

# **FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

**Adopted: December 2, 2021**

Prepared by the **Fruitland Township Planning Commission**

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The Planning Commission extends its sincere gratitude to Fruitland Township Zoning Administrator Val Jensen II and Zoning Building Coordinator, Sally Dion. Without their help and patience, the completion of this document would not have been possible.

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## **SECTION 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Fruitland Township Master Plan has been prepared by the Township Planning Commission under the provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. The Planning Act authorizes townships to prepare and adopt a plan for the unincorporated areas of the township. The purpose of that plan, according to the State Act, is to:

“Guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
- (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
  - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets and provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users.
  - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.
  - (iii) Light and air.
  - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
  - (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
  - (vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
  - (vii) Recreation.
  - (viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.”

Although the Master Plan has no regulatory power, it states specific land development and preservation goals. These goals are intended to guide both the Planning Commission and the Township Board in making both day-to-day and long-range land use decisions.

## **Planning History**

Fruitland Township adopted its first Master Plan in 1976 along with a new zoning ordinance. Both of these were updated in the mid-1980's. Additional revisions to the zoning ordinance were adopted in the mid-1990's. In 2006 the Township began the preparation of a new Plan seeking the input and support of the citizens of Fruitland Township and on July 18, 2007, adopted a new Master Plan.

The 2007 Plan contained a number of recommendations which were successfully carried out shortly after adoption of the Plan. Subsequent adoption of the Muskegon Area Wide Plan and a desire by the Township to adhere to its "Smart Growth" principles prompted a 2010 update of the 2007 Master Plan.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires Michigan townships to review their master plans at least every 5 years after adoption, and to determine whether to amend their plan, or to adopt a new one. The Fruitland Township Planning Commission has determined that an amendment is appropriate in 2020, and accordingly has prepared this update.

## **Use of the Plan**

The Master Plan serves as a tool for decision-making by providing information and rationale for land use decisions. The Master Plan does not contain a specific time frame or timetable for the development of Township lands as recommended on the Future Land Use Map. Development takes place as landowners seek rezoning, and as developers request approval of plans for residential and commercial projects in response to market demands.

The Master Plan does not indicate the timing of development but rather the Plan sets forth recommendations for what types of land uses can be established in the Township, where they can be established and under what conditions they can be established.

In particular, the Plan will assist local officials in the following:

- **Review of rezoning and special land use permits.** Applications for rezoning and special use permits should be evaluated not only in terms of specific ordinance standards but also in terms of how well the proposed action will be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.
- **Review of public improvement projects.** All future public improvements projects including the construction of new facilities, utilities, or buildings must first be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with the Master Plan, according to PA 33 of 2008. In particular, any public improvement project must be reviewed to see whether it is consistent with the planned future land use pattern in Fruitland Township. Public improvements projects include roads, public safety facilities, parks and recreation facilities, utilities, and any other public space, building, or structure.
- **Review of plats and site condominiums.** Site condominium divisions have a profound impact upon the character of a community and future public service needs. The Master Plan provides policies to assist the Planning Commission with decisions as to location and design of subdivisions, and the adequacy of public services to meet the increase in demand placed upon the community by the land use intensity of site condominium and platted subdivisions. Policies for subdivision of land apply not only to residential land use, but to commercial and industrial use as well.

- **Maintaining community character while managing growth.** Each community has a vision for its future, and a sense for the desired character. The Master Plan, more than any other document, provides direction for Township officials in managing growth while retaining the desired community character, and providing the best quality of life possible for current and future residents.
- **Providing a legal framework for zoning actions.** The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that zoning regulations be “based upon a plan.” (MCL 125.3203) A Township’s zoning actions and regulations are generally viewed favorably by the courts provided that such actions and regulations are not deemed to be “arbitrary and capricious.” By providing adequate support for zoning decisions, the Master Plan therefore serves as the legal backbone of the zoning ordinances and helps to protect zoning decisions made by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.
- The Plan is a very strong and visible statement by the Township and its residents, regarding the intended character of the community and strategies to assure that character. As a formal and tangible document this Plan instills a sense of stability and direction for Township officials, Township activities, and Township residents.

### **The Relationship between Planning and Zoning**

The Future Land Use Plan generally precedes, and provides the basis for the Zoning Ordinance. The Plan is intended as a policy guide for the arrangement of future land uses, and is not a legally enforceable document.

The zoning ordinance, which includes the zoning map, however, is regulatory and is intended to be enforced in the present. Zoning represents what the land can be used for now, while the Future Land Use Map represents how the land is to be used in the future.

The Future Land Use Plan map does not rezone property – the Plan merely signifies intent to rezone. Rezoning can only be accomplished through a process set forth by Michigan Law, which requires a public hearing and approval by the Township Board. Typically, the landowner initiates rezoning; although the Township has the authority to rezone land provided the proper procedures are followed.

## **Zoning**

The statutory authority for the Township to utilize zoning comes from the Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended which states:

*"A local unit of government may provide by zoning ordinance for the regulation of land development and the establishment of 1 or more districts within its zoning jurisdiction which regulate the use of land and structures to meet the needs of the state's citizens for food, fiber, energy, and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land, to ensure that use of the land is situated in appropriate locations and relationships, to limit the inappropriate overcrowding of land and congestion of population, transportation systems, and other public facilities, to facilitate adequate and efficient provision for transportation systems, sewage disposal, water, energy, education, recreation, and other public service and facility requirements, and to promote public health, safety, and welfare."*

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate property to achieve orderly land use relationships. It is the process most commonly used to implement community Master Plans. The zoning consists of an official zoning map and zoning ordinance text.

The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts within which certain uses are permitted and others are not. The zoning ordinance text notes the uses that are permitted and establishes regulations to control densities, height, lot coverage, setback, lot sizes, and accessory uses.



The zoning ordinance also sets forth the procedures for site plan review, conditional uses, and sign controls. These measures permit the township to control the quality as well as the type of development.

### **Fruitland Township Mission Statement**

*"The mission of Fruitland Township is to promote a high quality of life for all of its residents and guests. Mindful of the unique and diverse character of the area, Fruitland Township through its policies and ordinances is committed to orderly growth with sensitivity to its natural resources, open spaces, and water tables. The township seeks to provide sensible zoning, efficient and safe transportation networks, recreational opportunities, public services, and active public participation throughout the township."*

Fruitland Township desires to maintain its rural and residential character and protect the natural environment. The primary consideration in all land use decisions will be health, safety and welfare to include how the density and design of a development impacts the environmental and visual quality of the landscape.

Lake Michigan, Duck Lake and White Lake are revered as gems and their shorelines will be protected from overcrowding and poorly conceived developments, which are out of context with the shoreline environment. Likewise, dune lands, tributaries, wetlands and high-water table areas will be respected as fragile and important environments. Density in these areas will be kept low to limit disruption of the landscape and protect natural resources.

Development should be carefully nestled into the landscape, respecting and protecting crucial rural features and natural amenities. Woodlots, landmark trees, wetlands, natural drainage ways and rolling hills must be integrated into site designs rather than being lost in the wake of development. A band of natural vegetation must be retained adjacent to roadways, streams and waterfronts to punctuate the rural nature of the community.

Areas adjacent to or near Lake Michigan, White Lake and Duck Lake will continue at no greater than current residential density levels. Higher residential densities are contemplated for other areas more suitable for development in the township (e.g., in the Whitehall Road corridor).

Internal portions of the township will be reserved for low-density residential development depending on the presence of high groundwater, wetlands, floodplains or to preserve rural character. Planning tools will be implemented to maintain low-density development, but which prevent excessive land fragmentation. Creative tools will be encouraged that preserve open space in large land parcels.

New, high density residential development (of more than one unit per acre) is strictly limited to near Whitehall Road.

A small, mixed-use commercial area of approximately 15-20 acres will be situated near Whitehall and Riley Thompson Roads. Well designed mixed land uses with small scale commercial, office, affordable senior housing, and limited accessory apartments will incorporate access management, attractive landscaping, ample green areas, screening and non-motorized connections. This form of development will only be permitted in a limited, compact, centralized pattern. Other small clusters of resort commercial development will be permitted in historic resort areas of the township. Larger scale commercial and office development is better suited in, and will be directed to, the cities of Muskegon, Whitehall and Montague where public infrastructure and city services are already provided.

Future sewer service areas are presently envisioned within one-quarter mile of Whitehall Road corridor. These areas will host small-scale commercial and high-density residential uses. It is anticipated that developers will finance the extension of sewer and water services, but not beyond designated service areas.

Industrial development is limited in the Township land use plan because of the proximity of certain areas to the lakes and other areas having high water tables with no sanitary sewers or municipal water supply. It is more appropriately suited to the cities of Muskegon, Whitehall, and Montague where dedicated industrial lands and associated public infrastructure already exist.

## **SECTION 2**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Summary** – Fruitland Township is a rural community in northwestern Muskegon County, Michigan (see **Map 1 – Location Map**). The Township’s population has grown from 4,391 in 1990 to 5,793 in 2020. (See **Table 3 – Township Population**). This does not include a substantial number of seasonal residents who occupy summer homes, cottages and resorts near Lake Michigan, Duck Lake and White Lake.

