

Columbia Township

Master Plan

Prepared for:

Columbia Township
Grand Junction, Michigan

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The Planning Process

The purpose of a community plan is to provide guidance to public and private decision makers with regard to future changes in land use and the allocation of resources. A Comprehensive Plan contains information about physical and social features, community facilities, existing land use and economic trends.

The plan identifies key land use issues and then establishes goals and actions to address the issues. A future land use plan also becomes part of the recommendations section and guides local officials when making future zoning and land development decisions.

About the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan

This Plan was originally prepared in 2001 with the assistance of many individuals and groups throughout the Township. The Columbia Township Planning

Commission, Township Board members and Township Staff worked with Gove Associates, Inc. in defining the scope and developing the overall Plan. This Plan is not a zoning ordinance, mandating specific land use codes and other enforcement measures; instead, this Plan is a guide to share existing planning desires, pursue community-supported new land use practices and implement changes to future zoning regulations.

An essential responsibility of Columbia Township is not only utilizing the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, but updating its goals and recommendations for future development and redevelopment. Generally, a comprehensive plan should be updated every five years in a fast growing community and every 10 years for a slower growth community. **In 2008, the Planning Commission determined that, in order to take advantage of new information developed for the Black River Watershed Plan by the Southwest Michigan Commission that the Plan should be amended. It was also decided to ask property owners within the Township if they would be interested in having eligibility for the Van Buren County Farmland Preservation Program. To those ends, Michigan Township Services, Inc. was asked to provide assistance in updating the Plan.**

While using the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the following points should be kept in mind;

- The Plan is not permanent. It should be reviewed and updated every 5 to 10 years to ensure that its goals and objectives are being met and are still consistent with the overall desired vision of the community.

- The Plan is not inflexible. It can be amended if such an action is deemed necessary.
- The Plan is not a law. It documents the physical, social and land use-related features, as well as the overall community vision and land use goals and objectives of Columbia Township much like a snapshot photo done at a point in time (in this case, the year 2001 **with an update to 2008**).
- The Plan's maps are not zoning maps. Instead, the maps within the Plan are a community guide for future zoning decisions (such as requests for re-zoning by property owners).
- The Plan is not a basis for property tax assessment. All assessed property in Michigan is based upon existing land uses.

The Columbia Township Planning Commission

The Columbia Township Planning Commission is the body responsible for developing and adopting the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. While highly suggested, the Township Board is not required to adopt the plan. Amendments to the adopted plan are also the responsibility of the Columbia Township Planning Commission, **unless the Township Board exercises its option, by resolution, to retain final approval under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, adopted in 2007.**

How to Use the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan is broken into eight sections, which are influenced by two key themes: Existing Land Use and Future Land Use. While both Existing and Future Land Use issues are noted throughout the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, a description of Columbia Township's Existing Land Use is prominently covered in Section 4. Columbia Township's Future Land Use vision is covered in Section 7.

This plan is to be used as a guide for community land use decisions by the Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Staff, business people, residents, nonprofit organizations and developers. Columbia Township has developed a Vision for the Township's future, as well as specific Goals and Objectives to better define and reach the Vision (see Section 6). An Implementation Schedule of detailed projects to undertake over the next 20 years is provided in Section 8 to further guide the Township's Vision to Reality. It is up to each Columbia Township resident and any participant in Columbia Township's land use development, redevelopment and preservation, to constructively utilize this Plan and communicate its overriding intent of serving Columbia Township in maintaining and further advancing its quality, rural way of life.

Columbia Township Existing Land Use

Columbia Township is a rural community in the north-central portion of Van Buren County, occupying approximately 36 square miles or about 21,827 acres. Primary land cover is agriculture, lakes and woodlands. The Village of Breedsville is located in the southwestern quadrant of Columbia Township, and the unincorporated Village of Grand Junction is located at the intersection of CR 215 and Phoenix Road/CR 388. The current Community Development Plan for Columbia Township identifies areas along CR 215 from the Village of Breedsville to Grand Junction and east to Saddle Lake, as well as around Upper Jephtha Lake and western Great Bear Lake, as areas for Medium Density Residential development. The remaining areas of the Township are identified as Wetland and Agriculture-Low Density Residential.

Vegetation/Woodlands

In Columbia Township, various species of hardwoods exist, including Ash, Beech, Oak, Elm, Hickory, Maple, Walnut and Pine. These hardwoods are mainly second growth, and found on poorly drained mineral soils.

Topography/Physiography

Van Buren County's topography was molded by glacial activity which resulted in moraines, till plains, outwash plains, lake plains/drainage ways and areas where muck and silt deposition collected from melted glacial water activity. Columbia Township's topography ranges from a high of 753 feet above sea level to a low of 620 feet above sea level.

Water Resources

Water is an important resource in Columbia Township. Water resources are abundant, with numerous lakes and streams within Columbia Township providing recreational and irrigation opportunities for the area. There are over 1,000 acres of lakes and over 20 miles of rivers and streams within the Township.

LAKES

The lakes in Columbia Township are what draw many people. Lakes are valuable for the array of recreational, agricultural and economic opportunities that they offer. Lakes provide a community with extensive opportunities for recreation in every season. People visit lakes for numerous reasons but one reason that will keep them coming back is a clean, healthy lake. Columbia Township has over 1,000 acres of lakes that contribute to the unique quality of life in the Township. This abundance of fresh water is valued highly for its contribution to the unique ecological, recreational and agricultural value that these lakes present.

Lakes in Columbia Township include:



LAKE NAMES	ACRES
• Mud Lake	23.4
• Coffee Lake	40.4
• Little Bear Lake	46.1
• Silver Lake	50.1
• North Lake	60.6
• Saddle Lake	283.0
• Munson Lake	38.5
• Great Bear Lake	166.0
• Stillwell Lake	18.3
• Upper and Lower Jephtha Lakes	114.2
• Lake Moriah	17.0
• Deer Lake	30.4
• Lake Eleven	53.9
• Lake Fourteen	69.5
TOTAL ACRES	1,011.4

Rivers in Columbia Township include the southern branch of the Black River, Melvin Creek and the Great Bear Lake Creek/Drain

BLACK RIVER WATERSHED

The Black River watershed encompasses approximately 183,490 acres in Allegan and Van Buren counties; through its rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands. Of the total watershed, 56.2% lies in Van Buren County and Columbia Township has over 1,000 acres of lakes and streams connected to the Black River Watershed. The abundance of water resources within the Township provides residents and visitors alike a vast array of water related activities that they can enjoy throughout the seasons. The importance of this resource to the community means that careful attention must be paid to its protection and conservation.

The Black River Watershed Plan was completed by the Van Buren Conservation District through a Section 319 grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and administered by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. That plan focused specifically on nonpoint source pollution can be delivered by indirect means such as

runoff from farms and residential lawns, paved roads and parking lots, and redevelopment or new construction areas. This type of pollution poses serious threats to water quality and the function of the Black River Watershed.

FLOODPLAINS

In September 2008, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Van Buren County. For the first time these maps delineated flood plains in Columbia Township. Those floodplains were mainly located along the Black River, however, several inland lakes were also included. The final maps are due to be adopted in 2009. A floodplain is defined as a land area that has a 1% chance of flooding each year. Not all of these streams are shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

WETLANDS

Wetland areas, as defined by the National Wetlands Inventory, are defined 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 are mainly found around the Township lakes and areas adjacent to Township rivers and creeks.

Soils

The soil base in Columbia Township, as identified by the Soil Survey Conservation Service in the Soil Survey of Van Buren County, Michigan, has 22 soil types, each with its own unique characteristics and limitations for agriculture, residential and recreation development.

Agricultural Lands

Agriculture, Open Space, and Vacant lands make up approximately 84% of the land use within Columbia Township. Farming creates jobs, provides a product for sale, and provides vast areas of open space and scenic corridors. Farmland also provides substantial environmental benefits, including floodplain protection, groundwater recharge, and wildlife habitat. In addition, the tradition of family owned farms has been passed down from generation to generation; supporting a strong social structure focused on community and family.

Based upon agricultural statistics for Van Buren County, agriculture will continue to be a prominent economic force. However, since at least 1992 there has been a loss of farmland county-wide, as well as fluctuations in the number of active farms in the value of agricultural products.

Table 2-1 Van Buren County Farmland and Agricultural Statistics 1987-2002

	1987	1992	1997	2002
Total Acres of Farmland	190,251	206,781	189,432	176,260
Acres in Orchards	18,663	19,232	15,480	10,281
Acres in Vegetables	14,853	13,734	12,069	10,553
Acres in Corn (for grain)	35,282	38,255	34,695	31,870
Acres in soybeans	9,684	23,679	24,704	29,321

Existing Land Use

Total Number of Farms	1,278	1,164	1,217	1,160
Number of Orchards	373	312	256	N
Number of Vegetable Farms	201	158	104	91
Average Size Farm	149	178	156	152
Median Size of Farm	N	N	73	57
Total Market Value of Agricultural Products	69,624	84,931	104,868	96,724
Average Market Value of Agricultural Products per Farm	54,549	72,965	86,169	83,382
Hogs & Pigs Inventory (Farms)	147	119	68	36
Hogs & Pigs Inventory (Numbers)	56,167	52,055	29,477	24,985
Hogs & Pigs Sold (Farms)	152	116	64	41
Hogs & Pigs Sold (Numbers)	84,358	103,464	56,245	67,997

Source: 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Other Natural Resources

There are features in any community that any resident would readily recognize as important to the character of the area and to their personal quality of life. These features are often the ones that residents will use to identify or connect themselves with a community. Some of these features may be cultural, such as a rural village business district, centennial farms, or similar man-made features. Other features used to connect a community to its residents will be natural; lakes, woods, wildlife, views, and other similar features. How these elements are included in the fabric of Columbia Township have a profound influence on the community's value.

NATIVE VEGETATION

Native vegetation refers to the plant life that exists as a natural part of the landscape. It is increasingly recommended that native plants (vegetation that grows naturally in climate zone II and more specifically within 40 miles of Lake Michigan) be used because of their performance, site enhancement, and life cycle cost-benefits. Native plants typically cost more initially (depending on local availability); however, they are most cost-effective in the long run because they require less water and fertilizer, and are more resistant to local pests diseases than managing storm water runoff. Native plants provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife, help to buffer noise, filter air pollution and provide us with beautiful scenery.

