
Marion Township Master Plan

Marion Township, Saginaw County, Michigan

*Recommended by the
Marion Township Planning Commission
April 2015*

*Adopted by the
Marion Township Board
April 2015*

*Prepared by the
Marion Township Planning Commission*

*With the assistance of the
Saginaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission*

Marion Township Master Plan

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1-1
Chapter 2: Physical Profile of Marion Township	
A. Regional Setting	2-1
B. Land Use and Development Patterns	2-1
C. Soils	2-5
D. Water Resources	2-5
E. Transportation System	2-6
Chapter 3: Social and Economic Profile of Marion Township	
A. Population Characteristics	3-1
B. Local Economy	3-4
C. Housing	3-7
Chapter 4: Township Development Goals and Objectives	4-1
Chapter 5: General Development Plan	
A. Introduction and General Concepts	5-1
B. Major Township Land Uses	5-2
C. Future Land Use Map (Reference)	5-3
Chapter 6: Action Program	
A. Public Involvement and Education	6-1
B. Acceptance and Use of the Plan by the Township Board	6-1
C. Plan Updates	6-1
D. Annual Implementation Program	6-2
E. Update the Township Zoning Ordinance	6-2
F. Use of the Master Plan in Zoning Decisions	6-3
G. Consistency Between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance	6-3

Chapter 1 Introduction

Change is an inevitable fact of life. Communities will change over time, regardless of whether they *plan* for change or not. Marion Township is no exception – the community has changed over time and will continue to do so.

At this point, it is appropriate for Marion Township to examine present community conditions, evaluate the problems and opportunities facing the Township, and develop strategies for the future.

This document, the Marion Township Master Plan, is an attempt to quantify, assess, and respond to change. Also, the plan is both a statement and a vision concerning the Township's desire for its future growth and development. Furthermore, this Master Plan is to serve the following purposes:

- Encourage the establishment and implementation of land use and development policies that promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community's residents.
- Establish goals and policies relating to land use, development, and public services.
- Provide guidelines for the preservation and enhancement of Marion Township's character.
- Define a vision of the Township's future.
- Provide guidance to the process of reviewing land development project proposals.
- Identify positive actions that can be taken to assure that future development is consistent with the goals and policies expressed in this plan.
- Identify areas of the community that are suitable for different types of land use and development.
- Provide a basic plan consistent with the requirements of the Township Planning Act.
- Help members of the Township Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Township residents make informed decisions about how the community develops over time.
- Provide a legal foundation for the Township Zoning Ordinance.

This Master Plan has been prepared in
accordance with the requirements of

**MICHIGAN PLANNING ENABLING
ACT**

Act 33 of 2008

AN ACT to codify the laws regarding and to provide for county, township, city, and village planning; to provide for the creation, organization, powers, and duties of local planning commissions; to provide for the powers and duties of certain state and local governmental officers and agencies; to provide for the regulation and subdivision of land; and to repeal acts and parts of acts.

Chapter 2

Physical Profile of Marion Township

This portion of the Master Plan provides an overview of the physical features and natural resources that shape Marion Township.

A. Regional Setting

Marion Township (*Figure 2-1*) is a rural community located within the southwestern portion of Saginaw County.

Marion Township is bounded on the north by Lakefield Township, on the south by Chapin Township, on the east by Brant Township, and on the west by Gratiot County.

In terms of larger cities, the Township is about 30 miles from Saginaw and 50 miles from Lansing.

There are no state highways that directly serve the Township. Several paved county roads provide the main access routes to and from the Township. Ithaca and Merrill Roads are classified as county primary roads across the entire Township from east to west and north to south, respectively. Brant and Marion Roads provide additional east/west routes, and segments of these are also classified as primary roads. Other county roads provide for the

movement of traffic through and within the Township.

The Township Park provides community recreation opportunities and additionally, State land attracts visitors to the Township for hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation. The Fire Department personnel, building and equipment are also community assets.

B. Land Use and Development Patterns

Marion Township consists of 24 sections of land and covers an area of just under 15,800 acres. This is a smaller area than a “standard” Michigan township that consists of 36 sections.