**Conclusions** – An analysis of the existing physical characteristics and future development potential in the Township concludes that:

- Existing physical characteristics, growth rates, and present utilization patterns indicate that the Township is well suited for residential uses;
- Large areas of the Township are unsuitable for higher density development because of the presence of high ground water.

**Recommendations** – To accomplish the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, it is recommended that:

- Residential development should continue to be the dominant land use;
- Residential development should occur without altering the aesthetic character of the rural and environmentally sensitive areas;
- Other forms of development that may conflict with residential uses should be situated to minimize conflicts and maintain the Township’s rural character;
- In February 2006, the Fruitland Township Board passed a resolution to adopt the Muskegon Area-wide Plan. It is the intent of Fruitland Township to cooperate with this regional planning initiative and implement “Smart Growth” principles.

**High-Density Development** – Because the Township is not suited for dense forms of urban development, such development should be considered only under the following conditions:

- Adequate safeguards are provided, including public water and sanitary sewer services, where appropriate and cost effective;
- Public improvements, drainage and roads are provided to protect adjacent uses and the public health, safety and general welfare of residents in or near the development;
- To the extent possible, higher density residential development should be confined within areas identified as most suitable for development.
- Consideration as to population growth's influence on traffic volume.

**Future Commercial Development** – Future commercial development should be consolidated in specific areas to service both residential and non-residential growth areas, primarily along the Whitehall Road corridor near existing commercial development.

**Industrial Development** – The Township is not well suited for industrial development, therefore it should be diverted to adjacent communities better suited to accommodate it, as stated in the Muskegon Area Wide Plan.

**Agricultural** – Agricultural uses should be allowed and encouraged to continue in the Township. Larger farming operations are accommodated through an existing Agricultural Overlay District.

### **SECTION 3**

#### **EXISTING CHARACTER OF THE TOWNSHIP**

**2020 Population:** 5,793

**Housing Units:** 2,214

**Total Area:** 39.67 square miles (24,485 acres)

**Land Area:** 36.51 square miles (22,458 acres)

**Water Area:** 3.16 square miles (2,027 acres)

**Total Shoreline:** 14.95 miles

**Density:** 159 persons/square mile

**Housing units/square mile:** 70.99

**Location** – Fruitland Township is located in northwestern Muskegon County, Michigan (T11-N, R17-18W). It borders Lake Michigan to the west and White Lake to the north. The Township is primarily a rural residential community located fifteen minutes north of Muskegon, the State’s 31<sup>th</sup> largest city. The location of Fruitland Township relative to other nearby communities is shown in **Map 1 – Location Map**.

**Local History** – The Ottawa Indian Tribe originally inhabited the region. They called Duck Lake “Jibski Sagagen,” and White Lake “Waba-Gun-Gish-Boog-Wa-Nibeesh,” which translates as “White Clay That Is Being Washed Away in the Water.” Many Indian trails traversed the region, several of which, although now paved, are still transportation thoroughfares.

In 1785, after the American Revolution, the Continental Congress passed the Grayson Land Ordinance. This Act created a plan for a territorial land survey, dividing the area into blocks of land 6 miles square, known as a Congressional or Geographic Township. Townships were numbered, north or south of a base line, east or west of a principal meridian. When Michigan was surveyed, Congressional Township 11, located at T 11 north, and R 17-18 west, was organized in October 1869. It was given the name Fruitland, “Land of Fruit”, because the soil was thought to be suitable for growing fruit. It is the largest township in Muskegon County and

larger than the average Congressional Township, encompassing nearly 40 square miles. It is bounded by White Lake, the City of Whitehall and Whitehall Township (north); Lake Michigan (west); Dalton Township (east); Laketon Township (south).

The soil varies from sandy along the lakeshore to clay-loam mixed with gravel in the interior; the land was originally covered by a heavy growth of mostly pine timber. Between Duck Lake and Lake Michigan, a high, wooded dune shelters the Duck Creek outlet from the north winds. In 1841, Charles Mears, an early settler, purchased property on the southern side of this outlet for \$1.25 an acre and built a sawmill. In 1848, Mears also constructed a dam, a three-story boarding house and a store. Mill workers soon built a small settlement at the mouth of Duck Lake named the Village of Mar, which had its own post office, according to historical accounts.

The old channel between White Lake and Lake Michigan was located about a mile north of the present government channel, which was constructed to accommodate larger ships. The White River Light Station was built in 1875 to complement the new channel at a cost of \$15,000. The exterior is made of Lake Superior stone and Ryerson Steel Company of Muskegon fashioned the tower's serpentine staircase. Captain William Robinson was appointed first Light Keeper, guiding ships to Whitehall and Montague for refuge with a coal oil lamp. He held the position for almost half a century, until his death in 1919. His grandson, William Bush, succeeded him and remained Light Keeper until the Coast Guard officially abandoned the lighthouse in 1941. For over thirty years the lighthouse was rented out to families. In 1970, it was purchased from the U.S. Government for about \$7,000 with donations from Sylvan Beach families and others. In 1971, its original lamp, which had been in storage at the Smithsonian Institute, was returned and the lighthouse was opened to the public as a museum.

Until 1900, when shore land resorts became popular, land bordering White Lake, Duck Lake, and Lake Michigan was considered undesirable because it wasn't suitable for farming. Many resorts soon appeared throughout the Township, including Belleview Resort, Murray's Inn, Sylvan Beach Hotel, Michillinda Pines, Fernwood, Fairview Resort, Bonne Vista, The Locusts, Hayward Park, Lakeside Inn, Duck Lake Inn, Lakeview Farm, Rubin's Resort, and Michillinda

Tavern. A boat livery stood where Scenic Drive now dead-ends into White Lake. Owner Ed Wilson built, rented and stored rowboats and sailboats, along side his bowling alley, billiard room, ice cream parlor, candy shop and slot machines.

Every weekend during the resort season, the Goodrich Boats (Great Lake steamers) brought Chicago tourists to White Lake and hauled freight from Chicago to Muskegon. They docked at Sylvan Beach, Michillinda, Whitehall and Montague, and were transported to area resorts by horse and buggy. By 1923, the docks had deteriorated and the boats stopped coming.

Resort use has continued in the area, but not on the scale that exists elsewhere. The Michillinda Beach Lodge, Water's Edge are the three primary waterfront resorts in Fruitland Township, and they are all currently considered as nonconforming uses in their respective zoning districts.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL FEATURES**

**Topography** – Flat to gently rolling terrain characterizes the Township's topography. Elevations range from 575 at Lake Michigan to nearly 700 feet above sea level in Section 2 in the northeastern part of the Township. Most of the Township is at or near the 600-foot elevation.

**Soils** – Three soil types: Croswell and Au Gres Sands, (28%), Au Gres-Saugatuck Sands (18%), and Rubicon Sand (16%) cover nearly two-thirds of the Township. These sandy soils typically provide good drainage for septic systems and are ideal for fruit farming, although they are not considered "prime agricultural soils" according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service. Generalized soils are shown on **Map 4 – General Soil Types**.

**Vegetation** – The eastern portion of the Township is generally open with stands of hardwoods and scrub brush concentrated in wet, lowland, or difficult terrain areas. Westward, near the lakes, there is considerably more vegetative cover and dense forest. The west half of the Township is primarily (64%) hardwood forest, with a mixture of pine and shrub. The vegetative



cover in the east half of the Township consists of 35% hardwood forest, 16% shrub, 14% crops and pasture, and 13% pine forest. The remaining land is developed, wetlands, or savanna.

**Surface Water** – In addition to Lake Michigan, there are three other named lakes in the Township: White Lake, Duck Lake and Muskrat Lake (which is actually a bog or pond). White Lake, the largest at 2,535 acres, is located on the Township’s northern border and connects to Lake Michigan via a navigable channel. It features concentrated residential development and several public access points.

In 1987 the Federal Environmental Protection Agency classified White Lake as a designated “Area of Concern (AOC). Since 2010, almost \$5 million from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been used to complete the actions necessary for remediation restoration. Of the eight environmental impairments originally present in the White Lake AOC, none remain. On October 30, 2014, the White Lake AOC was formally removed (i.e., delisted) from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

Duck Lake is located in sections 18 and 19 in the western part of the Township and is also connected to Lake Michigan via a non-navigable controlled outlet. Duck Lake is 254 acres in size and relatively undeveloped, except along its south shore; there is an improved public access site at Duck Lake State Park on the northern shore. Duck Creek flows westerly across the central portion of the Township and through Duck Lake. This picturesque creek is typically 10 to 20 feet wide. Many small tributary or seasonal creeks and streams also facilitate surface water drainage. **Map 5 – Watersheds** portrays the three watersheds and related drainage characteristics in Fruitland Township.

