



PLANNING COMMISSION

Telephone: (269) 467-5617

125 Main St.
P.O. Box 277
Centreville, MI 49032-0277

MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND FUTURE LAND USE MAP

NOTICE OF RECERTIFICATION IN 2014

A notice of meeting to seek public input on the County Master Plan was mailed to all local units as required by P.A. 33 of 2008. This meeting was held on April 30, 2014 and only one written comment was received and a response was sent to the sender.

On June 25, 2014 the Planning Commission again reviewed the content of the 2007 County Master Plan and Future Land Use Map and determined no amendments were needed. A motion was unanimously passed to recertify the current St. Joseph County Master Plan and Future Land Use Map.

The St. Joseph County Planning Commission believes the current Master Plan and the Future Land Use Map guides orderly and efficient future growth and development of the County of St. Joseph as written and adopted in 2007. The County Master Plan and Future Land Use Map are hereby re-certified for another five years (2014-2019).

Patricia Kulikowski, Secretary



ST. JOSEPH
COUNTY
MICHIGAN
MASTER PLAN
2007 Update

***A SMART GROWTH APPROACH
TO URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION
AND
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION***



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Adopted by the St. Joseph County Planning Commission November 28, 2007

Endorsed by the St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners December 18, 2007



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Telephone: (269) 467-5617

125 Main St.
P.O. Box 277
Centreville, MI 49032-0277

November 28, 2007

To the Citizens of St. Joseph County

In August of 1967, your County Board of Commissioners created the St. Joseph County Planning Commission and empowered the members to *"make and approve a plan for the development of the county"* pursuant to the County Planning Act, P.A. 282 of 1945, as amended. The County Planning Commission adopted its first plan in July 1977. A second County Master Plan was adopted in 1997.

This document represents an update of the 1997 plan and contains the first "countywide future land use map" depicting the pattern of future land uses desired by our local governments and the County Planning Commission.

This plan has been developed over the past year with input from representatives of every local government within the County. Further, public input was gathered during a number of public meetings held throughout the County during the spring of 2007.

We are pleased to present this document to the citizens of St. Joseph County and thank the Planning Commission members and the large number of local government officials and citizens who provided help in its preparation.

Five background reports accompany this Plan and are incorporated by reference. They include the Socio-Economic Analysis, Issues Report, US-131 Alignment Workshop Report, Countywide Master Land Use Plan Workshop Resource Book, and the Farmland Preservation Workshop Report (including the *St. Joseph County Agriculture: Past, Present and Future* report). Also, you are encouraged to review the 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

While the highlights of the background reports are contained in this plan, we encourage you to review them for additional information and the process used in preparation and completion of the County Master Plan.

The Master Plan will be used by the County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners as the guide for future land use and infrastructure investment decision making. It also establishes our commitment to the creation of new jobs and other economic development opportunities including our commitment to agriculture though farmland preservation.

The future of St. Joseph County presents exciting opportunities. We believe this Master Plan strikes a needed balance, offering land for expansion of our more urban "built-up" areas including land for expansion of our commercial/industrial base while preserving farmland to sustain our agricultural heritage and economy.

On behalf of the County Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission, we invite your participation in planning for a prosperous future in St. Joseph County.

Robin Baker, Chair
Board of Commissioners

Douglas Pagels, Chair
Planning Commission

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

The County Planning Commission was established in August 1967 and adopted the first Master Plan in 1977. During the 1980s the Planning Commission principally served without dedicated staffing and limited its role to review of planning and zoning matters according to the planning enabling acts. In the mid 1990s, with assistance from the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council, the Planning Commission developed the 1997 County Master Plan. Since 2002, the County Planning Commission has served as the principal coordinating agency for local government planning and zoning.

MISSION STATEMENT

To engage local government officials and citizenry to examine critical future land use issues - future "built-up" urban land use, environmental resource protection, economic development, transportation and infrastructure improvements, farmland preservation - to form a consensus future pattern of land use compatible with the quality of life attributes desired for future generations.



St. Joseph County Planning Commission
(clockwise from left) Robert Horton (vice-chairman), Edward Bell, Lon Huffman, Pat Kulikowski (staff secretary), James Griffith, William Chase, Dennis Wilson, Eric Shafer, Douglas Pagels (chairman), and Maurice Cook

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

In Michigan, county planning is authorized by the County Planning Act (P.A. 282 of 1945, as amended). Along with specific description of the powers of the County Planning Commission, this statute describes the Commission's representative membership, how members are appointed, its officers and other administrative procedures.

Section 4 (1) of the act establishes the county development or master plan (MCL 125.104). Specifically:

(1) The county planning commission shall make and approve a plan for the development of the county. The county plan may include planning in cooperation with the constituted authorities for incorporated areas in whole or to the extent to which, in the planning commission's judgment, they are related to the planning of the unincorporated territory or of the county as a whole. The plan with accompanying maps, plats, charts, and all pertinent and descriptive explanatory matter shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the development of the county. In the preparation of a county development plan, the planning commission shall make careful and comprehensive studies of the existing conditions and probable growth of the territory within its jurisdiction. The plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the county that will be in accordance with present and future needs for best promoting the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the residents, as well as for efficiency and economy in the process of development.

(2) The county plan shall address land use issues and may project 20 years or more into the future. The plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the county. The plan shall also include those of the following subjects which reasonably can be considered as pertinent to the future development of the county:

(a) A land use plan and program. If the county has not adopted a zoning ordinance under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, M.C.L. 125.3101 to 125.3702, the land use plan and program may be a general plan with generalized future land use maps.

(b) The general location, character, and extent of streets, railroads, airports, bicycle paths, pedestrian ways, bridges, waterways, and water front developments; flood prevention works, drainage, sanitary sewers and water supply systems, public works for preventing pollution, and works for maintaining water levels; and public utilities and structures.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE UPDATE

In late 2005, the County Planning Commission and the County Board of Commissioners began discussing the need for a countywide effort to coordinate land use, environmental resource protection, economic development and farmland preservation efforts into a cohesive strategy. The objective of this process is to communicate this strategy to all local governmental officials and citizens of St. Joseph County.

OBJECTIVES

1. To establish an advisory pattern of countywide future land use.
2. To establish a basic understanding for the review of local unit of government planning and zoning decision making pursuant to the county, township and city & village planning acts and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act.
3. To help local units of government implement the County Master Plan Update by providing advice, counsel and professional technical support services when determined appropriate by the County Planning Commission.
4. To support cooperative installation of public infrastructure with county public works financing where appropriate and when consistent and necessary for the implementation of the County Master Plan Update.
5. To support and sponsor, when deemed appropriate by the County Planning Commission such actions and activities necessary to protect and preserve open space, unique environmental features and farmland when such actions implement the County Master Plan Update.

This Master Plan Update interweaves an understanding of the forces and trends shaping St. Joseph County with local community values expressed in each local Master Plan.

The St. Joseph County Master Plan Update grew from the work of each, city, village and township in the County. It recognizes the unique needs of each local government that provide a framework for a coordinated countywide land use plan.

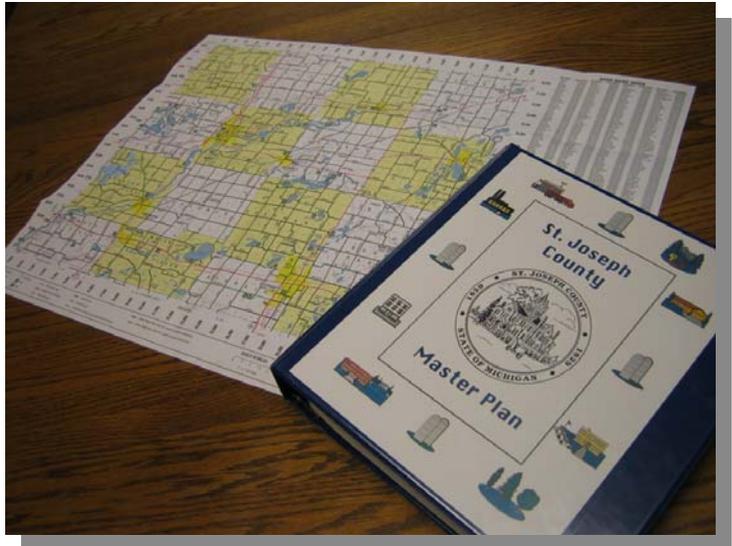
SECTION 2 - SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT MASTER PLAN

The 1997 Master Plan contains an extensive inventory of data and information including demographics, land resources, and land management tools and techniques. The Plan contains seven implementation recommendations, most addressing additional planning to be accomplished jointly with local governments.

The 1997 Plan, all 250 pages of data and information, contains a comprehensive analysis of historical population and economic conditions of county residents. It also provides a detailed inventory of natural resources and community services.