Information on existing land use in the Township has been derived from the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) and from aerial photography that is maintained by Saginaw County Geographical Information System (GIS).

The major land uses found in the Township are discussed below.

Forested land makes up the largest single category, comprising about 59% of the Township. *Agricultural land* (mostly cropland) is the second largest category, comprising about 31% of the total land area. *Open land* (grass and shrub vegetation) makes up just less than 6%. *Urban areas* (developed uses, including

residential and commercial) occupy 4% of the total area. Finally, *wetlands and open water* make up only about 0.4% of the Township. According to the Michigan land cover inventory, the “wetlands” category represents about 69 acres of land that mainly consist of forested and shrub types of wetlands.

In Marion Township, the “urban” land category is represented almost exclusively by single-family homes. This includes several small groups of homes in the following locations, adjacent to major road intersections:

- Ithaca and Fenmore Roads
- Marion and Fenmore Roads
- Marion and Merrill Roads
- Brant and Steel Roads
- Burt and Merrill Roads
- Burt and Chapin Roads
- Schroeder and Chapin Roads.

Taken together, the agricultural, open land, and forested categories make up almost 96 percent of the Township. This further emphasizes the rural character of the area. The distribution of major land uses is displayed as a pie chart in *Figure 2-2*.

Public lands represent a significant acreage in the Marion Township. A large portion of the Gratiot -Saginaw State Game Area is located in Marion Township. These state lands occupy nearly 3,500 acres in the north central portion of the Township, roughly between Ithaca and Marion Roads. These lands are dedicated to resource management and outdoor

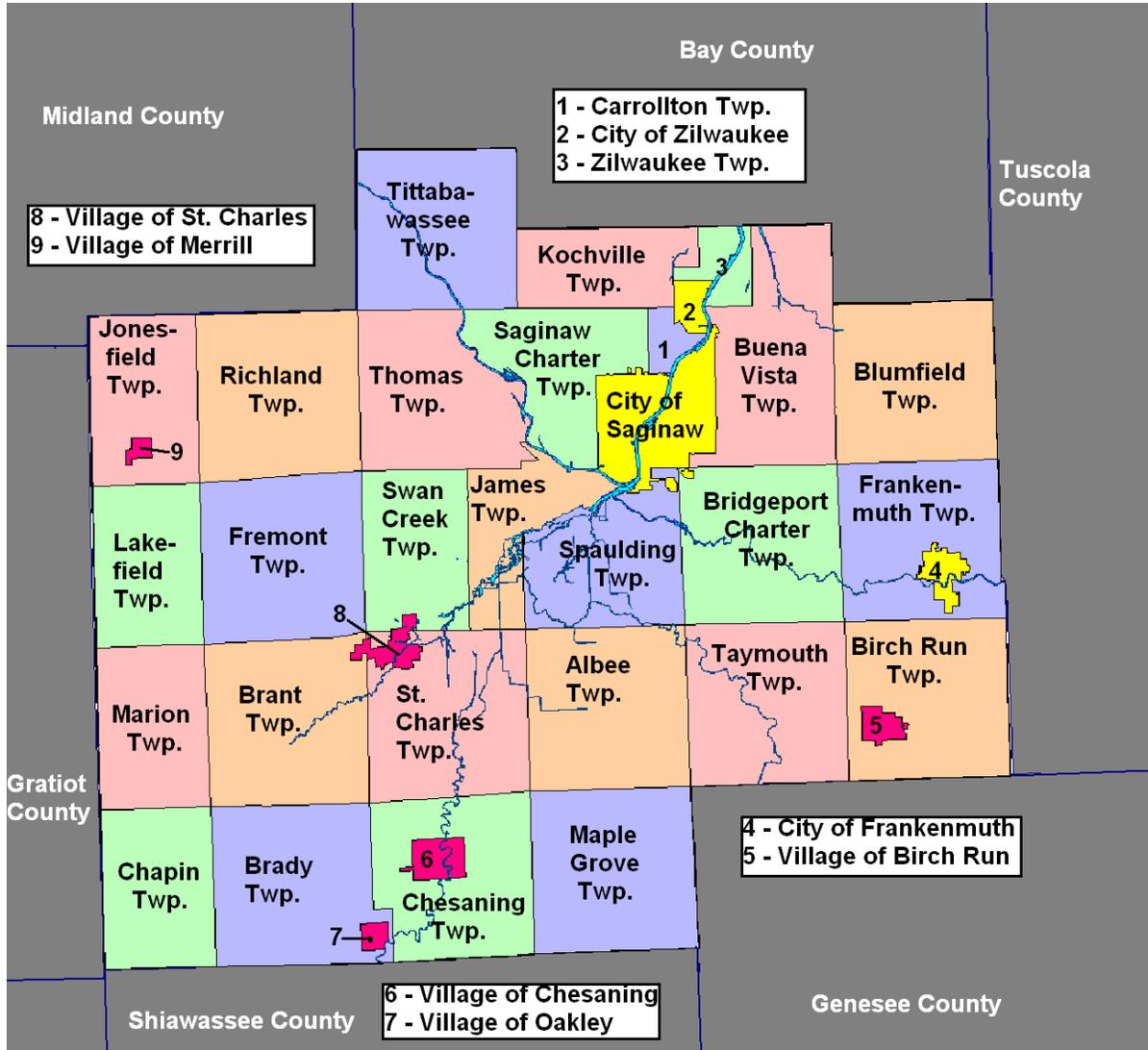
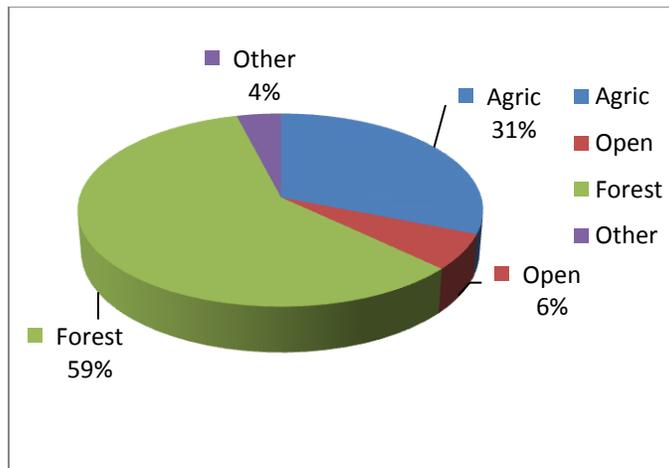