**Shorelines** – There are nearly 15 miles of shoreline in Fruitland Township. The shoreline lengths for the three water bodies in the Township are indicated in **Table 1 – Township**

**Shoreline.** The Lake Michigan shoreline, with its diverse and unique ecosystem, offers bountiful recreational opportunities for residents and tourists, benefiting the local and state economies.

<b>Table 1: Township Shoreline</b>		
<b>LAKE</b>	<b>LINEAL FEET</b>	<b>MILES</b>
Lake Michigan	31,013.4	5.87
White Lake	26,073.1	4.94
Duck Lake	21,881.9	4.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>78,968.4</b>	<b>14.95</b>

The great lakes shoreline can also be hazardous. Flooding of low-lying areas, erosive winds and water level extremes can cause property loss and great expense to the State and to local communities. Fruitland has significant areas of concern along the shoreline with large expanses of critical dunes and areas of erosion risk (see **Map 6 – Environmental Concern, Areas of**).

**High Risk Erosion Areas** – High-risk erosion areas are defined as areas along the Great Lakes and connecting waters where erosion has been occurring at a long-term average of one foot or more per year. Required setbacks are used to regulate and protect high-risk erosion areas from development, and conversely, the destruction of private property as a result of erosion.

**Critical Dunes** – In Fruitland Township critical dunes are located along the Lake Michigan shoreline between White Lake and Muskrat Lake. The depth of the dune areas varies significantly but generally does not extend east of Scenic Drive. Other, smaller dune areas are scattered throughout the Township.

**Groundwater** – The principal legal authority for water quality protection rests with the State of Michigan under the Comprehensive Groundwater Protection Program. In addition, the Michigan legislature has, over the past decades, enacted a series of environmental laws directed toward specific sources of contamination and/or types of water resources.

**Watersheds and Drainage** – Almost the entire Township drains to Lake Michigan through either the Duck Creek or White Lake Watersheds (approximately 20% of the land adjacent to

Lake Michigan drains directly to Lake Michigan and is not considered to be within an identified watershed). The three identified Watersheds in the Township are shown on **Map 5 – Watersheds**. The Duck Creek Watershed, which bisects the central part of the Township and drains 44% of the land area; White River Watershed drains the north 26%; the remaining 10% in the southeastern corner of the Township drains south to the tributaries of the Muskegon River Watershed and Muskegon Lake.

**Wetlands** – Part 303 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act defines a wetland as “land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp or marsh.” Wetlands contribute to the quality of other natural resources, such as inland lakes, ground water, fisheries, wildlife and Lake Michigan, and serve as storage areas for excess water and nutrients, controlling floods of rivers, lakes and streams. In addition, acre for acre, wetlands produce more wildlife and plants than any other land cover type. Generally, wetlands must be identified through individual site determinations. The low-lying areas shown on **Map 6 – Environmental Concern, Areas of** indicate where some of these areas may be located. 10-20 percent of the Township is wetlands or includes wetland soils.

## **LAND USE**

The township development pattern is lower density toward the east and south with progressively increased density along the north and west border (see **Map 2 – Existing Land Use Map**). Township land use can generally be described as follows:

**Residential** – The Township is composed of large lot development along the major transportation routes. Typically, single-family homes are on large lots, set back from the right-of-way, with the center portions of the sections remaining vacant as undeveloped open space. Several subdivisions (mostly site condominiums) have been added to the Township since 1990. More concentrated residential development can be found in the City of Whitehall, Whitehall

Township located north of White Lake Drive, and along the northern border of the Township. Although Township population increased by 4.5% from 2010-2020, total housing units rose by 15%. Second or seasonal home development likely accounts for this difference.

According to the 2010 census between 1990 and 2000, the Township gained 844 people and 424 homes and from 2000 to 2010, the township gained 308 people and 345 new homes.

As shown in **Table 2 –2010 Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units**, the median value of owner-occupied units in Fruitland Township is nearly 46% higher than the median value in Muskegon County of \$117,900. However, Fruitland Township’s median housing value of \$172,300 is comparable to the median value of the adjacent lakeshore Townships, White River, Laketon, and Whitehall Township. Fruitland Township’s higher housing values may be traced to the ready access to U.S. 31 and the availability of waterfront properties on Lake Michigan, White Lake and Duck Lake.

<b>Table 2: 2000 Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units</b>	
<b>Community</b>	<b>Median Value of Housing</b>
Fruitland Twp	\$172,300
White River Twp	\$176,300
Laketon Twp	\$156,600
Whitehall Twp	\$150,000
Dalton Twp	\$132,600
Montague Twp	\$149,595
Muskegon Twp	\$93,400
Muskegon County	\$117,900

Source: 2020 Census

Housing styles and values are varied throughout the Township. Older homes are either cottages or resort homes that are located on small single lots surrounding the lakes or larger farm homes built on older farmsteads. Many of the older cottages or resort homes that are located on the lakes have either been rebuilt or extensively renovated. Recent settlement has attracted more affluent homebuilders. These homes are often on larger, extensively landscaped lots, with ponds, horse barns and amenities indicative of a higher income level for the property owner.

A few historic farmsteads are still present within the Township; however, many of these farm homes have been converted to general residential use, permanently abandoning the farm fields. Additional homes have been constructed around the old farmsteads along the frontage roads.

Waterfront homes are often located on smaller lots than those found elsewhere in the Township. These lots are designed to take full advantage of the waterfront. Some of these houses are located within floodplains, high-risk erosion and critical dune areas.

Moderate to low-density development is scattered throughout the Township. Moderate density homes are located primarily along the main section line roads. Low-density residential development is predominant in the central and southern portions of the Township.

Until recently, limited access prohibited home construction in the center of sections, although recent subdivision developments have begun within section interiors. As the Township continues to grow, more driveways on major streets may create traffic flow problems resulting from turning movements.

New home construction has been occurring in already developed areas, "filling in" those gaps along the main section line roads. Many other lots are being advertised for sale for residential construction. The economic slowdown commencing in 2008 and 2009 dampened the pace of this growth.

New residential development, particularly in the southern portion of the Township, is situated on large lots with two to three and perhaps five, acres of land. This type of development will present many new opportunities and challenges to the Township, primarily centered on the provision of services to residents for waste collection, sewer and water distribution, and emergency services.

A limited amount of moderately dense residential development has occurred in primarily three areas of the Township: (1) adjacent to White Lake, (2) adjacent to Lake Michigan, and (3) adjacent to Duck Lake.

**Commercial** - Commercial development is located sporadically along Whitehall Road. The largest commercial activity is the Michigan's Adventure Amusement Park. In the last several years a gas station, veterinarian office, retail business and assisted living center have been constructed on Whitehall Road just south of White Lake Drive. The Township also has three golf courses, a marina, yacht club and several resorts, including Water's Edge and Michillinda Beach Lodge.

**Industrial** - There are currently no industrial uses in the Township.

**Public/Institutional** – There are hundreds of acres of public and institutional land, including two schools, two churches, a State Park, and approximately 714 acres of Township-owned parcels.

**Vacant** - Of the Township's 24,484 acres, 26% (approx.) is undeveloped. A high static groundwater level, poor water quality and difficult aquifers, make some areas inadequate and inappropriate for dense development.

**Agricultural** - Of the 24,484 acres in the Township, approximately 1,143 acres are devoted to active agricultural activities and there is a desire to allow the land to be used as such. Agricultural lands in the Township primarily include fruit crops such as blueberries, Christmas

trees, and horse and livestock farms. Some hay is grown primarily as feed for horses. There are many "hobby farms" where the practice is more for pleasure than income. Many agricultural lands within Fruitland Township have undergone a transition in use within the past several years. These lands, formerly active, now lay inactive and vacant. Several of the parcels where new home development has occurred recently, particularly subdivision construction have occurred in what may be assumed to be former farm fields.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**Water** – A water line has been constructed along Whitehall Road from the south to Michigan's Adventure at Riley-Thompson Road.

**Wastewater Collection** - In August 2009, Fruitland Township received a final version of a "Wastewater Collection System Master Plan" which it contracted for with Prein & Newhof. This plan examines two areas in the township for wastewater collection system extensions: these areas are: 1) White Lake Drive and Whitehall Road; near which the White Lake Assisted Living LLC is located and connected and 2) Riley Thompson Road and Whitehall Road. These two areas are currently deemed to be the most likely areas to receive wastewater collection from the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System over the next 20 years.

**Electricity** - Consumers Energy supplies electricity to all Township residents.

**Natural Gas** - The Township has natural gas in limited areas, fuel oil and liquid propane service throughout.

**Telecommunications** – Traditional wireline phone service is currently provided by Frontier Communications. Phone service is also provided through various IP (Internet Protocol) providers, including Comcast and Charter cable companies. Finally, wireless phone service is available through much of the township from various wireless providers.

