviews

Several of the stakeholders interviewed for the Master Plan commented on commercial and industrial issues in the Township:

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe stated that they would like to partner with township and region to promote tourism and lobbying strength.

Representatives from the **Middle Michigan Development Corporation** emphasized that the Township is prime location for industry because of easy access via railroad, M-20, US -127, and the airport. They also commented that they believe the Township needs more industrial land but that it may not be beneficial for the Township to own their own industrial park. And finally, they made the observation that areas can’t fight among themselves – this causes businesses to go elsewhere – everyone needs to partner to make it work.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: Prevent premature conversion of agricultural land to scattered non-farm development

- Ensure that lot sizes in Agricultural zoning districts are large enough to prevent fragmentation of identified priority agricultural areas
- Do not approve sewer or water line extensions into or across priority agricultural areas

Goal: Establish clear priorities for land to be developed in the Township

- Create a map of lands most appropriate for development, buffer lands, and priority preservation areas



- Consider rezoning requests only in those areas designated for the next “tier” of development
- Revise the zoning ordinance to include clear rules for development in agricultural areas
- Steer future commercial and industrial development toward appropriate infill sites before approving new developments in greenfield locations.

Goal: Revise Zoning Ordinance to meet currently identified needs and wants.

- Ensure that mixed use opportunities are available in the zoning ordinance, to encourage sustainable and walkable development.
- Update zoning ordinance per guideline in the MDA Agriculture Tourism Zoning Guidebook.
- Evaluate employment opportunities in the region and include appropriate industrial/office lands in the Master Plan so that the Township can contribute to employment for its citizens.
- Evaluate the availability of commercial lands (including vacant and underutilized properties) and target development in those areas first.

Goal: Promote a sustainable community.

- Find partnerships to develop a community-based food system
- Develop community food profile for the region with partners
- Ensure that the future land use plan reflects a balance between employment, services, residential and rural uses.

A white water tower with a spherical top and a tapered base. The top of the sphere has a metal railing. The words "WATER TWD" and "UNION" are printed on the sphere in a sans-serif font. The tower is set against a cloudy sky and a field of crops in the foreground.

WATER TWD
UNION

5

Utilities

Introduction

Where Are We Now?

The People Say

Growth and Efficiency

Goals, Objectives and Tasks



ATER TWD
E UNION

Chapter 5: Utilities

CAPACITY

INTRODUCTION

Municipal water and sanitary sewer services often determine what type of development can occur. Industrial land uses need high pressure water. Residential dwelling units on less than an acre usually must be serviced by a municipal waste water system, since septic fields require an acre or more of land. Commercial uses tend to locate where municipal services are available either out of necessity or cost.

In order to protect the health and safety of the residents and environment in Union Township, utilities should be carefully planned and financed. In doing so, future development should be linked to the capacity of systems and existing or planned locations of pipes.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The map on the following page shows the location of water and waste water in the Township. The City of Mt. Pleasant and the Chippewa Tribe also have water and waste water systems, but none are connected to those in Union Township.

Waste Water

Waste water pipes generally ring the City of Mt. Pleasant within one mile. Union Township's waste water treatment plant is operating almost at its capacity of 1.2 million gallons of water per day. The plant currently processes an average of 975,000 to 1,000,000 gallons of waste water a day, with peak flows over 1.2 million in extremely wet conditions.

Union Township is planning for a capacity upgrade of its waste water treatment plan to double the size of the plant to 2.4 million gallons per day. This project is funded with Rural Development low interest funds. The Township will close on those funds in the late summer or early fall of 2010. The projected completion

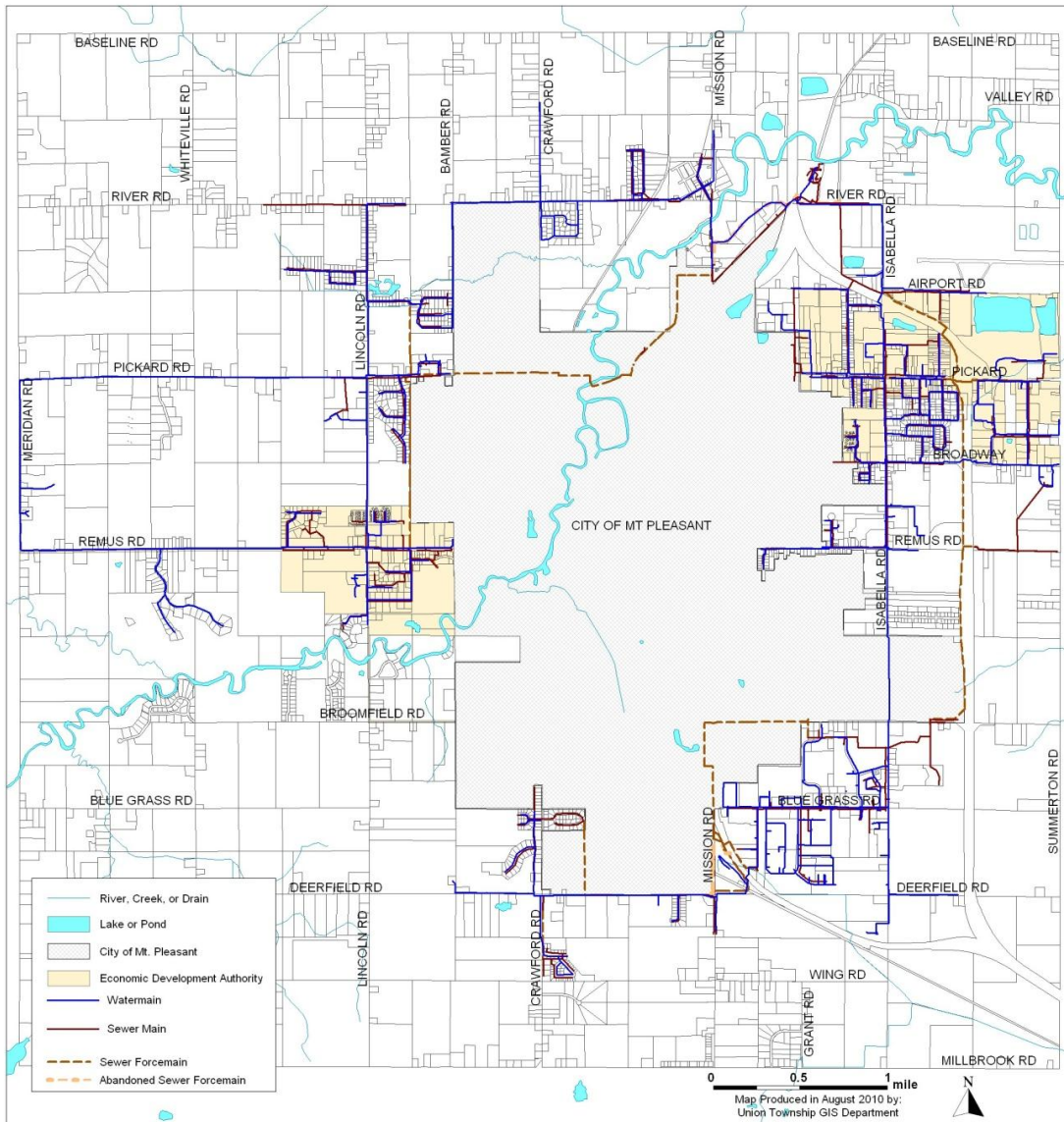


time for this project is 2014. The upgrade would enable the addition of the equivalent of 6,000 additional residential units to the system. Until the upgrade is complete, the Township facility cannot handle new connections or increased volume beyond its current capacity of 1.2 million gallons per day.

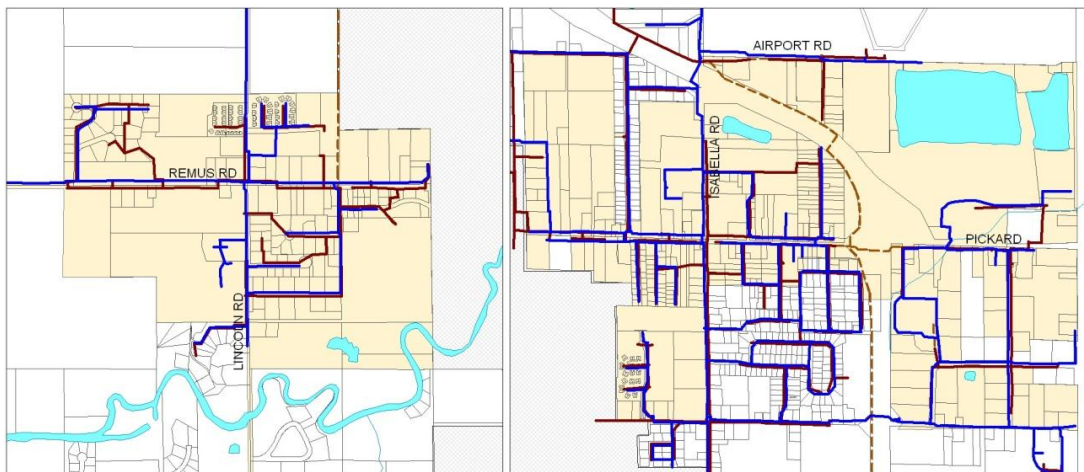
The Township also expects the following upgrades to be completed by fall of 2010, pending funding:

- Mission Road Force Main Relocation and Lift station #6 Relocation - The force main relocation on Mission Road has been completed and the relocation of lift station #6 which is located on the corner of Deerfield Road & Mission Road is scheduled.
- Enterprise Park Sewer Line Relining: This project includes the relining of the sewer lines within Enterprise Park which is located south of Pickard, east of US127, and west of Summerton Road. This project has been approved for funding by the Township's EDA Board.

Map 8 Water and Wastewater Systems



Union Township Water and Wastewater Systems

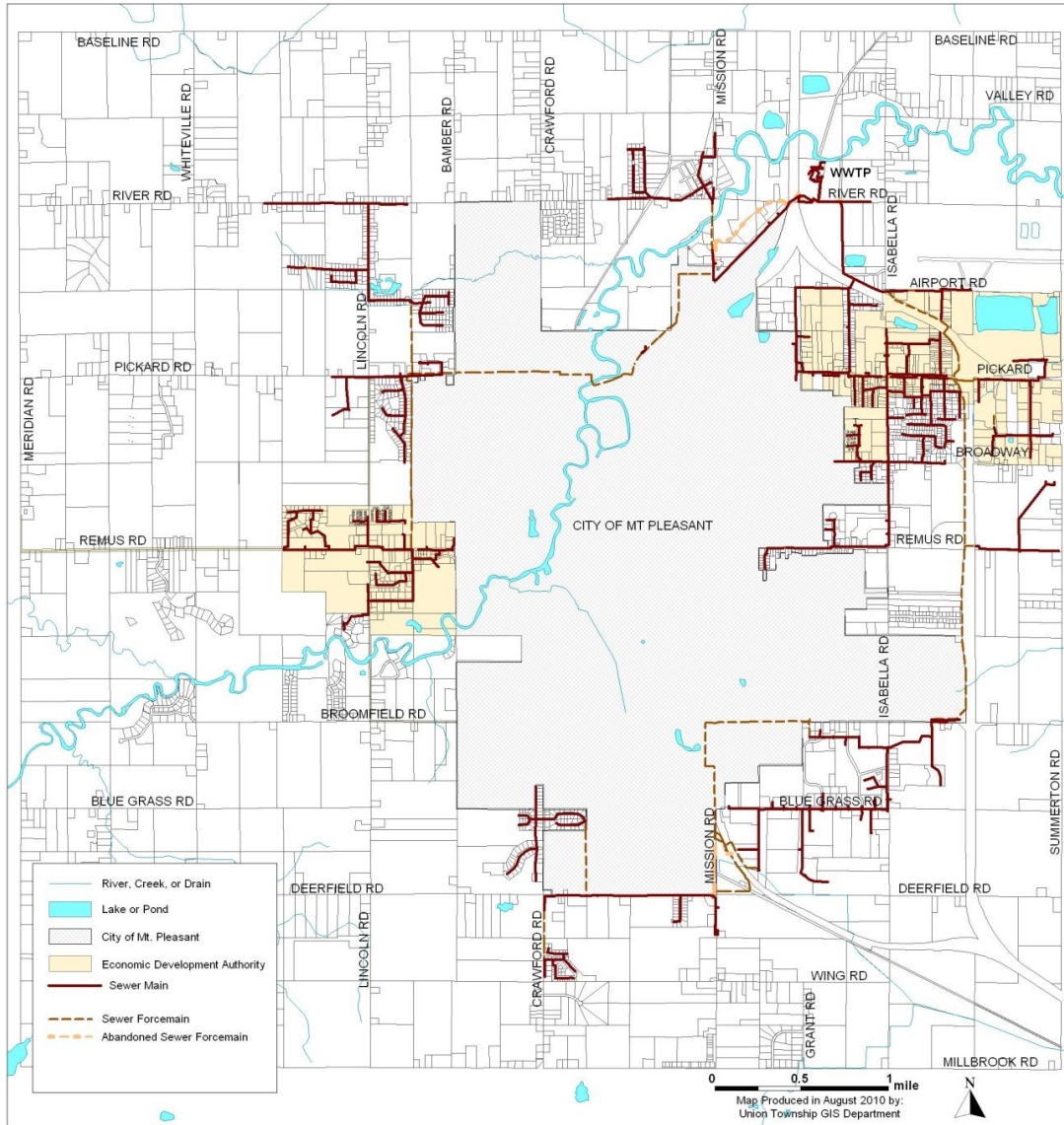


Waste water systems are impacted by infiltration from storm water running off of roads and roofs. While the Township has studied and corrected many of the infiltration areas into the sanitary sewer system, residents and builders can take steps to minimize storm water runoff through limitations on impervious surfaces, rain barrels, rain gardens and green roofs.

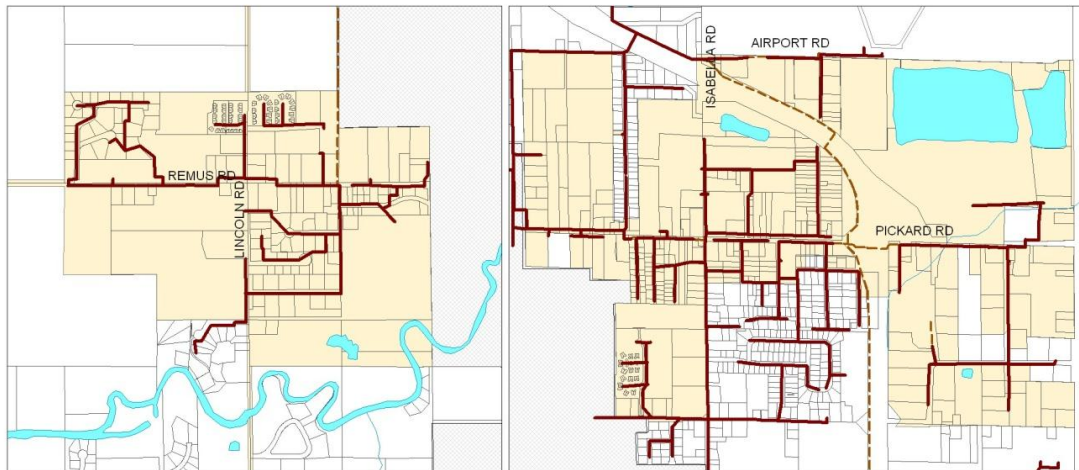
Both the City of Mt. Pleasant and the Chippewa Tribe have separate waste water systems. The Mount Pleasant waste water treatment facility has additional capacity of over 1.5 million gallons of water per day. Their sales have decreased, part of a statewide trend, due to the downward turn in the economy and sustainability efforts undertaken at Central Michigan University.