Figure 2-1: Location Map

Figure 2-2
Marion Township Land Use Distribution

Marion Township Land Use



C. Soils

According to the *Soil Survey of Saginaw County* issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the soils within the Marion Township have been classified as three major associations:

- ***Pipestone-Wixom-Belleville Association.*** This association consists of sandy soils on lake plains and water-worked till plains. Their drainage is described as poor. This association is mainly found in the northern two-thirds of the Township, from roughly Townline Road to Marion Road. The Soil Survey states that most of areas of this association are used for cropland or woodland. Wetness and poor filtering capacity pose limitations for building sites and sanitary facilities.
- ***Wixom-Capac-Parkhill Association.*** These sandy and loamy soils are found on nearly level or gently undulating terrain. They are found on water-worked till plains and other till plains. These soils tend to have poor drainage. These soils are found in mainly the southern third of the Township, from Marion Road to the south Township boundary at Gary Road. The Soil Survey

states that wetness and moderately slow permeability are the main limitations of these soils for buildings and sanitary facilities. Most of the soils within this association are fairly well suited to cultivated crops if a drainage system is provided.

- ***Parkhill-Wixom Association*** These soils are described as nearly level and gently undulating loamy and sandy soils on water-worked till plains. Drainage is described as poor. These soils occur in a relatively small area near the eastern edge of the Township, mainly in sections 13 and 24. The Soil Survey reports that this association is mostly used for cropland. The soils are poorly suited to use for building sites and sanitary facilities due to wetness and slow permeability.

D. Water Resources

Marion Township is within the Saginaw Bay Drainage Basin. The North Branch of the Bad River, as well as several streams and agricultural drains, generally drains the area toward the northeast. These smaller tributaries include Potato Creek, Little Potato Creek, and Limbocker Creek. Large bodies of surface water are not significant features in the Township.