WOODLANDS

Woodlands act as a type of buffer and moderator of flooding, erosion, and noise and air pollution. Woodlands are important to the township's quality of life. Much of the woodlands within Columbia Township are either in small parcels, usually left from agricultural clearing, or large areas where farms have not been established and where intensive development has not yet occurred. Various species of hardwoods exist, including Ash, Beech, Oak, Hickory, Maple, and Walnut. These hardwoods are mainly second growth, and found poorly drained mineral soils that were not suited for agricultural needs. Roadside rows of Sugar Maple are often found near old farmsteads. These "sugar-bushes" are an important feature left over from the settlement period of Columbia Township. There are also stands of pine, on sandy soils and Cedar or Tamarack in

wetlands. These may be second growth but the evergreens may be isolated reminders from virgin pre-settlement forests.

Aesthetically pleasing roadways with natural vegetation tend to be more popular than roads with little vegetation or highway clutter. Trees within the public domain should be managed for their aesthetics and for the critical role that they play in air quality mitigation through the filtering of air and noise pollution. Mature roadside trees are sometimes considered hazardous, but they are always seen as attractive and valuable and should be managed and maintained as part of the community identity. To the extent possible, roadside improvements should respect and maintain these important landmarks.

WILDLIFE

A rich variety of wildlife is present in Columbia Township, providing a truly valuable living classroom of diversity regarding Amphibian, Bird, Mammal, Reptile and Aquatic Species. Typical of wildlife found in most lower Michigan, the diversity of species include frogs, toads, rabbits, white-tailed deer, squirrels, fox, bats, turtles, snakes, ducks, pheasants, turkey and a variety of waterfowl species.

The presence of an array of wildlife means that protection of their habitat is necessary to ensure their survival. Michigan's wildlife is one of the most precious resources. Surveys consistently show that residents value wildlife as part of their quality of life. In addition, wildlife is valued throughout Michigan for the contribution it makes to tourism, recreation, hunting, and fishing. As a result, there is an increasing appreciation of the role that wildlife contributes to the economy and quality of life of Michigan residents.

As with other natural features, it is important to remember that wildlife does not respect jurisdictional boundaries. As a result, it is important to coordinate activities with other local governments on the basis of biological or ecological boundaries rather than on purely political ones. In rural areas, there are significant opportunities for wildlife management, simply because of already existing, abundant wildlife habitat. This makes planning for wildlife habitat protection possible, by identifying areas of high wildlife value and encouraging development elsewhere. Even with the development of scattered rural areas, large open spaces still may be found throughout the Township. This means that there is ample opportunity for movement of wildlife among habitat locations. It will require strong coordination of local governments and private landowners to ensure that wildlife considerations are included in the review of development plans.

Transportation

Columbia Township is served by the Van Buren County road system, as well as a variety of private service roads leading to Township lakes. State Road M-43 is located approximately two miles south of Columbia Township, connecting the City of Kalamazoo to the east to South Haven to the west. Another major east/west roadway is CR 384, which goes through Grand Junction and the upper half of Columbia Township. The major north/south roadway is CR 215, which connects northern Columbia Township and Grand Junction with M-43 to the south.

Climate

Columbia Township, like all of Michigan, experiences seasonal changes. This means that the area can support a variety of activities from swimming in the summer to snow skiing in the winter. Generally speaking, January is the coldest and July is the warmest month for the area. Precipitation averages over three inches during 7 months of the year, with the wettest months being August and September. Table 2-2 identifies climate

information for the Columbia Township area, as reported from the National Weather Service station in South Haven, Michigan.

TABLE 2-2 – TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION DATA FOR COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP AREA

Month	Average Daily Maximum Temp. (F)	Average Daily Minimum Temp. (F)	Precipitation (Inches)	
			Average	Average Depth of Snow on Days with Snow Cover
	24.8	18.1	2.05	18.5
February	26.8	19.6	1.37	12.5
March	36.2	28.1	2.39	6.2
April	46.5	37.4	3.28	2.0
May	56.5	46.8	3.02	0.0
June	65.9	56.3	3.38	0.0
July	70.5	61.8	3.54	0.0
August	69.5	60.7	3.62	0.0
September	63.4	54.0	4.20	0.0
October	53.2	44.3	2.85	0.4
November	42.0	34.9	3.24	4.3
December	30.0	23.7	2.86	18.2
Annual	48.8	40.5	35.8	5.2

SOURCE: Midwest Regional Climate Center; Gove Associates Inc. 2001

Generally speaking, January is the coldest and July is the warmest month for the area. Precipitation averages over three inches during 7 months of the year, with the wettest months being August and September.

Historical Sites

According to the Michigan State Historical Preservation Office, the Gordon Hitt Farmstead is a known state historical site within Columbia Township

Social Features

Table 2-3 shows the historical population of the Township and County between 1960 and 2000. According to Table 2-3, Columbia Township's population grew 6.3 percent between 1990 and 2000. Between 1960 and 2000, Columbia Township's population

almost doubled, growing 97.5 percent. During the same period, Van Buren County grew 57.6 percent, from a population of 48,395 to 76,263.

TABLE 2-3 - HISTORIC POPULATION TRENDS 1960 - 2000

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	CHANGE 1960-2000	% CHANGE 1960-2000
Columbia Twp.	1,374	1,657	2,248	2,552	2,714	1,340	97.5%
Van Buren Co.	48,395	56,173	66,814	70,060	76,263	27,868	57.6%

SOURCE: Southwestern Michigan Commission, 1998 Extract; U.S. Census, 2001

Table 2-4 provides population projection trends to Year 2020. It is estimated that Columbia Township will grow by 12.6 percent between 2000 and 2020, while Van Buren County will grow by 16.2 percent and the State of Michigan will grow by 6.8 percent over the same period.

TABLE 2-4 - POPULATION PROJECTION TRENDS TO YEAR 2020

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	CHANGE 2000-2020	% CHANGE 2000-2020
Columbia Township	2,248	2,552	2,714	2,885	3,056	342	12.6%
Van Buren County	66,814	70,060	76,263	82,440	88,617	12,354	16.2%
State of Michigan	9,262,044	9,295,297	9,938,444	10,276,351	10,614,258	675,814	6.8%

SOURCE: Office of the State Demographer, Michigan Dept. of Management and Budget; U.S.

Census, 2000; Gove Associates Inc, 2001

Age distribution of a community influences the types of facilities and programs needed. Table 2-5 shows Columbia Township's median age (36.8) is basically the same as Van Buren County's medium age (36.6). Approximately 28 percent of Columbia Township's population is 19 years old or younger, with an additional 57.6 percent being between the ages of 20 and 64.

TABLE 2-5 - AGE DISTRIBUTION 2000

	< 5	5-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Median Age
Columbia Twp.	204	614	128	768	369	298	333	36.8
% of Total	7.5	22.6	4.7	28.3	13.6	11.0	12.3	
Van Buren Co.	5,176	18,377	3,862	21,425	10,975	7,075	9,373	36.6
% of Total	6.8	24.1	5.1	28.1	14.4	9.3	12.3	
Michigan (%)	6.8	22.2	6.5	29.8	13.8	8.7	12.3	35.5

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2000; Gove Associates Inc, 2001

Male and Female Distribution

Many communities have a higher proportion of females since women generally have a longer life expectancy. Throughout Michigan, females account for approximately 51 percent of the state's total population in 2000. Table 2-6 shows that Columbia Township has proportionally slightly more males (50.7%) than that of Van Buren County and the State of Michigan.

TABLE 2-6 - GENDER DISTRIBUTION 2000

	Male		Female	
	Population	%	Population	%
Columbia Twp.	1,376	50.7	1,338	49.3
Van Buren Co.	37,843	49.6	38,420	50.4
Michigan	4,873,095	49.0	5,065,349	51.0

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2001

Racial Distribution

According to Table 2-7 Columbia Township and Van Buren County have a higher proportion of white residents than Michigan as a whole and fewer residents in all other U.S. Census categories.

TABLE 2-7 - RACIAL DISTRIBUTION 2000

	White	Black	American Indian Or Alaska Native	Asian, or Pacific Islander	Other	Total
Columbia Twp.	2,413	83	28	8	186	2,714
(%)	88.9	3.1	1.0	0.1	6.8	100.0
Van Buren Co.	67,051	4,001	705	229	4,268	76,263
(%)	87.9	5.2	0.9	0.3	5.6	100.0
Michigan	7,966,053	1,412,742	58,479	176,510	321,968	9,938,444
(%)	80.2	14.2	0.6	1.8	3.2	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2000

Household Distribution

Household distribution can influence a community's commercial, social, and recreation needs since the distribution often identifies unique community traits. According to Table 2-8, the Township and Van Buren County have higher proportions of family and married couple households than the State of Michigan as a whole. Nonfamily household totals are, therefore, lower within the Township and Van Buren County than statewide. Persons per household and average family size all are relatively close in size for the Township, County and State of Michigan.

TABLE 2-8 - HOUSEHOLD DISTRIBUTION 2000

	Total HH's	Family Households				Nonfamily Households				Average Family Size
		Total	Married Couple Families	Married Couple w/child <18	Female HH, No Spouse Present	Total	Hhder Living Alone	Hhder 65+, Living Alone	Person s per HH	
Columbia Twp. (%)	981 100.0	723 73.7	576 58.7	228 23.2	98 10.0	258 26.3	214 21.8	74 7.5	2.7	3.14
Van Buren Co. (%)	27,982 100.0	20,327 72.6	15,878 56.7	7,031 25.1	3,136 11.2	7,655 27.4	6,285 22.5	2,488 8.9	2.66	3.10
Michigan (%)	100.0	68.0%	51.4%	23.1%	12.5%	32.0%	26.2%	9.4%	2.56	3.10

* HH = Households

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2000

Persons with Disabilities

Table 2-9 provides a summary of Columbia Township's known population with mobility or self-care limitations. When planning for future public, residential, commercial and industrial land use developments, Columbia Township should ensure that all such developments/facilities are easily accessible to those with mobility limitations and meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

TABLE 2-9 - PHYSICAL DISABILITIES - 2000

	Total Population 16 - 64	Persons 16 - 64 w/a Mobility or Self-Care Limitation	Persons 16 - 64 w/a Work Disability	Persons 65 and Over w/a Mobility or Self- Care Limitation
Columbia Twp.*	1,756	60	252	125
(% of Population)	64.7	2.2	9.3	4.6
Van Buren Co.*	46,825	915	5,186	4,500
(% of Population)	61.4	1.2	6.8	5.9
Michigan (%)*	64.7	2.9	5.8	2.3

* Based on 1990 U.S. Census, Physical Disability Distribution (2000 Census Population Applied to 1990 Physical Disability Distribution % of Population)

SOURCE: U.S. Census; Gove Associates Inc. 2001

Employment

Table 2-10 identifies employment trends in Columbia Township, Van Buren County and Michigan for comparison years 1997 through May, 2001.