Some interaction between the three systems occurs. Union Township provides water and waste water services to the old Holiday Inn and the tribally owned industrial park. The Township waste water system has lines to Mt. Pleasant treatment plant with a bulkhead. Staff members from all three systems have participated in joint trainings. However, the pipes from the systems are not interconnected.

Map 9 Wastewater System



Union Township Wastewater System



Water

Union Township businesses and homes draw their water either from individual wells or a municipal water system supplied by six deep wells with iron removal facilities. Therefore, the quality of the groundwater is linked to the health, safety and welfare of the Union Township residents and represents a critical natural resource to be protected.

Ground water can be polluted by human activities ranging from agricultural pesticides to lawn fertilizer to septic systems. Limiting the pollution in storm water runoff and preventing building in and around areas critical to water quality – wetlands, water bodies, ground water recharge areas and well head protection areas – are two regulatory approaches to ground water protection.

Township staff is in the initial stages of developing a well head protection plan and associated ordinance. This plan would delineate wellhead protection areas based on scientific data. The more resources that are put towards the plan, the more accurate and better the protection of the resulting ordinance will be. When delineating a wellhead protection area, several criteria can be considered including distance from the well, drawdown of the water table around the well, time of travel to the well, and physical boundaries to the ground water. The method for determining the area of protection varies as well. Some municipalities merely protect the land in a radius around wells, ranging from 3,000 feet to 3 miles. While the costs are minimal, critical areas may be missed. Others invest over \$60,000 to create a numerical model of the aquifer(s) feeding the wells to draw a protection zone. The State of Michigan has two programs to help local municipalities develop well protection plans – Michigan Department of Agriculture Groundwater Stewardship Program and Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment Wellhead Protection Program. The final chapter of this plan contains additional information on types of wellhead protection area delineation models and state-sponsored wellhead protection programs.

The Township municipal water system is currently operating at its capacity of 1.15 million gallons of water per day. The following projects are planned for the water system:

- Isabella Road Well Site Upgrade: The project includes the installation of a well with a capacity of 750 gallons per minute, installation of a 500,000 gallon storage tank, installation of an iron removal filter and high service pumps which can process up to 1,500 gallons per minute, and an addition to the existing building to house the iron removal facility and a central location for water system operations. This project is estimated to be completed in the fall of 2010.
- Lincoln Road Water Main Looping: The looping of the water main on Lincoln Road – south of Remus Road to the water main located on Crawford Road – south of Broomfield is proposed in the Township’s five year capital improvement plan for 2014. This project has not been approved.
- Well #6 Replacement: In the Township’s five year capital improvement plan for 2014, one of the 8” wells located at the Mission Road Well Site is proposed for replacement. This project has not been approved.
- River Road/Bamber Road 12” Looping: To increase fire protection, flows, and reliability of the overall water system, the looping of the water main on River and Bamber Roads is proposed in the Township’s five year capital improvement plan for 2011. This project also has not been approved.

The City of Mt. Pleasant and the Chippewa Tribe also have individual water systems. Mt. Pleasant currently has an estimated 3–4 million gallons of water a day of excess capacity. Mt. Pleasant treats its drinking water by softening it, i.e. removing the hard minerals. In some cases, specifically industrial uses or larger apartment complexes, softened water is more desirable. Mt. Pleasant has experienced a decrease in demand, due in part to the economy as well as some of the sustainability efforts at CMU. Meanwhile, the Mt. Pleasant water system is facing increasing costs – gas, electricity and chemicals.

Though potentially desirable, interconnection between the Union Township and Mt. Pleasant water systems would be expensive. First, the two systems would need to be physically connected. Second, since the City softens and fluoridates their water while Union Township removes only iron from its water, all of the water needed in the Township would have to be treated at the City Plant, requiring a new system of pipes to bring water from the Township wells to the City Plant. The



Township water system cannot be easily linked to the Tribe's system either because it is not subject to the same rules and regulations as Union Township, which must meet the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment requirements for municipal water systems.

THE PEOPLE SAY...

Community Issues Survey

Twenty-six residents and seven students noted utilities, especially water quality, as one of the most important issues affecting the quality of life in Union Township. Survey respondents noted the lime and minerals as well as the taste of the water as problematic.

Stakeholder Interviews

During the stakeholder interviews, planners asked participants about utilities. The Chippewa Tribe indicated a willingness to partner with the Township for services to the new water park. Department heads from the Mt. Pleasant water and sanitary sewer system were receptive to sharing resources and services with Union Township.

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY

Coordination with Adjacent Agencies and Municipalities

For different reasons, three separate municipal water and sewer systems exist in and around Union Township: the Union Township system, the City of Mt. Pleasant system and the Chippewa Tribe system. None are physically connected, making sharing or consolidating services an expensive endeavor.

At the very least, the three systems should have contingency plans for tapping into one another's pipes in case of emergency, such as a major fire. Also, future utility expansions and use should be planned in consultation with the adjacent municipalities, specifically with input from the utility department heads.

Capacity Increases and Pipe Extensions

Some excess capacity is always needed in a wastewater or water system in order to handle extraordinary events. These events could be a hot summer month when many are watering their lawns or significant seepage of storm water into the waste water system. However, both the Mt. Pleasant system and the Township system, once planned upgrades are installed, will have capacity beyond the needed cushion. The excess capacity can be a catalyst for inefficient growth unless utility extensions are carefully controlled and regulated.

In order to maintain the integrity of the master plan and control growth in Union Township in an orderly manner, further capacity increases beyond what is existing, under construction or proposed in approved capital improvement plans should only be constructed in one of the following circumstances:

- An upgrade in capacity is critical to the health and safety of Union Township residents and service customers.
- An upgrade is needed to maintain the operational safety of a facility.

Pipes should only be extended to new areas in the Township under the following circumstances:

- The area to be serviced is directly adjacent to property currently serviced by the system proposed for extension.
- The area is currently undeveloped and master planned for a land use requiring sewer and/or water services.
- The area to be serviced is not an area designated for agricultural protection by either the Union Township Master Plan or the Isabella County Master Plan or unnecessarily passes through an agricultural protection area.
- The extension of the services will not adversely impact the Chippewa River, streams, lakes, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas or well head protection areas.
- Services are needed due to changed circumstances to provide safe drinking water or waste water treatment to existing residents.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

Several of the Goals and Objectives identified by the Township Planning Commission relate to utilities:

Goal: Promote collaborative efforts among municipalities and agencies.

- Plan utility expansion and use with adjacent agencies and municipalities.

Goal: Revise Zoning Ordinance to meet currently identified needs and wants.

- Establish a well head protection program with appropriate zoning ordinance changes using the resources available from the State of Michigan.
- Utilize the sewer service areas as a guide in zoning decisions.
- Consider groundwater quality in zoning decisions
- Require additional information for site plans proposed in groundwater recharge areas
- Add impervious surface limitations to the Zoning Ordinance
- Revise parking regulations with a maximum number of allowed parking spaces, land banking of areas for parking and allowances for pervious surfaces in parking and loading areas.
- Require vegetated buffers from all wetlands, streams, lakes and rivers to protect water quality.
- Update screening requirements to allow rain gardens, bioswales, bioretention areas and filter strips.
- Require septic systems to be located at least 100 feet from a lake, wetland, stream or other water feature.

Goal: Preserve Farmland and Agricultural Interests.

- Expand infrastructure in a coordinated and efficient fashion.
- Permit extension of water and sewer pipes into or across prime agricultural areas only when absolutely necessary.

Goal: Promote a sustainable community.

- Link sanitary sewer and municipal water expansion to future land plan
- Produce and distribute educational materials for residents on how to limit water use outside their homes and how to capture storm water runoff through rain barrels, rain gardens and green roofs.
- Promote and encourage design methods to lessen storm water run-off and pollution, also known as low impact development (LID), by providing educational materials and a list of area contractors skilled in this area.



A large, bold, blue number '6' is centered on the page. The background is a faded, sepia-toned photograph of a dirt road winding through a wooded area. A road sign is visible on the left side of the road, partially obscured by the number '6'.

6

Transportation

Introduction

Where Are We Now?

The People Say

Goals, Objectives and Tasks



Chapter 6: Transportation

ROADS, TRANSIT AND PATHWAYS

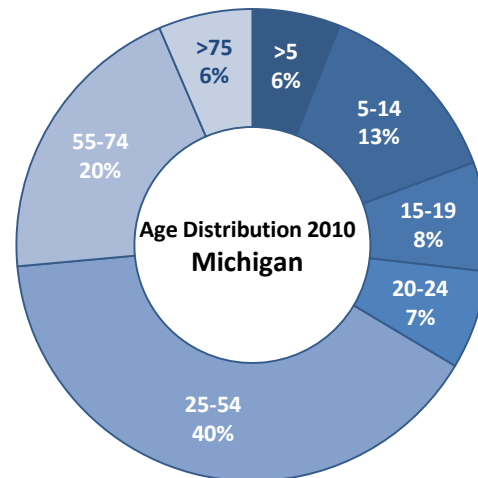
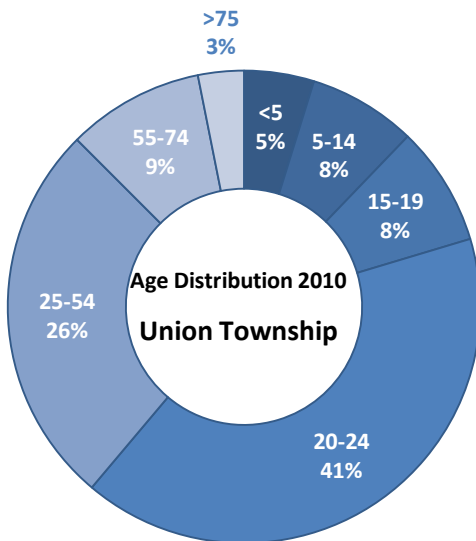
INTRODUCTION

The movement of people and goods is one of the predominant factors shaping development in our communities today. Transportation and land use are closely linked by the relationships between where people live and where they go to work, shop and play. In Union Township, that link is defined to a significant degree by the students living in the Township and travelling to the University in Mt. Pleasant for classes.

Transportation planning for the Township includes an examination of traditional, motorized transportation; public transit options; and the non-motorized transportation system including pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Demographics



The age distribution of a community provides an important context for planning for the transportation needs of its residents. Union Township has a larger proportion of 20–24 year olds (41%) than the State as a whole (7%), due primarily to the large student population. The student population’s transportation needs are cyclical and frequent, requiring access to transit and well–direct non–motorized routes. The senior citizen population, another group that has unique transportation needs, is smaller in Union Township than the state as a whole.

Along with the proportionally large 20–24 year old age group population in the 2010 Census and recently adopted policies by the City of Mt. Pleasant geared toward more single–family owner–occupied housing, means that the student population in Union Township is likely to continue to increase. This will make the availability of transportation options to CMU even more important.

Roads

The road system is highlighted by US 127, the major north–south artery for the Township. The Township is connected to the City of Mount Pleasant by several east–west arterials as well, including Pickard and Remus Roads.

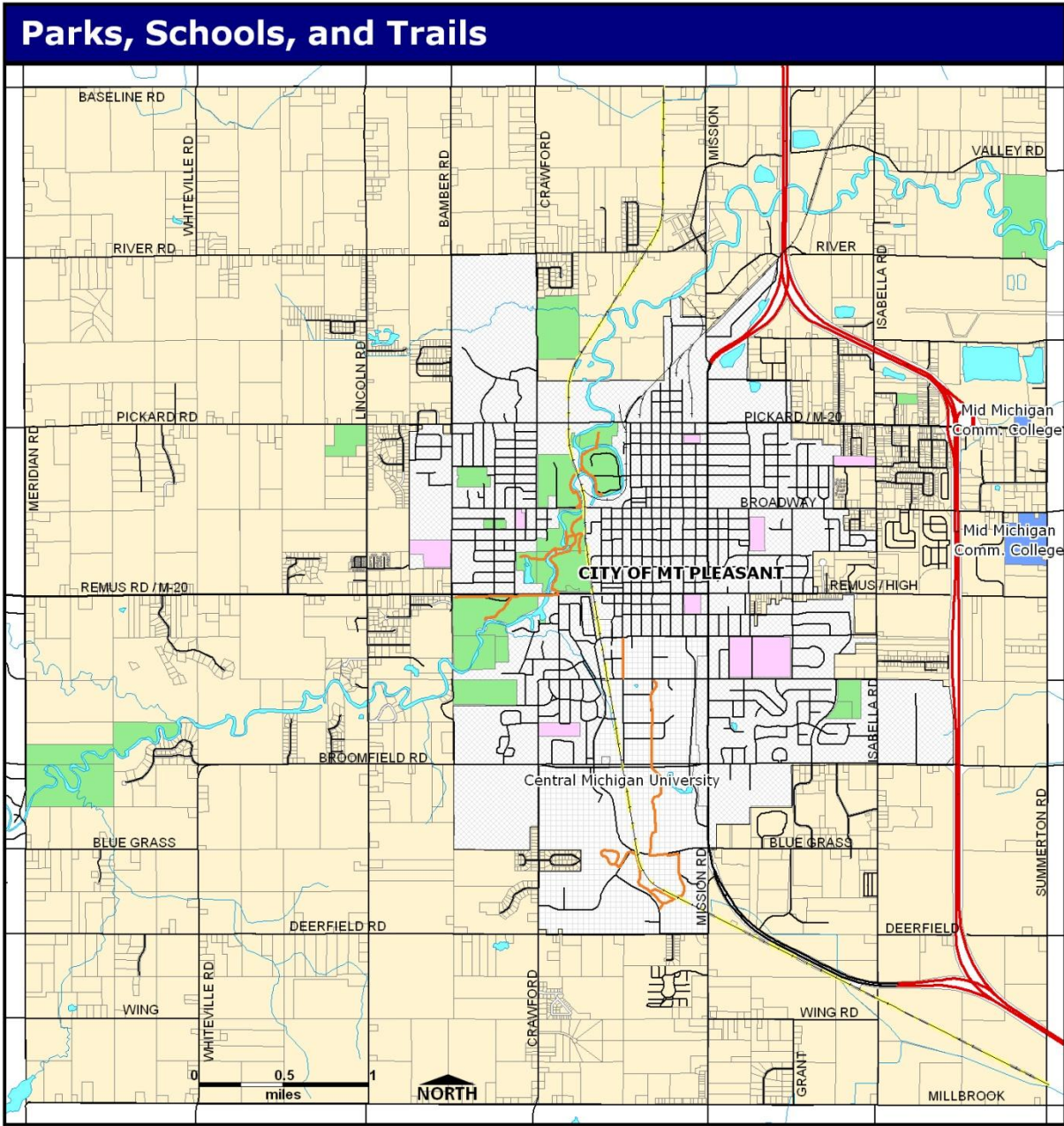
On the policy side, the Township currently has very specific access management recommendations for US 127 BR, M–20/Pickard Rd., and M–20/Remus Rd. developed in conjunction with MDOT and the City of Mt. Pleasant. A draft overlay zoning district was also developed in 2006 to implement the recommendations of this access management plan. This overlay has not yet been adopted, however.

The Township also has a Private Road Ordinance, which is written to balance the right of reasonable access to private property with the right of the citizens to safe and efficient travel. This ordinance goes beyond just providing for efficient travel and recognizes the link between roads and land use. The intent of the ordinance states, “These regulations also further the orderly layout and use of land, protect community character, establish emergency vehicle access and conserve natural resources by promoting well–designed road and access systems and discouraging the unplanned subdivision of land.”