NEEDS, CONCERNS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANTAGES

Chapter VI of the 1997 Master Plan contains a list of the needs and concerns of county land use conditions. Of significance is the fact that items gathered on this list, through the public participation process conducted over 10 years ago, remain equally relevant today with similar needs and concerns expressed through public input in preparation of the 2007 Master Plan Update.



NEEDS AND CONCERNS FROM THE 1997 MASTER PLAN

1. Groundwater quality both as an agricultural resource and public health necessity
2. Surface water quality and quantity of lake communities and agricultural interests
3. Urban vs. rural communities competition/conflicts
4. Intensive livestock operation conflicts with neighboring uses
5. Industrial development patterns for "greenfield" vs. "brownfield" development
6. Decline of retail shopping and central business district redevelopment
7. Long-range land use plan for US-131 corridor
8. Planning coordination and collaboration among townships, cities and villages
9. Loss of farmland to residential uses
10. Loss of the rural character of the county
11. Declining physical conditions of older housing and affordability gap of new housing
12. Dispersed development pattern impact upon urban services, utilities and infrastructure
13. Agricultural preservation
14. Industrial diversification
15. US-131 traffic impact on Constantine
16. Impacts of US-131 relocation route alignments
17. Residential encroachment and interference upon agricultural activities
18. Geographic information system use in land use decisions
19. Training of planning commission and zoning officials
20. Access to rail freight services

GOALS

The Master Plan established ten goals “as a guide to development decisions and to direct the recommendations of the County Planning Commission as an advisory body to township, city and village planning and zoning bodies.”

As shown by these statements, the goals underlying the 1997 plan are equally relevant today as they were some 10 years ago. These statements will serve as the starting point for discussion by the County Planning Commission for changes in direction or refocusing emphasis of this Master Plan Update.

GOALS – 1997 MASTER PLAN

Residential Development - Provide a choice of housing types, location and environments to accommodate individual capabilities and preferences of current and future populations. Residential growth should be planned so as not to hinder commercial and agricultural activity, nor require excessive public infrastructure investments.

Agricultural Development - Preserve to the maximum extent possible the most productive or unique agricultural lands of the County and utilize land use planning to avoid conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.

Commercial Development - Provide suitable areas for the orderly development of a variety of commercial and service activities to serve the needs of the projected population.

Industrial Development - Provide for additional industrial growth within appropriately planned areas of the County.

Recreational and Open Space Development - Provide recreational opportunities to meet the needs of the County residents, and, to support/attract tourism.

Transportation - Provide for efficient, safe, and convenient access to the transportation network.

Utilities - Provide for the timely development of necessary services - - sewer, storm drains, water lines, in accordance with the present and planned future needs of the County.

Community Facilities - Provide for a range of community facilities and services to satisfy the present and future needs of the residents of the County.

Solid Waste – Provide for the immediate and long-term solid waste management needs of county residents.

Environment - Maximize environmental protection and conservation as an essential element in decision-making.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The most important chapter of the 1997 Master Plan is Chapter IX which lists eight specific recommendations for implementation of the Master Plan. These in actuality, become the work plan for the Planning Commission and other responsible parties to implement the pattern of land use desired by the residents of St. Joseph County.

1997 MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Community Land Use Planning - Encourage township, village and city planning and zoning as a means of implementing the Master Plan.

Model Zoning – Prepare a model ordinance to serve as a guide for local government zoning ordinances.

Capital Improvements Program – Develop a multi-year capital improvements program to serve as a guide for future county government capital improvements.

Recreation Planning – Maintain St. Joseph County’s five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ensure state/federal grant funding.

Solid Waste Management Planning - Continue planning for proper recycling, reuse, and disposal of solid waste.

Transportation Needs Priorities - Prepare and maintain a transportation capital improvements program through cooperative efforts among all local governments and the County Road Commission.

Special Studies - Support special studies to develop and promote new and relevant information to enhance decision making.

COMMENTARY

Careful reading of the 1997 Master Plan reveals its role as the principal policy document for much of the land planning and key decisions for public investment in recent history. The land use planning goals established by the Planning Commission in the 1970's established the framework for policies leading the development of St. Joseph County towards a balance of urban uses with economic development, and environmental, agricultural and rural preservation of environmental and agricultural uses.

Efforts of the Planning Commission in implementation of the Master Plan show partial success. Today, almost all local governments have a Master or Comprehensive Plan containing a Future Land Use Map. Few local governments still need to prepare a Master Plan and others have Master Plans that are noncompliant with statutorily mandated periodic updating, indicating that the need for individual and cooperative planning remains. The need for a model zoning ordinance and unified labels for future land use planning purposes also remain. The need for an organized capital improvement planning process for infrastructure remains unfulfilled.

Housing, solid waste and recreation planning have been addressed, along with completion of a number of special studies most notably the establishment of a Farmland Preservation Program in the County.

A county master planning process is designed to establish long-term implementation recommendations. It is not unusual to see mixed results when evaluating completion due to the many variables that affect the ability of the Planning Commission to achieve success. In the opinion of the Master Plan Steering Committee of the County Planning Commission, the efforts of the County Planning Commission towards implementation have been successful; however, success is never fully achieved as there is always more to do to meet the ever growing future needs of the County.

SECTION 3 - THE PLANNING PROCESS

This Master Plan Update is the result of a 12-month planning process that involved over 175 participants, including elected and appointed officials from all local governments within St. Joseph County, grassroots citizen assistance, professional planning and engineering support, and special interest group participation. It attempts to interweave an understanding of the forces and trends shaping local communities with citizen values, and the unique constraints, opportunities and challenges facing St. Joseph County.

This Master Plan grew from the work of local land use planners in each local government as documented in their individual master plans and zoning ordinances. It recognizes the unique needs and challenges of local governments as well as the combined challenges faced on a countywide basis.



KEY STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

A kick-off meeting and initial issues identification session with the County Planning Commission Master Plan Steering Committee.

Preparation of a *Socio-Economic Analysis* and future population projections.

A local government representative's issues workshop and preparation of the *Master Plan Issues Report*.

Holding of the US-131 Alignment Workshop and choosing of a preferred alignment by impacted local governments, documented in the *US-131 Alignment Workshop Report*.

Preparation of the *Countywide Master Land Use Plan Workshop Resource Book*, including a "local government" composite Future Land Use Map.

Analysis of the "build-out" of future urban land uses indicated in local unit of government plans.

Analysis of current water and wastewater service areas and future needs.

Analysis of environmentally significant, farmland and parks/open space land resources.

Preparation of a draft Countywide Future Land Use Map.

Analysis of agriculture documented in the *St. Joseph County Agriculture: Past, Present and Future* report prepared by St. Joseph County Michigan State University Extension.

Holding of the Farmland Preservation Planning Workshop and identification of preserved farmland areas documented in the *Farmland Preservation Workshop Report*.

Special meetings throughout the County to obtain pre-public hearing input into the draft Future Land Use Map.

Public presentation of the Master Plan to the County Board of Commissioners, prior to entering the public hearing process.

Delivery of the draft Master Plan to all local units of government, contiguous townships and adjoining counties for formal comments prior to public hearing.

Public Hearing, adoption by the Planning Commission and endorsement by the Board of Commissioners.



SECTION 4 - TRENDS SHAPING THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR LAND

Michigan planning law requires local and county planning commissions to prepare plans that address their future needs 20 to 25 years into the future.

The fundamental question before the St. Joseph County Planning Commission is “What should we be planning for?” More specifically, how much new growth will likely happen and how and where do we absorb this new growth? The planning process identified several trends and issues necessary for understanding the future that serve as fundamental elements of a “supply and demand” land use analysis.

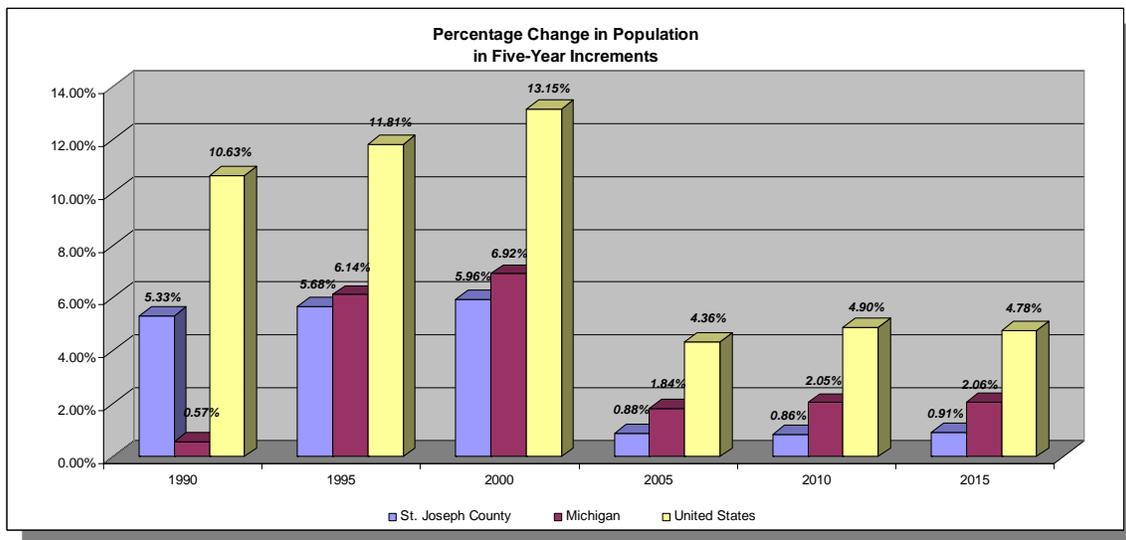
DEMAND SIDE ANALYSIS - Demand for land to accommodate new development will originate from new residential growth, location of new commercial enterprises to serve existing and new residents, and location of new employers. The most influential factor is new population resulting from employment growth. Population information was analyzed to determine the number of new households that will likely seek residence in St. Joseph County. Employment information was also analyzed to determine the need for additional commercial and industrial development land. Other influences include transportation access, availability of infrastructure, agricultural production, regional location and community values.