**Zoning** - The Township adopted its first zoning ordinance in the early 1970's and its first Land Use Plan in 1976. Both have undergone several revisions, including a major zoning update in March 2003. The zoning ordinance is based on the Master Plan and reflects the Township's interest in protecting the quality of life for future residents. This Master Plan update is intended to serve as a guide for making future ordinance and map changes.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

**Roads** - Fruitland Township has good regional, interstate, and intrastate access by state and federal highways. There is good access to US-31, which cuts through the northeast corner of the Township. The road network is comprised primarily of county roads developed around the section perimeters and private streets within small residential developments. All of the 120.24 miles of improved public roads are maintained by Muskegon County, including approximately 1 mile of US-31. Property owners collectively maintain several miles of private streets and easements. There are numerous private easements without formal property owner maintenance agreements or specified adjacent property rights. This situation can cause problems when the street surface deteriorates, structures fail, or ownership changes.

Whitehall Road is the Township's primary north-south transportation corridor. The primary east-west corridors are Duck Lake, McMillan, Michillinda and River Roads, and White Lake Drive which provide good access and are well traveled.

**Complete Streets** – In August of 2010, PA 33 of 2008 (the Michigan Planning Enabling Act) was amended to require that local master plans include consideration of additional elements related to transportation. These elements include safe and efficient movement of people and goods by not only motor vehicles but also by bicycles, pedestrian, and other legal users including handicapper users. Additionally, the amended Act defines street as "a street, avenue, boulevard, highway, road, lane, alley, viaduct, or other public way intended for use by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users."



In December of 2010, PA 33 was further amended to require that local master plans also take into consideration the location, character, and extent of public transit routes and public transportation facilities in the preparation of the master plan, and to coordinate with public transportation agencies in the planning process.

The Fruitland Township Master Plan endorses the concept that roads should be safe and available to all users, not just motorists and that streets be designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. It is important that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, equestrians and transit riders of all ages and abilities are able to move safely along and across Complete Streets.

Complete Streets play an important role in livable communities where all people, regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation feel safe and welcome on the streets. A safe walking and bicycling environment are an essential part of improving transportation and creating friendly, walkable communities.

The Board of County Road Commissioners for Muskegon County has endorsed various concepts, parameters, and guidelines as the MCRC Complete Streets Policy, including the following:

- The needs of all legal road users are understood to be important and should be considered on all road projects undertaken by MCRC.
- Complete Streets accommodate the needs of all legal road users including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, disabled persons, equestrians, transit users and commercial vehicles. MCRC will work with local communities during planning and scoping to determine community interest and capacity to help fund Complete Streets efforts.
- Accommodations for all legal road users should be implemented when said accommodations are needed and have been determined by MCRC to be safe, financially feasible, environmentally responsible, and consistent with local community desires, do not create undue liability exposure to MCRC and can be readily maintained without undue hardship and undue expense.

- All roads and road improvement projects are unique and present their own challenges, constraints and opportunities. Therefore, it is understood that the methods of accommodation will vary from project to project, and what works in one context, may not work in another.
- Complete Streets accommodations should only be implemented if safety is not compromised.
- Every community MCRC serves may have its own unique perspective on the subject of Complete Streets and their interest in partnering with MCRC on Complete Streets efforts will vary.
- MCRC will respect the desires of local communities when considering the provision of Complete Streets accommodations.
- Input from local communities regarding Complete Streets is needed as early in the project planning phase as possible.
- Fruitland Township intends to work with MCRC in order to help implement Complete Streets in a manner that is financially feasible to the Township, and is consistent with the desires of local residents.

**Rail Services** - An abandoned railroad line bisects the northeast corner of the Township. This railroad has been converted to the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail, approximately 3 miles of which traverses the Township.

**Air Services** - Fruitland Township is fortunate to be located only 20 minutes north of Muskegon County Regional Airport. This large facility provides commercial and private air service to area residents.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Park and recreation development within the Township is limited (see **Map 8 – Parks and Recreation Facilities**). The Township has two primary park facilities: (1) Township Park, located on Nestrom Road, featuring baseball fields, tennis courts, picnic shelters, play equipment and access to Duck Lake; (2) White River Light House and Museum, a 2.75-acre site located in the northwest corner of the Township, featuring parking for approximately 24 cars and a walkway along the channel. The museum has more than 600 artifacts and photos from the Great Lakes.

The Township also owns and maintains Marcus Park at the west end of Duck Lake and Duck Lake Road Park adjacent to the Township fire station on Duck Lake Road. Duck Lake State Park is located in the west central portion of the Township. This 728-acre facility features a picnic shelter, swimming beach and boat launch on the north shore of Duck Lake, as well as Lake Michigan access. There are no county parks within the Township, but there are several city, state and county parks in surrounding communities that are accessible to Township residents. White Lake and Duck Lake provide year-round fishing and boating opportunities and there is trout fishing in Duck Creek. The Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail in the northeast portion of the Township provides an opportunity for leisure and recreational pursuits. Also located in the township is The Anderson Woods Nature Preserve, which was made possible after approximately 75 acres was gifted to The Land Conservancy of West MI. Features include a wheelchair and stroller accessible trail system that leads visitors through a towering oak and white pine forest.

Fruitland Township also has roads that end at natural bodies of water. They include: Lamos Road, McMillan Road, Nestrom Road, Scenic Drive and White Lake Drive. Uses for this public property include small boat launching and vistas for viewing.

Recreational facilities include:

- **White Lake Golf Course:** private, 139-acre, 18-hole course in sections 12 and 13.

- **Lincoln Golf Course** – a private/public, 182-acre, 18-hole course in section 13.
- **Bent Pine Golf Course:** a public, 80-acre, 18-hole course in sections 14 and 23.
- **Michigan’s Adventure Amusement Park** – A major attraction featuring roller coasters, amusement rides and water park.

The Planning Commission recognizes that the Parks and Recreations Commission has their own Master Plan that can be used in conjunction with the Township Comprehensive Plan if applicable.

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

**Population Growth** – The Township continues to show a steady pattern of growth. From 2010 to 2020 there was a 4.5% increase from 5,543 to 5,793 people.

<b>Table 3: Township Population</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Population</b>	4,391	5,235	5,543	5,793
<b>Growth by people</b>	+223	+844	+308	+250
<b>Growth by %</b>	5.4	19.2	5.9	4.5

The 2020 U.S. Census reported Fruitland Township population at 5,793, up from 5,543 in 2010. Populations exceeded 6,000 in Townships located south and east of Fruitland, while those to the north are less than 2,000. The pace of growth in Fruitland Township and adjacent communities is not characteristic of the county as a whole.

**Seasonal Population** – Fruitland Township has a significant seasonal population, increasing in the summer months because of its inland lakes and Lake Michigan shoreline. Duck Lake and a

portion of White Lake contribute to the Township's attractiveness. Second home development and the influx of retirees have increased population in areas surrounding these lakes and along Lake Michigan.

In addition to resorts, some visitors of the Township rent private residential units. The Township must consider whether these facilities must be regulated to ensure that they are properly maintained and not overcrowded, thereby protecting the safety and quality of life of both visitors and Township residents.

**Township's Comparative Growth Rates** - Fruitland Township's growth rate was greater than most nearby Townships between 1980 and 2010. **Table 4 - Study Area Growth** illustrates the rates of population change from 1980 to 2010.

<b>Table 4: Study Area Growth</b>				
	<b>Growth by persons</b>			
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Fruitland Twp.</b>	4,391	5,235	5,543	5,793
Blue Lake Twp.	1,235	1,990	2,399	2,363
Laketon Twp.	6,538	7,363	7,563	7,626
Muskegon Twp.	15,302	17,737	17,840	17,596
Dalton Twp.	6,276	8,047	9,300	9,427
White River Twp.	1,250	1,338	1,335	1,354
Montague Twp.	1,429	1,637	1,600	1,555
Whitehall Twp.	1,464	1,648	1,739	1,746
Muskegon County	158,983	170,200	172,188	175,824

In total, Fruitland Township has increased 32% since 1990, gaining an additional 1,402 people between 1990 and 2020; the majority of that growth occurred between 1990 and 2000, as illustrated in ***Table 4 – Study Area Growth***. The county and communities surrounding the Township have been included for comparison.

**Age of Population** – Based on 2020 Census Data, Fruitland Township has an overall older population than Muskegon County. Persons under 5 years 6.3%, persons under 18 years 21.3%, persons 65 years and over 20.4%, female persons 47.3%. Muskegon County persons under 5 6.1%, persons under 18 22.9%, persons 65 years and over 17.6% and female persons 50.5%.

**Household Income** - Median household income throughout Muskegon County increased between 2010 and 2020, from \$40,670 to \$50,584; Fruitland Township's was significantly higher at \$65,905.

**Labor Force** – Based on 2020 Census Data, from 2015-2019 Fruitland Township has in civilian labor force, total, percent of population at 16 years+ of 56.1% and in civilian labor force, female, percent of population at 16 years+ 55.2% with a mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+ of 22.8%. Muskegon County has in civilian labor force, total, percent of population at 16 years+ 58.9% and in civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+56.4% with a mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years of 21.7%. Few businesses are located within the Township, so most non-self-employed residents work outside Township boundaries and drive an average of 22.8 minutes to work.