TABLE 2-10 - LABOR FORCE EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

	1997	1998	1999	2000	May 2001
Columbia Township					
Labor Force	1,150	1,150	1,175	1,175	1,175
Employed	1,050	1,075	1,075	1,100	1,100
Unemployed	100	75	75	75	100
% Unemployed	9.0	7.2	7.0	7.1	7.9
Van Buren County					
Labor Force	36,625	36,900	37,550	37,675	37,925
Employed	34,575	35,250	35,925	36,000	36,075
Unemployed	2,050	1,650	1,625	1,650	1,850
% Unemployed	5.6	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.9
State of Michigan					
% Unemployed	4.2	3.9	3.8	3.6	4.6

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Career Development, 2001; Gove Associates Inc., 2001

According to Table 2-10, unemployment in Columbia Township has been consistently higher between 1997 and May 2001 than Van Buren County and the State of Michigan. Columbia Township's unemployment was, on the average, approximately three percent higher than Van Buren County and the State of Michigan during that five-year period.

TABLE 2-11 - EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION 2000

	Columbia Township		Van Buren County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	%
Employed persons over 16	1,071	100.0	29,997	100.0	100.0
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries					
Hunting and Mining	70	6.4	1,353	3.8	1.0
Construction	102	8.9	3,463	11.5	5.6
Manufacturing	368	33.5	9,473	26.6	19.7
Wholesale Trade	12	1.1	1,043	2.9	3.2
Retail Trade	100	9.1	3,998	11.2	11.7
Transportation, Warehouse & Utilities	80	7.3	1,949	5.5	4.1
Information	4	.4	382	1.1	1.9
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	47	4.3	1,638	4.6	5.6
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, & Waste Management Services	64	5.8	1,952	5.5	8.4
Education, Health, & Social Services	120	10.9	6,579	18.5	21.2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food Service	79	7.2	2,273	6.4	8.5
Other Services (except public administration)	31	2.8	1,418	4.0	4.5
Public Administration	23	2.1	897	2.5	3.6

SOURCE: U.S. Census SF3, 2000; MTS-Allegan, 2008

Table 2-11 highlights employment distribution for Columbia Township, Van Buren County and the State of Michigan. In Columbia Township, the largest employment category is Manufacturing of Durable Goods (33.5%), followed by Education, Health & Social Service (10.9%), Construction (9.3%) and Retail Trade (9.1%). Van Buren County's largest employment category is Manufacturing (26.6%), followed by Education, Health, & Social Services (18.5%), Retail Trade (11.2%) and Construction (7.5%). It is apparent, from this data, that the area's employment is not as diverse as it might be, with a full third of the workers holding blue-color jobs. Columbia Township's recreation facilities and programs should be established and maintained to benefit these job activity-level categories.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

According to Table 2-12, which provides a summary of socio-economic characteristics, Columbia Township's median household income and per capita income are lower than both Van Buren County and the State of Michigan. Therefore, it is not surprising that the percentage of Columbia Township's population below the poverty level is higher (at 18.0%) than either Van Buren County (at 11.1%) and the State of Michigan (at 13.2%).

TABLE 2-12 - SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR 2001

Median Household Income ¹	Per Capita Income ¹	Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level ²
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Existing Land Use

Columbia Township	34,389	15,015	18.0
Van Buren County	39,365	17,878	11.1
State of Michigan	46,039	24,379	13.2
¹ 2001 Income derived from 1990 Census Data = 1989 Income x (2001 CPI/1989 CPI)			
² 1990 Census Data			

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Census; 2005 American Community Survey; MTS, 2008

Clearly, there is a need for additional economic opportunities for Columbia Township residents. The inclusion of an industrial park with adequate facilities and job training programs for the Columbia Township community could provide better and higher paying jobs for residents.

Introduction

To properly address the needs and desires of Columbia Township's land use needs, as well as administer specific implementation actions identified in this Plan, a clear administrative structure and related funding is needed. The following section will identify the Township's organizational structure, services, budget and other related information.

Organizational Structure

The residents of Columbia Township elect a five member Township Board. The elected officials serve on behalf of the interests of fellow Township residents, and oversee the budget and administration of Township business.

Standard Operation Procedures/Staff Description

As of August 2001, Columbia Township Hall is open between 9 a.m. and Noon Monday through Saturday. The Township Supervisor manages the over-all administration of Columbia Township's budget and on-going projects/activities. The Clerk manages Township voting, meeting and related records, as well as facilitates additional duties as designated by the Supervisor. The Treasurer manages the Township budget, billing and taxpayer records, as well as facilitates additional duties as designated by the Supervisor. The Township Zoning Administrator, manages zoning, planning, code enforcement and site plan review issues, as well as facilitates additional duties as designated by the Supervisor. One part-time secretary aids secretarial duties at the Township Hall. At this time (2001), there are no anticipated changes to this structure in the near future.

Fire and Police Protection

Columbia Township currently has a nine member volunteer Fire Department. The Fire Department is serviced by one pumper and a brush truck. The Department maintains a station on Phoenix Road in Grand Junction. Police protection is provided by the Van Buren County Sheriff Office (with a Sheriff sub-station in Bangor) and the Michigan State Police (with a police post in South Haven).

Township Maintenance Staff

Maintenance of Township-owned facilities, including park land and the Township Hall, is done by one full-time maintenance worker and a part-time maintenance worker.

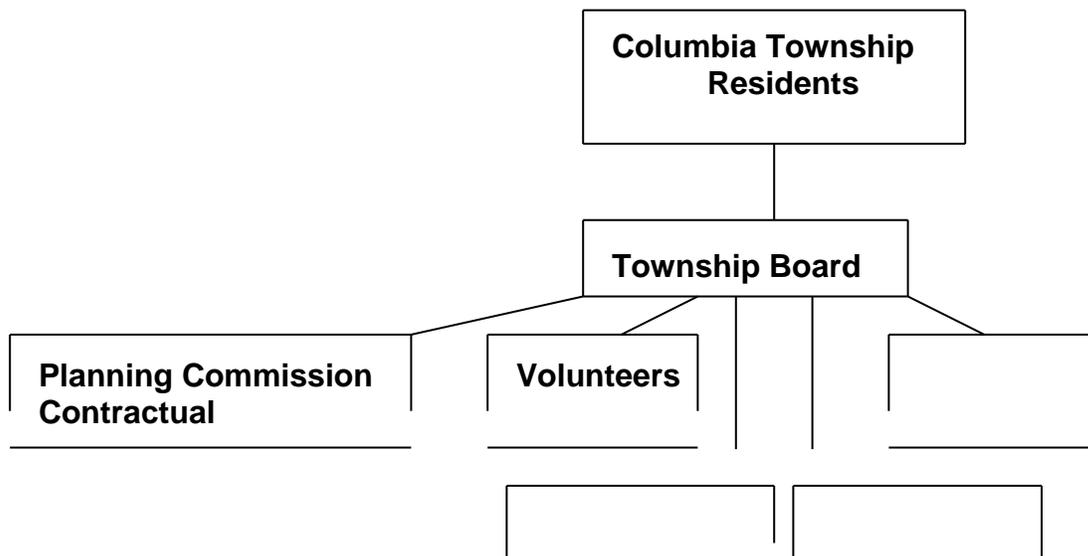
Township Operating Budget

Columbia Township operates on a fiscal year, which runs April 1st to March 31st. The funding of Township operations is mainly provided through the collection of property taxes and state shared revenue. Additional revenue from state grants and charges for services, including cemetery lot sales, occur during the typical Township fiscal year.

Columbia Township Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2000-2002

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Budget</u>	
	<u>Allocation</u>	
	2007-2008	2008-2009
General Fund	\$310,120	\$330,560
Fire Fund	\$252,045	\$200,000
Road Fund	\$166,000	\$238,000
Ambulance Fund	\$ 14,664	\$ 11,500
Liquor Fund	\$ 1,422	\$ 1,400
Hospital Fund	\$ 22,696	\$ 27,716
Police Fund	\$ 81,050	\$ 97,135
Seniors Fund	\$ 15,000	\$ 19,000
Special Assessments Fund	\$ 29,725	\$ 30,000
Housing Rehabilitation Fund	\$ 1,700	\$ 1,800
Total Budget	\$894,422	\$957,111

Organizational Structure



The Bloomingdale School District operates the Grand Junction Elementary School on Phoenix Road, which has a school playground with a jungle gym and open space. The Bloomingdale Middle and High School on East Willow Street, located in Bloomingdale, includes one football field with running track, two basketball hoops and two baseball fields.

Libraries

Columbia Township currently has access to five libraries within 10 miles of Grand Junction. The Pullman Public Library is located on 56th Street in Pullman. The Bangor Public Library is located on Division Street. The Gobles Public Library is located on East Main Street. The South Haven Public Library is located on Broadway. Each library provides a wide range of reading and visual aid materials for Township residents.

Medical Services

Medical services for Columbia Township are available in South Haven Community Hospital on South Bailey Avenue in South Haven, Allegan General Hospital on Linn Street in Allegan, and Lakeview Community Hospital on Hazen Street in Paw Paw. Coloma Emergency Ambulance Service provides ambulance service under contract for the entire Township. **a new emergency services barn was built at the intersection of C.R. 384 and 52nd Street, providing a centralized location for ambulance service response within Columbia Township.**

Utilities

Consumers Energy services Columbia Township with electricity only. Private propane providers located throughout the area provide gas service to individual businesses and residences. Currently, there is no public sanitary sewer service or public water service available within the Township.

Introduction

Before pursuing specific future land use objectives, an inventory of existing land use in Columbia Township is necessary. The inventory depicts the existing distribution and location of land uses within the Township. Understanding existing land use patterns empower the community to make an assessment of both good and bad land use practices currently found within Columbia Township. The goal is to better clarify the reasoning concerning the designation and justification of proposed future land use classifications within the Township.

Land Use Classifications

The best perspective of existing land uses within Columbia Township is gained by categorizing land uses by specific classifications. The Existing Land Use Map utilizes base map information from MIRIS data and incorporates a Township-wide windshield survey completed in early 2001. The following are the classifications used in the land use inventory:

Residential

This classification indicates an area in which dwellings with their accessory buildings occupy the major portion of the land and can include:

- Single-Family Dwelling Units
- Multiple-Family Dwelling Units, which are one or more buildings containing two or more dwelling units each. This subcategory includes duplexes, apartments, townhouses and multiple-family condominiums.
- Manufactured Homes, which include mobile homes and modular housing unit designs. These residential units are assembled primarily off-site and anchored upon paved slabs or sub-foundations

Agricultural/Open Space/Vacant

This category includes areas used for the production of crops, orchards, or the raising of livestock. This open space and forest areas, as well as wetlands and lakes, are also part of Columbia Township's rich natural land inventory.