**IMPACT OF
POPULATION AND
JOB GROWTH**

St. Joseph County will continue to see limited population growth in the future, but not in substantial proportions to cause a significant impact upon the ability of local governments or St. Joseph County to easily absorb this growth.

POPULATION - According to the 2000 Census, the County population was 62,422 and is projected to increase to 64,094 in 2015. Assuming that the growth rate of 2.7% continues, the County population will be approximately 65,209 in 2025.

On a household basis, the 23,381 households in 2000 will increase by 1,578 households to 24,959 in 2010. Projection of total households shows growth of an additional 851 to a total of 25,810 households in 2015 and 26,260 households in 2025.



LABOR FORCE AND JOBS - Based on *County Business Pattern* data, resident jobs totaled 8,765 in 1998 and increased to 8,810 positions in 2004, an annualized compound growth rate of 0.09%. To project future jobs in the County two analyses were completed; application of the recent historic job growth rate and the projected 2007 job growth rate of 2% as determined by the W.E. Upjohn Institute in their June 2006 Economic Outlook.

Application of the growth rates indicates the number of jobs in St. Joseph County will increase between 1,437 and 2,738 jobs by 2015 for a total number of jobs ranging from 10,247 to 11,548. Total resident employment inside and outside the county will increase to between 48,818 and 60,100 jobs (visit the county website for additional demographic and economic data). Such opportunities for growth of vibrant commercial and industrial employment are valued by the County Planning Commission and local units of government alike.

Influential Factors

US-131

Construction of US-131 roadway improvements will bring better access to the north-south urban development corridor thus increasing the desirability of this corridor for new residential, commercial and industrial development.

Infrastructure

Expansion of infrastructure service areas in the future to accommodate new growth will increase the opportunity to expand commercial and industrial development opportunities as well as allow for residential development along waterways in an environmentally friendly manner.

Agriculture

The preservation of farmland is one technique to ensure "large blocks" of land remain available for pursuing expanded commercial agriculture.

Regional Location

In the future, the 15.4% of the County workforce commuting to Indiana for employment is expected to increase. This is predicated on planned State of Indiana investments for commercial and industrial infrastructure at strategic I-80 interchanges and positive State of Indiana business location attributes.

US-131 - for over 25 years there have been calls for the creation of a limited access freeway through St. Joseph County to connect the I-80/90 Indiana Toll Road to points throughout west Michigan. The County Planning Commission, through a consensus decision of the US-131 Corridor Committee, has determined the existing alignment should be used for future improvements and expansions of US-131, with the exception of the Village of Constantine, which should be by-passed to the west by Practical Alternative 5. The St. Joseph County Economic Development Corporation supports the County Planning Commission recommended route, with the following additional exceptions:

- Consideration should be given to deviate from the current alignment at the US-12 intersection
- MDOT Practical Alternative 1 or 4 should be used to bypass Three Rivers
- MDOT Practical Alternative 1 should be used at Lovers Lane instead of the current alignment
- Future consideration should be given to deviate from the current alignment at the M-216 intersection

Local units of government are encouraged to consider the future right-of-way for US-131 as a limited access freeway when presented with development proposals in the existing US-131 corridor. The County Planning Commission recommends that local units of government along the corridor amend their master plans over time to improve north-south transportation mobility and the potential for expanding US-131 as a limited access freeway in the existing alignment. Local units of government are also encouraged to implement access management techniques such as those presented in the Michigan Department of Transportation's *Access Management Guidebook*.

INFRASTRUCTURE - Publicly supplied water and wastewater systems hold the key to residential, commercial and industrial future land use as well as water quality protection of the many lakes throughout the County. Currently approximately 13,338 acres of land area have this infrastructure supplied. Analysis indicated a need to expand these services areas by 23,485 acres. See page 14.

AGRICULTURE - Is the largest land use in the County and produces over \$94 million dollars of farm gate product, including, seed corn, snap beans, potatoes, and pickles. Of the 231,000 acres of agricultural land, 44% is irrigated, amounting to 23% of all irrigated land in Michigan. More than half of the cropland is dedicated to corn production, predominately seed corn. This is estimated to stimulate an additional \$468 million economic contribution to the County from agricultural support businesses.



REGIONAL LOCATION - The proximity of I-80/90 in Indiana poses an interesting economic relationship for St. Joseph County. Adjoining Indiana counties have historically provided employment for St. Joseph County residents. In fact, in terms of new job creation, these Indiana counties are projected to increase employment at rates faster than those for most of southern Michigan. Historically, 15.4% of the county workforce commutes to Indiana counties for employment, a proportion that is projected to increase in the future.



VALUES - Local and county officials identified a set of values forming the basis of the Quality of Life experienced and desired for the future. These values include rural character, farmland preservation, open space preservation, and environmental protection.

- Values**
Quality of Life Values:
- Rural Character
 - Farmland Preservation
 - Open Space Preservation
 - Environmental Protection

SUPPLY SIDE ANALYSIS - With an understanding of the major influences that will shape future land use, planners can project the amount of land use needed to accommodate future needs. Determining the supply of land for this purpose can be done in several ways. The process chosen was to “knit-together” each future land use map from each local government, or in absence of a future land use map the zoning map, and calculate the total amount of residential, commercial and industrial land areas shown on the map.

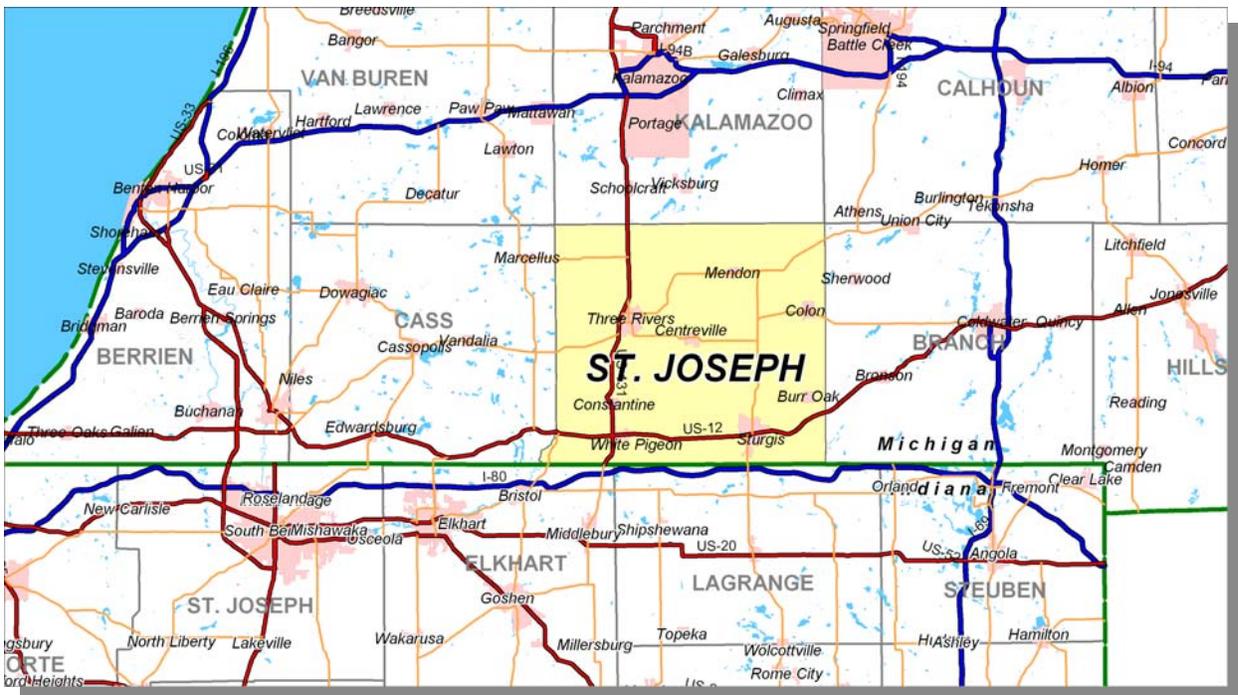
Supply Side Analysis
Although the 2025 population is expected to be roughly 65,000, the composite future land use map provides land to accommodate 500,000 more residents at the average current population density throughout the county, increases commercial use by 2% and increases industrial use by 47% by proposing two new locations.