**Tax Base** - The 2015 State Equalized Value of real and personal property in Fruitland Township was \$327,101,900, the fifth largest tax base in Muskegon County. In 2020, 3,416 parcels were classified residential, 112 parcels as exempt (institutional and public), 37 parcels as commercial improved; 31 parcels as agricultural; no parcels were classified industrial. Between 2019 and 2020 the total for real and personal property values increased 9.17%.

<b>Table 5: State Equalized Value</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Real Property</b>	<b>Personal Property</b>	<b>Annualized % Change</b>
<b>2015</b>	327,101,900	317,011,500	10,090,400	7.00
<b>2016</b>	337,716,900	327,679,800	10,037,100	3.25
<b>2017</b>	336,463,100	326,637,300	9,825,800	-0.37
<b>2018</b>	348,400,000	337,347,000	11,053,000	3.55
<b>2019</b>	372,189,900	359,707,300	12,482,600	6.83
<b>2020</b>	406,332,200	329,615,500	13,716,700	9.17

**PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDS AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

**State Park** - State owned land adjacent to Duck Lake represents the largest publicly owned land holding in the Township.

**Township Land** - Numerous Township-owned parcels of land provide additional acreage and recreational opportunities for residents now and for the future. In total, the township owns 714 acres of land; 5 of the parcels are 40 acres or more in size. The Township Hall Park features 36.67 acres with two ball fields, tennis courts, two picnic pavilions, play equipment, shuffleboard, pickle ball and a trail to Duck Lake. Other public lands include a maritime museum located at the White River Light Station on the Channel of White Lake, a play area located on Duck Lake Road and several large parcels of undeveloped land.

**Educational Facilities** –There are two school districts: Reeths-Puffer and Whitehall public schools. Whitehall School District covers approximately 67% of the Township; Reeths-Puffer School District covers the remainder.

Regional educational facilities are provided by the Muskegon Intermediate School District. See **Map 9 – School Districts** for a map of school district boundaries.

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Police** – The Muskegon County Sheriff’s Department and Michigan State Police provide police protection.

**Fire** – The White Lake Fire Authority provides fire protection to the Township. It currently owns fire-fighting vehicles, a rescue unit and EMT vehicles. The equipment is housed at facilities on Duck Lake Road and in the City of Whitehall and operated by both full-time and on-call firefighters.

**Ambulance** – Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is provided by the firefighters. Ambulance services are provided by ProMed Ambulance.

## **HISTORIC SITES**

The White Lake Community Building, located at the intersection of Lamos and South Shore Drive, the White River Light Station Museum, White Lake Yacht Club and the White Lake Golf Club are historic sites. There are also three Centennial farms in the Township. There is a historic cemetery on the north side of the Duck Lake Channel on the Lake Michigan side of Scenic Drive.



## **MARKET CENTERS**

The Muskegon area serves as the primary market center and provides most of the retail, commercial and related services for the daily needs of Township residents. Many other market centers exist outside the Township such as the cities of City of Whitehall, North Muskegon, Montague, Norton Shores and Twin Lake.

## **NEIGHBORING LAND USE AND ZONING**

Land uses surrounding Fruitland Township are generally open space, agricultural, and very low-density residential land use areas. All of the surrounding municipalities have their own zoning regulations. The surrounding Townships have recently adopted updated master plans.

Surrounding zoning and proposed land uses are similar to the existing land use pattern. Most areas are intended for agricultural and residential development. The Whitehall area adjacent to the township is a residential area. Areas of the Village of Lakewood Club that are adjacent to the Township limits are zoned for a variety of uses including, residential, industrial and medium-density residential. Laketon Township along the south border of the Township is planned and zoned primarily for low density residential. Dalton Township along the east border of the Township is planned and zoned for a mixture of commercial and low density residential. Whitehall Township along the north border of the Township is planned and zoned for residential use. However, much of this is either vacant or agricultural land. See **Map 10 – Surrounding Zoning** for a depiction of these areas.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Census Bureau designates Muskegon County as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) along with Allegan and Ottawa Counties. This suggests that growth patterns affecting Muskegon County are similar to those occurring throughout the region. Muskegon County has undertaken a variety of economic development initiatives that consist of coalitions with private, public, and citizen groups. All indications are that these efforts will continue to be successful. The potential implications to land use planning and housing for the county may be substantial. Residential

growth in Fruitland Township may be associated with the expanding tier of job growth occurring throughout the county and region. Residential expansion may also be the result of the Township's proximity to Lake Michigan, White Lake and Duck Lake.

## **HAZARD MITIGATION**

On August 17, 2015, Fruitland Township adopted the Muskegon County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Muskegon County Hazard Mitigation Plan was created to protect the health, safety, and economic interests of residents by reducing the impacts of natural and technological hazards through hazard mitigation planning, awareness, and implementation. Hazard mitigation is any action taken to permanently eliminate or reduce the long-term risk to human life and property from natural and technological hazards. It is an essential element of emergency management along with preparedness, response and recovery.

Hazard mitigation is a discipline that intersects with virtually every aspect of community planning, and the countywide plan contains a great deal of information. The Muskegon County Hazard Mitigation Plan can be viewed online at <http://wmsrdc.org/project/muskegon-county-hazard-mitigation-plan/>.

Adoption of this plan enables Fruitland Township to access certain types of hazard mitigation and flood mitigation funding if necessary.

## **SECTION 4**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Questionnaire** – In August 2020, the Township distributed a 37-question survey to all Township property owners, which provided the basis for amending the Township Master Plan in 2020. There is no evidence to suggest that the prevailing sentiments of property owners expressed in that survey have changed substantially, and therefore it remains the basis for the 2020 amendment and the current plan update. Of the 2,054 surveys sent, 584 (29%) were returned. Appendix A contains the complete questionnaire results, which are summarized here:

**Respondents:** 71% of respondents live in the west half of the township, west of Simonelli Road. A full one-third of the population is concentrated in the northwest 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the township, west of Simonelli and north of Michillinda, along South Shore Drive and Murray Roads. Approximately 18% own lakefront property; 97% live in Fruitland year-round.

**Commercial development:** 64% of survey respondents don't want non-residential development, such as stores and businesses. Those who did, favored neighborhood stores, like the White Duck, gas/ convenience stores and recreational businesses, like camping or resorts.

**Residential development:** In the area where they live, the housing density should be 3% more dense, 21% less dense and 74% the same. (62%) of the respondents believe that residential subdivisions are inappropriate in the township. The preferred form of residential development would include pedestrian trails, bikeways and paths connecting neighborhoods featuring large wooded lots. The majority of respondents (60%) were opposed to constructing a public water and sanitary sewer system. Nearly 93% did not favor higher density development, such as apartments and 83% for condominiums.

**Other issues:** When asked to identify the most important issues facing the township, 49% said the environment, with 23% identifying roads as most important. 59.7% answered that development should be limited in areas of the township that have a high ground water table.

54% agree that controls on development are important to protect water quality in the rivers, lakes and streams. Whether they own lakefront property or not, slightly over one half of respondents supported the 100-foot setback on the waterside of lakefront lots, and that accessory buildings should be sized according to the size of the parcel.

**Industrial development:** 78% stated that industrial development is inappropriate in the township and would prefer directing industrial development to other nearby communities like Whitehall and Muskegon.

**Environment:** 78% feel the township should make an effort to protect wildlife habitat and corridors and 91% feel agricultural and forestland should be preserved.

**Road improvement:** Widespread sentiment exists for continuing to improve Township roads, as well as for accommodating increased bike traffic along Scenic Drive and the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Rail Trail.

**Public Hearing** – The Planning Commission consulted with Township Board members during the review of this Master Plan. The Planning Commission held a properly advertised public hearing on December 2, 2021, to gather public input and discuss comments received from neighboring communities on the proposed master plan.

## **SECTION 5**

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

A Master Plan should be consistent with (1) the physical characteristics of the planning area, (2) local goals, and (3) regional needs. Beyond physical parameters, it is important to evaluate social considerations when developing a rational Master Plan. The Planning Commission conducted public meetings to allow Township residents and other interested persons an opportunity to participate in the process. Community responses and comments have provided direction for the Planning Commission in setting goals and policies.

A Master Plan must also be reasonable from a regional perspective. It is very possible that significant development pressure will be exerted on the Township in future years. Past growth trends and continued expansion in the Townships surrounding Fruitland, particularly Laketon and Dalton townships, increases in the number of requests for property splits, re-zonings and variances; the expected growth in the Muskegon Metropolitan area also supports this expectation. Most of the development pressure will be for residential homesteads in a rural environment. However, other related and associated development, such as retail, service and general business are frequently generated by the existence of larger, more concentrated population areas. The cost of development and subsequent loss of farmland and open space are of great concern to Fruitland Township residents.

Fruitland Township endorses aggressive, proactive action necessary to preserve and maintain the appealing character of this area for generations to come. Protecting open space, forested area, farmland and other rural characteristics is a primary objective. Development should be directed most to areas where it would have the least visual and environmental impact, and conservation tools, such as PA 116, the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, should be encouraged.