There are no public water supply systems in the Township, and residents rely on wells for their drinking water and other water supply needs.

Freeland in the northern part of Saginaw County.

No rail lines directly serve the Township.

E. Transportation System

As mentioned earlier, Marion Township is not directly served by any state highways. Several paved county primary roads provide the main access routes to and from the Township. Brant and Ithaca Roads provide east/west access, and Merrill Road provides a major north/south route. Other county roads provide for the movement of traffic routes through and within the Township.

Ithaca Road, in particular, provides a linkage to the west through Gratiot County to US-27 at Ithaca, about 20 miles away. Merrill Road connects the Township to M-46 (Gratiot Road) about 12 miles north and to M-57 about 5 miles south.

M-46 provides additional linkages to US-27 and US-131 to the west, and to I-75 to the east in Saginaw. M-57 provides similar connections.

There are no commercial aviation facilities in the Township. The closest general aviation facility is the Chesaning Airport to the southeast. The closest commercial passenger airport is MBS International in

Chapter 3

Social and Economic Profile of Marion Township

This section of Marion Township’s Master Plan contains an overview of the social and economic factors that shape the community. The topics covered here include population growth and composition, income levels, housing, and other relevant factors.

A. Population Characteristics

The latest 2010 Census figures report that Marion Township has a population of 923 residents. This is a slight decrease of two people, or about 0.2 percent of the population, since the last official Census in 2000.

During this same period, Saginaw County also experienced a population loss of 4.9 percent. The State of Michigan’s population declined by 1 percent from 2000 through 2010.

Historical population changes from 1960 to 2010 for Marion Township and Saginaw County are summarized in Table 3-1 and Figure 3-1.

From a long-term perspective, the Township’s population grew

steadily until 1990 and has only shown a slight decline in the past decade. From 1960 to 2010, Marion Township showed a net population gain of nearly 64 percent. For comparison, the Township presently has 361 more residents than it did in 1960.

Saginaw County has also shown a net gain in population of about 4.9 percent for the 50-year period discussed here. However, in terms of more recent trends, the County population has declined by over 11,000 people since 1990.

Additional information on the make-up of the population (based on the 2010 Census) is shown in Table 3-2. The pre-school (under 5 years) and school-age populations (5 to 19 years) in the Township are nearly the same as the Saginaw County and state averages. The Township's senior population (those 65 and over) is three to five percent smaller than the County and state proportions. The median age of Township residents is younger than Saginaw County residents in general and the average Michigan resident.

Racial characteristics of Township residents are presented in Table 3-3. Although the population is predominantly (98%) white, several other races are represented.

**Table 3-1
Historical Population Changes
Marion Township & Selected Government Units**

Unit	1960 Census	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	% Change 2000 – 2010	% Change 1960 – 2010
Marion Township	562	679	913	928	925	923	- 0.2%	64.0%
Saginaw County	190,752	219,743	228,059	211,946	210,039	200,169	- 4.6%	4.9%
Michigan	7,823,194	8,881,826	9,262,678	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,833,640	-1.0%	25.7%

Source: U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing.

Population Changes

Figure 3-1. Population Trends

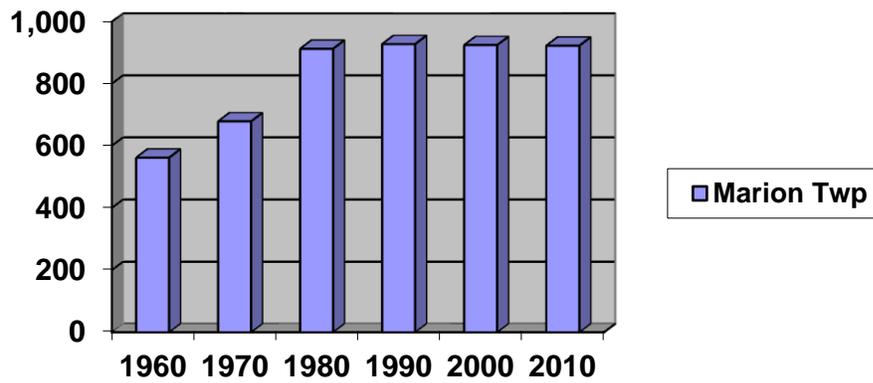


Figure 3-1

**Table 3-2
Population Age Profile (2010)**

Community	Under 5 years	5 – 19 years	20 – 64 years	65 years & over	Median Age
Marion Township	59 6.4%	193 20.9%	575 72.7%	96 10.5%	37.9 years
Saginaw County	11,854 5.9%	42,223 21.1%	146,092 73.1%	30,601 15.3%	39.5 years
Michigan	6.0%	20.1%	68.1%	13.8%	38.9 years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