Using the average density of residential land currently developed, and multiplying that density by the amount of land projected for future development in local government plans calculates the amount of development that can be supported on the land designated for future development.

Commentary

The projection of the amount of land required for new population growth and for commercial and industrial purposes is an imperfect science, at best. However, from a land planning perspective, planners must provide an adequate supply of land at the time residential development needs are present. Planners also must provide commercial and industrial land with necessary infrastructure when and where it will be needed in advance of the need.

This planning seeks to determine whether there will be sufficient land for all projected land uses at the time the land uses are needed. Careful analysis was given to the land use plans of local governments in formulating the supply of land depicted in the Future Land Use Map. The supply has been determined to be sufficient to meet all future development needs for the planning period ending in 2025. The County Planning Commission recognizes that the 500,000 new resident capacity of the Future Land Use Map is unrealistic and recommends that local units of government amend their master plans over time to plan for a smaller, more realistic growth in population consistent with projections in this Master Plan and other sources.



St. Joseph County Master Plan – Update 2007

IMPLEMENTATION WORK TASK

The County Planning Commission, in concert with local governments, and the Agricultural Preservation Board will assume the responsibility to establish a 2025 land preservation acreage goal. The County Planning Commission will also work to develop conservation subdivision development standards and a “tool-box” of incentives to encourage land development that takes full advantage of conservation designs that preserve both environmentally sensitive land and farmland to be administered by each local government.

TEMPORARY FARM LAND PRESERVATION

P.A. 116 is a state administered program that allows land owners to claim tax credits for temporarily preserving farmland.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION ELEMENT

With the adoption of the St. Joseph County Farmland Preservation Ordinance by the Board of Commissioners on March 15, 2005, St. Joseph County established a Farmland Preservation Purchase of Development Rights Program. The Farmland Preservation Program enables landowners to access State of Michigan farmland preservation funds authorized by P.A. 262 of 2000.

Landowners who desire to preserve farmland must voluntarily submit an application to the County Agricultural Preservation Board for evaluation and prioritization relative to other eligible farmland on the Master Plan Update - Future Land Use Map, and in some cases, in township master plans.

By law, the County Planning Commission’s role in farmland preservation focuses on preparation of the Master Plan Future Land Use Map that establishes large blocks of productive farmland for preservation.

Recognizing that farmland preservation is a top priority of the 2007 County Master Plan Update places importance upon the County Planning Commission to advance implementation efforts to preserve farmland.

By adoption of this Master Plan Update, the County Planning Commission establishes the policy, in cooperation with the Agricultural Preservation Board, to support local government participation in the countywide farmland preservation program, thus granting eligibility to those property owners wishing to preserve farmland.

To implement this policy the Planning Commission, as part of its responsibilities to serve as an information repository and technical advisor to local governments and the Agricultural Preservation Board, intends to:

1. Provide and maintain a “tool-box” of best planning practices that enable local governments to preserve farmland,
2. Provide technical assistance to local governments to implement local land use regulations and incentives that support farmland preservation,
3. Provide education and examples of successful implementation of preservation tools including among other techniques:
 - a. Open Space (cluster) development,
 - b. Transfer of Development Rights,
 - c. Dedicated single-use agricultural zoning districts, and
 - d. Sliding scale density agricultural zoning.
4. Provide educational opportunities for local government planners concerning incorporation of a farmland preservation component in their current master plans.



St. Joseph County Agricultural Preservation Board
(back row, left to right) John Fair (vice chairman), Larry Rice (chair) Tim Peterson, John Wagner
(front row, left to right) Henry Miller, Dave Pueschel, Carroll Parmeter

St. Joseph County, Michigan

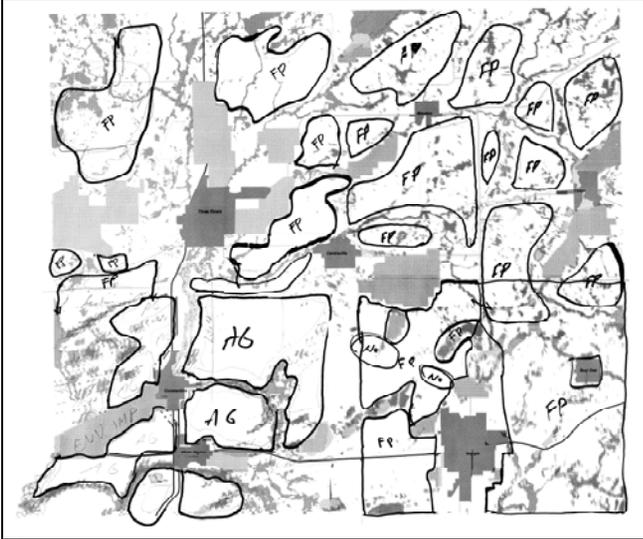
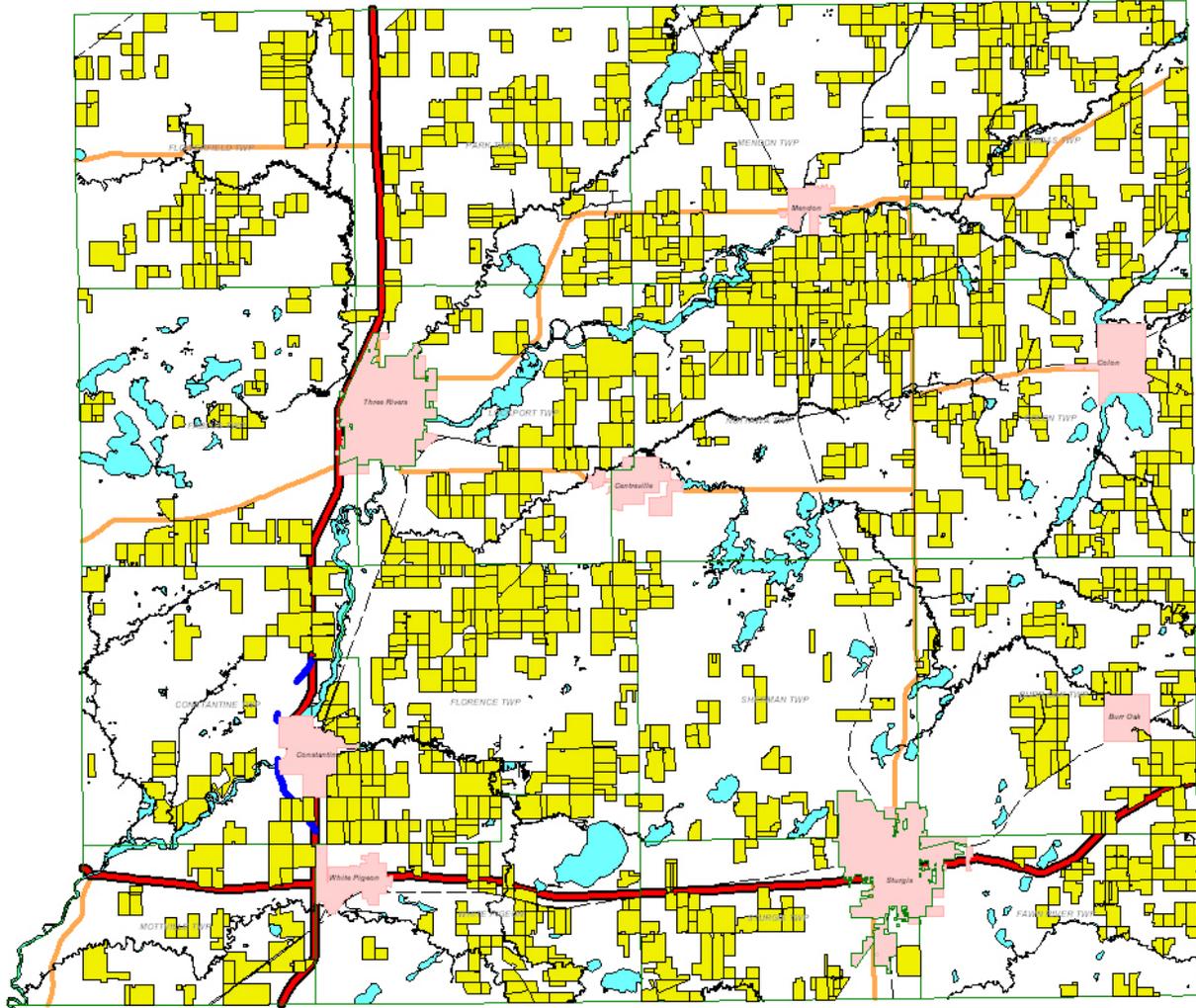
Parcels in P.A. 116

January, 2007

Legend

P.A. 116 Land 

Farmland Preservation "Bubble Map"



Note: Actual acreage with an agreement may be less than shown for any given parcel.
Sources: St. Joseph County Land Resource Centre and MDA PA 116 records.
Produced by the St. Joseph County MSU Extension Land Policy Education Program and Soil Conservation District.