Parks

The parks and recreation areas are shown on the following map. These are largely centered around the water courses, the prime recreational asset in the Township.

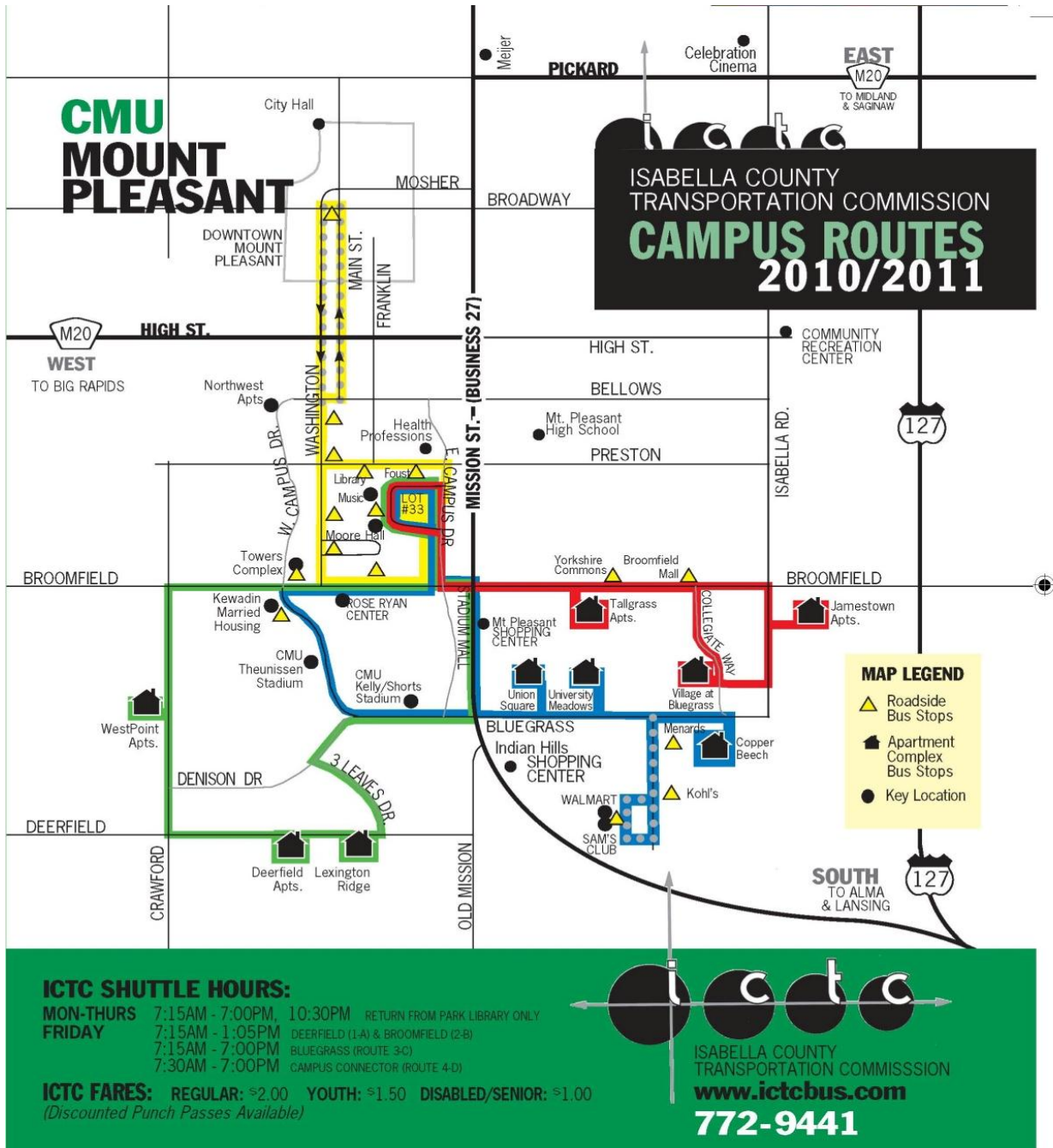




- Legend**
- Road
 - US Highway
 - Major Road
 - Existing Trails
 - Public Schools
 - Parks

Transit

Public transit is well supported and used in the Township. While it is primarily geared toward the student population, it is recognized as being forward thinking and willing to adapt to local needs.



The [Isabella County Transportation Commission](http://www.ictcbus.com) (ICTC) provides demand-response transit services to Union Township and the surrounding areas. The ICTC provides

dial-a-ride service to the entire County, with additional service to Clare, Remus and Oil City. They also provide a fixed-route campus shuttle between the CMU campus and the several large apartment complexes and shopping areas in the Township.

Stops in the Township include:

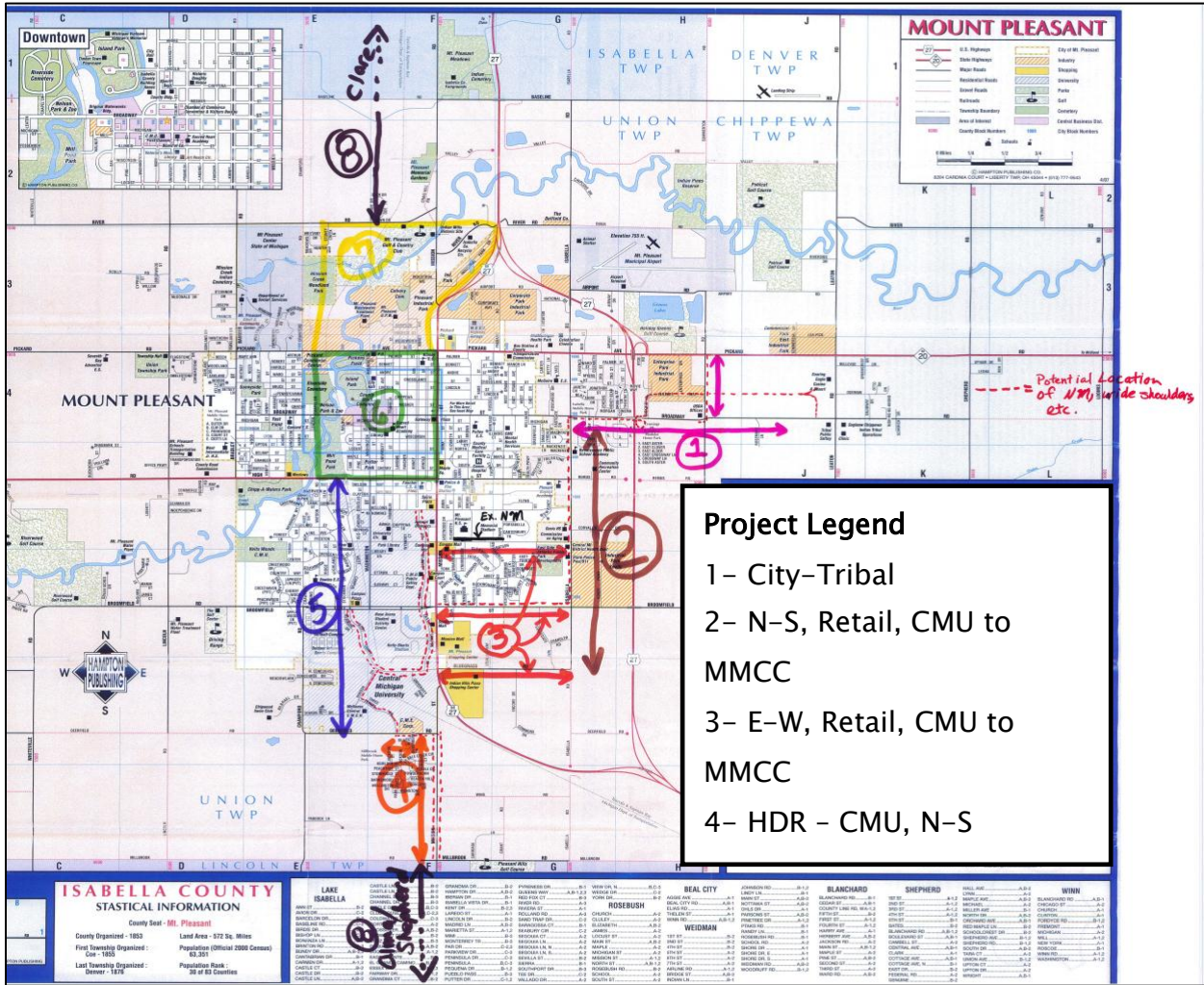
- West Point Apartments
- Deerfield Apartments
- Lexington Ridge Apartments
- Union Square
- University Meadows
- Village at Bluegrass
- Cooper Beech
- Jamestown Apartments
- Menards
- Kohl's
- Wal-Mart/Sam's Club

Regular fares for ICTC dial-a-ride service and the campus shuttle are \$2.00, \$1.50 for youth and \$1.00 for seniors making it financially accessible to most people.

Non-Motorized

Union Township places a high priority on making non-motorized transportation connections available to its residents. The Township has contracted with The Greenways Collaborative to produce a comprehensive micropolitan based study and recommendations. This project will serve to coordinate the various non-motorized efforts underway including the Township Pathways Committee, a pathways program through MDOT and a CMU-driven bike path project. While we anticipate that goals in this Plan related to nonmotorized transportation will be consistent with the recommendations of the new Nonmotorized Plan, the Master Plan goals will defer to the Nonmotorized Plan and it will replace this section's discussion in the Master Plan. The Nonmotorized Plan can be referenced on the [Township's website](#) upon completion.

Map 11 Preliminary Draft Of Potential Bike Pathways.



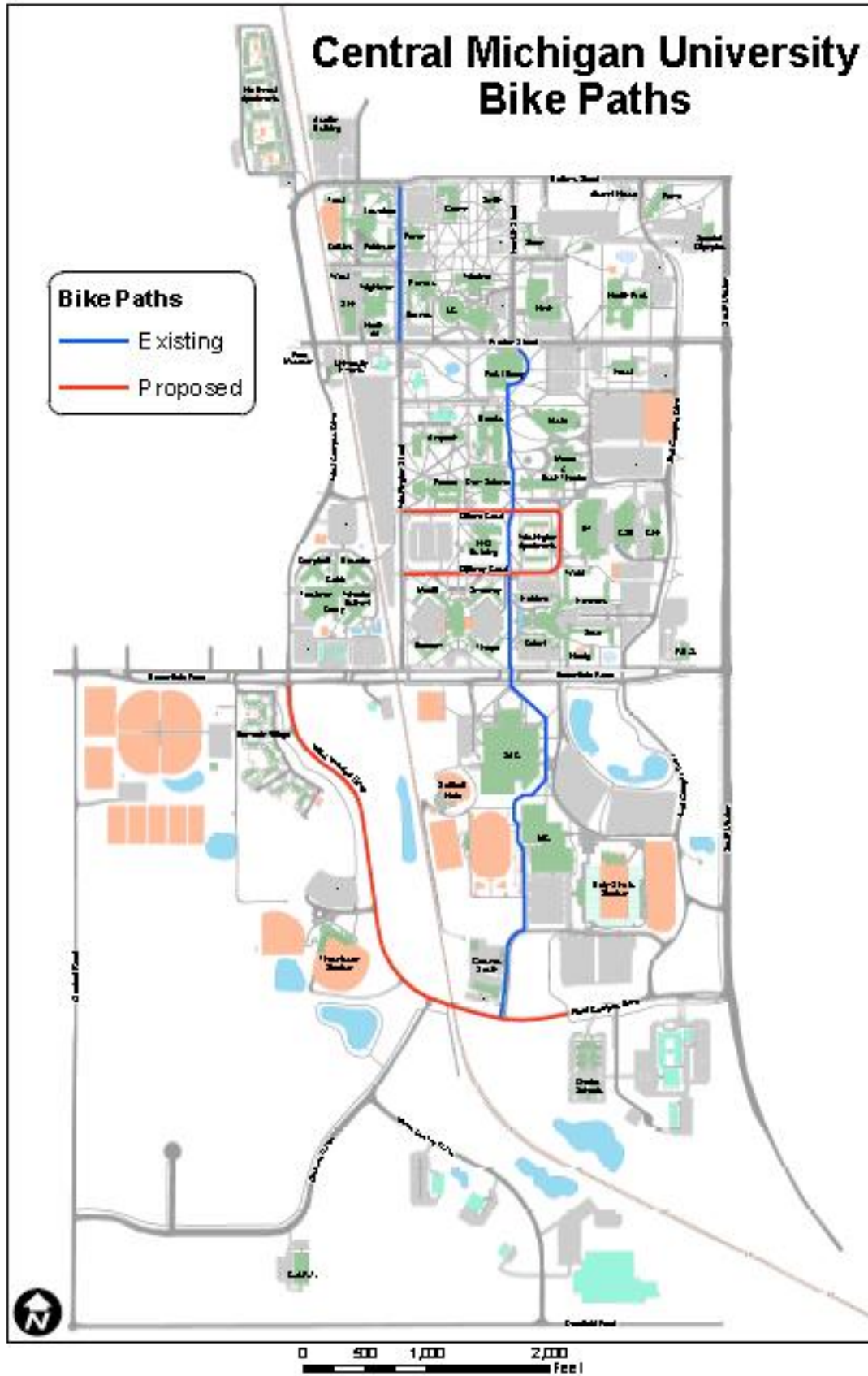
Source: Intergovernmental Pathways Committee, 2008.

In 2009 the Township also adopted a Sidewalk and Pathways ordinance, which requires all new development and redevelopment requiring site plan approval and substantial remodeling to include a sidewalk plan. The Township defines “pathways” (separate from sidewalks) and their use as follows: “An off-road shared use, non-motorized path, usually asphalt, separate from the public road (though sometimes in the public right-of-way). All cyclists regardless of age are encouraged to use pathways.” Through this ordinance, the Township also established a Sidewalks and Pathways Planning Committee to establish priorities for sidewalk construction in the Township. While sidewalks and pathways have

been needed and desired in the Township for years, this plan represents the first coordinated articulation and commitment at the governmental level to bringing Union into a healthier, more sustainable community.

CMU has a system of existing and proposed bike paths that should be considered in any Township non-motorized transportation planning effort. Although these paths are internal to or on the periphery of campus, they are relevant to the Township because students rely on them to get to from the apartment complexes and classes via Broomfield Road.

Map 12 CMU Bike Paths



THE PEOPLE SAY...

Stakeholder Interviews

In stakeholder interviews conducted during the planning process, many different stakeholder groups discussed transportation issues. The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe representative stated that the tribe participates in the Pathways project for non-motorized transportation so that the project complements the tribe's plans for growth and development. The Mt. Pleasant City Manager also participates in this project.

Representatives from CMU stated that they work regularly with the Township on commuting options for students to get to campus from residential areas within the Township. CMU stated that working on a comprehensive, connected non-motorized transportation system was important to them in their mission to be a "green university". Their suggestions to the Township included:

- Provision of non-motorized transportation options to the campus
- Locating future apartment complexes in other locations to spread out traffic flows into campus.
- Continue to work on commuting issues in general.

The Downtown Development Authority stated in their stakeholder interview that they would prioritize road improvements over bike paths. Although they are supportive of bike paths, they felt that there are areas that were safe for bike/pedestrian traffic and areas that were not. They recommended that bike paths be designed with safety as a primary objective.