**Table 3-3
Marion Township
Racial Characteristics**

White	Black or African American	American Indian & Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Hispanic or Latino (Any Race)
905 98%	2 0.2%	6 0.7%	0 0.0%	0 0%	5 0.5%	25 2.7%

Note: Categories may add up to more than 100% because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

B. Local Economy

Income

Income data (Table 3-4) are useful in examining local economic conditions. Two types of income information are usually analyzed: *household* income and *family* income. To measure *family income*, the Census adds together the incomes of all members 15 years old and over in each family and treats the resulting figure as a single amount. *Household income* includes the income of the householder and all other persons 15 years old and over in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not. Since many households consist of only one person, average household income is usually less than average family income. The Census reports this data as *median* household and family income levels. The median is the “middle” – the point that divides the population into two equal groups, one that has income levels higher than the median and the other that has incomes below the median.

The information shows that, for the last Census, median household income in the Township (\$40,500) was just \$1,831 less than in Saginaw County as a whole.

Median family income in the Township was \$48,250, an amount that was \$5,754 less than the County average.

Another economic indicator is the *poverty level*, especially the portion of the population that is living below the poverty level. The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family’s total income is less than the threshold, then that family and every individual that is part of that family is considered poor. The poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. To give an example, the poverty threshold for a family of four (with two children under 18 years) in 2000 was \$17,463. In 2010, the poverty threshold for this same size family had been adjusted to \$22,113.

The percentage of Marion Township’s residents who were living below the poverty level in 2010 was 28.4%. The proportion of Saginaw County residents below the poverty level at that time was 19.2%.

**Table 3-4
Local Income & Poverty Levels (2013)**

Community	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	% of All Persons Below Poverty Level
Marion Township	\$40,500	\$48,250	28.4%
Saginaw County	\$42,331	\$54,004	19.2%
Michigan	\$48,411	\$60,793	16.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Employment

The major employment categories for Marion residents are shown in Table 3-5. This information shows some diversity of the local work force, with no single category completely dominating employment in the area.

In Marion Township, the top employment category is manufacturing (32.4% of total employment), followed by educational, health and social services (16.3%) and then retail

trade (12.7% of the total), making up the third largest category. Taken together, these categories represent over 60% of all employment by Township residents.

Some other major employment types reported include construction, Professional, scientific, management & administrative, various services, and occupations related to transportation.

**Table 3-5
Marion Township
Employment by Type of Industry (2013)**

Employment Category	Number of Employees	% of All Employed Persons
Manufacturing	99	32.4%
Retail Trade	39	12.7%
Educational, health & social services	50	16.3%
Construction	25	8.2%
Other services (except public administration)	11	3.6%
Transportation, warehousing & utilities	18	5.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food services	9	2.9%
Public administration	8	2.6%
Finance, insurance, real estate	11	3.6%
Agriculture, forestry, mining	10	3.3%
Wholesale trade	5	1.6%
Professional, scientific, management & administrative	21	6.9%
Information	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

A. Housing

An adequate supply of sound housing is important to every community. Housing data for Marion Township are shown in Table 3-5. This information shows that from 2000 to 2010, there was an increase of 23 housing units in the Township, an increase of 6.6%. This rate of housing growth is higher than the housing growth that took place in the County 1.6%.

Also, it should be noted that the net change in housing units does not consider homes built as replacements for existing structures.

Home ownership is a strong trend in the Township, with over 82% of all homes occupied by owners. This trend is also evident in Saginaw

County as a whole. Home ownership is generally viewed as a positive trend because it lends greater stability to a community.