Farmland preservation and protection areas determined by local officials and agricultural interests based on the location of existing development, P.A. 116 parcels, and prime farmland soils.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM ELEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION WORK TASK

To implement this Future Land Use Plan, expansion of the current water and wastewater service areas throughout the county is required with financing most likely provided through the St. Joseph County Board of Public Works.

Of all publicly supplied government services, probably the most costly to local taxpayers is the provision of municipally owned and operated wastewater systems. Recognizing that modern urban development can be seriously restricted without adequate systems, the Master Plan Steering Committee placed special emphasis on examination of the need for, and likely timing of, future expansion of the systems during preparation of this Master Plan Update.

This examination required the inventorying and mapping of existing systems proposed by current system managers and analyzing the pattern of future development desired by each individual local government (as shown upon their Future Land Use or Zoning Map) and initial engineering analysis by the consultant to identify the geographic areas most likely requiring wastewater systems to develop in the future.

These studies identified that approximately 13,338 acres of land are currently served with wastewater systems. Initial engineering analyses identified that in the future approximately 23,485 additional acres will require services in order to develop the land according to the desires of local governments, as expressed on their future land use maps and zoning maps.

Historically, almost all public systems in the County have been constructed with financing provided through the St. Joseph County Board of Public Works. Formed under P.A. 185 of 1957, as amended, the County Board of Public Works can issue municipal bonds to finance wastewater projects. Using the authority granted to the County Board of Public Works typically allows local governments to raise more funds at lower interest costs for these large scale projects.

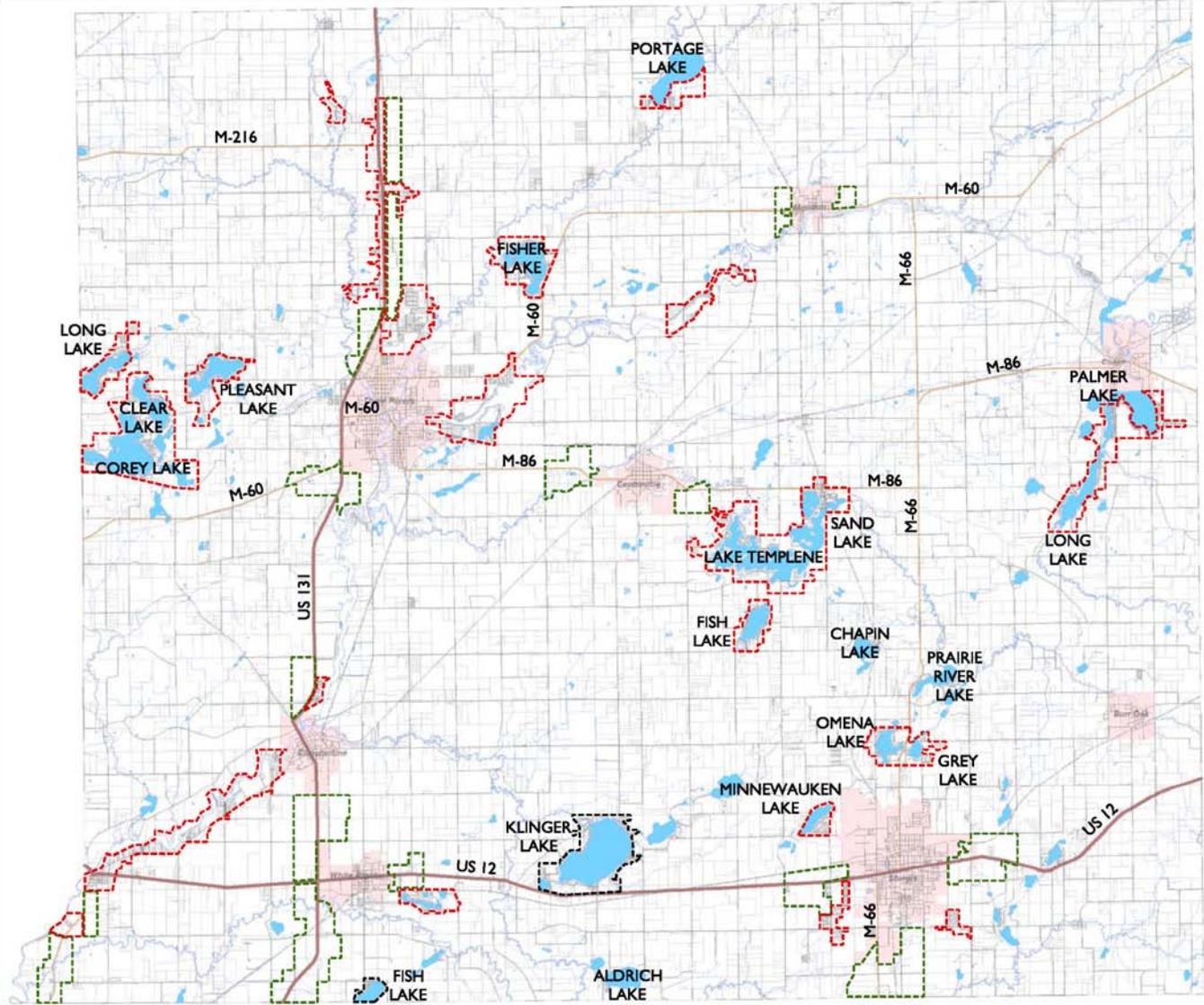
This Master Plan Update relies heavily on continued use of County Board of Public Works funding for implementation of the proposed expansion of the wastewater systems. Without investment in these systems, implementation of the pattern of development and land preservation illustrated on the Future Land Use Map will be seriously hindered.

It is unlikely that the financing capacity of the County Board of Public Works, nor the demand from development, will allow for the installation of wastewater services in the additional 23,485 acres at one time. This Master Plan realizes that expansion of the system must be staged over time depending on the timing and location of development needing these public services.

To implement this Master Plan Update and to allow a logical pattern of development to follow, the installation of sewer services will require the County Board of Public Works, in association with the County Planning Commission and local governments, to study the future timing of development and the anticipated construction phasing of new utility system expansions.

It must be noted that future service areas address both urban development service needs and also service areas where wastewater systems are especially needed in or near sensitive areas to protect water quality.

The accompanying map shows the geographic location of the current service areas for wastewater systems. Also mapped are the expansion areas that are needed to accommodate the proposed new development identified on local government future land use maps.



POLLUTION ABATEMENT OR FUTURE NEEDS SERVICE AREA



SERVICE AREA SELECTION CRITERIA

1. SERVICE AREA INCLUDES GREATER THAN 100 RESIDENTIAL EQUIVALENTS
2. LOCATED IN AREA OF INFLUENCE OF SURFACE WATER RESOURCE
3. MEDIUM TO HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT
4. INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT EXISTS WITHIN THE SERVICE AREA
5. SERVICE AREA IS SERVED BY TYPE II WATER SUPPLY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE AREA (SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR BOTH SEWER AND WATER UTILITIES)



SERVICE AREA SELECTION CRITERIA

1. SERVICE AREA ADJOINS A STATE HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR.
2. SERVICE AREA IS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO INTERSTATE 80-90
3. SERVICE AREA INCLUDES EXISTING INDUSTRIAL
4. SERVICE AREA IS WITHIN AN EXISTING URBAN SERVICES AREA OR DEVELOPMENT ZONE



EXISTING SERVICE AREA



EXISTING TOWN LIMITS



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WASTE WATER SYSTEM ANALYSIS ST JOSEPH COUNTY, MI

SECTION 5 - FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Certain principles provided the foundation upon which this Master Plan was developed. These principles create a vision for the County land use pattern showing both the developed land uses as well as the land for continued agricultural production and open space recreation. However, preparation of the Future Land Use Map by the County Planning Commission was accomplished with recognition that specific land use decisions will continue to be made by each city, village and township in St. Joseph County, not by the County Planning Commission itself.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. St. Joseph County will sustain its current population and only increase slightly in population during the planning period ending in 2025. The challenge for local governments and the County Planning Commission is to provide suitable land for this development in logical and defined locations that maximize the use of existing governmental services and infrastructure.
2. No single local government or the County can effectively manage St. Joseph County land resources at the exclusion of other entities. This means that the chief role of the St. Joseph County Planning Commission is to focus on cooperation, collaboration, coordination and communication.
3. The County Planning Commission must articulate a countywide pattern of future desired land use, creating a vision that emphasizes the desired urban “built-up” pattern of land use and the pattern of land desired for open space and farmland preservation.
4. The most desirable and efficient form of development for the County is compact development directed into and around communities with existing infrastructure and planned future infrastructure extensions.
5. Open space for environmental resource protection and the preservation of farmland for commercial agricultural production must coexist with the urban “built-up” pattern of development in order to maintain and enhance the community values historically rooted in the County.
6. Superior quality of life attributes is a universal goal for all residents of St. Joseph County and is achieved not only by an orderly pattern of future land use but also through the provision of employment opportunities, convenient transportation to regional population centers, quality affordable housing choices, and cultural and social amenities which together enrich daily life experiences.
7. Economic development, specifically the provision of improved transportation to the Interstate Highway System plus the provision of “fully serviced” new business sites is necessary to maximize employment opportunities for existing and future County residents.
8. Infrastructure to support new urban development plus infrastructure necessary to accommodate development within environmentally sensitive areas throughout the County is currently needed and will be demanded in the future to preserve water quality and other significant environmental resources.
9. The County Planning Commission should serve as a coordinating, problem-solving and facilitative body for inter-jurisdictional planning problems including, extensions of infrastructure, connectivity between land use plans of adjoining local units of government, and other planning issues that transcend jurisdictional boundaries.
10. The County Planning Commission should serve as the repository and clearinghouse of information and technical resources (including professional staff capacity) necessary for implementation of this Master Plan by both local governments and the County Planning Commission.