Planners also spoke to representatives from the Isabella County Transportation Commission (ICTC) – the primary providers of transit service in the region. They stated that they have a 3-5 year plan to provide fixed route services in addition to the demand-response service they provide currently. They plan to build in the three fixed-routes they operate for students during the CMU semesters. Their suggestions to the Township as they related to land use and transportation included:

- They support usable and walkable area development

- The transportation system is part of usable and walkable development as we move from driving individual cars to more green approaches (they have started to use hybrid buses) – using a transportation system will help with traffic, support growth. (ICTC serviced 500,000 people in 2009. They realize that time-sensitive transportation will be a key to growth.)
- More specifically, ICTC would like more sidewalks along Bluegrass and Isabella Rd also with overhead lighting.
- They expressed concerns about the south end of Mission Ave., which has among the highest number of traffic accidents in the State (outside of major urban areas); the road is narrow and traffic is heavy. This is an area where increased public transit could help.

The ICTS has also been cooperating with the Tribe to provide transportation options to the new water park (to be located on M-20 at the site of the old Holiday Inn) and the casino. The Tribe has contributed to the transportation system, including purchasing buses for the ICTS.

Community Issues Survey

Residents participating in the Community Issues Survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies at CMU ranked several transportation issues among their highest priorities. The first table shows the priorities for non-

Table 6.1 Resident's Priorities

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Improve roads	73.5	21.4	5.1
Enhance cooperation with local governments	60.8	32.9	6.3
Provide alternative energy sources	50.7	35.1	14.3
Union Township inspect rentals	34.3	35.9	29.7
Enhance sidewalks	32.7	37.6	29.8
Increase zoning enforcement	29.1	42.2	28.7
Bike paths	20.9	30.4	48.6
Community swimming pool	20.9	28.3	50.8
Regulate outside sales	16.7	25.6	57.8
Provide more parks	7.3	30.4	62.1



student residents. The second depicts the same priorities, but for the Township’s student population.

Improving roads was rated “High Priority” by over 70% of Township residents; the highest priority initiative in the survey. Conversely, providing more bike paths was among the lowest priorities in the survey, receiving a “low priority” ranking by nearly 50% of respondents.

Like the resident sample, students also ranked improving roads as their highest priority and ranked bike paths fairly low. However, the student sample placed a much higher priority on enhancing sidewalks.

Table 6.2 Student’s Priorities

Student Sample, Percentage Distributions	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Improve roads	62.3	28.2	8.5
Enhance sidewalks	62.7	26.6	10.7
Provide alternative energy sources	58.6	33.9	7.5
Enhance cooperation with local governments	41.8	45.3	12.9
Union Township inspect rentals	28.6	40.6	30.9
Provide more parks	20.3	44.1	35.6
Bike paths	19.3	46.6	34.1
Community swimming pool	16.1	27.6	56.3
Increase zoning enforcement	14.3	47.8	37.9
Regulate outside sales	11.4	26.7	61.9

Overall, nearly all sources of input into this plan recognize that roads need to be improved for safety and efficiency purposes. Those that provide transportation services or routes (such as ICTS and CMU) also highlight the need to take stress of roads by offering non-motorized transportation alternatives. Both CMU administration and the students living in the Township recognize the need for sidewalk improvements.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

Goal: Establish and promote non-motorized transportation.

- Integrate paths with sidewalks and bike lanes.
 - Prepare a complete inventory of sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the area.
 - Identify gaps, particularly between parks, apartment complexes, neighborhoods and subdivisions and important destinations
 - Prioritize necessary connections based on the nearby users/residents and the routes to important destinations
- Require sidewalks in all new developments.
 - Consistently implement the provisions of the Sidewalks and Pathways ordinance adopted in 2009
 - Utilize the Healthy Development Checklist, published by the Walkable Communities Institute (www.walkable.org) when reviewing new site plans
- Establish sidewalk program to construct sidewalks where they are required.
 - Utilize the Township's Pathways Committee to inventory the gaps in sidewalks and prioritize new installations
- Connect all schools, parks, apartment complexes, neighborhoods and subdivisions and bus stops.
 - Create a GIS inventory of apartment complexes, parks and bus stops
 - Connect with sidewalk/pathway inventory to identify gaps
 - Prioritize areas within ¼ mile of bus stops and schools for sidewalk and pathway installation
 - Adopt Complete Streets design standards.
- Promote mixed use developments to encourage walkability
 - Revise the zoning ordinance to permit mixed uses in commercial and high density residential areas
- Offer incentives for reuse of vacant structures to encourage infill and density



Goal: Create an access management plan as a part of the overall redevelopment plan for Bluegrass Road.

- Adopt access management policies and a definitive plan for driveway closures, driveway placement, shared parking, non-motorized access and limitation of turning movements.
 - Create a GIS inventory of all existing driveways and access points along Bluegrass Road
 - Create a land use inventory along the corridor, including vacant properties
 - Work with property owners to establish a plan for appropriate access to each business, including possible shared access points, and closing driveways that are no longer necessary
 - For public safety purposes, ensure appropriate number of access points for large residential complexes, creating new ones and connecting to adjacent developments where possible
 - Revise the zoning ordinance to require joint access for new development

Map 13 Aerial View of Bluegrass Road, Showing High Density Development, Scattered Vacancies and Uncoordinated Access.



Source: Union Township GIS, 2010

Goal: Promote a sustainable community

- Have diverse transportation options
 - Work with the university, local schools, the Tribe and senior citizens groups to identify alternative transportation needs
 - Identify key destinations in the Community that need to have multiple options for access (such as schools, major shopping nodes, etc.)
 - Identify gaps between transportation needs and current availability
 - Work with the ICTS in their 3-5 year plan to expand fixed-route transit service to the area
 - Establish an asset management program at the Township (and work with the County Road Commission to do the same)

- Conduct a walkability audit of the Township, perhaps in collaboration with the City of Mt. Pleasant and CMU



7

Development Opportunities

Introduction

Where Are We Now?

The People Say

Goals, Objectives and Tasks



Chapter 7: Development Opportunities

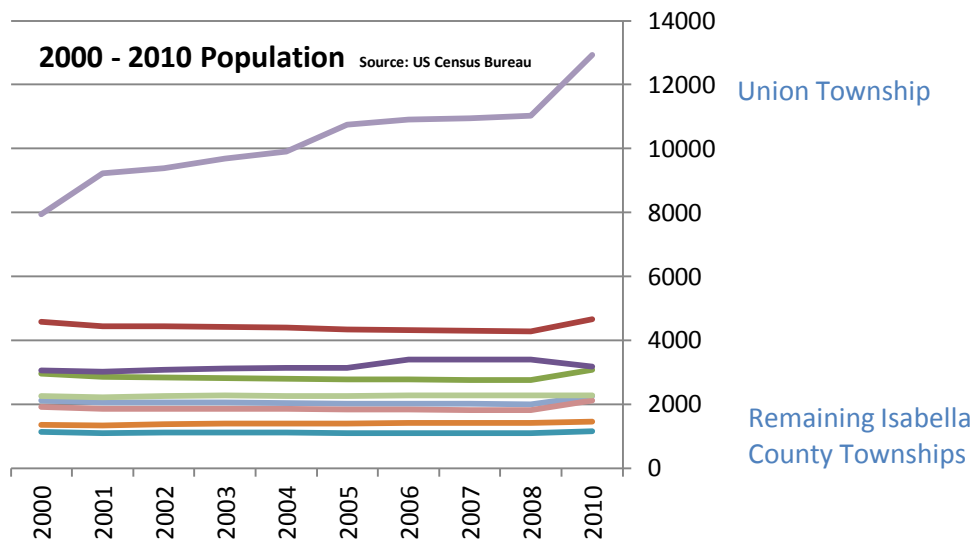
LIVE, SHOP, WORK

INTRODUCTION

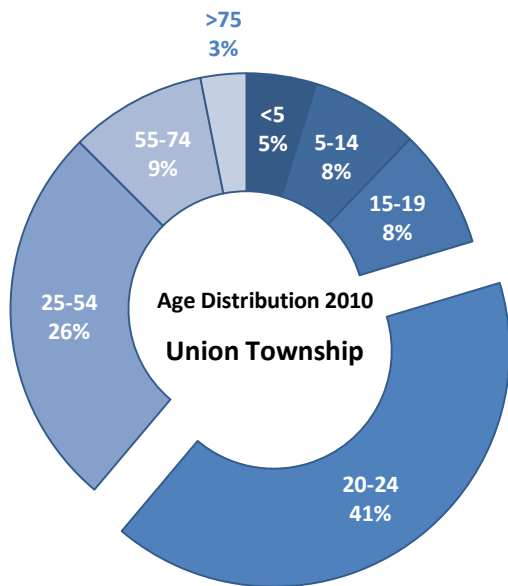
Despite the struggling economy, the Township remains focused on its future beyond the recovery. Development and redevelopment opportunities need to be examined now, so that the Township can grow and prosper while maintaining its desired community character. Housing, commercial and industrial land uses must be planned for a wide range of current and future residents, as well as to contribute to the economic health of the region.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Basic demographic data can shed a great deal of light on the housing needs of current and future populations and businesses. Union Township is, by far, the most populous Township in Isabella County and has experienced a higher rate of growth since 2000 than any other Township, as seen in the figure below.



While other Michigan and Isabella County communities are planning for smaller populations, Union Township should assume some growth in the future.



Union Township has a much higher percentage of residents aged 20–24 than the rest of the State, indicative of the large student population in the Township. Housing should be planned specifically for students as well as for the population between the ages of 25 to 54, the second largest segment, in conjunction with the university student need and growth projections. Commercial nodes with appropriate goods, services and building design should

be placed strategically and connected intentionally with non-motorized paths to serve the residences of Union Township.

According to the assessment data in the following table, the land uses with the highest taxable value are occupied by commercial property followed by occupied residential land uses. Industrial and agricultural land uses, whether occupied or not, lag far behind in terms of taxable value. Moreover, the number of acres devoted to occupied residential use is slightly less than that devoted to the active (occupied) agricultural uses yet the residential generates over 24 times more taxable value.

The building permit data shows that residential building permit activity, particularly in the single-family and two-family R2-A zoning district, outpaced every other zoning district between 1990 and 2003. Under the Michigan Right to Farm Act, agricultural operations do not need building permits for agricultural buildings so the permits in the Agricultural zone were most likely for single-family residences. The number of permits issued in business and industrial zones, where any business with employees, producing, and/or selling goods and services, would be located, was quite low in comparison to residential districts. Additional

commercial establishments may emerge in the future due to the increasing population. Industrial and office uses will probably remain a small part to the Township’s tax base, though office uses may be growing.

Table 7.1 Property Assessments, 2009

Union Twp 2009 Property Assessment Database				
Property Class	Number of Parcels	Acres	SEV	Taxable Value
Ag-Occupied	69	3,864.09	\$9,768,400	\$5,433,996
Ag-Vacant	74	3,059.02	\$5,052,900	\$1,809,424
Commercial – Occupied	311	1,762.97	\$194,843,500	\$159,940,276
Commercial – Vacant	99	5,59.06	\$11,359,000	\$6,117,062
Industrial – Occupied	10	129.1	\$4,348,900	\$3,909,968
Industrial – Vacant	2	16.38	\$96,100	\$8,816
Residential – Occupied	1883	3,659.93	\$138,979,500	\$123,680,599
Residential – Vacant	375	1,178.82	\$7,839,000	\$4,222,208
Developmental – Occupied	33	736.5	\$8,584,900	\$4,388,099
Developmental – Vacant	37	1,165.59	\$14,249,500	\$4,945,084
Total	2893	16,131.46	\$395,121,700	\$314,455,532

Smart Growth principles call for walkable, distinctive neighborhoods with a mix of uses that take advantage of compact building design. Without strong development guidelines, current trends may work against these principles. The Future Land Use decision scheme outlined in Chapter 4 for agricultural lands and largely developed commercial, high density residential and industrial land, calls for specific guidelines for permitting new development. The goals included in this plan specifically state the need to revise the zoning ordinance to promote infill and mixed uses in rezoning and development decisions.



Building Permits by Zoning District

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
total	132	124	118	107	143	147	177	205	283	612	828	608	501	499
AG	29	23	26	26	20	16	29	35	48	104	242	154	142	141
B4	1	6	2	3	4	3	3	3	5	4	6		8	1
B5	1	6	2	2	10	14	11	10	5	18	27	12	22	15
B6	5	3	7	3	3	2	3	2	2	23	19	16	9	17
B7	8	3	4	5	12	11	6	8	6	22	23	26	12	8
I1	4		1	2	6	1	3	4	5	22	7	13	7	23
I2	6	3	2	3	4	4	3	5	1	4	10	9	7	4
MULTIPL	7	6	4	8	29	15	16	6	3	36	41	18	26	16
R1	7	9	6	6	3	3	11	10	16	26	33	25	40	13
R2A	20	22	25	30	30	50	54	56	77	205	220	177	154	179
R2B	15	14	9	4	5	2	12	7	8	22	42	39	21	12
R3	4	1		1	3	1	5	3	3	23	44	63	28	34
R4	12	6	7	6	9	6	6	24	69	43	24	12	5	13
R5	3	4	9	5	5	18	11	6	9	28	27	8	9	7
(blank)	10	18	14	3		1	4	26	26	32	63	36	11	14

AG Agricultural District

R-1 One-family Residential District

R-2A One and Two-Family District

R-2B One and Two-Family District

R-3A Apartment and Condominiums District

R-3B Medium Density Apartment and
Condominiums District

R-4 Mobile or Modular Home District

R-5 Single-wide Mobile Home
District

B-4 General Business District

B-5 Highway Business District

B-6 Auto-Related Highway Business District

B-7 Retail and Service Highway Business District

I-1 Light Industrial District

I-2 General Industrial District

OS Office / Service

Source: Union Township Permit Database.

Housing

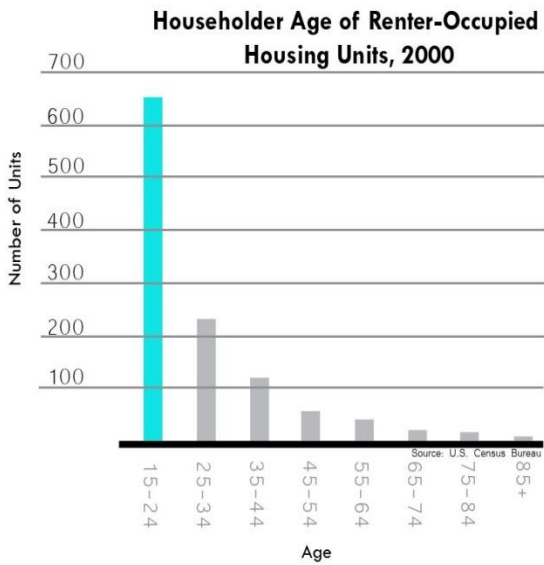
In 2000, the percentage of total housing units that were renter occupied was just under 39%. In 2005 that percentage had increased slightly to just over 40%.

However, the population living in rented units increased dramatically, from approximately 36% to just over 57% in the same 5-year period. This implies that while the number of rental units has increased, the number of people per rental unit has increased much more dramatically. This is a reflection of the increase in CMU student population in apartment complexes in the Township.