Agriculture, open space and vacant land account for 87.7 percent of the entire Township land use area, while inland lakes occupy over four percent of the Township.

Therefore, recognizing the community-wide need to support sustainable agricultural and land use/water preservation practices, such as

- Soil Protection
- Crop Diversity
- Organic Farming
- Animal Waste Management
- Reduction of Groundwater Contamination
- Wetland/Water Protection Programs
- Land Saving Development Practices, like Cluster Development

should be the key priority for all Columbia Township residents. Having citizens recognize the importance of working farms in slowing the rate of development in

Existing Land Use

the Township, and having farmers recognize the importance of safe and effective land use methods to preserve a healthy local environment (such as land buffers between different land uses), Columbia Township will continue to prosper as a rural, natural community.

Conservation/Preserve Area

An area used for the conservation and preservation of animals, waterways, wetland, trees and plant life and/or land occupying a specific parcel or parcels.

Trends and Analysis

Columbia Township covers an area of approximately 21,827 acres. The Township is primarily agricultural lands, open space and single-family residential. Water bodies are also a prominent component of the total area of Columbia Township, thereby magnifying the importance of proper land use management to preserve and protect the rural and natural beauty, and water resources of the Township.

TABLE 4-1 - EXISTING LAND USE IN COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP, 2001

Land Use Type	2001 Land Use	
	Acres	Percentage
Residential, Single-Family	1,011	4.6
Residential, Multiple-Family	7	< 0.1
Residential, Mobile Home	317	1.5
Agriculture, Open Space, Vacant	19,150	87.7
Commercial/Retail	29	0.1
Industrial/Manufacturing	36	0.2
Public	81	0.4
Quasi-Public	23	< 0.1
Recreation	20	< 0.1
Conservation/Preserve Area	226	1.0
Lakes	927	4.2
Total	21,827	100.0

An on-going concern within Columbia Township is the promotion of sustainable local agriculture. Farmland is a private investment by individuals or corporate agricultural concerns. Farmland, often the key retirement investment of the farm owner, can be more valuable in subdivided parcels of residential land contingent upon its location and proximity to roads, lakes, streams and other factors.

Commercial/Retail and Service

This category includes areas, with or without structures, where goods are distributed or services are provided. The category includes areas in which retail and wholesale goods are sold, personal or business services are provided, or in which professional offices are located. Structures, adjacent land and parking areas dedicated for the use of employees and customers are included in the category.



Industrial/Manufacturing

This classification includes areas where raw or unfinished materials or commodities are used to produce a product or service. Manufacturing processes often produce noise, odors, vibrations, light or other emissions that may be detrimental to surrounding land uses.

Public

This category includes areas or facilities used by Columbia Township, School District, County or State agencies to meet the needs of the community. This classification includes Township offices, schools, public meeting places, public parking lots and other uses.

Quasi-Public

This classification identifies land or facilities used by a limited number of persons with particular interests and nonprofit organizations, such as churches, private schools, private cemeteries, private clubs and related activities.

Recreation

A facility or area used for recreational activities, including water parks, golf courses and ski areas. This category includes all structures, adjacent land and parking areas dedicated for use by employees and customers of such recreational areas or facilities.

Category also includes open space and forest land, as well as abandoned agricultural fields and flood plains. Lands in this category consist of both suitable and unsuitable areas for development.

Clearly there are some resources which, if lost, would significantly detract from the environment and the community as a whole.

Natural features such as native vegetation, woodlands, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors add to the natural features that lure people to Columbia Township. Removing these natural features will not only alter the landscape of the community but it can also lead to water quality issues such as increased runoff, erosion and flooding. Development in these areas should be discouraged.

Introduction

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan can only be comprehensive when it provides inclusive community input. The overall vision, goals and objectives of the plan must be based upon a foundation of statistical data, topological mapping, geological data, urban land use theory and public insight.

Regarding the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan, community input was provided by the following:

- Distributing a community-wide questionnaire.
- Input by members of the Planning Commission, Township Board and Township staff.
- Holding a public visioning session on June 2nd, 2001 at the Columbia Township Hall.
- Providing updates, memos and mapping data at the monthly Planning Commission meetings.
- **During the process of developing the Black River Watershed Plan, the Conservation District planners held a series of visionary session to gather the input of local stakeholders.**
- **During the 2008/2009 plan amendment process, 240 Farmland Preservation Interest survey cards were mailed to property owners who owned more than 20 acres of land in the Township. Forty-one (17%) of the postcards were returned with the majority expressing interest in the County's farmland preservation program.**
- **On March 16, 2009 an informational meeting was held to which the respondents to the farmland preservation questionnaire were invited to participate.**

The following provides a review of both the community-wide survey and public visioning session, **the Black River Watershed stakeholder concerns and the farmland information session, as well as comments from a re-zoning hearing in 2009:**

Columbia Township Community Survey Overview

Columbia Township Questionnaire Results

Between November 2000 and March 2001 a planning survey questionnaire was developed, distributed, collected, tabulated and analyzed by Gove Associates. The questionnaire was mailed using the Columbia Township Property Appraiser's property tax

list of homeowners. Approximately 1,600 surveys were mailed, and 300 were returned as of April 2, 2001 - a good return rate of 19%.

Summary of Columbia Township Questionnaire Findings

Responses were evenly distributed in the Township. 49% of responses were done by males, 21% by females and 26.7% of responses done by more than one person.

Tenure of residency responses indicate a strong representation of respondents calling Columbia Township home for 10 or more years. Specifically, 181 respondents (or 60% of 300 total respondents) have lived in Columbia Township for 10 or more years. 27 respondents, or about 9% of respondents, also work in Columbia Township, with another 129 respondents (approximately 43% of respondents) indicating they are retired or not employed. 7% of respondents indicated they work in Kalamazoo, and 7% indicated they work in South Haven.

Of interest, Question 4 asked where the respondent(s) lived if not noted in Question 3.

- 30 responded that they live/work in the Chicago/Metro Chicago area.
- 8 responded that they work in Allegan.
- 4 responded that they work in Indiana.

Annual household income reflects a diversity of income levels. Of the total 300 respondents, 245 answered this question. 23% of respondents to this question have an annual household income of \$24,999 or less. Over 28% of respondents to this question have an annual household income between \$25,000 and \$50,999. Approximately 30% of respondents to this question have an annual household income of \$51,000 or more.

General quality of life in Columbia Township was rated as good by 45% of 270 respondents answering Question 19. In Question 19 most services and resources mentioned were rated Excellent to Fair. A concern within Columbia Township appears to be both zoning code enforcement and control of trash/litter/junk. Zoning code enforcement earned a 22.7% Poor to Very Poor response, while control of trash/litter/junk earned a 32.3% Poor to Very Poor response.

Question 20 was more specific, inquiring respondents to address issues/concerns about the future. Of note, the following issues appear to be important to questionnaire respondents:

- 48% of respondents AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE about having more single-family housing in Columbia Township. Another 29.7% are NEUTRAL concerning this issue.
- Locating mobile home/manufactured home parks in specific, designated areas earned a 43% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response, while approximately 16% provided a NEUTRAL response and 34% DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE with the idea.
- Encouraging apartment housing in the Township drew DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE response by 46% of respondents, while housing for senior citizens in the Township earned a 44% response, with an additional 35% responding with a NEUTRAL stance.

- New retail or other services business development drew a AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response of 56% of respondents. Development of industry in Columbia received a mixed response. Use of public funding to attract new businesses got a 39% DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE, and a 29% NEUTRAL, response.
- Bike/hiking trails received a mixed response, while preservation of natural areas in Columbia Township earned a 44% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response and a 22% NEUTRAL response.
- Farmland preservation is supported by an 80% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response.
- Strict sign regulations in the Township drew a 86% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response, with an additional 29% being NEUTRAL concerning this issue.
- Over 53% of respondents AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE that family businesses should be allowed on residential property, with another 20% being NEUTRAL concerning this issue.
- 57% of survey respondents AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE that there should be a limit on the number of domestic animals permitted at a non-farm residence.
- Over 51% of respondents AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE and 30% were NEUTRAL concerning the need of more police protection.
- More fire protection earned a 48% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response, with an additional 33% responding with a NEUTRAL stance.
- The need for better ambulance service received a 51% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response, and a 35% NEUTRAL response.
- Support of recycling services earned a 54% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE, with a 28% NEUTRAL, response.
- Promotion of public water facilities by the Township got an 6% STRONGLY AGREE, 13% AGREE, 36% NEUTRAL, 26% DISAGREE and 11% STRONGLY DISAGREE response.
- More traffic lights or stop signs in certain places of the township drew an 25% AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE, 37% NEUTRAL and 32% DISAGREE or STRONGLY AGREE response.

Question 21 asked where more traffic lights or stop signs are needed:

- CR 380 at CR 681 needs to be reviewed as a high speed, dangerous roadway, according to 3 respondents.
- CR 388 needs a 3 way stop at the CR 388/CR 384 intersection according to 3 respondents.
- Signs need repainting and roadways need better painted lines. Railroad crossings need clearer, better signage (4 respondents).

Question 22 listed current conditions, which Columbia Township residents may look at as problem. Responses were as follows:

- Division of farmland of residential development: 26% NOT A PROBLEM, 28% POSSIBLE PROBLEM.
- Loss of wetlands: 25% NOT A PROBLEM, 24% POSSIBLE PROBLEM.
- Soil erosion: 26% NOT A PROBLEM, 29% POSSIBLE PROBLEM, 14% SLIGHT PROBLEM.
- Traffic congestion on Township roads: 62% NOT A PROBLEM, 12% POSSIBLE PROBLEM, 11% SLIGHT PROBLEM.
- Motorist speeding on Township roads: 16% NOT A PROBLEM, 18% POSSIBLE PROBLEM, 17% SLIGHT PROBLEM, 20% MODERATE PROBLEM, 18% SERIOUS PROBLEM.
- Use of pesticides/fungicides: 24% NOT A PROBLEM, 29% POSSIBLE PROBLEM, 12% SLIGHT PROBLEM, 12% MODERATE PROBLEM, 11% SERIOUS PROBLEM.

Question 23 asked what are the most important items that should be dealt with in Columbia Township. Responses of 10% or higher included:

- Road maintenance at 36%
- Preservation of natural areas at 33%
- Farmland preservation at 28%
- Police protection at 26%
- Fire protection at 23%
- Ambulance service at 23%
- Code enforcement at 17%
- Loss of farmland at 17%
- Loss of open space at 17%
- Quality of drinking water at 15%
- Loss of wetlands at 14%
- Concentration of mobile/manufactured home parks at 14%
- New senior housing at 12%
- Park and recreation facilities at 12%
- Recycling services at 11%
- Limits on domestic animals at 10%
- Cablevision/internet access at 10%

Respondents willing to pay additional taxes to address one or all of the concerns listed in Question 23 were 45% YES and 44% NO (with non-response to this question making up the remaining 11%).