Under this approach, the question arises, "What role does the County Planning Commission play in land use policy throughout the county?" As an advisory board, the County Planning Commission plays a critical role in reviewing local government planning and zoning decisions and coordinating land use across municipal lines. Toward that end, the County Planning Commission crafted a composite, generalized map of the future land use forms planned for by each local unit of government.

Thus, the approach of the Future Land Use Map is to identify the "form and general location" of desired land uses establishing a framework that St. Joseph County cities, villages and townships can utilize to coordinate specific land use decisions.

THE CONSENSUS COUNTYWIDE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

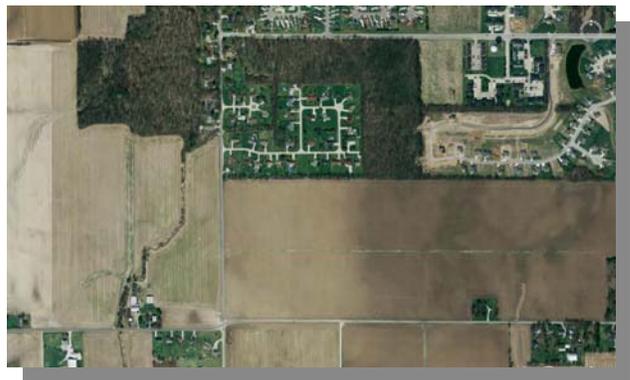
The "bottom-up" approach of using each individual city, village and township future land use map as the basis for the countywide Future Land Use Map, resulted in a pattern of land use that is consistent with many of the preceding guiding principles. The "bottom-up" approach knitted together a pattern of urban and rural densities of development while recognizing the agricultural and sensitive natural resources of the County.

Completing a "build-out" analysis, a process where currently undeveloped land that is designated for future development in local government master plans is tabulated and assumed to be developed at current densities, revealed that the countywide Future Land Use Map could accommodate an additional 500,000 residents. It is a concern of every Master Plan that adequate land resources are made available in order to accommodate future development. This exercise concluded that the proposed countywide Future Land Use Map provides adequate land for a somewhat unrealistic growth in future population - "probably more than we will ever need" as stated by one workshop participant.

The Master Plan recognizes essentially four land use forms:



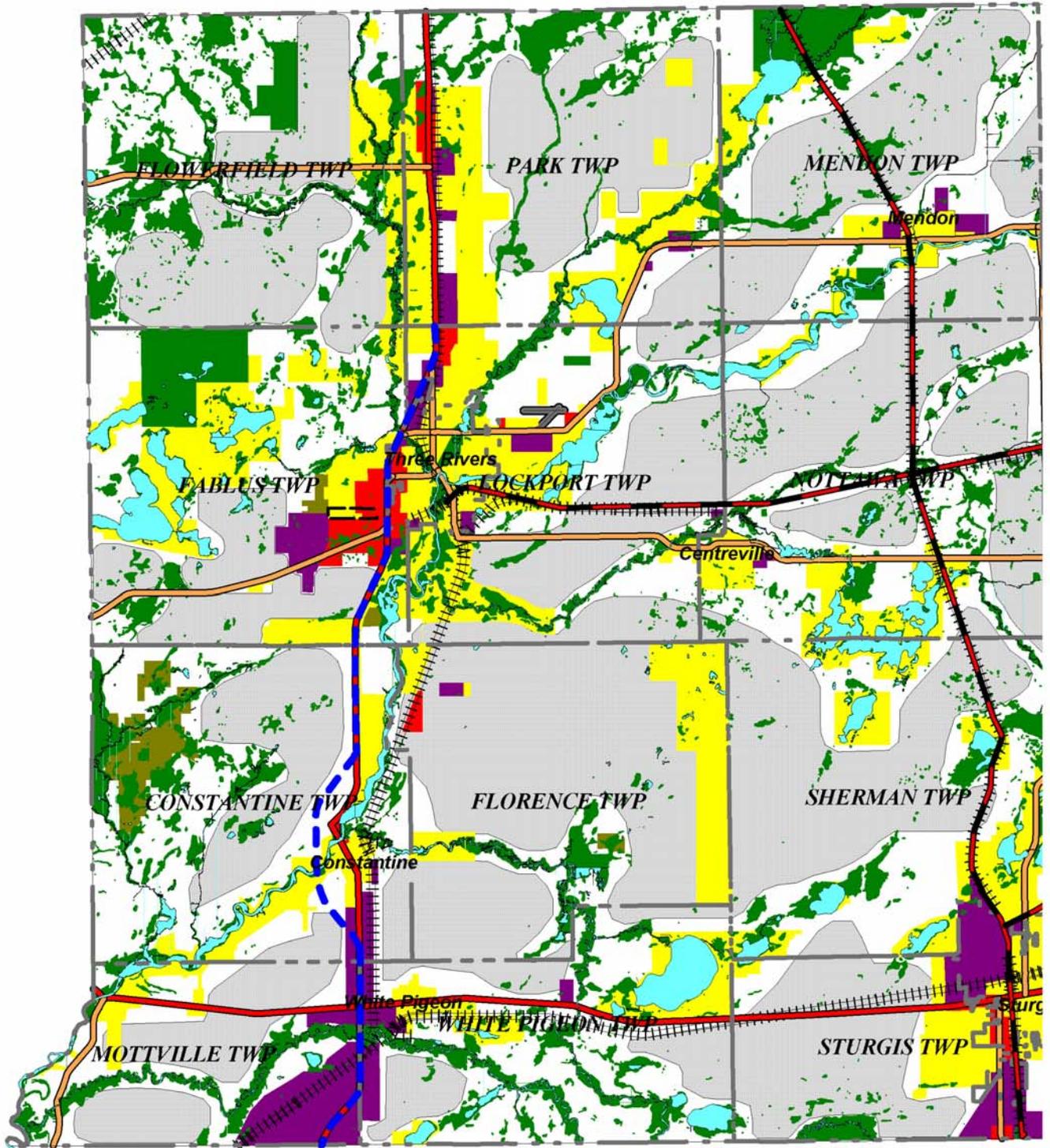
Urban - Those areas within the County that currently encompass a majority of the population, being the center of business and commerce and where the water and sewer infrastructure systems are currently present and will be expanded in the future.



Agriculture/Rural Residential - Those areas, where residential development currently exists and where future residential development will likely be attracted due to access to water and other natural resources. New development here should be sensitive to the high quality agricultural production land and water resources, if converted to residential uses.



Agricultural Production - In the Agriculture/Rural Residential and Agricultural Production areas, farmland protection and preservation policies will be promoted and implemented on those lands having current and future commercial agricultural production value due to location, soil type, and the presence of irrigation, based on the desires of the landowners. New residential development here should be minimized in order to maintain viable units of agricultural production.