Also the Township population living in “non-family” households is quite high, in particular the number of people living with a housemate or boarder. Not surprisingly, the householder age of renter-occupied housing units was generally quite low in 2000.²

Table 7.3 Non-Relatives

By Household Type, 2000	Family Households	Nonfamily Households
Roomer or boarder	9	44
Housemate or Roommate	36	899
Unmarried Partner	92	136
Foster Child	5	0
Other Nonrelatives	23	38



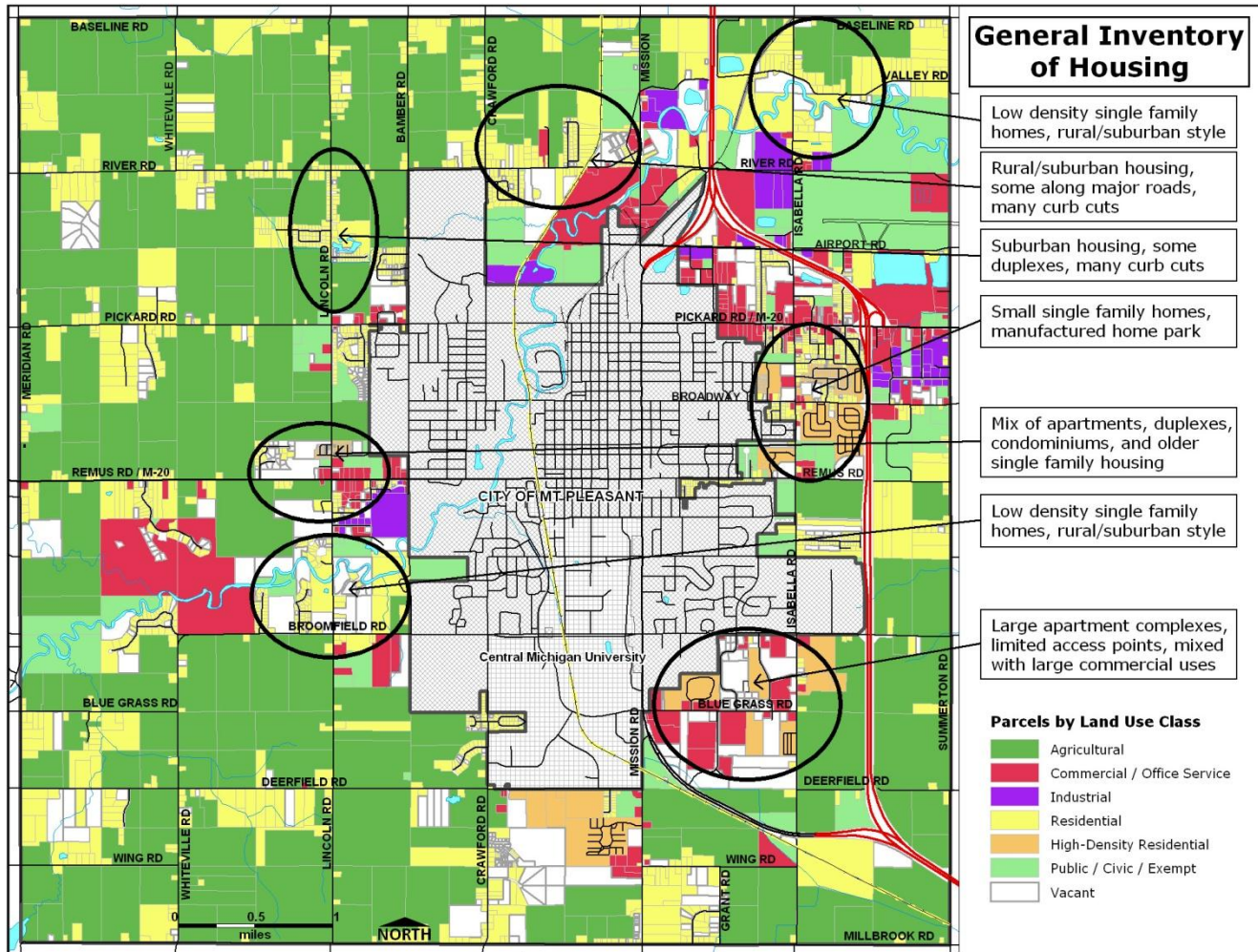
Demographic Data from [US Census Bureau](http://www.census.gov)

The following map shows a general inventory of housing for the Township. Only one area has a mix of housing types while the six other nodes identified were dominated by a single type of housing, targeted for specific populations.

² 2010 census data for this statistic was not available for use in this document.



Map 14 Housing Inventory



Commercial Development

The commercial uses in the Township are generally clustered along major roads or intersections near the boundary of the city of Mt. Pleasant, as shown in the Figure following. The buildings within each area vary in age, design and placement on the site. Large vacant commercial parcels are located in the areas near Pickard Road and also along the Bluegrass Road corridor. Since commercial uses tend to change location or update their facilities once every decade, the varying ages of buildings and vacant properties within established commercial areas are indications of future change – redevelopment of the commercial area, transition to other uses or gradual abandonment. If undeveloped property is made available in the Township for

commercial development, uses within established commercial areas may build new facilities rather than update their current locations. Abandonment or underuse of commercial property affects the value of adjacent commercial entities. Occupied commercial uses account for just over half of the Township's taxable value.

Commercial land should be primarily located in the urban/suburban areas of the Township and only allowed in rural areas when utilities or resources are not available in already built areas. Infill in commercial areas should be encouraged and supported through appropriate zoning, planning, infrastructure and programming. Also, new commercial development should be considered as a supporting partner to the residential uses, in terms of types of uses, means of access and building design.

The redevelopment of commercial areas represents an opportunity to create high-quality places with Smart Growth development regulations and coordinated planning. Regulation changes could include limiting the number of driveways, improving sign regulations, allowing shared parking to meet zoning requirements, and standardizing the placement of buildings on sites. The Commercial areas will also support mixed residential and commercial uses, fostering both the infill and mixed use tenets of Smart Growth. The Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to increase; mixed use options by permitting residential uses in all districts and limited nonresidential uses in residential districts.

These measures would complement the streetscape and pedestrian amenities made by the Township, creating public and private spaces of the same quality and access for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike. The Bluegrass Road area, just southeast of the border with Mt. Pleasant, offers a testing ground for commercial redevelopment strategies for Union Township. The Township would like to develop a plan with policies and regulations to redevelop this area.

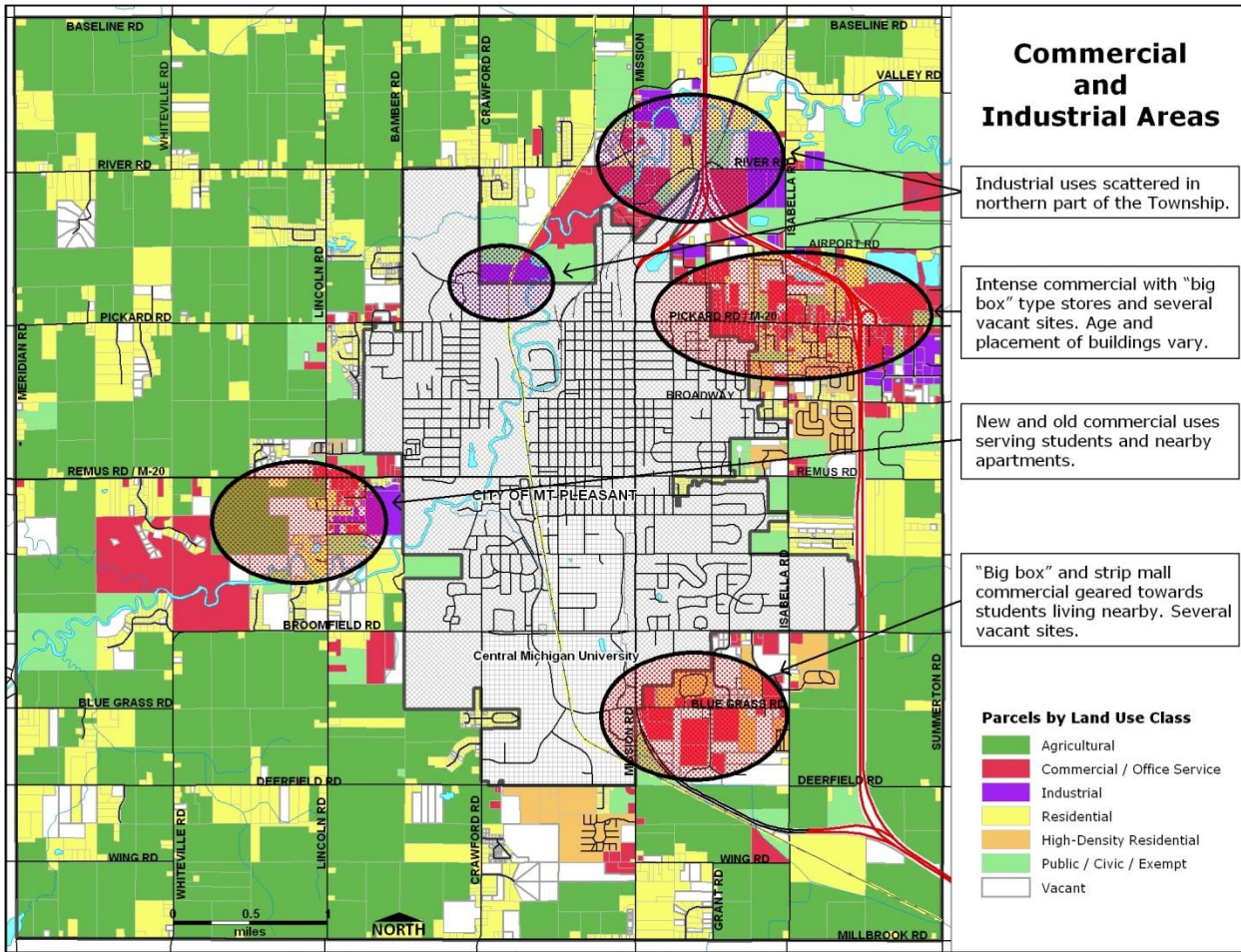
Industrial Development

A goal of Union Township is to promote the region as a destination for industry and tourism. However, the taxable value of occupied industrial areas is just over one percent of the total taxable value for the Township. To contribute to the attractiveness of the region for industry, Union Township would need to offer more



opportunities and incentives for industry to locate here. The geographic area where industrial uses are allowed could be expanded or appropriate industrial and research uses could be considered as special uses in commercial districts. Also, the uses allowed in the industrial districts could be examined to see if additional uses, such as commercial, research or computer-related uses, could be added to promote growth. Zoning regulations dealing with signs, building placement and lighting will help industrial uses to blend with different uses. Union Township has several strengths upon which to build. The proximity of CMU could be used as a catalyst to attract businesses to Union Township or to create first homes for emerging entrepreneurs. Both the university and the hospitality operations cater large number of meals creating the possibility for food processing, storage and packaging facilities for locally grown food.

Map 15 Commercial and Industrial Areas



THE PEOPLE SAY...

Community Issues Survey

Residents and students (surveyed in separate samples) participating in the Community Issues Survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies at CMU, addressed development issues in several questions.

Table 7.4 General Views

Residents Sample, Concerning Growth and Quality of Life				
	Rapid Growth	Moderate Growth	Slow Growth	No Growth
Preferred growth in Union Twp in 10 years	7.3	58.2	26.8	7.7
Preferred growth in Isabella County in 10 years	8.0	61.8	24.5	5.7
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of Life in Union Township	32.4	56.2	10.3	1.1
	Increase	Decrease	About the Same	
Expect change in quality of life in 10 years	37.6	8.4	54.0	

Residents’ opposition to change is most pronounced in three areas: “developing more rental housing,” “developing more upscale, high income housing,” and “creating cohesive neighborhoods– that is, keeping homes near one another rather than scattered throughout open land.” At least 50 percent of the resident sample is probably or definitely opposed to these changes.

Table 7.5 Support for Change

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Curbside recycling	57.1	17.5	8.5	16.8
Protect existing farmland	46.5	44.0	7.4	2.1
Develop more low income housing	36.1	39.1	14.9	9.9
Growth in industrial development	33.9	40.6	14.4	11.1
Creating cohesive neighborhood	22.3	24.4	34.0	19.3
Growth in commercial development	20.9	46.2	21.8	11.1
Develop more upscale housing	8.3	27.3	36.0	38.5
Develop more rental housing	2.5	10.9	30.3	56.3

Students' opposition is most pronounced in three areas. About 50 percent of the student sample is probably or definitely opposed to developing more upscale housing and to the growth in industrial development. Interestingly, 45 percent of the student sample is also probably or definitely opposed to developing more rental housing in the township.

The issue of enhancing cooperation with local governments ranked as an

Table 7.6 Support for Change

Student Sample, Percentage Distributions	Definitely Support	Probably Support	Probably Oppose	Definitely Oppose
Curbside recycling	80.7	17.0	1.1	1.1
Develop more affordable low income housing	65.9	26.1	6.3	1.7
Protect existing farmland	35.5	58.4	5.4	0.6
Growth in commercial development	32.2	48.0	15.8	4.1
Creating cohesive neighborhood	26.8	42.7	26.8	3.8
Develop more rental housing	23.3	32.0	29.7	15.1
Growth in industrial development	10.7	40.2	34.3	14.8
Develop more upscale housing	3.0	42.8	38.6	15.7

extremely high priority in the residents' survey. Collaboration is also a key



element in most of the other issues that ranked as high priority for township residents, including road improvements and alternative energy.

Stakeholder Interviews

During the stakeholder interviews, planners asked participants about their relationship with the Township. The responses relevant to housing issues are included below:

Central Michigan University: would like to work with the Township to improve the appearance of apartment complexes geared toward students. The University is not planning to add housing to campus.

Isabella County Farm Bureau: would like more land zoned to encourage higher residential densities and therefore less land area used for residential purposes. They would also like to see fewer large-lot splits in the agricultural areas. These activities would be intended to encourage infill rather than green field development.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

Several of the Goals and Objectives identified by the Township Planning Commission relate to housing, and developing a wide range of housing opportunities.

Goal: Promote collaborative efforts among municipalities and agencies.

- Plan proactively for the needs of students in all areas, specifically transportation, safety and housing.
- Promote the region as a destination for industry and tourism.

Goal: Revise the zoning ordinance to meet currently identified needs and wants.

- Study affordable housing needs, so that the housing stock meets the needs of a wide variety of ages, family structures and income levels. Note that the existing

affordable housing that has historically been occupied by students may now be occupied more frequently by people who become permanent residents.

- document how much housing we have that meets the definition of affordable to determine if we need more of any one kind of housing with respect to our population.
- work with senior citizens and advocacy groups, such as the Isabella County Commission on Aging, to assess and meet the needs of older residents.
- Promote higher density development in all districts.
- Permit large houses on smaller lots. Decrease yard requirements.
- Promote variety in housing style and orientation.
- Promote neighborhood development through subdivision regulations and private road standards.
- Increase mixed use options by permitting residential uses in all districts and limited nonresidential uses in residential districts.
- Promote infill development through the use of higher densities, joint access, shared parking, and land use decisions that allow development only in infill areas or areas designated for the next “tier” of development.
- Revise industrial districts to permit retail, research and computer-related uses and to enhance growth.
- Adopt design guidelines for commercial and industrial development.

Goal: Create a plan for redeveloping Bluegrass Road.

- Adopt access management policies and a definitive plan for driveway closures, driveway placement, shared parking, non-motorized access and limitation of turning movements.
- Establish maximum setbacks, façade design guidelines.
- Lower the height and number of signs. Standardize signage size and placement.
- Research the feasibility and acceptability of amortizing nonconforming signs and façades.