Question 25 asked if not all the issues noted in Question 23, which issues would the questionnaire respondent be willing to pay for?:

- Additional police protection earned 9 responses
- Additional fire protection earned 7 responses
- Road maintenance earned 6 responses
- Additional ambulance protection earned 5 responses
- Code enforcement earned 4 responses
- Recycling services earned 3 responses
- Quality of drinking water earned 3 responses
- Parks and recreation facilities earned 2 responses
- Farm preservation earned 2 responses
- Preservation of natural areas earned 2 responses
- Trash collection earned 2 responses

Question 26 was a broader inquiry, asking if there are conditions at a particular location in the Township those surveyed feel should be improved.

- Road improvement concerns (more paved roads, better signage, speed limits) were expressed by 30 respondents.
- Need for stronger zoning code/blight enforcement in Columbia Township earned 29 responses.
- Concerns about Breedsville and/or Grand Junction looking "junky" and needing better zoning code/blight enforcement earned 6 responses.

Question 27 asked what population target should the Township be prepared to accommodate by the year 2020.

- No growth = 10.7%
- 2,900 - 3,000 = 11.3%
- 3,000 - 3,500 = 18.7 %
- 3,500 - 4,000 = 13.3%
- 4,000 - 4,500 = 7.0%
- 4,500 - 5,000 = 5.0%

- 5,000 or more = 9.0%
- (The remaining 25% did not respond to this question.)

Community Visioning Session

On June 2, 2001 a public visioning concerning public input on future land use in Columbia Township was held at the Township Hall. A presentation on Columbia Township's past and future population, housing and overall land use by the consultant was followed by dividing attendees into three specific work groups. Each work group was provided with Township maps, land use issue notepads and markers to both write and illustrate Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public Land, Open Space, Agricultural and any other land use issue within Columbia Township.

An interest in pursuing a more community-oriented environment was expressed, where Columbia Township would become more "neighborly" and a stronger spirit of community would evolve. The preservation of agricultural land and preserving the rural environment/atmosphere of Columbia Township was also promoted by the participants. Finding a means to protect the Township lakes from the impact of development, as well as overuse by boaters and visitors from other communities, was another concern expressed.

Residential Development Concerns
<p>Group One</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concern of single-family homes around lakes only in RI areas 2. Current survey stake 3. Discrimination on housing; height, building 4. Mobile home parks on main thoroughfare and must go through variance procedure 5. Mobile home area – see map 6. 90 day permits should be changed to 30 days on camper until septic permit is applied for
<p>Group Two</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobile home developments – regulated 2. Blight – ordinances – enforced 3. Better zoning to protect property values and more attractive for better housing 4. Split size – increased minimum lot size - 3-5 acres

5. Increase minimum road front – 200'-300' minimum
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zoning/blight enforcement 2. Subdivision of lands need to be looked at having larger parcels Restrict subdivision to 1) developers, 2) mobile home parks, apartments/condos

Commercial Development Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main thoroughfares 2. Gas stations should have public toilet or be available along CR 388 – 215 3. Street lights on “T” and commercial areas (need to be moved to better area)
Group Two
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phoenix Road from Grand Junction west zoned commercial (CR-388) 2. CR-215 from Grand Junction south to Bend 3. Spot zoned commercial – doesn’t go along with future zoning to be changed to appropriate zoning
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zoning restrictions enforced (49th Auto Repair across from 14th Avenue) 2. Blight enforced 3. Improve/develop area around Township Hall i.e. concentrate – basketball court, pavilion, etc. 4. Grills made available to public 5. Maybe access from Kal-Haven Trail to Park

Industrial Development Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main thoroughfares 388-215
Group Two
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See no need for an industrial zoned area
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zoning restrictions enforced – do not want 2. Blight problem addressed/enforced

Group One
1. Aerial spraying on lakes
Group Two
1. Tax incentives to keep farms intact 2. Zoning to protect farms from being split-up
Group Three
1. Zoning restrictions enforced – do not want 2. Blight enforced

Public Land Concerns
Group One
1. Silver Lake = no acquisitions for new land 2. We want to know what areas are public lands – county, state, federal – all in Columbia Township
Group Two
1.
Group Three
1. Need to show Kal-Haven Trail on Township Map 2. North Lake Park – why?? Is it public or S/B discussed under next section – keep as wildlife preserve

Open Space/Forested Land Concerns
Group One
1. Turkey population 2. No more accesses on lakes
Group Two
1. Public – donated to or buy acreage to set aside for
Group Three
1. Designate more lands for wildlife

Transportation/Roadway Network Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More and better signage at corners 2. 25 mph on roadway slow down to Breedsville 3. More signs – 45 mph
Group Two
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better ‘road side’ maintenance – that would look better instead of spraying or brush hogging large trees - leaving mess
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance on Silver Lake Road (gravel) between Beauty Ln to pavement (south). Gravel and water drains into lake 4. Railroad grade crossing bad after 1 year 5. Road (215) into Breedsville bad shape after 1 year 6. Keep roadside as natural 7. Eliminate spray for roadside cleanup – weeds – have mowing and cutting replace pesticides

Environmental Issues/Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aerial spraying and lake spraying 2. Clean up of tree trimming – who is in charge
Group Two
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mining – controlled – protect roads – truck’s size 2. Blight controlled 3. Disposal of hazardous waste 4. Landfills restricted 5. Septic waste - controlled disposal - around lakes higher
Group Three

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crop dusting – spraying S/B more closely examined by DNR 2. People dumping garbage on roadway – any method to pickup 3. Recycle S/B addressed 4. Free dump day – more than once –result great 5. S/B – ¾ times during summer |
|---|

Specific Land Use Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recycling center at dump site 2. New utility 3. Blight!
Group Two
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not want a public access on Silver Lake because of parking, excess number of boats and jet skis and traffic on the lake

Other Comments or Concerns
Group One
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Web page for out-of-towners
Group Two
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.
Group Three
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blight, Blight, Blight!

Black River Watershed Stakeholder Concerns

The watershed-wide stakeholder and public participation meetings held in 2004-2005 identified the following desired uses for the Black River Watershed:

- **Maintain the water supply for agricultural uses (cropland and livestock watering)**
- **Maintain the water supply for industrial uses (processing)**
- **Improve and maintain warm and cold water fishery**

- **Improve and maintain habitat for other indigenous aquatic life**
- **Improve partial body contact (water quality standards for water skiing, canoeing and wading)**
- **Improve total body contact (water quality standards for swimming)**
- **Improve recreational infrastructure along the river**
 - **Signage along the river, access sites, remove log jams in portions for canoeing, canoe stops with sanitary facilities and picnic areas, remove litter and trash along the banks**
 - **Establish trail/boardwalk along river in Bangor**
- **Maintain and protect wildlife habitat, specifically Great Blue Heron population near Breedsville**
- **Increase awareness and stewardship ethic in the watershed**
 - **Enhance public involvement (i.e. “Friends of the Black River”)**

It must be kept in mind that these sessions involved public participation from all fourteen townships, cities and villages within the three branches of the Black River. The following table lists the stakeholder concerns identified through a series of watershed-wide public meetings, interviews and other forms of public participation.

Stakeholder Concerns: Black River Watershed	
Nutrients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farms improperly spreading manure • Farms with inadequate stream buffers • Runoff from agricultural land • Inadequate on-site septic systems • Residential landscaping • Overpopulation of Canadian Geese in Allegan State Game Area • Waterfowl activity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive algae blooms • Lake weed growth
Aquatic Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake weed growth impacting fish habitat • Fish habitat lacking or degraded • Dams and other barriers for fish runs • Pollution impact on fishery • Exotic plants invading lakes and streams • Largemouth Bass virus impact on bass and perch
General Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overpopulation of Canadian Geese • Exotic fauna such as zebra mussels and rusty crayfish • Introduction of non-native species • Reduction of biological diversity • Loss of wildlife habitat
Development Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland protection needed • Lack of coordination between local governments and non-governmental economic development promoters • Coordination of zoning regulations, incentives, etc. are needed for watershed protection • Lack of planning and zoning communication/coordination • Headwater protection • Areas of the watershed are in need of economic development • Development needs to occur with river protection • Region needs to capitalize on the amenity provided by the river for recreation and tourism • River front sites are available to residential or commercial development • Impermeable surfaces and channelized waterways result in a pulse pattern of runoff and flow rather than an even runoff sustained over a longer period of time
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of canoeing opportunities • Fisheries on the river are degraded
Sedimentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in sedimentation from short-sighted land-use practices • Sediment from road run-off • Sediment from the Kal-Haven Trail • Improper drain maintenance procedures
Chemical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of cyanide from the former Breedsville tannery

Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial run-off and dumping resulting in PCBs, cyanide and other toxins in the water and sediments • Petroleum pollution from outboard motors and personal watercraft • Road Commission using herbicides near/over water and culverts
Water Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River and lakes suffer from low water levels • Wells and pumping diminish the surface aquifers
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garbage/debris entering the river from dumping, littering and run-off

Summary of the 2009 Farmland Preservation Information Session

In December 2008, the Township mailed about 240 postcard surveys to all property owners with more than 20 acres of land in the Township. The postcard asked if the property owner would be interested in farmland preservation. There were 51 cards returned in response (21%). Of those, the majority expressed an interest in farmland preservation.

The Township Planning Commission invited all respondents to a public meeting on March 16, 2009, to determine the amount and degree of interest in the county’s farmland preservation program. About 12 persons attended with and taking an active part in the discussion. All but one of the participants expressed interest in the county program but no one was ready to apply at this point in time. The consensus was that the opportunity should be made available for anyone who might want to apply in the future.

Grand Junction Area Commercial Re-Zoning Hearing – June 2009.

Residential property owners within the existing Grand Junction residential zones acknowledged that there is a need for rezoning to

commercial but objected to blanket rezoning. The primary issue centered around problems experienced with the sale of residential use property that has been zoned commercial. Even though the non-conforming use sections of the zoning text are very liberal as to the reconstruction of non-conforming use structures lending institutions have become very reluctant to grant loans in such situations. The result is a lowering of property values due to a perception of uncertainty and/or increased regulation.

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Updated: June 2009

Vision Statement

A Vision Statement identifies the overall goal of the Master Plan by establishing Columbia Township's preferred future. While general in nature, the Vision Statement provides an essential foundation upon which Goals and Objectives can be established.