The presence of farming operations throughout the Township and the lack of available public water and sewer facilities, make much of the land in the Township unsuitable for concentrated

development. This combined with the Township's primarily rural character make adjacent cities of Whitehall, Montague and Muskegon more appropriate locations for industrial and commercial land uses. Thus, based on natural physical characteristics and historic development patterns, the logical primary land use in the Township should continue to be rural and residential.

### **Goal and Objective Statements**

The basic intent of this Plan is to maintain reasonable residential development areas as the dominant land use in the Township. Other forms of development will be allowed, as needed, but will be located and patterned such that adverse impacts and conflicts with residential activities will be minimized. The following goal and objective statements summarize the issues and concerns for the various types of development expected to occur in the Township.

### **GENERAL GOALS**

- To plan for and regulate new development in a manner which preserves, and protects open space, protects the natural environment, and maintains the rural character of the Township.
- To direct development so that it takes place in a manner that minimizes or eliminates the potential for soil erosion, for disturbances to the natural drainage network and that protects the quality of surface and groundwater, woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.
- To assist in providing a street system that achieves an even and safe distribution of traffic on existing and future streets.
- To maintain a continuing program of reviewing and evaluating the planning needs and goals of the community.

## **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal** – Ensure that the character of Fruitland Township will remain primarily residential with homes in rural and low-density settings by encouraging meaningful open spaces to create an overall positive sense of place for Township residents.

### **Objectives**

- Promote lot sizes which are of sufficient size, typically two or more acres, to preserve open space and protect ground water resources
- Direct planned and orderly residential development to areas best suited to accommodate growth, and minimize potential conflicts between residential and other land uses.
- Residential neighborhood development should occur without altering the aesthetic character of the rural and environmentally sensitive open spaces.
- Encourage creative design in residential developments which will provide privacy for residents, preserve the rural views along Township roads and significant natural features of a site and avoid the look and feel of a traditional subdivision.

## **COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal** – Provide opportunity for a mix of commercial uses at planned locations which are developed in an aesthetically pleasing fashion and which provide for safe and efficient patterns of pedestrian and vehicular circulation and which can meet the convenience shopping needs of Township residents.

### **Objectives**

- Direct a limited amount of commercial development to the Whitehall and Riley Thompson Road area and the White Lake Drive interchange with U.S. 31.

- Require commercial development to be designed to reflect the low-density residential character of Fruitland Township, with an emphasis on meeting the daily needs of the neighborhood, and limiting sizes of buildings and parking areas.

## **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal** – Limit industrial development and land uses in light of the lack of appropriate locations in the Township for such development. Minimize the negative impacts of industrial land uses upon adjacent properties, and the community as a whole.

### **Objective**

- Sufficient industrial development opportunities exist in adjacent communities where public utilities, services and Class A roads can be provided without excessive cost while still providing employment opportunities for Township residents. Industrial development should be directed to these locations.

## **AGRICULTURAL LAND USE**

**Goal** - Preserve lands suitable for agricultural uses in the Township, and direct growth to minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas valued for agricultural purposes. Support residents' efforts to provide locally grown food for themselves and the community.

### **Objectives**

- Use appropriate buffer zones and site planning to minimize adverse impacts on agricultural lands adjacent to developing areas.
- Require larger lot sizes for non-farm dwellings to reduce density, protect ground water and minimize negative impacts on agricultural practices.
- Prohibit private roads in agricultural areas outside of Planned Unit Developments.
- Promote farming opportunities where applicable throughout the Township.



## **RECREATIONAL**

**Goal** - Provide recreational facilities throughout Township for the convenience and enjoyment of Township residents.

### **Objective**

- Maintain recreational facilities at existing properties.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

**Goal** - Develop and maintain an adequate transportation system in the Township.

### **Objectives**

- Systematically improve Township roads giving priority to the most traveled roads.
- Pursue land development policies that foster a safe and efficient transportation network appropriate for a rural, low-density community.
- Promote connectivity between existing and proposed private streets.
- Create a pedestrian and bike trail system linking residential areas and major activity centers.
- Require adequate setbacks from arterial and residential roads for new structures to provide separation for noise, traffic flow, safety, rural character, and for possible needed additional road lanes in the future.

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES AND SERVICES**

**Goal**- Provide phased public water and sanitary sewer service only to areas in the Township that are planned for utility service.

## **Objectives**

- As presently envisioned, any further provisioning or expansion of public utilities will occur along the eastern border of the Township along the Whitehall Road corridor.
- The provision of public utilities should not create an undue burden on existing residents.
- New developments that require public utilities should absorb the cost of providing these utilities.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

**Goal** - Ensure that development of the land does not significantly alter present environmental conditions.

### **Objectives**

- Ensure that protection of watershed resources is performed whenever possible in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents.
- Ensure that new development protects the natural or aesthetic character of environmentally sensitive areas through responsible and innovative development and site planning techniques.
- Protect the hydrological system, including groundwater, surface water, lakes, and streams from the harmful effects of intensive and incompatible development through the use of aquifer and watershed management techniques which seek to reduce risks of and quantities of pollution, sedimentation, and flooding.
- Maintain protective vegetation strips along rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands.
- Ensure protection for the all dunes along Lake Michigan through cooperation with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.
- Discourage clear-cutting of significantly forested areas.
- Require buildings to be setback at least 100 feet from a lake or stream (or bluff in the case of Lake Michigan).

- Support area efforts to protect White Lake.
- Investigate the feasibility of developing a natural resource inventory and incorporate relevant features into the township Future Land Use Map.
- Stream Corridor and Floodplain Protection is important for the health, safety and welfare of residents as well as for flood control, stream bank protection, pollutant filtration, wildlife habitat, sediment reduction, stream shading, and scenic and recreation opportunities. Coordination of efforts for floodplain protection with adjoining communities is important.
- Minimize impervious surfaces in new construction and redevelopment projects to reduce runoff and improve filtration, thereby enhancing the health, safety and welfare of residents.
- Protect and preserve open space in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents, protect vital air, land and water resource quality, buffer air and noise pollution, and preserve wildlife habitat and aesthetic beauty. Protection and preservation can be accomplished by techniques such as land acquisition and conservation easements.
- Habitat preservation, woodland preservation, and community greenways are important to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents, and should be coordinated with adjoining communities.
- Groundwater is important to the health, safety and welfare of residents, and high risk land uses should be restricted in wellhead protection areas.
- Proper storm water management is important to the health, safety and welfare of township residents. Quantity and quality of storm water is important, and best management practice should be employed to minimize, collect and treat storm water. Where possible, natural features should be preserved to improve filtration of storm water.

- Septic systems should be deployed in suitable areas only. The Natural Resource Conservation Service mapping application, or similar application, should be used to ensure this is accomplished.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

**Goal-** Protect the air, water, and natural resources of the Township by promoting public awareness and establishing reasonable well thought out protection measures.

### **Objectives**

- Inform residents about the township’s fundamental reliance upon ground water resources for potable water supplies through the Township web page or newsletter and provide information on ground water protection techniques and methods for homeowners and businesses.
- Continue to partner with the Muskegon Conservation District for review of land development proposals and for assistance in promoting sound conservation measures.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY**

**Goal –** Promote energy conservation techniques and facilitate the use of alternative energy technologies where feasible.

### **Objectives**

- Develop, maintain and update zoning ordinances that facilitate the prudent use of alternative energy techniques, such as wind energy systems and solar energy technology.
- Encourage application of energy conservation and alternative energy in development proposals brought to the Township.

## **SECTION 6**

### **FUTURE LAND USE**

Future land use decisions for Fruitland Township will be guided by the Plan's Goals and Objectives. These statements rest on the desire of Township residents and officials to preserve the values that make Fruitland Township a desirable place to live; specifically, the preservation of the rural character, low-density residential settings, and natural features. The Plan acknowledges that new development will occur, but must be planned, and contingent on the availability of public utilities to protect the groundwater upon which most residents rely. This section provides guidelines for the location of various land use activities anticipated within the Township.

The Future Land Use Map establishes the planned future land use pattern for the Township. The Plan is intended to be flexible and does not establish precise boundaries for the proposed land uses. The plan identifies various land use areas based on the existing characteristics, goals, and management guidelines of the Township. This section of the Plan provides a description of proposed land uses and includes recommendations on the best location for land uses within the Township.

The Future Land Use Map does not change the existing zoning in an area. A property owner or the Township will need to apply for a rezoning at some point in the future if the future land use category is different from the existing zoning. Meanwhile, a property owner must use the property as it is currently zoned.

The general strategy of the plan is to provide a low-density level of development in most of the Township. The preservation of agricultural land and natural resources is a key element of the plan. This policy will reduce the cost of community services (i.e., roads, police and fire protection, street lighting, mail delivery, school bussing, and sewer and water services);

preserve important agricultural lands and other natural assets; and encourage a compatible development pattern. The recommendations of this plan should be implemented through the zoning ordinance regulating the location, type, design, character, and density of land uses permitted in the Township. The land use areas described in this section are shown on the Future Land Use Map of the Township (see **Map 11 – Future Land Use**). The Future Land Use Map identifies generalized land use areas and policies, and is therefore intended to be somewhat flexible in its interpretation.