Goal: Improve quality of rental housing

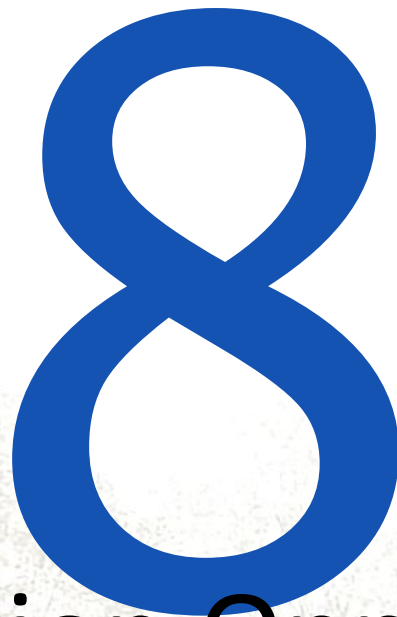
- Establish design guidelines.



- Adopt frequent inspection program.
- Improve safety features of the development.
- Establish consistent public safety system for rental complexes.

Goal: Promote a sustainable community

- Balance local and regional integrity.
- Have local employment.
 - Expand locations and types of uses allowed for increased local employment.



8

Collaboration Opportunities

Introduction

The People Say

Goals, Objectives and Tasks



Chapter 8: Collaboration Opportunities

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

INTRODUCTION

Union Township understands that good planning means collaborating with both public and private sector neighbors. A primary weakness in many planning efforts has been to view the Township as a distinct entity for planning purposes. Smart Growth principles stress encouraging community stakeholder collaboration.

The Township has identified several community partners during the master plan process and places a high priority on their input. The collaboration chapter of this Master Plan is intended to build on existing relationships and identify opportunities for improvement. The goal of this effort is a sustainable community with a high quality of life that will be attractive for residents for decades to come.

THE PEOPLE SAY...

Stakeholder Interviews

During the stakeholder interviews, planners asked participants about their relationship with the Township and what, if any, collaboration takes place. A wide variety of stakeholder groups were included in the planning process and their responses were quite varied.



Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* tumultuous, conflicted, ignored, separate
- *Current areas of collaboration:* utilities, tourism, media, parks
- *Notes:* The Tribe indicated that they often feel that the Township is imposing rules on them, such as showing tribal lands as zoned by the Township, when they cannot be as a sovereign nation. However, the Tribe does participate in the Pathways project for non-motorized transportation to be sure it complements tribal growth and development. The Tribe also gave \$150,000 to the Township for improvements on Isabella Road as part of casino revenue distribution and continues to distribute 2% of its revenues for local needs. They would like to be portrayed as a *partner* in the Township's planning process. The Tribe would like the plan to stress the similarities of all the groups that live in our region and the need for education and respect for each other's ways. The Tribe is another governmental unit with the objective of safeguarding their community, as are all governments.

Central Michigan University

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* Limited, but cordial
- *Current areas of collaboration:* transportation, public safety
- *Notes:* CMU would like to be portrayed as a destination, and as a sustainable university. They would like to be involved in the goal setting process and have a master plan of their own that will be available in late 2010.

City of Mt. Pleasant

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* Collaborators, forward, positive
- *Current areas of collaboration:* service, economic development, CMU, transportation, recreation, utilities, safety
- *Notes:* The City believes it is important that the Township recognizes the forward thinking vision of the City. The City is quite willing to

cooperate with local and regional endeavors and they recognize that the City is part of a bigger economic and functional region.

Middle Michigan Development Corporation

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* client, advocate, positive
- *Current areas of collaboration:* fund raising; business attraction and retention; helping businesses navigate local government services; providing employment and sector data for information and marketing purposes
- *Notes:* It is important to portray the MMDC services, collaborative role in the region, the Township's prime location and the educated workforce nearby. They noted that areas can't fight among themselves – this causes businesses to go elsewhere; communities need to all partner to make it work.

Isabella County Planning

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* provide them with information whenever it is requested
- *Current areas of collaboration:* Currently, the only interaction with the Township is reviewing Township zoning changes per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act
- *Notes:* They stated that communication is important; that it is important to make the County aware of zoning and planning action and the reverse is also true.

Isabella County Farm Bureau

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* They described a good working relationship with the Township
- *Current areas of collaboration:* Most interactions relate to development proposals on farmland
- *Notes:* There is limited, but regular communication with the Township. They are concerned that the current Master Plan does not have an agricultural preservation component. Items that are important to include in this version of the Master Plan include

agricultural education and preservation. They also suggested that the Township participate in the County's PDR program through a Master Plan component.

Economic Development Authority

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* EDA members are invited to Township meetings, but do not generally attend.
- *Current areas of collaboration:* none discussed
- *Notes:* The key issue discussed was lack of communication between DDAs, the Township, and the County. Several examples were cited regarding infrastructure and capital improvement projects. There was mutual desire from the DDA and the Township to have representatives attend each other's meetings.

Chamber of Commerce

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* The Chamber cited a good, cooperative relationship with the Township, particularly relating to special events.
- *Current areas of collaboration:* The Township supervisor sits on the Chamber's legislative affairs committee and attends chamber events
- *Notes:* The Chamber wants to make sure that collaboration and communication continues, and in particular would like to be kept informed posted on any new business activity in the Township

Isabella County Transportation Commission (ICTC)

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* ICTC reports a great relationship with the Township, and views Union Township as an example of how to work with other groups provide them with information whenever it is requested
- *Current areas of collaboration:* Township Zoning Administrator makes sure that the architects and builders check with him on their building designs to review for appropriate access for ICTC buses with regard to turning radius, parking, overhangs, etc.
- *Notes:* They wish for a collaborative relationship that includes the City of Mt. Pleasant and the Tribe as well. The ICTC also wishes to

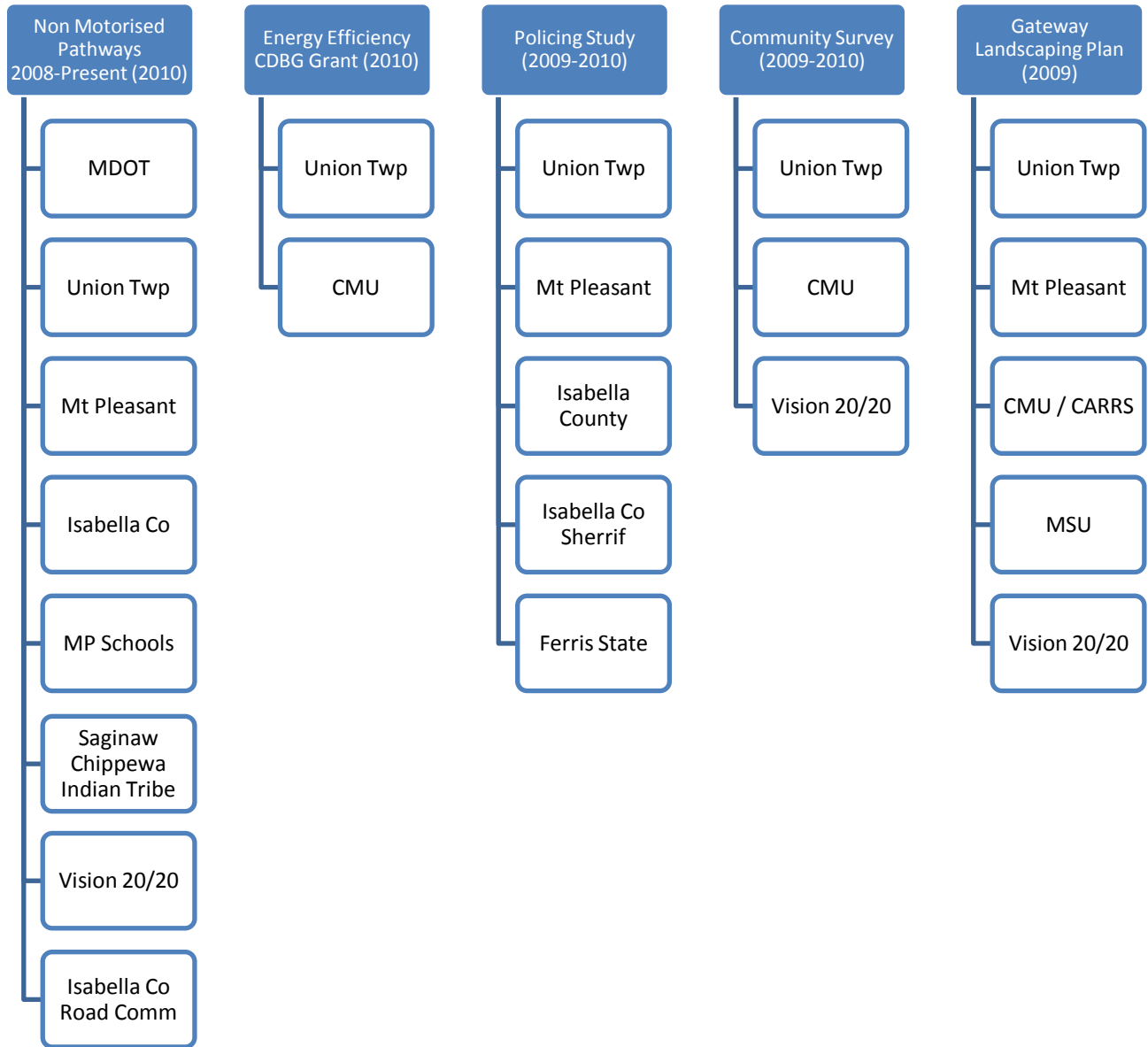
work with the Township as they plan for more fixed route services in the next 3–5 years.

Isabella County Home Builders Association

- *Key words to describe relationship with the Township:* Very little interaction was reported
- *Current areas of collaboration:* Obtaining permits from the Township
- *Notes:* Participants stated that they would like to be informed in the earlier stages of changes to the Township regulations, rather than only at the end.

The following chart shows recent studies that the Township has undertaken to advance the initiatives of the groups with whom they collaborate. The groups listed under each heading represent the active collaboration that took place with each study and demonstrates some of the existing partnerships in the community and the active move toward economies of scale and the logical provision of services versus those whose service areas are limited by municipal boundaries.





Community Issues Survey

Residents participating in the Community Issues Survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies at CMU addressed collaboration issues in several questions.

Table 8.1 Resident's Ratings

Residents Sample, of Township and Collaborative Services	A Excellent	B Good	C Adequate	D Fair	E Poor
Fire services of Mt. Pleasant to Union Twp	48.6	42.2	7.4	1.2	0.6
State Police services	44.9	39.2	12.9	1.5	1.5
Isabella County Sheriff services	36.3	45.6	13.9	2.4	1.9
Water and sewer services, for those with township service (n=307)	29.0	41.0	17.3	6.5	6.2
Government Services	12.2	43.8	33.4	7.3	3.3

First, when asked to grade Township services, government services in general ranked largely Good or Adequate. Services related to public safety that are provided in collaboration with other units of government (such as the City of Mt. Pleasant and the County Sheriff) ranked much higher.

Table 8.2 Resident's Priorities

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Improve roads	73.5	21.4	5.1
Enhance cooperation with local governments	60.8	32.9	6.3
Provide alternative energy sources	50.7	35.1	14.3
Union Township inspect rentals	34.3	35.9	29.7
Enhance sidewalks	32.7	37.6	29.8
Increase zoning enforcement	29.1	42.2	28.7
Bike paths	20.9	30.4	48.6

Table 8.2 Resident’s Priorities

Residents Sample, Percentage Distributions	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Community swimming pool	20.9	28.3	50.8
Regulate outside sales	16.7	25.6	57.8
Provide more parks	7.3	30.4	62.1

The issue of enhancing cooperation with local governments ranked as an extremely high priority in the residents’ survey. Collaboration is also a key element in most of the other issues that ranked as high priority for township residents, including road improvements and alternative energy.

Chippewa Indian Tribe

There are three types of land that is under the jurisdiction of the Tribe. A discussion of this is necessary to understand opportunities and impediments for collaboration.

Trust Lands: Trust land is owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and is held in trust for the benefit of indigenous people. This land is not taxable and is beyond local and state jurisdiction.

Allotted Lands: In the 1870’s land was set aside by the federal government for the use and ownership of indigenous people. This land encompassed six townships in Isabella County and was set aside as allotments. Indians were allotted plots of 40 acres, which were owned in fee simple by the land owner with jurisdiction of the Tribe over the land.

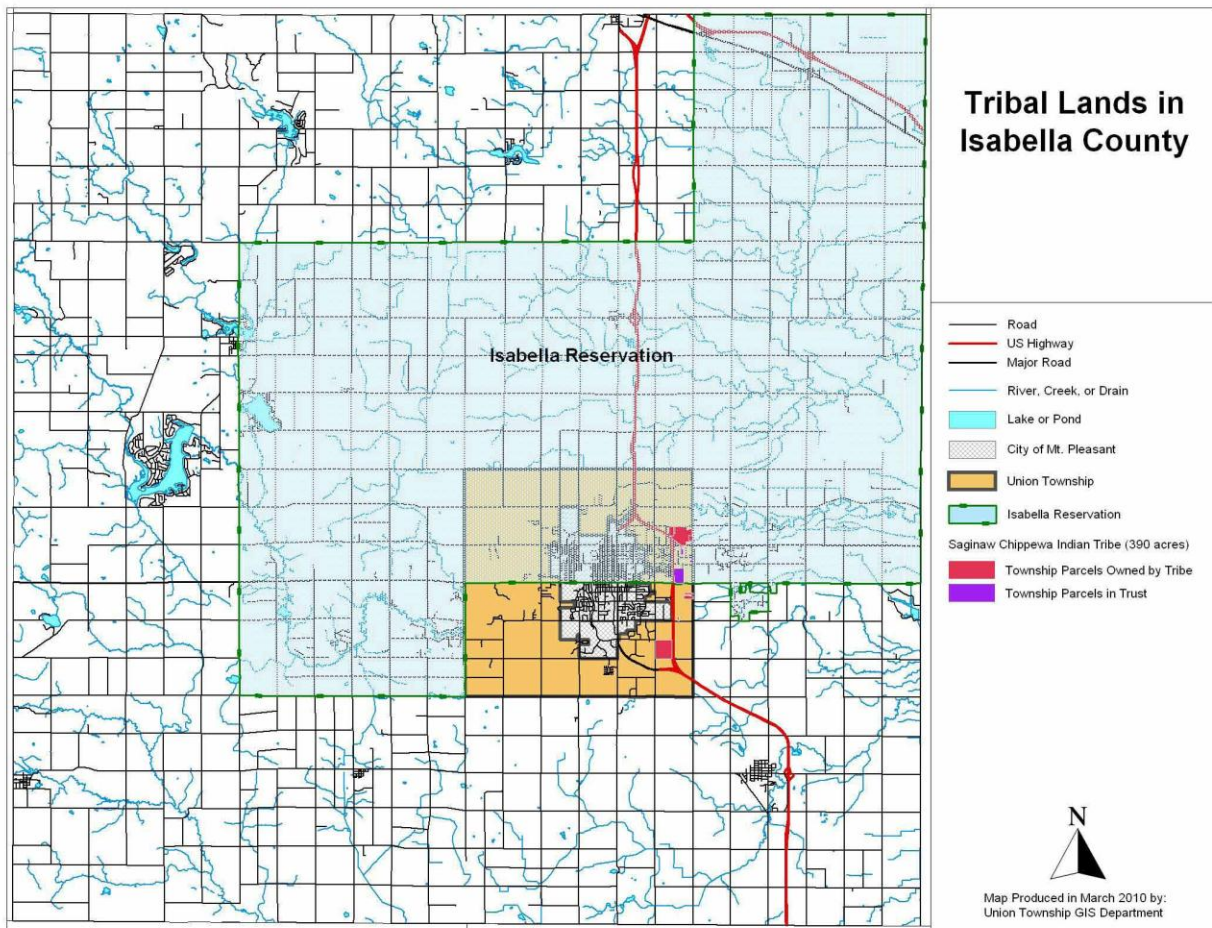
Reservation Lands: On the reservation, the Tribal Police have jurisdiction over tribal members only. On Allotted and Trust lands the Tribe has jurisdiction over all people.