St. Joseph County, Michigan Countywide Future Land Use Map 2007

Legend

Urban Land Use Forms

Residential	
Commercial	
Industrial	

Agriculture/Rural Residential Land Use Forms

Agriculture/Rural Residential	
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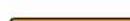
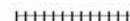
Agricultural Production Land Use Forms

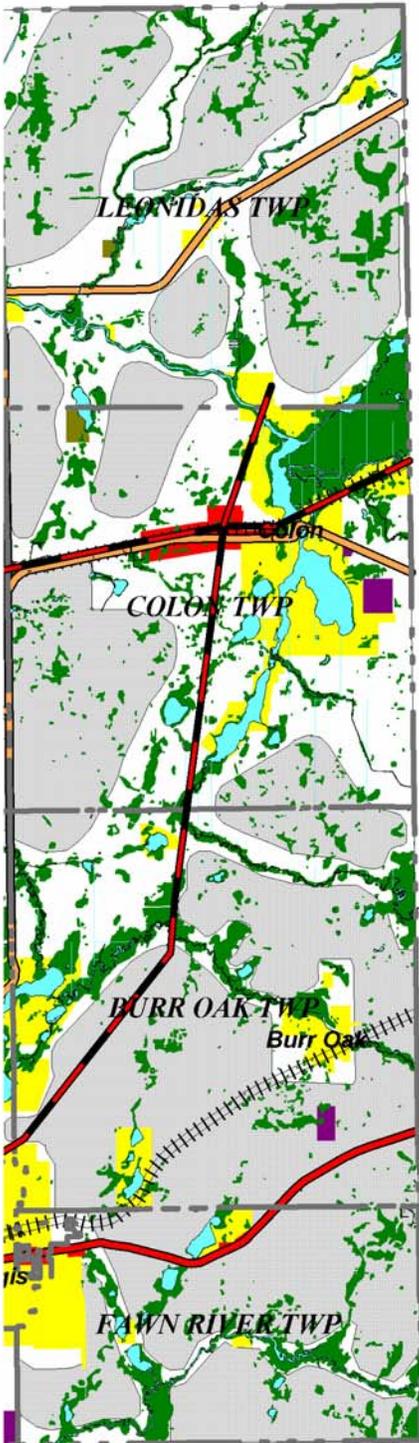
Farmland Protection and Preservation	
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Open Space Land Use Forms

Environmentally Important Lands	
County Parks / State Lands	

Other Map Designators

US 131 Locally Selected Alignment	
US Highway	
State Highway	
Railroad	
Proposed Trails	



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The Master Plan also recognizes open space land use forms:

Open Space Land Use Forms - Those environmentally sensitive wetland and upland forested areas that contribute to the health and management of the watershed and are important wildlife habitat and recreation areas. This land use form also includes county parks and state of Michigan game areas.

Future Land Use

15% Urban
16% Agriculture/Rural
Residential
53% Agricultural
Production
16% Open space

**Ten Smart Growth
Tenets**

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

The intent and desire behind the land use forms illustrated on the Future Land Use Map is to establish a long-range vision that can serve as a coordinating mechanism to meet the statutory requirements of the County Planning Commission. At the same time, the pattern of land use recognizes that each city, village and township retains final responsibility for implementation of the Master Plan by making decisions for each individual parcel of property within their local jurisdiction.

The “Smart Growth” Scenario

This Future Land Use Map sets forth a broad and exciting vision for shaping growth and development in St. Joseph County. The independent work of local units of government in St. Joseph County, have dedicated approximately 15% of the total future land area for urban land uses and 20% for agriculture/rural residential uses.

In the process of preparation of the Future Land Use Map, representatives of these same local units of government, in concert with representatives of agricultural interests, determined that approximately 45% of the county land area should be dedicated for agricultural production and 20% for open space.

According to the St. Joseph County Planning Commission, the vision of providing adequate land for future development plus providing sufficient land to protect sensitive natural resources and land necessary to sustain production agriculture in the county is best served by this “Smart Growth” pattern of future land use.



SECTION 6 - MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this last section of the Master Plan Update is to detail a series of implementation recommendations. Since the implementation of the Master Plan Update is not the sole responsibility of the County Planning Commission, actions by the County Board of Commissioners, other county departments, and actions of many local governments will be required to accomplish the recommendations and implementation actions called for within the Master Plan.

Implementation is not an easy task. Some actions can be accomplished immediately, while others will take considerable time and County and local government funds to implement. Undoubtedly, some recommended actions will be modified from their present concept to accommodate unforeseen needs of the County and local governments and budgetary constraints. Specific recommendations should be viewed as starting points for additional discussion and refinement prior to implementation. This assures that each action taken is fully understood and implemented in a way that complements the specific needs of the County and local governments.

The implementation tasks are intended to be general in nature, leaving specific details to be prepared as an annual work program by the County Planning Commission based on input from the County Board of Commissioners and local units of government.

Implementation

This Master Plan Update calls for the County and its local governments to shape growth and development in a very proactive manner. As the plan stresses, the County must identify what it can do well, for example leading countywide efforts that cut across local government jurisdictional boundaries such as open space and farmland preservation. It must also provide assistance and coordinate land use among local governments that shape development through their individualized master plans and zoning regulations.

The following recommendations call for a variety of tools to make this Master Plan Update a reality. Traditionally, master plans almost exclusively call for regulations as the primary approach to implementation - zoning codes, design standards and environmental protection regulations. However, today's planning practices indicate that these approaches must be complemented by other approaches, if the plan is to produce the desired results in the long term. The implementation strategy and "tools" will only work if there are cooperative actions and efforts among all local governments within St. Joseph County.

Countywide Cooperation - Historically, local governments in the county have conducted local planning efforts with limited countywide cooperation. This is evidenced by the fact that there are over eighty terms used by local governments in the County to describe land uses/zoning districts. Given the regional nature of land use impacts and interactions, there is tremendous value in "getting together" representatives of local governments to discuss and plan for the future cooperatively.

Not only should these discussions focus on countywide open space and farmland preservation, but also consider transportation, water quality and new development design standards. Countywide uniformity among regulations and uniform application and inspection procedures to guide planning decision making and new development construction should be investigated.

"The Master Plan generally calls for the County and local governments to direct development to designated areas within the County that can efficiently provide needed services and infrastructure while retaining areas for continued agricultural production."

Implementation Priorities

Countywide Cooperation

Countywide Open Space & Farmland Preservation

Improve North-South Transportation

Economic Development

Public Water and Sewer Service Areas

Provide Technical Expertise and Assistance

Land Use Leadership

The County Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, US-131 Corridor Committee and Economic Development Corporation, as well as each local unit of government, must consider the economic necessity for future north-south access to the Indiana Toll Road and take appropriate action to expedite transportation improvements required to freely move people to areas having job growth, as well as the movement of goods and people within St. Joseph County itself.

The County Planning Commission must take an active role in assisting the County Economic Development Corporation in implementing measures to ready new economic development locations and assure proper transportation access and utilities, as well as sponsoring actions designed to retain “large blocks” of productive farmland.

Countywide Open Space and Farmland Preservation - Land preservation is and will become a bigger growth and development issue of St. Joseph County, prompted by the need to address environmentally sensitive lands and waters, and to sustain commercial agricultural production. Since these issues cannot be totally managed by any one local government, a countywide approach is mandatory for success.

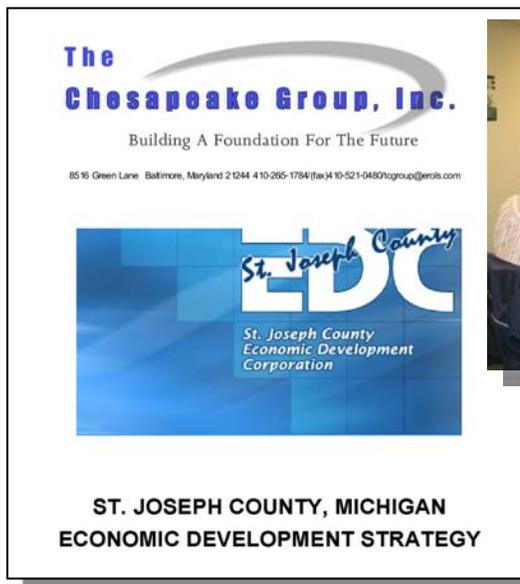
In collaboration with local governments and the County Agricultural Preservation Board, the County Planning Commission should establish land preservation acreage goals, for both temporary (P.A. 116 and exclusive agricultural zoning) and permanent (P.A. 262) preservation.

Preservation cannot be implemented totally through purchase of development rights, land acquisition, zoning or other regulations. Other means, including bonus densities and cluster development (open space development) should be considered for developers who provide land preservation beyond some baseline conservation standards. All of these tools for maintaining open space and protecting farmland should be utilized within the Agriculture/Rural Residential, Agricultural Production, and Open Space land use forms on the Future Land Use Map.

Improve North-South Transportation - Historically, St. Joseph County has focused its economic development strategy on Michigan’s economic development platform, specifically relying on its regional relationship with the Kalamazoo metropolitan area. In more recent times, the growth of the County’s southern Indiana neighbors has increasingly had greater economic influence on St. Joseph County.

With a significant portion of the \$1.3 billion lease of the Indiana Toll Road allocated for economic development purposes in Indiana, LaGrange and Elkhart counties are expected to grow. These counties have historically had, and are projected to continue to have, future job creation rates greater than southern Michigan counties.

The future land use plan and future population growth of St. Joseph County is partially predicated upon future job creation in Indiana for residents of St. Joseph County. Transportation access to the Indiana Toll Road is essential to accessing this growing job base.