Columbia Township values its rural, agricultural environment. Therefore, it is the intent of this Master Plan to, wherever possible, preserve both Columbia Township's natural features and agricultural activities. The preservation of farmland, wetlands and open space will be the underlying community issues upon which future development and community planning decisions will be based, therefore ensuring a continued rural quality of life for Columbia Township residents into the future. Furthermore, the Township will strive to provide a quality living environment for all of its residents, supporting fair and equitable housing regulations, while not impeding upon the rights of its current and future residents. Underlying all land use planning actions, Columbia Township commits itself to promote community pride and upholding values of its landowners.



**property
Township**

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1

Columbia Township will work to preserve its rural character and open space.

Objectives

- Designate areas for residential and commercial development along currently "built-up" areas and along Phoenix Road and adjacent to the hamlets of Grand Junction and Breedsville. Tie these designated areas with regulations reducing conventional plat and land division development using land use management techniques that will promote better design and concentrated development (such as cluster development), to help aid in the preservation of farmland, wetlands, woodlands and open space.

- Identify areas for residential development in non-prime farmland areas and other valued rural open space areas.
- Preserve large parcels in areas of prime farmland.
- Encourage concentrated commercial development in Grand Junction to complement existing business activity and discourage scattered, sprawling strip development throughout the Township.
- Promote the establishment of conservation easements in appropriately identified areas whenever possible and financially feasible.
- Work with existing property owners and community developers to inform them of the value of preservation and enhancement of open space in site design and construction of residential, commercial and/or industrial developments.

Goal #2

Columbia Township will work to preserve the area's valued farmland.

Objectives

- Inventory existing farmland areas, both active and inactive, to promote as potential preservation/open space areas.
- Encourage farmers to participate in existing farmland preservation programs, especially programs that help retain large parcels of land for agricultural production.
- Identify and designate areas suitable for residential, commercial and industrial development where such development has already occurred.
- Utilize natural vegetation buffers separating active farmland from other activities on adjacent parcels.

Goal #3

Promote, develop and maintain a safe and efficient roadway network.

Objectives

- Work with the Van Buren County Road Commission to identify existing and growth related weaknesses on County-maintained facilities.
- Correct poorly marked intersections and blind spots in Columbia Township using appropriate signage ("Stop Ahead", "Cross Traffic does not Stop", etc.).
- Work with the Michigan Department of Transportation to identify existing and growth related weaknesses on State-maintained facilities.
- Develop specific regulations for private roads to ensure proper signage, as well as meet appropriate construction and maintenance standards.
- Work to provide better lighting at key Township intersections, identified by the Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

Goal #4

Columbia Township will continue to work with the State of Michigan's Bureau of Construction Codes to enforce what is required and/or applicable. Furthermore, Columbia Township will continue to seek out effective and cost-efficient means to enforce community zoning ordinances.

Objectives

- The Township will adequately enforce established building and zoning codes.
- The Township staff will work with property owners to encourage and enforce compliance with building and zoning codes.
- The Township will update the zoning ordinance to support the findings of the comprehensive plan.
- The Township will regularly review the existing ordinances to ensure they meet the community's needs.

Goal #5

Columbia Township will **encourage** commercial and industrial development to concentrate, in clustered locations to preserve an over-all rural, agricultural environment to live and work.

Objectives

- The Township will identify specific areas suitable for commercial and industrial development, especially adjacent to existing related development and utilizing existing infrastructure.
- The Township will encourage commercial development in planned, concentrated clusters. Commercial development will provide shared, small parking facilities with adjacent existing businesses whenever possible to minimize an urbanized, "asphalt jungle" community environment.
- **The Township will amend the zoning ordinance to allow commercial/residential mixed-uses within the Grand Junction area with the added objectives of providing for a 'walkable' community, encouraging re-use of existing buildings, preserving community character and reducing public infrastructure and services costs.**
- The Township will identify and address the impact of commercial and industrial development upon its environment and overall rural character. The intent will be to ensure that the impact of commercial and industrial development will not be at the expense of Columbia Township's residents, environment and tax base.
- **The Township will allow small scale commercial businesses to develop along C.R. 388 west of 53rd street, in the Grand Junction area in order to provide opportunities for entrepreneurship along this corridor.**

Goal #6

Columbia Township will continue to work with existing agencies to provide adequate public services and community facilities.

Objectives

- Utilize, whenever possible, appropriate technological tools and training to improve the operational efficiency of Township operations.
- Continue cooperation/communication between Columbia Township and both the Van Buren County Sheriff's office and the Michigan State Police.
- Continue cooperation/communication between Columbia Township and participating fire departments and ambulance services.
- Promote better communications and exchange ideas with neighboring units of government.

Goal #7

Columbia Township will emphasize in its planning efforts the special, valued aspects of the Township's natural areas, including its many lakes, streams, rivers and woodlots throughout the Township.

Objectives

- Identify areas along Township lakes, streams, rivers and woodlots to set aside for future community use or preservation.
- Preserve surface water quality by establishing appropriate buffers and land uses near the Township's waterways.
- Seek community input for all land use and recreational planning and development.

Goal #8

In order to preserve the historic character of the Grand Junction community, Columbia Township will provide for mixed uses commercial/residential and industrial/commercial in the village.

Objectives

- To encourage the continuation of a walkable community
- To preserve the historic character of the community
- To encourage re-use of existing buildings
- To reduce public infrastructure costs

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Updated: June 2009



Introduction

Upon designating an overall vision and specific community goals and objectives, a future land use plan and map can be developed to better implement and envision the before-mentioned Township vision, goals and objectives.

The intent of this section will be to review the effects of past land use trends common to rural communities and present proposed future land use in various land use categories.

Past Land Use Trends - An Overview

Before the future land use plan is presented, the effects of past land use trends common to rural communities will be reviewed.

Land use practices within Columbia Township are reflective of land use practices found in rural communities throughout Michigan and the United States. For example, with 14 lakes within its borders, Columbia Township has an abundance of flag lots. Flag lots are interior lots with either a narrow easement lane road access or no road frontage but having a guaranteed access via a permanent right-of-way across an adjoining parcel. Flag lots often cause difficulty due to an abundance of curb cuts along rural roadways (with high speeds and blind-spots that are often associated with such roadways), property use disputes between adjacent property owners, access issues for emergency service vehicles and non-conforming setback issues related to a community's zoning code.

The placement of homes fronting rural Columbia Township roads is another typical rural land use practice. Locating homes on sub-parceled agricultural or open space land fronting rural roadways is an inefficient method of residential development. This method depletes usable agricultural property, increases driveway/roadway traffic, and builds residential "walls" around agricultural property, which impacts farm equipment ingress/egress. Furthermore, this form of residential development often leads to difficult residential vs. agricultural land use complaints, such as complaints concerning chemical use, organic smells, and noise of farm equipment. A proven solution to this form of residential development is the promotion of cluster development, which will be explained later in this section.

Columbia Township's Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan for Columbia Township is tied to issues raised from community input as well as the vision statement and specific community goals and objectives as noted in Section 6. The underlying objective of the future land use plan will be to preserve the overall rural, agricultural and water resources of Columbia Township.

It is essential to note that any area designated on the future land use map for a specific land use DOES NOT guarantee such land use will actually occur in the future. Instead, the designation is a proposed future use to further advance the land use planning vision, goals and objectives of Columbia Township. Beyond applying specific public or nonprofit land use controls, or the outright purchase of land, Columbia Township is limited in **influencing** the future development of private property.

Agricultural Land Use

The proposed agricultural lands were selected based upon existing land practices and the desire to preserve large agricultural property and open space. Given this perspective, the preservation of large agricultural areas in Columbia Township is best accomplished by considering the application of specific zoning concepts when updating the Township's existing zoning code to this Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Zoning concepts to consider include:

Agricultural Buffer Zone: A buffer, or transition, zone created between agricultural land and adjacent unrelated development (residential, commercial, and industrial). The buffer zone protects existing agricultural operations from problems and complaints generated by neighboring residential, commercial and/or industrial land uses.

Point/Numerical Zoning: Zoning which establishes objective standards in which a proposed lot must meet for development approval. The standards are defined by a point system, and the proposed lot must accumulate a minimum number of points for development to occur. Standards may include setback requirements, existing density of development considerations, availability of public utilities, police/fire protection, trip generation, etc.

Exclusive Farmland Zoning: Zoning in which on-farm residents are not allowed and properties may be split into larger parcels of at least 40 acres or more.

Quarter-Quarter Zoning: Allows for one non-farm residential dwelling for each 40 acres of land.

Sliding Scale Zoning: Better associates parcel size to development of residential units. The number of allowable non-farm residences increases as the size of the parent parcel increases. However, proportionally fewer dwellings are allowed the larger the parent parcel. For example, one dwelling may be allowed for the first 10 acres, another dwelling for the next 20 acres, a third dwelling for the next 30 acres.

Large-Lot Zoning: This is not a farmland preservation tool, but rather a rural character preservation technique. Minimum lot size can be 5 to 20 acres and requires a minimum of 330 feet of road frontage. It does not prevent the breakup of farms but does maintain a rural character by keeping development to a minimum.

Plat/Condominium Subdivision Restrictions in Agricultural Districts: Prohibits more subdivision lots than could be obtained as divisions exempt from the state Land Division Act. Does not prohibit plats or condominiums, but limits the total number of divisions no matter what method is used to divide land.

Often, communities apply a combination of these zoning concepts to address the preservation of agricultural land. Regardless of the type implemented, effective zoning codes and administration can be a valuable instrument in Columbia Township's goal of preserving agricultural land, open space and the community's rural character, while ensuring landowner rights concerning resale value and development.

There are a number of non-zoning strategies for farmland preservation. These include:

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): Van Buren County Farmland Preservation Program: There are five (5) factors supporting participation by Columbia Township in the Van Buren County Farmland Preservation Program. First, there are areas of prime agricultural soils, some of which are also prime development soils. Second, there is a thriving agricultural sector in the Township that has a productive capacity suited for the production of feed, food and fiber and has a greater potential for long-term agricultural production. Thirdly, the land compliments other farmland protection efforts of Van Buren County, specifically land enrolled in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (P.A. 116 of 1974). Fourth, there are areas of the Township where property owners, due to circumstances beyond their control, cannot achieve the full development potential due to soil conditions where septic systems cannot or should not be located and/or where wells cannot reach water. These lands in particular often are or have the potential to be productive agricultural lands. Fifth, all lands with water bodies including streams and county drains are under increasing pressure as residential development sites.

Public Act 116 of 1974: An older tool is P.A. 116 of 1974, the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, which establishes processes both temporary and permanent limitations on development. The statute provides for formal renewable agreements to keep farmland and open space out of development for periods of time from 10-90 years. Farmland may continue to be farmed during the agreement period. Open space land is not obligated to be open to access by the general public. In exchange, the landowner is

granted tax deferments and tax exemptions. This process is initiated by applications from landowners at the township level. Townships notify the appropriate planning and soil conservation agencies for comment and must approve the request before it is advanced to the Department of Natural Resources for a transfer of a “development rights easement” to the public.