## **FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS**

### **RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RR)**

This category is recognition of the abundant and widespread natural resources in Fruitland Township. Rural Residential areas are characterized by larger parcels, typically five acres or more in size, with high ground water table, significant wetlands, large wooded areas and active agricultural use. Single-family houses and agricultural activities are proposed as the principal land use.

Rural Residential land uses are proposed for those areas zoned Rural Residential as illustrated on the Fruitland Township Zoning Map in order to affirm the long term land use for these areas and to protect the natural qualities enjoyed by residents of these areas.

The minimum lot size proposed for this area is five acres with 235 feet of road frontage. These standards match the current Zoning Ordinance requirements for the Rural Residential Zoning District. This minimum lot size allows adequate space for well and septic systems on lands where high water table is prevalent and, over the long term, septic field replacement.

Because Rural Residential areas will not be served by public water and sanitary sewer the large minimum lot size will provide further protection for ground and surface waters.

One of the main goals of the Master Plan is to preserve lands suitable for agricultural uses in the Township and to increase opportunities for farming.

Most of the lands in areas planned for RR use have one or more of the following characteristics: prime farmland soils; active agricultural uses; and large lots, many over forty acres in size.

The larger lot size required in this category will reduce the number of houses adjacent to active farm operations and in turn reduce the number of conflicts between these land uses.

Future residential developments proposed in RR areas that are close to active farms should provide some type of separation or buffer between the farm activity and new house locations. Consideration should be given to prohibiting private roads in the areas as a further method to protect farm operations and preserve prime agricultural lands by limiting development opportunities.

#### **LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LDR)**

This classification is intended to provide for larger lot residential development in a rural setting and is intended to preserve existing rural character. Low Density Residential areas are signified by single family detached dwellings with a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres as required by the Low-Density Residential Zoning District. Low Density Residential areas on the Future Land Use Map for the most part reflect those lands already zoned Low Density Residential.

The 2.5-acre minimum lot size coupled with a minimum 165 feet of lot width will contribute to the preservation of scenic rural views by greater separation of houses and driveways and by fewer vehicles on local roadways. The Low-Density Residential area in the northeast area of the Township is within the Agricultural Overlay District and contains active farms, parcels over 50 acres and prime farmland soils. The Low Density Residential minimum lot size will keep residential density low to provide some protection for the active farms.

Low Density Residential areas are not envisioned to be served by public water and sanitary sewer and the 2.5-acre minimum lot size provides ample room for initial and reserve septic systems and separation between residential wells.

### **MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (MDR)**

This classification is intended to ensure that Fruitland Township will remain primarily a residential community which desires to retain its open space and protect its ground water resources. This objective was supported by 76 percent of the Township in a 2008 survey in which they were asked if they supported a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres or more. In response to this the Township Board increased the minimum lot size from one acre to two acres and increased the minimum lot width from 105 feet to 150 feet. This increased lot size in this district also helps to preserve rural views along township roads and forested areas which make up much of this district. Most parcels in the MDR designated areas are larger than two acres.

Medium Density Residential areas are not planned to be served by public water and sanitary sewer as the two acre minimum lot size provides adequate space for onsite well and septic systems. The MDR future land use classification corresponds to those lands zoned Medium Density Residential.

### **MEDIUM HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (MHDR)**

This future land use category provides for single family detached houses on lot sizes of 30,000 sq. ft with 100 feet of lot width. If public water and sanitary sewer are provided the lot size would be a minimum of 20, 000 sq. ft. with 85 feet of width.

The MHDR category provides housing opportunities for smaller lot sizes in a traditional subdivision setting for those who do not desire or who cannot afford the larger lot sizes required in the RR and MDR planned areas.



MHDR areas are therefore proposed north of the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail close to the City of Whitehall where the MHDR density would be more compatible and more likely to be served by public utilities. A portion of this area is already zoned MHDR.

### **HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (HDR)**

The High Density Residential Category would allow duplexes and multi-family buildings with no more than 16 dwellings per building. The density for the multi-family buildings would be limited to approximately five dwelling units per acre. Two family dwellings would need one acre of land without public utilities and a minimum of 30,000 sq. ft. with public utilities.

An HDR area is proposed on the east side of Whitehall Road along U.S.31 in Section 1. The lands along this portion of Whitehall Road are planned for varying levels of intensity and the HDR category is planned to abut a planned Manufactured Home Park on the north and Medium High Density Residential to the south. The HDR would be compatible with these planned abutting future land uses.

Adequate water and sewer should be required as a condition of development to multi-family use.

### **MIXED USE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (MPUD)**

The Mixed Use PUD land use category is proposed as means to encourage the creative development of residential areas. Within a Mixed Use PUD a variety of dwelling unit types and lot sizes would be required. Single family detached dwellings may very well be the predominant type but two family and multi-family buildings up to eight units per building including townhouses are also permitted. An appropriate zoning ordinance will be required if this land use category is utilized in the future.

A maximum density of five dwellings per acre is permitted depending upon compatibility with the uses and character of adjacent lands. Senior housing along with related medical care facilities would be permitted at a slightly higher density of eight units per acre.

Specific design standards are required in MPUD developments with emphasis placed on preserving the natural terrain, providing usable open space, community or village type greens to promote opportunities for social interaction, providing sidewalks and foot trails in open space areas along with a variety of lot sizes and building setbacks to create a sense of neighborhood which is often missing from traditional subdivision design.

As a further means of encouraging creativity in neighborhood design and function, some limited office/service uses and neighborhood convenience retail uses would also be permitted within a Mixed Use PUD. Campgrounds would also be considered as a compatible use because of the proximity to Michigan's Adventure Park. A minimum of 30 acres and adequate sewer and water would be required for this type of use.

An MPUD area is proposed along the east side of Whitehall Road north of Michigan's Adventure Park due to the proximity of public utilities, good access, large vacant lots, and the intent of the Plan to locate intensive uses away from agricultural and rural residential areas.

## **FOREST/RECREATION (F/R)**

Duck Lake State Park is the single most significant recreational resource in the Township. The Area is located between Nestrom Road and Scenic Drive, south of Michillinda Road. Encompassing over 700 acres, the State Park is classified as a regional recreational facility. Visitors utilize the facility for day use only as there is no overnight camping. The facility offers picnicking, extended hiking trails, boat launch, and beach access.

The Park features a towering sand dune and the terrain is a mixture of open brush land to mature hardwood forest, with some pockets of open meadows mixed in. Wild life includes white-tailed deer, rabbits, woodcocks, pheasant, duck, geese and squirrel. The land was purchased by the Nature Conservancy from two Boy Scout organizations, and acquired by the state in 1974. Remains of the old scout camps were removed and access roads were constructed. The park was officially dedicated in the spring of 1988.

The Mission Statement of the Fruitland Township Master Plan states: "Lake Michigan, Duck Lake and White Lake are revered as gems and their shorelines will be protected from overcrowding and poorly conceived developments, which are out of context with the shoreline environment. Likewise, dune lands, tributaries, wetlands and high-water table areas will be respected as fragile and important environments. Density in these areas will be kept very low to limit disruption of the landscape and protect natural resources."

In order to achieve this vision with respect to Duck Lake, the Plan recommends the continued use of Duck Lake and surrounding lands as a State Park. The Future Land Use map illustrates this area as Forest/Recreation and the intent of this classification is to protect and sustain those lands and water bodies most suitable for recreational purposes and forest preserves.

Zoning measures will need to be adopted to regulate and limit the location of buildings and structures including a recommended minimum lot size of 40 acres so as to protect the significant natural resources of the park. Permitted uses would include public and private park activities, camping, playgrounds and sustainable forestry practices. The Plan recommends that in conjunction with the adoption of these zoning regulations the land encompassing Duck Lake State Park be rezoned to this new Forestry/Recreation Zoning District.

A natural resources inventory of the park should also be undertaken by the Township in order to further document and provide a solid rationale for preserving this unique environment.

## **LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELINE**

This land use category recognizes the unique attributes of the lands along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Originally conceived and put into place as an overlay zoning district the Township officially created a separate Lake Michigan Zoning District for these lands in 2006.

The purpose of the Lake Michigan Shoreline District is to regulate and protect the unique natural qualities, environmentally sensitive areas, hydrologic functions, and significant natural features located near Lake Michigan and to preserve the low-density residential and natural character of the area through lessening adverse urban influences and preserving open space. This is achieved by regulations which require: building setbacks from bluffs and dunes; water front access standards; minimizing removal of vegetation along the lakeshore; fence height limitations; and slope construction standards.

The Lake Michigan Shoreline future land use category corresponds to the lands described in the Fruitland Township Zoning Ordinance for the Lake Michigan Shoreline Zoning District.

## **INLAND LAKES**

This Land Use category includes lands along White Lake, Muskrat Lake, the south side of Duck Lake, lands along South Shore Drive and properties containing Water's Edge. These lands are included in the Inland Lakes Zoning District which was adopted by the Township Board in September 2007 as recommended in the 2007 Fruitland Township Master Plan.