Median housing values in the Township were reported at \$110,700 in 2013. This figure is \$9,100 higher than the median value for Saginaw County. Median housing values in the County in 2010 ranged from \$48,000 in Buena Vista Township to \$166,000 in the City of Frankenmuth. In evaluating this information, it is important to note that the median value refers to the middle point of the range. This means that an equal number of homes had both higher and lower values than the median value of \$110,700 reported for Marion Township by the 2013 Survey.

In terms of structural characteristics, the 2010 Census reported that over 80% of the homes in the Township (293 units) were detached single-family homes. At that time, 19.3% of the housing stock (70 units) consisted of mobile homes.

**Table 3-6
Selected Housing Characteristics (2000 & 2013)**

Unit	2010 Total Housing Units	2000Total Housing Units	% Change in Housing Units 2000 –2010	Median Value of Housing (2013)	Percent Owner-Occupied (2010)
Marion Township	371	348	6.6%	\$110,700	82.8%
Saginaw County	86,844	85,505	1.6%	\$101,600	72.3%
Michigan	4,532,233	4,234,279	7.0%	\$128,600	72.1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2000 and 2010, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Chapter 4

Township Development Goals and Objectives

This section of the Master Plan presents the goals and objectives that have been developed to provide a strong, coherent direction for the future development of Marion Township. The formulation of these statements evolves from the desire to remedy existing problems, to maintain positive features, and to provide an attractive and functional community environment in the future. These goals and objectives form a key element of the Township Master Plan. Desired land use arrangements and proposed strategies for action are a natural outgrowth of established goals.

Some additional benefits of establishing these goals and objectives (policies) for the Township are:

- **Consistency** -- A comprehensive list of statements concerning a variety of planning issues can help avoid arbitrary decision-making in the future.
- **Efficiency** -- Clearly stated policies help to reduce the time spent on individual topics while providing sound planning principles to assist in the process.

- **Coordination** -- Established policies provide a single framework to guide actions by the Township Board, Planning Commission, and the public.
- **Stability** -- Policies tend to be general and long-range in nature. As such, they remain stable under a variety of changing community conditions.
- **Basis for Decisions** -- Established policies are necessary to provide a reasonable basis for adopting local land use controls such as zoning. Furthermore, clearly stated policies are helpful to the courts if called upon to judge the fairness of specific land use regulations.

The proposed goals and objectives for Marion Township are presented in the remainder of this section.

General Land Use and Development

GOAL:

Arrange future land uses in a manner that will preserve the natural features and rural character that make Marion Township an attractive place to live.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Make provisions to accommodate future residential, commercial, and other types of development in appropriate locations.

2. Encourage the *managed* growth of the Township through good planning and appropriate development controls.
3. Maintain Marion Township as a rural residential community that is characterized by farmlands, forests, and extensive open space areas.
4. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and existing farming operations.
5. Encourage the preservation of natural features and open space.
6. Discourage the placement of land uses that are incompatible with existing natural features.
7. Discourage the placement of land uses that are incompatible with surrounding development.
8. Regularly evaluate the Township Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to determine their effectiveness, and update the documents as needed.

Residential Land Use and Housing

GOAL:
Provide for residential development in a manner that results in both housing and neighborhoods that are safe, healthy, and attractive, while also

providing a wide choice and adequate supply of dwelling units.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Reserve sufficient land for residential development in convenient, economical, and environmentally sound locations.
2. Consider making allowances for innovative development techniques (such as conservation development and clustering) that would permit development at higher densities, while also using the available land more efficiently and preserving natural features.
3. Encourage the development of housing opportunities for all economic levels.
4. Encourage regulatory measures that are necessary to ensure that both new and existing housing meets appropriate health and safety standards.
5. Encourage basic housing standards to ensure the compatibility of future housing with the existing housing stock.
6. Encourage the adoption and consistent enforcement of proper zoning standards for home occupations.

Commercial Land Uses

GOAL:

Encourage sound commercial development that is small in scale and compatible with the Township's character.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage the development of commercial centers or clusters, as opposed to strip development.
2. Discourage "spot" commercial development.
3. Encourage beautification efforts in commercial areas through amenities such as lighting, signage, and landscaping.
4. Develop appropriate standards to ensure that any future commercial and other non-residential development is in keeping with the community's character.