Current collaboration exists among policing agencies in the County and with some utilities agreements. Pending lawsuits with the State of Michigan and the City of Mt. Pleasant has impeded utility sharing and other potential

collaboration opportunities. The Tribe gives 2%\$ of their revenues to area municipalities for projects that are mutually agreed upon. The purpose of this required allocation is to offset the presence of the reservation and its members in a community where they do not contribute to the general fund via traditional tax dollars.

There is disagreement among municipalities in which there is land designated as allotted, in trust or part of the reservation regarding who has jurisdiction over land use regulations such as zoning and utility connections. This is a prime area where there is opportunity for collaboration and agreement regarding the needs and protections for each group.

Map 16 Tribal Lands



Utilities

The issue of utilities deserves some additional discussion given the challenges and opportunities facing Union Township and its surrounding communities and the collaboration opportunities.

The Township provides water and sewer utilities to significant portions of the Township abutting the City of Mt. Pleasant; the Township's wastewater service area essentially rings the City. While some of the Township's sewer force mains travel through the City limits, they do not share any connections with the City's system. In many cases, the pipes run parallel but do not connect.

Several service needs and expansion plans are at issue now, bringing up questions of how these services could be provided most efficiently and equitably across the region. The County has recently pledged its Full Faith and Credit to the Township for a bond for the expansion of the Township's wastewater system. Concurrently, the Tribe is making plans for water and sewer service for its planned water park at the site of the former Holiday Inn. The City has seen service demands decline because CMU has decreased their usage of City water and sewer and because of the closure of the Mt. Pleasant Center residential facility for the disabled.

Based on these circumstances, the opportunities for collaboration between the Township, City and Tribe are many:

- The Township or Tribe could purchase additional capacity from the City instead of expanding or creating new systems
- The Township could expand its water system as planned and sell additional capacity to the Tribe
- Future utility delivery should be an urgent topic for discussion between the Township, City, Tribe and CMU.

Table 8.3 Summary of Collaboration Opportunities

	What	Who	How
Sewer and Water	Distribute excess capacity to areas/municipalities that need it	Union Township Public Works City of Mt. Pleasant CMU	Ad-hoc committee Capital Improvements Plan
	Coordinate future utility expansion	Tribe	Establish water and sewer authority
Public Safety	Share public safety resources	City Fire and Police Departments County Sheriff State Police Township Board	Cost of service study Inter-governmental agreements
Housing	Plan proactively for the needs of students, seniors, and other population groups	Township Planning Commission CMU Home builders association	Meet regularly to discuss student population projections Community Meetings in/near student housing developments
Transportation	Plan motorized and non-motorized transportation with all area agencies	ICTC CMU Township planning Commission Township zoning administrator DDAs County Road Commission	Coordinate design of new developments Work with ICTC on plans for new fixed route service
Tourism and Industry	Promote the region as a destination for industry and tourism	Township DDA Chamber of Commerce City DDA Middle Michigan Development Corporation	Regular Meetings Marketing Materials Communicate on new and potential business activity

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

Goals and Objectives identified by the Township Planning Commission relate to collaboration with neighboring communities and other agencies.

Goal: Promote collaborative efforts among municipalities and agencies.

- Plan utility expansion and use with adjacent agencies and municipalities
 - Create an ad-hoc committee to discuss future utility expansion, with a special focus on sewer and water services (which have a great impact on land use development patterns)
 - Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Township that is consistent with the City of Mt. Pleasant Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan
- Share public safety resources among municipalities and the university.
 - Conduct a cost-of-services study for public safety services, in cooperation with adjacent municipalities
 - Explore inter-governmental agreements with adjacent municipalities
- Plan motorized and non-motorized transportation with all area agencies.
 - Assist the ICTC with planning for future fixed route service
 - Coordinate the road and non-motorized amenities of new developments with those in surrounding jurisdictions
- Promote the region as a destination for industry and tourism.
 - Meet regularly with area Chambers of Commerce and Downtown Development Authorities to discuss opportunities
 - Explore the development of marketing materials for the region jointly with these agencies
- Plan proactively for the needs of students in all areas, specifically transportation, safety and housing.
 - Establish a regular line of communication with CMU and receive regular updates on enrollment and projections

- Hold community meetings on a regular basis in/near student housing developments/hang outs to discuss the needs of students and how to plan for them
- Embrace change when justified. Resist the status quo when unjustified.
 - Research thoroughly new ideas to promote collaboration
 - Revisit old ideas to reevaluate their potential effectiveness apart from political concerns



A large, bold, blue number '9' is centered on the page. The background is a faded, light-colored image of a river flowing through a wooded area with trees on both banks.

9

Looking Forward

Introduction
Land Use Goal Setting
Goals and Objectives
Future Land Use Plans



Chapter 9: Looking Forward

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & PLANS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we reiterate the goals and objectives that have been discussed separately in the earlier topic chapters of this plan. This chapter should serve as a concise reference for Township officials, developers, landowners, and the public.

LAND USE GOAL SETTING

The Union Township Planning Commission drafted the goals and objectives for this plan using Smart Growth principles, demographic information and the community survey. These goals and objectives were further refined based on the interviews, public input sessions and background research described in previous chapters.

These goals and objectives are guides for development, recognizing the inevitability of changing circumstances. The future land use plan at the conclusion of this chapter is based on the goals and objectives. The Township Board and the Planning Commission should reference these when making land use decisions such as special land uses and rezoning, as well as when defining tasks and budgets for land use planning.

The future land use plan is based on concentrating building in already developed areas and protecting existing farmland. Residential, commercial and industrial development should be focused in built areas. Rezoning to suburban or urban land uses should only be allowed in the areas dedicated on the future land use map as the next “tier” of development.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives are the backbone of the Master Plan. They should be used as a guide in all future land use decisions.

Goal: Promote collaborative efforts among municipalities and agencies.

- Embrace change when justified and resist the status quo when unjustified.
- Promote the region as a destination for industry and tourism.
- Proactively plan for the needs of students in all areas, specifically transportation, safety and housing.
- Plan utility expansion and use with adjacent agencies and municipalities.
- Plan motorized and non-motorized transportation with all area agencies.
- Share public safety resources among municipalities and Central Michigan University.

Goal: Establish and promote non-motorized transportation.

- Integrate paths with sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Require sidewalks in all new developments.
- Establish sidewalk program to construct sidewalks where there required.
- Connect all schools, apartment complexes, parks and bus stops with sidewalks or paths.

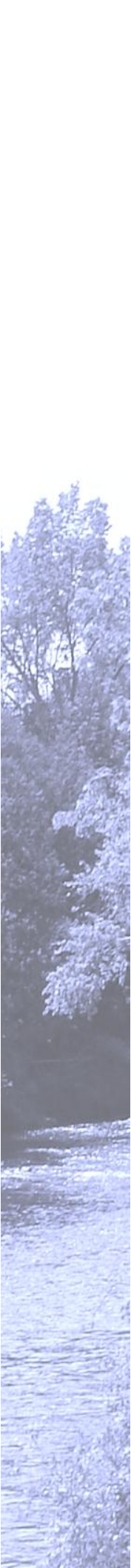
Goal: Revise Zoning Ordinance to meet currently identified needs and wants.

- Incorporate groundwater protection into zoning and development decisions.

- Revise the zoning ordinance to include standards for impervious surfaces and innovative storm water management techniques.
- Establish a wellhead protection program with appropriate zoning ordinance changes using the resources available from the State of Michigan.
- Utilize the sewer service areas as a guide in zoning decisions.
- Consider groundwater quality in zoning decisions.
- Promote higher density development in all districts.
- Promote variety in housing style and orientation.
- Promote neighborhood development through subdivision regulations and private road standards.
- Promote infill development through the use of higher densities, joint access, shared parking, and land use decisions that allow development only in infill areas or areas designated for the next “tier” of development.
- Adopt design guidelines for commercial and industrial development.
- Ensure that mixed use opportunities are available in the zoning ordinance, to encourage sustainable and walkable development.
- Evaluate employment opportunities in the region and include appropriate industrial/office lands in the Master Plan so that the Township can contribute to employment for its citizens.
- Evaluate the availability of commercial lands (including vacant and underutilized properties) and target development in those areas first.

Goal: Prevent premature conversion of agricultural land to non-farm development and preserve farmland.

- Expand infrastructure in a coordinated and efficient fashion.
- Permit the extension of water and sewer pipes into or across prime agricultural areas only when absolutely necessary.
- Ensure that lot sizes in Agricultural zoning districts are large enough to prevent fragmentation of identified priority agricultural areas.



Goal: Establish clear priorities for land to be developed in the Township

- Use Future Land Use Map as the guide for the most appropriate areas for development, buffer lands, and priority preservation areas.
- Consider rezoning requests only in those areas designated for the next “tier” of development.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to include clear rules for development in agricultural areas.
- Steer future commercial and industrial development toward appropriate infill sites before approving new developments in greenfield locations.

Goal: Create a plan for redeveloping Bluegrass Road.

- Adopt access management policies and a definitive plan for driveway closures, driveway placement, shared parking, non-motorized access and limitation of turning movements.
- Establish maximum setbacks, façade design guidelines.
- Lower the height and number of signs and standardize signage size and placement.
- Research the feasibility and acceptability of amortizing nonconforming signs and façades.

Goal: Improve quality of rental housing

- Establish design guidelines.
- Adopt frequent inspection program.
- Improve safety features of the development.
- Establish consistent public safety system for rental complexes.
- Study affordable housing needs, so that the housing stock meets the needs of a wide variety of ages, family structures and income levels.

Goal: Promote a sustainable community.

- Balance local and regional integrity.
- Link sanitary sewer and municipal water expansion to future land plan.
- Produce and distribute educational materials for residents on how to limit water use outside their homes and how to capture storm water runoff through rain barrels, rain gardens and green roofs.
- Promote and encourage design methods to lessen storm water run-off and pollution, also known as low impact development (LID), by providing educational materials and a list of area contractors skilled in this area.
- Expand locations and types of uses allowed for increased local employment.
- Find partnerships to develop a community-based food system.
- Develop community food profile for the region with partners.
- Create and maintain diverse transportation options.

FUTURE LAND USE PLANS

The future land use plan reflects a balance between employment, services, residential and rural uses. Isabella County's zoning ordinance approach was used to prioritize lands for future development with three agricultural areas: A1, A2, and A3. These areas were determined using soil conditions, existing development and location of utilities. A1 areas should be the last to be developed, A2 should function as a sort of rural buffer and A3 is land that can be permitted to be developed according to a strict set of rules.

The table below lists each future land use category, and its intended types and stages of development.

The A-1, the preserved agricultural area, is intended to remain agricultural for the life of this Plan. However, the Plan is not intended to prohibit individual lots from being developed as residential in the A-1 district provided they do not require sewer or water. Creating lots outside of



subdivisions is permitted under the Land Division Act although undesirable in the A-1 area when they conflict with agricultural operations.

The A-2 and A-3 categories do not specify the type of land use or zoning that will be permitted, rather the decision to develop is based on location with respect to existing development, available utilities and paved roads. Once these criteria are met, various mixed land use options are available depending on the existing characteristics of the area.

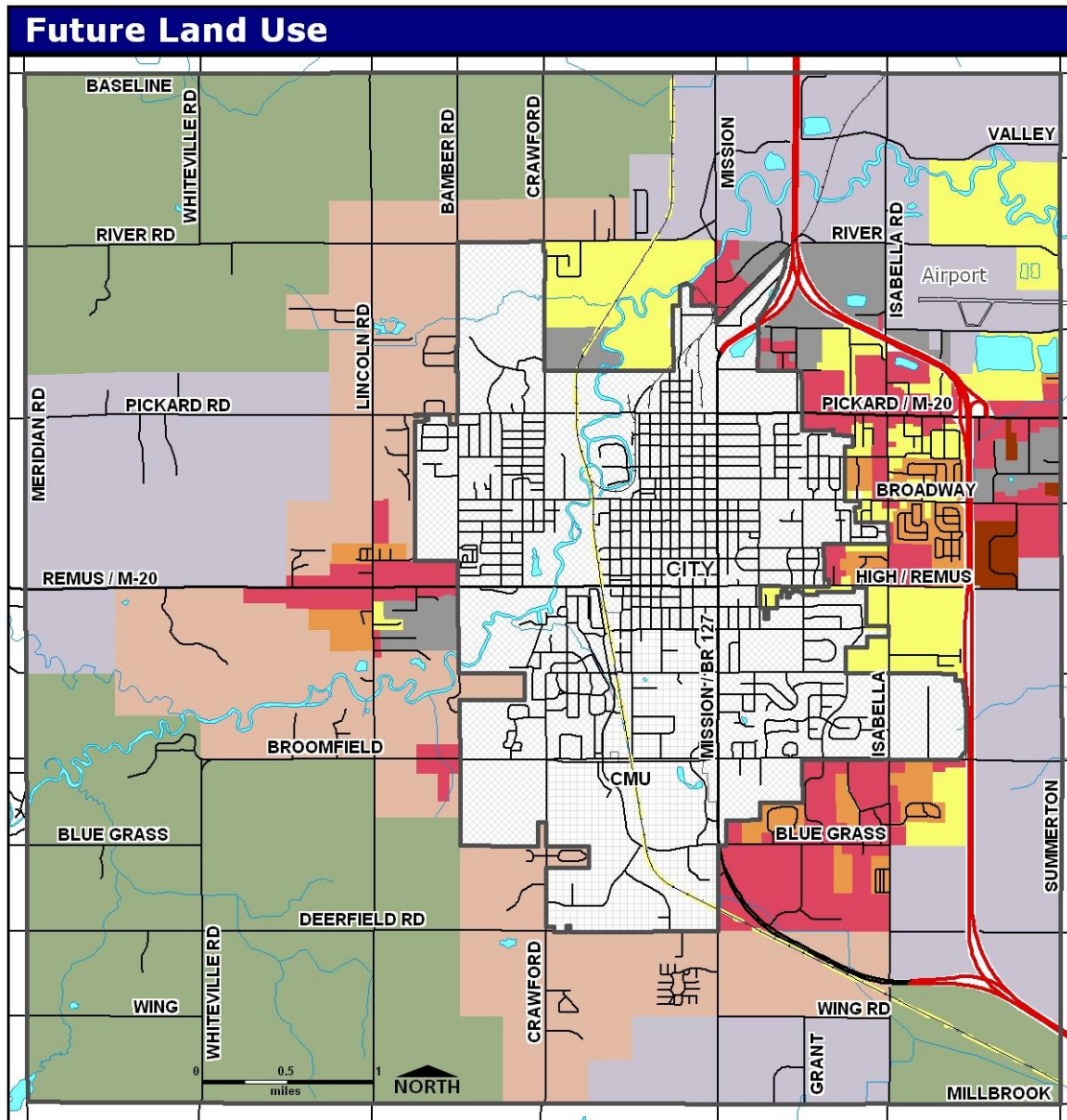
Future Land Use Category	Acres	%	Land Use Intent
Agriculture A-1	6698.58	37.04%	Preserve integrity and viability of existing agricultural operations
Agriculture A-2	4613.71	25.51%	Provide additional land for primarily residential uses with some mixed use development, relying on the underlying zoning as a guide. This area should only be developed when it is a logical extension of the developed areas in A-3.
Agriculture A-3	3381.18	18.70%	Buffer existing agricultural or undeveloped land from new development. Desired uses in this area follow the existing zoning.
Low Density Residential	1212.97	6.71%	Primarily single family uses with limited mixed neighborhood commercial uses
High Density Residential	413.709	2.29%	Primarily high density housing with mixed neighborhood commercial uses
Commercial	1209.3	6.69%	Shopping, office and professional services with mixed residential uses
Industrial	478.185	2.64%	Areas for factories and research facilities
Tribal Trust Lands	77.5763	0.43%	Areas that are under the jurisdiction of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
TOTAL	18,085.21	100%	

This criterion is intended to provide a decision guideline to the Planning Commission and Township Board when considering zoning decisions. The overriding purpose of the guidelines is to promote infill in developed areas,

avoid undue costs by extending utilities and paving roads prematurely, and to provide the mechanism for a wider mix of uses throughout the commercial area and to a lesser extent in the residential areas. Exercising these guidelines will only have their full effect when there are thorough revisions to the zoning districts, permitted uses within them and the site plan development regulations.