Development rights may also be permanently transferred. P.A. 116 created a fund for buying development rights without direct purchase of the land using money recovered from the payback of tax credits when farmland agreements expire or are terminated. This acquisition of development rights by the State has not been used extensively and it is not anticipated that large areas of Columbia Township will be deemed sufficiently “unique or critical” to be preserved in this way in the near future.

Transfer of Development Rights: Under this type of program, the Township could allow developers to purchase development rights from the owners of property in an area targeted for preservation and then use those rights on different parcels in another part of the Township where growth can be encouraged. No Township funds would be involved, however, the zoning ordinance could provide for documentation of the use of private funds as match for the County program. The purchase would remain private transaction between property owners that the Township would allow, with some minimal rules for fair play and record keeping, under the zoning ordinance. This tool has potential uses in preserving not only farmland, but also the function of the C.R. 388 and C.R. 384 corridors as well as the flood plains of the Black River and its tributary streams.

As a matter of policy Columbia Township has chosen not to utilize exclusive agricultural zoning, large-lot zoning, or a township PDR and/or TDR program. The Township supports applications for P.A. 116 agreements, and in the Columbia Township Zoning Ordinance Article IV General Provisions, Section 4.14 Planned Unit Development, could provide for conservation easements, plat dedications, deed restrictions, or covenants to preserved open space. These tools could be provided for in order to encourage preservation of both farmland and land in an undeveloped state by providing development incentives to land owners/ developers. Other incentives that these tools could allow for include bonus divisions and bonus lot sizes. The main benefit to the developer would be to allow possibly higher density. Additional bonuses could include zero lot line setbacks or reductions in dimensional or infrastructure requirements.

The Township will allow participation in the Van Buren County Farmland Preservation program provided that the property owner meets or exceeds all of the County’s requirements and the property is in conformance with the Columbia Township Master Plan. Part of the County’s requirement includes support from the Township. The Township has determined that in order to support applications to the Van Buren County Farmland Preservation program the applicant’s property must:

- 1 Be located within the portion of the Township’s future land use map designated for Farmland Preservation,
- 2 Have at least 51% of the land in active agricultural use,
- 3 Be at least 20 acres in size,
- 4 Have mineral rights owned by the landowner, and
- 5 Have the 25% match required by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, which can be accomplished by:
 - a. private payment,
 - b. grant(s),
 - c. reduced payment received by the landowner, or
 - d. if the people of the Township approve a tax levy, then by that means.

In determining eligibility for the County Farmland Preservation Program, the scoring of all applications and scoring criteria are established by the County without involvement by the Township.

Residential Land Use

The development of residential land within Columbia Township will create many related issues in the future. For example, more residential property will require additional community services, such as fire and police. Also, additional residential property around lakes will further impact the introduction of chemicals, sewage and boater noise upon Township waterways. Most of all, additional residential development could further erode the areas overall rural environment, agricultural land and open space.

Table 7-1 presents population projections for Columbia Township over the next 20 years. The estimates presented use a methodology blending constant proportion, the Michigan Department of Management and Budget growth rate and insight/input from the Columbia Township Planning Commission. Clearly, population projections are not always accurate. However, they do provide some guidance on the potential future needs of Columbia Township.

TABLE 7-1 - POPULATION PROJECTION TRENDS TO YEAR 2020

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	CHANGE 2000- 2020	% CHANGE 2000- 2020
Columbia Twp.	2,248	2,552	2,714	2,885	3,056	342	12.6%
Van Buren Co.	66,814	70,060	76,263	82,440	88,617	12,354	16.2%

SOURCE: Office of the State Demographer, Michigan Dept. of Management and Budget; U.S. Census, 2000; Gove Associates Inc., 2001

Viewing the projections presented in Table 7-1 it is estimated that 342 additional residents will reside in Columbia Township by 2020. The estimated 2020 population of 3,056 represents a 12.6 percent increase in Township residents from the year 2000.

Assuming an average household size of 2.5 persons per housing unit, the 342 new residents by 2020 will create a need for 137 additional housing units. Given the desirable environment and geographical location of Columbia Township, the addition of 137 housing units over a 20-year timeframe could be low. Therefore, this Plan will consider the measure of 137 units as a minimum numerical basis upon which to determine the location and type of residential housing. Furthermore, any identified areas on the Future Land Use map, especially regarding residential housing, will require sensitivity to the existing rural, agricultural environment of Columbia Township. Therefore, the Township has determined that consideration of more progressive, proactive residential land use development tools should be considered. Addressing the demand for future residential development requires;

1. Identification of the number and size of parcels required to accommodate expected growth.
2. Identification of appropriate parcel locations and general acreage to specifically accommodate expected growth.

Based upon community input, public discussion and review of existing land use practices within Columbia Township, residential development priorities were identified as follows:

1. Single-family housing around lakes should be at a low density.
2. Mobile home parks/manufactured housing should be located in designated development areas along main thoroughfares and be under strict site planning procedures.
3. Any development of residential housing should have a minimal impact upon existing farmland, open space and natural areas.

The average single-family residential lot size in Columbia Township is 1.67 acres (72,745 square feet), with residential lot sizes ranging from over 15 acres in rural areas to .07 acres (3,049 square feet) adjacent to lakes. Mobile home residential lot size on average is 1.48 acres (64,469 square feet), and have a range in lot sizes from over 10 acres to .11 acres (4,792 square feet).

Utilizing the before mentioned identified priorities and existing zoning ordinance regulations, and applying them to the proposed future land use map, indicates the following:

- Additional areas designated as Single-Family Residential will be provided on 374 acres in Sections 4, 5, 9, 20, 28, 29 and 33.
- Additional areas designated as Multiple-Family Residential will be provided on 44 acres in Sections 4 and 28.
- Additional areas designated as Mobile Home Residential will be provided on 55 acres in Sections 4 and 28.

In order to provide for reasonable options for developers and landowners who choose to engage in residential development, this Plan has allocated additional acreage in the Township exceeding the minimum amount required for such development. While there is no desire by Columbia Township to actually build upon all the designated areas over the next 20 years, the Township intends to provide a large and diversified selection of areas upon which future residential development can be located.

Clustered housing development is a valuable residential planning tool, providing an attractive alternative to traditional, sprawling, linear and land-consuming "tract" residential development. Clustered development promotes the preservation of large areas of open space while still providing the landowner financially valuable developmental rights. Essentially, residential development is allowed within a smaller area of the larger undeveloped or agricultural parcel.

Promoting higher density development is more cost-efficient for developers, landowners and taxpayers, and is more environmentally sensitive than rural large lot residential zoning or traditional subdivision development, both of which allocate the entire parcel to private development and easements for streets and related infrastructure. In contrast, cluster developments allow the same number of housing units as a traditional subdivision by allowing a decreased lot size; the remaining undeveloped area of the parcel creates a permanent natural/open/recreational/agricultural space, thereby preserving the overall rural character of the community.

The underlying principles when reviewing any future residential development in Columbia Township should be based upon identified impact criteria, as defined within the Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives found in Section 6. Specifically, criteria should include:

- Sustainability of residential development over time.
- Develop residential housing adjacent to or in existing "built-up" areas and upon non-prime farmland areas, avoiding development upon larger farmland, wetlands and large open space areas.

- Impact of residential development upon Columbia Township's infrastructure, tax base, rural environment and Township services.
- Project affordability in relationship to the overall housing market for the area.
- Feasibility of residential development: the relationship of the parcel designated for development to adjacent parcels current and future land use classifications.
- Public input to the proposed residential development.
- Project access to, and impact upon, existing primary roads.

Future land use for residential development is explained in detail below:

Within the Single-Family Residential the Land Use Map identifies approximately 374 acres for future development, increasing the total land use area dedicated to Single-Family Residential from 4.6 percent in 2001 to 6.3 percent. These areas reflect an interest in preserving the Columbia's overall rural character by being located near the hamlets of Breedsville and Grand Junction, along major Township roadways. Specifically, new Future Land Use Single-Family Residential sites have been placed in Sections 4, 5 and 9 adjacent to Grand Junction, Sections 20, 28, 29 and 33 adjacent to Breedsville. **The Township will allow home-based businesses as a special use within ¼ mile of C.R. 388, 384 and 215. The intent is to provide for start-up entrepreneurship and to allow the market to determine appropriate locations for neighborhood business districts to develop while at the same time protecting residential uses in the vicinity.**

Multiple-Family Residential, only 7 total acres within the entire Township in 2001, will increase by 44 acres (or 0.2 percent of the total Columbia Township area). Multiple-Family Residential may reflect a variety of future residential developments within Columbia Township. Apartments, duplex housing, senior citizen housing, homes with accessory, adjacent living quarters (so-called "Granny Flats") and types of clustered housing developments could be classified under Multiple-Family Residential. Within Columbia Township, Multiple-Family Residential sites have been added in Section 4 adjacent to Grand Junction and Section 28, immediately east of Breedsville.

Mobile Home Residential has been identified as a viable housing option. However, the location and development of Mobile/Manufactured housing is best done in a clustered, concentrated planning approach, to better facilitate the special development needs and impacts such residential housing places upon Columbia Township. Future Mobile Home Residential housing sites within Columbia Township have been identified in Section 10 near Grand Junction and

Sections 28 and 29 adjacent to Breedsville, increasing Mobile Home Residential dedicated land by 55 acres.

Commercial/Retail Land Use

As of August 2001, commercial land use in Columbia Township consisted of 29 designated acres. **In 2009, the 2020 Plan was amended to propose an increase of 215 acres providing for Commercial/Retail Land Use**, representing a **162 percent increase** over 2001 commercial/retail land available.

Commercial/retail land use will account for **1.2 percent** of the total land area of Columbia Township by 2020, versus only 0.1 percent of the total Township land area in 2001. Specifically, new Commercial/Retail Land Use will be located in **Sections 4, 5, and 6 along and 300 feet either side of CR 388 and in Section 20-21, at the CR 384/CR 215 intersection**. Both areas will complement existing commercial/ retail land use, with Section 20-21, CR 284/CR 215 providing a logical, centralized area for Columbia Township residents to be served by future commercial/retail businesses.

To the west of Grand Junction, commercial re-zoning will start at the CR 681 intersection. Re-zoning to commercial along this stretch of roadway should be adjacent to and expand upon existing commercial zoning spreading out from the two existing starting points (Grand Junction and the CR 681 intersection with CR 388). Non-sequential or “Leap-frog” commercial re-zoning should not be allowed in this area in order to promote the integrity of the commercial uses and avoid isolated commercial uses that fail to promote local business.