The predominant land use is single family detached dwellings on minimum lot sizes of 30,000 sq ft with 100 feet of lot width. Zoning regulations are designed to avoid overcrowding along the lake frontage, preserve views along the lake shore as well as preserving existing lake side vegetation. Rules limiting access to the lake are also stipulated in the Inland Lakes Zoning District.

## **WATERFRONT MARINE**

This classification is intended to accommodate recreational boating and corresponding water oriented land uses such as dwellings, restaurants, boat sales and service, fuel sales and retail uses for the sale of water related goods and services along White Lake. The Future Land Use Map provides for such area in Section 12 on the south side of White Lake.

## **MANUFACTURED HOUSING PARK (MHP)**

This category recognizes the vacant land zoned for this use along Whitehall Road. Manufactured housing subject to the rules of the Michigan Mobile Home Commission would be the only use permitted in this category. A very large amount of land is zoned for MHP, well over 100 acres. The Plan recommends that this zoned area be reduced to approximately 40 to 50 acres. Such area will accommodate a reasonably sized manufactured housing community (200 -250 units) in an area of the Township that can be served by public utilities which would need to be provided by the developer of this land.

## **COMMERCIAL**

One of the principal goals of this Plan is to limit the amount of commercial land use in Fruitland Township. The proximity of the Whitehall, Montague, and the Muskegon metropolitan area to Fruitland Township provides virtually all of the necessary commercial services needed by Township residents.

However, the Township Zoning Map shows a very large area, well over two hundred acres, zoned Neighborhood Commercial along Whitehall Road in Sections 1, 12, 13 and 24. If fully developed over one million square feet of commercial building area could be constructed on this commercial zoned land which is currently either vacant or occupied by single family dwellings on large lots.

The Future Land Use Map recommends continuing commercial use in certain portions of Section 1, 12, 13 and 24. Public utilities should be provided for commercial uses as demand increases.

**INDUSTRIAL (I)**

Beginning in 2000, Fruitland Township participated in the “Muskegon Area-wide Plan” (MAP), an effort which focused on building consensus among the various governmental entities within Muskegon County for future growth and land use, and intending to minimize the adverse impacts of urban “sprawl.” These intentions were captured in several “Smart Growth” principles, which among other things, intend that Muskegon communities will direct their growth towards already built environments, thereby preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. Fruitland Township has endorsed the MAP and its Smart Growth principles. Fruitland Township does not have a real industrial base or a public utility infrastructure system which can adequately serve industrial uses. Also there are a number of under-utilized industrial areas in Muskegon County, including some industrial parks in communities very close to Fruitland Township which provide sufficient utility served industrial property to meet the industrial needs of the region.

In light of these existing conditions in Fruitland Township and in order to support the Muskegon Area-Wide Plan, the Fruitland Township Master Plan does not designate any land for future industrial use. Future industrial users are therefore encouraged to consider nearby communities for industrial development as these areas already contain public utility infrastructure and are thereby more suited for industrial purposes.

**MICHIGAN’S ADVENTURE PARK**

Michigan's Adventure Amusement Park is located on Whitehall Road with nearby access to U.S. 31 and is frequented in the summer time by Michigan residents and out-of-state visitors.

Because Michigan's Adventure is such an unusually large and unique commercial property, a separate future land use and zoning district classification has been created specifically for that use. This category recognizes the Michigan's Adventure Park property within Fruitland Township.

**NORTH DUCK LAKE OVERLAY**

This classification applies to the lands abutting the north side of Duck Lake extending to Wabaningo Road. This land is under the control of the State of Michigan as a portion of Duck Lake State Park. This future land use classification applies to the existing North Duck Lake Overlay Zone which was adopted by the Township Board in September of 2007. The regulations of the North Duck Lake Overlay Zone are designed to protect and preserve the pristine and unique natural features of this area especially wetlands while still allowing a reasonable use of the land.

**AGRICULTURAL OVERLAY**

The Plan recommends the continuation of this category which applies to the lands illustrated on the Township Zoning Map as the Agricultural Overlay District. This area is characterized by a number of large acreage parcels (over 40 acres), active farm operations, primarily blueberry farms, pasture lands and the presence of prime farmland soils. This category signifies intent to encourage farming operations on lands most suitable for this enterprise and to sustain the agricultural heritage of Fruitland Township.

## **SECTION 7 IMPLEMENTATION**

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide to the continued development of Fruitland Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Board, the Planning Commission and the Township staff. This is done through a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures.

It is important to note that the Master Plan itself has no legal authority to regulate development in order to implement the recommendations of the Plan. This implementation must come from the decisions of the Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures relative to the use of the land.

The private sector, which includes individual land owners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township.

Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Section 5 of the Plan sets forth goals and objectives that serve to guide the future development of Fruitland Township. Many of the specific implementation recommendations of this chapter are taken from these goals and policies, while others are taken from the land use recommendations made in Section 6.

The following sections identify the major activities that the Fruitland Township Planning Commission should pursue in order to be proactive in the implementation of the Master Plan.



## **ZONING**

Zoning is a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. It is the process most commonly used to implement community Master Plans.

The zoning ordinance consists of an official zoning map and zoning ordinance text.

The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts within which certain uses are permitted and others are not. The zoning ordinance text notes the permitted uses and establishes regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setback, lot sizes, and accessory uses.

The zoning ordinance also sets forth procedures for site plan review, conditional uses, and sign controls. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as the type of development. In order that the recommendations and goals of the Master Plan can be implemented, the following actions should occur:

- Analyze commercial zoned lands along Whitehall Road to determine the acceptability of rezoning these lands to the category recommended by the Future Land Use Map.
- Rezone the existing Manufactured Home Park District to coincide with the area recommended in Section 6 and the Future Land Use Map.
- Analyze the existing High Density Residential zoned area in Section 12 to determine the acceptability of rezoning these lands to the category recommended by the Future Land Use Map.

### **Additional Recommendations**

**Muskegon Area Wide Plan** – The Planning Commission should support the Muskegon Area Wide Plan and its “Smart Growth” principles by taking into consideration the Muskegon Area

Wide Plan recommendations as development proposals are reviewed. In addition, Planning Commission members should participate in intergovernmental planning committees within the county and the region to the extent that those intergovernmental planning efforts have implications for Fruitland Township.

**Utility Service Policy** – The Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees for Fruitland Township shall work together to ensure that any future requirements for public utilities are carefully considered and planned for. While there are no known immediate needs for additional public utility services in the township, we recognize that such needs may arise in the future, requiring joint efforts from both the Planning Commission and the Board.

**Planning Commission Work Program** – The Plan recommends that the Planning Commission prepare an annual work program in the beginning of each year. This work program would set forth the tasks of goals that the Planning Commission determines to accomplish for the upcoming year. This will allow the Commission to stay focused on important tasks, in order to develop and implement goals and strategies identified within this Plan.

**Planning Education** – The Planning Commissioners should be kept informed of planning seminars to learn how to better carry out their duties and responsibilities as Planning Commissioners. These seminars are regularly sponsored by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) and the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) and are a valuable resource for Planning Commissions.

The Michigan Citizen Planner Program, which is administered by the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, is also an important education program for Planning Commissioners. There are also several planning publications that are useful information tools for Planning Commissions. The main publications are Planning and Zoning News and Michigan Planner Magazine.

**Revisions to Master Plan** – Under the provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, Township Planning Commissions are required to review their Master Plans every five years and determine whether to amend the plan or adopt a new plan. This review allows the Commission to be responsive to new growth trends and current citizen attitudes. As growth occurs over the years, the Plan’s goals, land use information, population projections, and other pertinent data can then be reviewed and revised as necessary so the Plan can continue to serve as a valid guide to the growth of the Township.

## **SECTION 8**

### **KEEPING THE PLAN CURRENT**

#### **MONITORING ACTIVITY IN THE TOWNSHIP**

To be a functional, decision-making tool, the Master Plan must be kept current. By recording Township activities regularly, the Master Plan can be periodically updated to reflect the current conditions. This procedure will also help identify development trends that are not following the objectives of the Plan and may identify advantageous concepts that should be incorporated in the Plan. To keep the Plan current, the following items need to be tracked on a regular basis:

1. Use building permits to track new buildings.
2. Parcel splits.
3. Requests for rezoning and zoning variances, with notation of action taken.
4. A description of any development that would be noteworthy in assessing the growth of the Township.

A short narrative of Township activity should be prepared by the Zoning Administrator and reviewed annually by the Planning Commission to assess its compliance with the desired development Plan. If necessary, the Plan should be modified.

Every five years, the Plan must be reviewed to compare the development that has occurred with the provisions of the Plan. If necessary, the Plan should be modified to reflect the current character of the Township. The goals and objectives of the Township should also be reassessed in light of any changed conditions. As the Plan is modified, the Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to determine if the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance agree with the revised Master Plan. Zoning changes should not be considered without being substantiated by the Plan.