Economic Development - This plan relies heavily upon creation of several new economic development growth locations as well as expansion of commercial agricultural production. It is recognized that the County Planning Commission and local units of government must provide areas in the future land use map, for both activities. This Master Plan Update addresses these matters. First, two new economic development growth locations are proposed, both having north-south access but located in proximity to the Indiana Toll Road. The strategy is to interconnect these with efforts underway in Indiana. The second economic development focus is the creation of “large blocks” of preserved farmland that can support expansion of commercial agricultural production.

Public Water and Sewer Services - Local government land use plans call for expansion of water and sewer services areas in order to accommodate proposed future development, especially for environmental protection and economic development purposes. The two-fold increase in water and sewer services areas will be costly and must be coordinated with the anticipated schedule of development to assure that infrastructure is available “just ahead” of the new development. Also, where residential development already exists, surrounding area lakes and rivers, water and sewer services will be needed to protect water quality. The provision of these services should be coordinated between local units of government, the County Planning Commission, and the County Board of Public Works.

Provide Technical Expertise and Assistance - By Michigan law, the County Planning Commission is limited in its ability to implement the policies in this plan through the regulation of land uses. The role of the County Planning Commission relies heavily upon the willingness of local governments to submit proposed planning and zoning decisions for review and implement portions of the County Master Plan Update. Nevertheless, there are enormous opportunities for the County Planning Commission to assist local governments with implementation of their own local master plans and the County Master Plan Update. The County Planning Commission has identified a series of tools it feels should be provided to local governments:



- **Countywide Repository of Land Use Policies**

Provide a central repository of current master plans and regulations for all local governments.

- **Information Library**

Provide a central library of materials concerning current land use regulations, land planning standards, and “best practices” for distribution and use by local governments within St. Joseph County.

- **“Commonize” Zoning and Planning Language**

Provide “no cost” advisory services to local governments and a mechanism to “commonize” the language used by local governments into one single dictionary of terms to achieve language consistency for zoning and planning purposes.

- **Technical Assistance and Administration**

Provide “no cost” and “fee based” technical advisory assistance and administrative services, if desired, by individual local governments.

- **Joint Planning and Zoning Assistance**

Serve as facilitator for the exploration and possible implementation of cooperative planning and zoning among local units of government as provided by Michigan law.

The Planning Commission and the County Board of Public Works must address the need for future infrastructure investment and prepare detailed plans and financing strategies in order to offer land areas throughout the county ready for development “just-ahead” of their need, and to develop critical economic development areas for new business location.

The County Planning Commission should assume the role of assembler and coordinator of periodic meetings for the purposes of gathering land use decision makers involved in shaping individual local governments land use planning and administration tools.

Land Use Leadership - While this Master Plan recognizes the limited role of county planning in the implementation of the Master Plan, the County Planning Commission feels it is important to foster land use leadership at all levels of government. Education, discussion groups and community wide recognition are tools for which leadership is identified and stimulated into action, especially the youth in St. Joseph County who will be future planning commissioners, township, village and city elected officials and county commissioners.

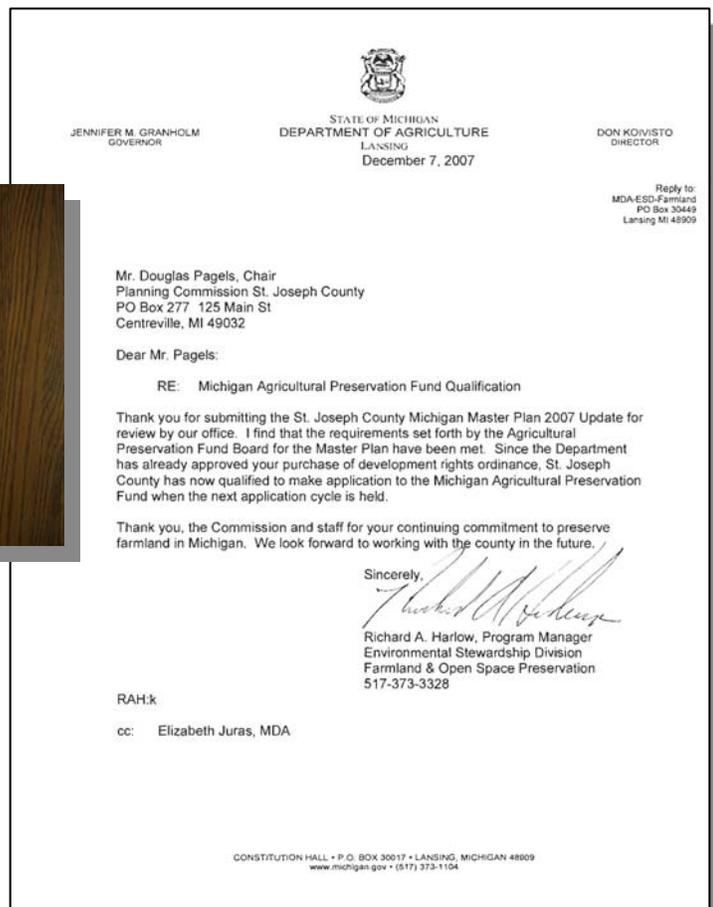
Therefore, to implement this Master Plan, the County Planning Commission should establish two leadership programs.

- **Land Use Leadership Cooperation Council**

Establish a "Leadership Council" to provide a forum for local governments and County Planning Commissioners to discuss cooperative planning and land use regulation.

- **Awards Program**

Establish an annual awards program to recognize excellence in intergovernmental land use problem solving.



Acknowledgements

The County Planning Commission would like to thank the following for involvement with the 2007 Master Plan Update – Douglas Pagels, Eric Shafer, Robert Horton, and Lon Huffman of the County Planning Commission Master Plan Steering Committee, the Board of Commissioners and County Administration, the Economic Development Corporation, the County Agricultural Preservation Board, the County Parks and Recreation Commission, MSU Extension, Southcentral Michigan Planning Council, local units of government for participation in the planning process and comments during public review, and citizens of the community committed to planning for a prosperous future in St. Joseph County.

APPENDIX

A Brief Summary of the Reports Incorporated by Reference

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The October 5, 2006 report contains a statistical inventory of demographic and economic information about residents of and businesses in St. Joseph County. The report also contains future population, household and employment projections, data that is important to the determination of future land use needs. The report was provided to participants to stimulate discussion of future trends, to direct the countywide land planning process and to aid in identification of specific issues to be addressed in the Master Plan Update.

MASTER PLAN ISSUES REPORT

The report documents the results of the October 5, 2006 workshop in which a group of 50 individuals representing almost every local government in St. Joseph County were queried on twenty specific land use issues using real-time voting technology to obtain immediate results for discussion purposes. The data obtained from the exercise helped define the critical issues to be addressed in the Master Plan Update.

US-131 ALIGNMENT WORKSHOP REPORT

The report was prepared to serve as an informational resource for members of the US-131 Corridor Committee composed of all affected local governments along the corridor. The report contains information based on the Michigan Department of Transportation US-131 Improvement Study for all possible alignments. The purpose of the report was to stimulate discussion and provide information to reach a decision on a preferred future alignment of the highway for inclusion on the countywide Future Land Use Map. The resource guide was distributed on December 20, 2006 and the US-131 Corridor Committee voted to choose Alignment A with Alignment C at the north end of the corridor during a meeting held on January 31, 2007. The alignment selected by the US-131 Corridor Committee constitutes the existing alignment of US-131, with the addition of the Constantine bypass to the west (PA-5).

MASTER LAND USE PLAN WORKSHOP RESOURCE BOOK

The report contains a copy of the future land use maps for each local unit of government or, in absence of a future land use map, the zoning map for the local unit of government. The information was compiled as a resource for attendees at the February 21, 2007 workshop for preparation of a future land use map for the county. The document contains what has been referred to as a “knitted-together” or composite land use map depicting the pattern of land use desired by all local governments in the county. Data analyzed and documented in this report disclosed that several local governments did not have future land use maps, others who have master plans that are out of date, and that over 80 different labels are used to describe future land uses in the county. Using the information from each local unit of government, a “generalized” composite countywide future land use map was prepared showing the location of residential, commercial, industrial, open space, environmentally important, and agricultural land uses. This map served as the “starting point” for the workshop participants to refine the countywide future land use map.

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY AGRICULTURE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Prepared by Michigan State University Extension of St. Joseph County in February 2006, the report was used in the master planning process to document the extent of agricultural production in the county, both in terms of acreage and commodity and livestock sales. The document serves as the rationale and the basis for farmland preservation efforts in the county.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION WORKSHOP REPORT

The document contains a summary of the workshop held March 29, 2007 and includes a presentation about a process for farmland preservation planning that will secure certification of the master plan according to the Michigan Farmland Preservation Program requirements. Also documented in the report is the process used to identify the land areas designated for farmland preservation on the Future Land Use Map including copies of the “bubble map” worksheets completed by workshop participants.

DOCUMENTATION

This document contains adoption and endorsement resolutions, public hearing notice, review and public hearing comments, Michigan Department of Agriculture certification and other materials.

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