Mixed Use

Within the Grand Junction area, the zoning ordinance will provide for attached residential uses. That is, new dwelling units will be allowed above and attached to the rear of commercial uses within the same structure. Existing dwellings will be allowed to continue as permitted uses and may be altered to include commercial uses. These provisions are included both to encourage ‘walkable’ communities and ease the costs of start-up small-scale commercial businesses. In order to avoid adverse effects upon existing residential owners rezoned to commercial, non-sequential rezoning, commonly termed “leap-frogging” will be permitted as a matter of policy within the Grand Junction ‘Mixed Use’ planning area.

Industrial Land Use

As of August 2001, industrial land use in Columbia Township consisted of only 36 acres. An additional 73 acres are provided in the Township's future land use, representing an increase of 197 percent over 2001, but just 0.5 percent of the

overall land use area of Columbia Township. The additional industrial land use area is located directly south of North American Blueberry's facility in Section 8, Grand Junction, to better address infrastructure needs associated with industrial development.

Agriculture, Open Space, Vacant Land Use

Agriculture, Open Space, Vacant land use will decline by only 3.0 percent as proposed future land use changes are implemented over the next 20 years. If implemented, this would be a substantially lower decline in agricultural/open space acreage than what occurred between 1992 and 1997 (the most recent Census agricultural land use data). According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Van Buren County saw a decline of 14.2 percent (or 29,421 acres) of farmland between 1992 and 1997, or 11.2 percent more agricultural land lost than what is proposed within the 2020 Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Recreation and Conservation/Preserve Land Use

The Columbia Township future land use plans for Recreation Land Use will involve an increase of this important community land use by 12 acres, representing an increase of 150 percent over current land dedicated to recreational use. Conservation/Preservation Land Use will increase by 40 acres to a total of 286 acres, representing approximately 1.3 percent of the total Township land use by 2020. The 40 acres dedicated for Conservation/Preservation use is located in Section 32, in the southwestern corner of Breedsville. The area is mainly a wooded and floodplain area, and is adjacent to the Black River Nature Sanctuary, and would be a beneficial buffer between Breedsville and the valuable farmland immediately south of Breedsville.

Future Land Use Distribution

Table 7-2 presents the statistical breakdown concerning land uses associated with the accompanying Future Land Use Map.

TABLE 7-2 - PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE DISTRIBUTION IN COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

Land Use Type	Land Use Distribution	
	Acres	Percentage
Residential, Single Family	1,385	6.3
Residential, Multiple Family	51	0.2
Residential, Mobile Home	372	1.7
Agriculture, Open Space, Vacant	18,288	83.7
Commercial/Retail	250	1.3
Industrial/Manufacturing	109	0.5
Public	81	0.4
Quasi-Public	23	0.1

Recreation	42	0.2
Conservation/Preserve Area	286	1.3
Lakes	927	4.2
TOTAL	21,827	100.0

SOURCE: Gove Associates, Inc. 2001; SWMC, 2008; MTS-Allegan, 2009

In this plan are discussions of sensitive and valuable land and resources in Columbia Township, including prime agricultural soils, wetlands, surface water, wood lots and potential areas of contamination. Maps illustrating these areas are included. These are intended to form a basis for discussion and decisions regarding the suitability of land for particular uses and the designation of lands best left open as open space.

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Implementation

The greatest challenge for Columbia Township will be the implementation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Maps, tables and text regarding both existing and proposed future land use within Columbia Township have been presented, but such information is irrelevant without ACTION. Community cooperation and commitment to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan's Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives are vital ingredients to truly creating a successful, vibrant and rewarding future within Columbia Township.

This section will highlight the implementation steps that Township citizens, leaders, business owners and interested community groups can take to support the identified Goals and Objectives of the Columbia Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Specifically, the Implementation section will present specific programs, tools and actions that can help the Township move towards a sustainable rural, agricultural community in the years to come.

Partners in Implementation

A partnership of people and institutions provide the essential fuel to propel any land use strategy forward. Cooperation between individuals, organizations and governmental agencies are in the best interest of Columbia Township as it strives to preserve and enhance its rural character, natural environment and agricultural heritage.

➤ **Individuals:**

- An informed citizen regarding land use issues can be an asset as Columbia Township moves forward regarding the implementation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Utilize local newsletters and public meetings to advance the benefits of pro-active land use planning. Present local, regional and state-wide community and environmental issues whenever possible.

- Support an open, but civil dialog regarding land use planning. Welcome individual residents concerns, but also seek Township resident solutions when any issue of concern is raised. Strive to weigh individual and community interest equally when molding solutions to Township land use issues.

➤ **Local Government, Policymakers and Intergovernmental Cooperation:**

- Utilize the Comprehensive Land Use Plan diligently in the coming years. Encourage resident participation in the planning process on an ongoing basis.

- Work with neighboring township governments and Van Buren County to support related regional and sub-regional issues, such as environmental protection of land and water resources, transportation planning and socio-economic programs.
- Promote the land use planning and planning-related education of residents and community leaders. State statutes, legal case studies and innovative land use planning tools should be reviewed to expand the knowledge and abilities of all community leaders, policymakers and interested citizens.
- **State and Federal Governmental Cooperation:**
 - Seek, support and pursue fiscal and tax policies which encourage sustainable land development goals and regional land preservation initiatives. For example, support Michigan legislation providing new farmland and open space preservation programs, such as Transfer of Development Rights.
 - Consider and, where deemed viable, support cooperative Township-State-Federal land use planning.
 - Work with local state and federal representatives to support fair and equitable land use preservation and agricultural farming programs.
- **Businesses:**
 - Locate and expand commercial development in areas that are accessible to primary county roads and existing commercial businesses.
 - Retrofit existing commercial facilities to facilitate new business opportunities, especially any retrofit effort within the hamlets of Breedsville and Grand Junction.
 - Support the conservation of infrastructure and surrounding natural environment when handling any commercial or industrial site plan designs. Such conservation will save Columbia Township and Van Buren County taxpayers public dollars regarding wasteful lost of rural land and underutilization of existing roadways, public utilities, public safety services (fire, police, ambulance) and related infrastructure.
- **Financial Institutions:**

- Support financing instruments which support land preservation (preservation trusts, location-efficient mortgages), energy-efficiency, public-private projects and agriculture.
- **Developers and Builders:**
 - Encourage development in or near existing higher-density residential areas and/or major roadway intersections.
 - Require developers and builders to work with the Township on the design and location of development projects.
 - Impose impact fees to cover local taxpayer cost of development upon Columbia Township's infrastructure and environment.
- **Advocacy and Service Organizations:**
 - Encourage coalitions with area businesses, banks and developers to support agricultural and open space preservation.
 - Support innovative projects: non-profit land preservation, cooperative and worker-involved agricultural development/ industries.

Implementation Schedule

The implementation schedule ties the Objectives of each of the Goals with the participants responsible for completing the actions. While the schedule is not comprehensive, it does highlight primary actions needed to accomplish the Plan's overall Goals. It is the responsibility of the Township to ensure Objectives are completed and Goals are met regarding this Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The implementation schedule lists participants that include local and state agencies or groups. Often, an action will require several participants in order to accomplish many tasks. The timing of implementation actions is broken down into three categories: Short-range/On-going Actions (one to three years), Medium-range Actions (three to 10 years) or Long-range Actions (10 years or more). Actions often take a considerable length of time to complete, so the schedule may identify two or more time periods for certain Actions. It also identifies timing and potential funding sources for each action.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE:

Growth Management

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
1	1	Designate areas for residential development near Breedsville & Grand Junction	1-10 years	General revenue
2	1	Adopt flexible zoning standards for mixed uses	1-3 years	General revenue
3	1	Planning & Zoning boards to attend educational training courses	1-3 years	General revenue
4	1	Adopt required ordinance, bylaws & resolutions	1-3 years	General revenue
5	1	Ensure staff levels are sufficient to meet needs	1-10 years	General revenue
6	1	Review ordinances	1-5 yrs.	General revenue

Land Use

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
6	2	Identify potential farmland preservation areas	1-3 years	County & state farmland preservation funds. Private sources.
7	2	Recommend policy changes to the Board	1-3 years	General revenue
8	2	Encourage farmers to participate in preservation	1-10	State & private sources
9	1	Minimize development on prime farmland	1-3 years	General revenue
10	1	Establish density standards	1-10 years	General revenue
11	3	Establish cluster/open space standards for PUD	10+	General revenue
12	1	Educate developers on advantages of clustering	1-10 years	General revenue
13	1	Adopt clustering standards for the zoning ordinance & subdivision regulations	1-3 years	General revenue
14	2	Plan for future community facilities	1-3 years	General revenue & possible state assistance
15	1	Designate appropriate areas for commercial & industrial development	1-10 years	General revenue
16	1	Adopt buffering standards to separate industrial uses	1-10 years	General revenue
17	1	Identify areas along the rivers to be preserved	1-10 years	General revenue & possible MDNR grants
18	2	Develop a parks plan	1-3 years	General revenue
19	2	Work with watershed & conservation groups to establish conservation goals	1-10 years	General revenue & MDNR funds

Housing

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
20	1	Provide existing home loan info to renters	1-5 years	MSHDA
21	1	Ensure rental units meet all codes	1-10 years	General revenue
22	1	Establish site standards for rental housing developments	1-3 years	General revenue
23	2	Provide infrastructure requirements for new development	1-10 years	General revenue
24	2	Provide clustering standards for PUDs	1-3 years	General revenue

Economy

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
25	1	Maintain inventory of sites available for development	1-10 years	General revenue
26	1	Work with county & region economic development	1-10 years	MEDC, foundations & others
27	1	Establish standards for Township industrial park	1-3 years	General revenue & MEDC
28	1	Identify areas suitable for commercial development	1-10 years	General revenue

Public Facilities/Utilities/Services

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
29	2	Add wellhead protection regulations to zoning ord.	1-5 years	General revenue
30	1	Identify potential recreation areas	1-3 years	General revenue
31	1	Work with Breedsville & school district to develop recreation facilities	1-3 years	General revenue, MDNR & MDEQ
32	2	Meet with schools to coordinate plans to accommodate growth	1-10 years	General revenue
33	2	Work with schools to reduce duplication of recreation services	1-5 years	General revenue
34	1	Review, update & maintain capital improvement program for the township	1-3 years	General revenue

Transportation

Item #	Priority	Project	Timing	Funding Source
35	2	Work with the Road Commission to identify weakness of township maintained facilities	1-10 years	General revenue
36	2	Work with MDOT & MDNR to identify growth related impacts on state maintained facilities	1-10 years	MDOT & ISTEPA
37	2	Work with County Road Commission to identify growth related impacts to county maintained facilities	1-10	Act 51