Map 17 Future Land Use



Future Land Use

- A-1
- A-2
- A-3
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Tribal Trust Lands

Map Produced in March 2011 by:
Union Township GIS Department



10

Making It Happen

The Zoning Plan
Implementation Plan
Policy Governance

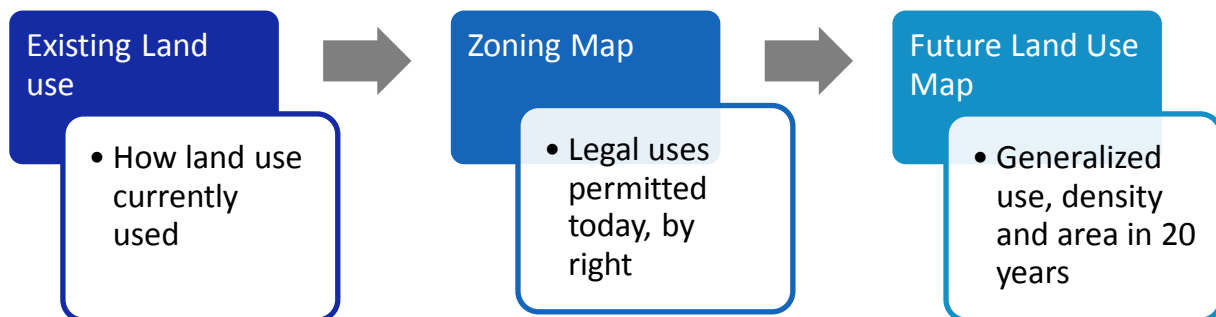


Chapter 10: Making It Happen

ZONING AND IMPLEMENTATION

THE ZONING PLAN – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ZONING AND THE MASTER PLAN

While there are many actions that play a role in the overall implementation of this plan, zoning is the single most significant mechanism for achieving the desired land use pattern and quality of development advocated in the plan. This section provides a useful guide relative to the inconsistencies between current zoning patterns and proposed future land use designations.



Per the requirements of the [Michigan Planning Enabling Act](#) (PA 33 of 2008), this section describes how the land use categories on the Future Land Use Map relate to the zoning districts in the Township. The table below shows future land use categories and the corresponding zoning districts for which they are intended.

Future Land Use Category	Zoning District(s)	Notes
Agriculture	AG	
Rural Residential	R-1	One acre minimum lot size
Suburban Residential	R-2A, R-2B	One and two family residences
Urban Residential	R-3A, R-3B	Apartments and condominiums
Manufactured Housing	R-4, R-5	Single-wide, mobile and modular homes
Commercial	OS, B-4, B-5, B-6 or B-7	
Industrial	I-1, I-2	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Throughout this Plan, the Township has identified specific objectives that it intends to accomplish during the next five years. The following implementation matrix breaks down the tasks that support the objectives from the plan by subject area. The tasks are prioritized and assigned to a responsible party or parties.

This implementation plan should be utilized not only by the Planning Commission, but also by the Township Board, administration and department heads in the development of staff work plans. The matrix should be reviewed on an annual basis to assess the work that is being

accomplished and to reprioritize if necessary. This matrix should also become an integral part of the Township's budgeting process.

Implementation measures are prioritized as follows:

High Priority – within the next fiscal year

Medium Priority – within the next 2–3 years

Low Priority – within the next 4–5 years

POLICY GOVERNANCE

The Township has recently begun the process of shifting their management structure from the traditional elected, appointed, board and commissions system – that which runs almost every municipality in the country, to a lesser known municipal structure called [Policy Governance](#). This method of governing is quite common in the private sector, particularly among nonprofit organizations.

The foundation of this system is that the staff of the organization is empowered to carry out the established end statements or goals. The means to do this are also established in the means statements, or objectives. The actions of the staff and other people or boards charged with achieving the ends is a system of monitoring through reports that evaluate at prescribed times, the effectiveness of the means to achieve the goals. If goals are not being achieved, the elected and appointed staff will step in to revise those ends, modify the means or change the staff.

The elected and appointed people make the plans. The staff and appointed people carry them out. In theory, this is the way a typical government structure works, although the boards, commissions and committee structure have tied the hands of staff and limited efficiency and effectiveness in some instances.

This shift is timed with the additional of a professional manager on the staff of the Township, who will be charged with carrying out many of the duties of the Township. The elected and appointed people in the Township will

provide feedback to the staff through reports that evaluate the success of the staff according to predetermined benchmarks.

As the founder of the system John Carver puts it, “In contrast to the approaches typically used by boards, Policy Governance separates issues of organizational purpose (ENDS) from all other organizational issues (MEANS), placing primary importance on those Ends. Policy Governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose, and only limit the staff's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.”

The negatives of this system are that it is new and quite foreign to communities that have operated under the typical system of boards and commission since their formation. The change can make it difficult to carry out what appears to be new found powers and freedom to complete the goals of the organization. In time, and with consistent education, this will improve.

As we look forward to carrying out the ends, of the Master Plan, Policy Governance standards will be informed by the adopted goals of the community and will be reflected in the benchmarks for staff and boards, as is appropriate.

Table 10.1 Implementation plan

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
Inter-governmental Cooperation and Efficiency	Conduct a cost-of-services study for public safety services, in cooperation with adjacent municipalities	Township Board	Medium
	Explore inter-governmental agreements with adjacent municipalities	Township Board, utilities department, Planning Commission	Medium
	Research thoroughly new ideas to promote collaboration	Everyone	Ongoing
	Revisit old ideas to reevaluate their potential effectiveness apart from political concerns	Everyone	Ongoing
Non-Motorized Transportation	Implement the provisions of the Sidewalks and Pathways ordinance adopted in 2009 consistently.	Public Works department, Planning Commission, Zoning department	High
	Prepare a complete inventory of sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the region.	Pathways Committee	High
	Identify gaps in nonmotorized transportation routes, particularly between high density residential areas and important destinations	Pathways Committee	High

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
	Utilize the Healthy Development Checklist, published by the Walkable Communities Institute www.walkable.org when reviewing new site plans	Planning Commission	High
	Utilize the Township's Pathways Committee to inventory the gaps in sidewalks in the region and prioritize new installations	Pathways Committee	Medium
	Prioritize necessary connections based on the nearby users/residents and the routes to important destinations	Pathways Committee	Medium
	Create a GIS inventory of apartment complexes, parks and bus stops	Pathways Committee	Medium
	Prioritize areas within ¼ mile of bus stops and schools for sidewalk and pathway installation	Pathways Committee	Medium
	Conduct a walkability audit of the Township, perhaps in collaboration with the City of Mt. Pleasant	Pathways Committee	Low
Utilities	Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Township that is consistent with the City of Mt. Pleasant Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan	Planning Commission, with close coordination from Public Works and Utilities	High
	Do not approve sewer or	Planning	High

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
	water line extensions into or across priority agricultural areas	Commission, Township Board	
	Create an ad-hoc committee to discuss future utility expansion, with a special focus on sewer and water services (which have a great impact on land use development patterns)	Township Board and Planning Commission	Medium
Motorized Transportation	Assist the ICTS with planning for future fixed route service	Planning Commission, zoning department staff	Medium
	Identify key destinations in the Community that need to have multiple options for access (such as schools, major shopping nodes, etc.)	Planning Commission	Medium
	Identify gaps between transportation needs and current availability	GIS and Zoning Staff, Planning Commission	Medium
	Work with the University, local schools, the Tribe and senior citizens groups to identify alternative transportation needs	Planning Commission	Low
	Utilize the Township's Pathways Committee to inventory the gaps in sidewalks in the region and prioritize new installations	Pathways Committee	Medium
Zoning	Increase mixed use options	Planning	High

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
	by permitting residential uses in all districts and limited nonresidential uses in residential districts.	Commission, Zoning Staff	
	Combine similar residential districts and similar commercial districts to increase latitude in uses.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Change lot sizes and setback requirements to increase density in the urbanized areas and decrease density in the rural areas. Permit larger houses on smaller lots.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Revise industrial districts to permit retail, research and computer-related uses to enhance growth.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Examine the minimum lot size in the Agriculture districts to ensure that it is large enough to prevent fragmentation.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Zoning, Cont'd High
	Update zoning ordinance per guideline in the MDA Agriculture Tourism Zoning Guidebook.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Require additional information for site plans proposed in groundwater recharge areas.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Medium
	Add impervious surface limitations to the Zoning Ordinance.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Medium

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
	Revise parking regulations with a maximum number of allowed parking spaces, land banking of areas for parking and allowances for pervious surfaces in parking and loading areas.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Medium
	Require vegetated buffers from all wetlands, streams, lakes and rivers to protect water quality.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Low
	Update screening requirements to allow rain gardens, bioswales, bioretention areas and filter strips (see Resources chapter for examples).	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Low
	Require septic systems to be located at least 100 feet from a lake, wetland, stream or other water feature.	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Low
Economic Development	Review the zoning ordinance to expand the locations and types of uses allowed for increased local employment	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Meet regularly with area Chambers of Commerce and Downtown Development Authorities to discuss opportunities	Planning Commission	Medium
	Explore the development of marketing materials for the region jointly with these agencies	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	Low

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
Housing	Establish a regular line of communication with CMU and receive regular updates on enrollment and projections	Zoning staff	High
	Document how much housing we have that meets the definition of affordable to determine if we need more of any one kind of housing with respect to our population	Planning Commission, Zoning Staff	High
	Hold community meetings on a regular basis in/near student housing developments/hang outs to discuss the needs of students and how to plan for them	Planning Commission	Medium
	Work with senior citizens and advocacy groups, such as the Isabella County Commission on Aging, to assess and meet the needs of older residents	Planning Commission	Medium
	Evaluate the stock of existing affordable housing that has historically been occupied by students; these units may now be occupied more frequently by people who become permanent residents	Zoning staff	Medium
	Adopt a rental registration	Planning	Medium

Category	Implementation Strategy	Group Responsible	Priority
	and inspection program	Commission, Township Board	
	Create design guidelines for multi-family housing	Planning Commission	Low
Bluegrass Road	Create a land use inventory along the corridor, including vacant properties	GIS Staff	High
	Create a GIS inventory of all existing driveways and access points along Bluegrass Road	GIS Staff	Medium
	Work with property owners to establish a plan for appropriate access to each business, including possible shared access points, and closing driveways that are no longer necessary	Zoning staff, Planning Commission	Medium

The background of the slide is a photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are several large, round hay bales. Behind them is a field of tall, dry grass. In the distance, there is a dense line of trees. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

11

Resource Data



Chapter 11: Resource Data

1996 Union Township Community Opinion Survey results – from Township

[2007 U.S. Agricultural Survey](#)

[Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies \(CARRS\)](#)

[Central Michigan University Student Life Council](#)

[City of Mt. Pleasant](#)

[CMU Admissions](#)

[Community-Based Food Systems](#)

[FEMA](#)

[Smart Growth Principles](#)

[Isabella County Preservation of Development Rights Study and Maps](#)

[Isabella County Transportation Commission](#)

[Isabella County's zoning ordinance.](#)

[Local Food Systems – Michigan Good Food Charter](#)

[MDNRE](#)

[MDOT Access Management Guidebook](#)

[Michigan Planning Enabling Act \(Act 33 of 2008\)](#)

[Middle Michigan Development Corporation](#)

[Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program PA 116](#)

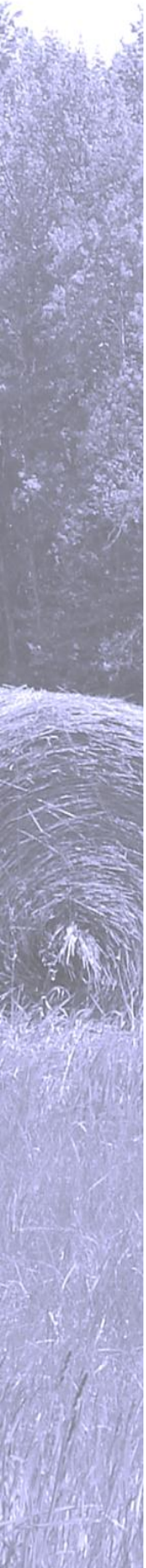
[Policy Governance](#)

[Prime Farmland Definitions](#)

[Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Nation](#)

Sewer and Water study and maps – from Township

[Union Charter Township Master Plan for Parks and Recreation](#)



[Union Charter Township Website](#)

[Union Charter Township Zoning Ordinance and Forms](#)

[Union Township Economic Development Authority](#)

[Union Township Sidewalk and Pathways Ordinance](#)

[US Census Bureau.](#)

[USDA Sustainable Development](#)

[Walkable Communities Institute](#)

[Zoning Guidebook for Agricultural Tourism](#)

**UNION CHARTER TOWNSHIP RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE UNION CHARTER
TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Union Charter Township Planning Commission, under the provisions of PA 33 of 2008, as amended¹ of the State of Michigan may adopt a Master Plan;

and PA 33 of 2008 requires the Planning Commission to review and, if necessary, revise or amend the Plan at least once every five years and the current Union Charter Township Master Plan was adopted in 1998 with map revisions in 2006;

and the Union Charter Township Planning Commission recognized the need to revise and adopt a Master Plan, including establishing and supporting visions, goals, actions, implementation and the Future Land Use Plan as described within the document;

and in connection with the preparation of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission surveyed and studied present conditions, projections of future growth of Union Charter Township, and the relation of Union Charter Township to neighboring areas and jurisdictions; and the Master Plan has been prepared for the purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of Union Charter Township and its environs;

and the Planning Commission forwarded copies of the Draft Master Plan to all adjoining jurisdictions, Isabella County Planning and all utilities and railroads operating within the Township;

and Preparation of the Master Plan included fifteen public meetings, a phone survey and a public hearing held by the Planning Commission; and was assisted by Crescent Consulting, and others in the preparation of the Master Plan; and the Planning Commission considered the testimony presented at the public hearing, and written testimony received prior to the closing of the public record;

and the Planning Commission gave notice of the time and place of the Public Hearing by giving notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the Township and regular mail to surrounding communities and concerned entities; and held the required public hearing on the Master Plan on April 20, 2011 at the Township Hall, 2010 South Lincoln Road, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by Union Charter Township, Michigan, that

The Township Board of Trustees adopts the Master Plan, pursuant to PA 33 of 2008, as amended and directs the Township Clerk to record this Resolution with the Isabella County Register of Deeds and forward it to the Isabella County Planning office.

This Resolution being put to vote on roll call, the Commission voted as follows:

AYES: Gal ii flat, Lannen . Mikus . Stovak and Barker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Dinse and Verwey