Community Facilities and Services

GOAL:

Provide community facilities and services in the most efficient, effective, and economical manner possible.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Continue efforts to improve the Township Park and Fire Department, including maintaining the Township's eligibility for grants through the state.
2. Work with the County Road Commission to address the Township's priorities for road improvements.
3. Ensure that future development does not exceed the Township's ability to provide supporting facilities and services.

Natural Resources and the Environment

GOAL:

Protect, maintain, and enhance the natural resources and environmental features of Marion Township.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Preserve the quality and natural state of environmentally sensitive

areas, including surface waters, groundwater, wetlands, forested land, and wildlife habitat.

2. Protect the Township's residents from development that would degrade environmental quality.
3. Protect the Township's residents from development that would degrade the aesthetics, natural appearance, or character of the community.

Chapter 5

General Development Plan

A. Introduction and General Concepts

The Marion Township Master Plan is a general guide for future development. It is to direct future land use in way that will result in a development pattern that is logical, economical, visually pleasing, and environmentally sound. A basic concept that has guided the plan's development is the desire to retain the rural character and natural features that make Marion Township an attractive place to live while, at the same time, adequately providing for future development.

This plan is designed to accommodate a reasonable amount of new development in a flexible manner. However, any such development that occurs must also be done in accordance with sound land use controls, and it must be consistent with the community's character and values. The major concepts that form the basis for Marion Township's plan are summarized below:

1. Drastic changes are not encouraged in the character and population of the Township. Marion Township wishes to

remain a predominantly rural residential and agricultural community. The Township's natural features (especially the forested areas) and farmlands will continue to dominate the character of the community.

2. In all future development, the plan advocates retaining the Township's natural features, farmlands and open space areas to the greatest extent possible.
3. The plan also advocates keeping the Township's farmlands in agricultural production, and it discourages the premature conversion of these lands to non-farm uses.
4. Additional rural residential development can be accommodated under the plan in a manner that is attractive, environmentally sound, and compatible with other land uses.
5. Provisions should also be made for the development of additional small-scale retail and service business establishments. These types of development should be directed into a designated business area, and not randomly scattered throughout the Township.

6. In all cases, future development must not create demands for public services that exceed the Township's capabilities to provide such services.

This planning district contains the existing farmlands in the Township. It is the plan's intent that current farmlands and other large tracts of land should be conserved for agricultural pursuits and related purposes.

B. Major Township Land Uses

The future direction for Marion Township's land use and development pattern is mainly shaped by the community's natural features, and by the Township's desire to retain an attractive rural character. Beyond these concepts, it is necessary to describe the major land use categories that are recommended and to identify appropriate locations for these uses. The major land uses envisioned by this plan are outlined in the following discussion.

It is also the plan's intent to discourage urban development in these areas and to preserve their rural character. These areas will not require major public services such as water and sewer.

Within this planning district, residents who desire rural living can have that option, but not at the expense of farmland or farming operations. Non-farm uses will need to coexist with agriculture within this district.

Agriculture and Forestry District

This planning district includes those portions of the Township that are sparsely developed. These areas will be used predominantly for agriculture, forestry, farm dwellings, rural homes on large lots, conservation and recreational areas, and other uses that are compatible with a rural setting. Other activities closely related to agriculture, such as operations for packing and shipping locally grown produce, would also be appropriate here. Accessory uses such as home occupations should also be permitted with proper zoning standards.

Rural Residential District

This planning district is mainly intended for low-density residential development and some agricultural activities on lots that are one acre or more in area. The Rural Residential planning district includes areas that have the potential for single-family home development.

Community Business District

This planning district is designed to provide for some limited development of general retail and service businesses in the Township, primarily to serve the day-to-day

needs of residents. Appropriate uses include small-scale retail businesses and service establishments.

The Township's rural nature and lack of major highway access tends to preclude its development as a commercial center. Therefore, extensive commercial development is not anticipated in the Township. Historically, very little of the Township has ever been designated for commercial development. The current Zoning Map identifies only the northeast corner of the Marion and Merrill Roads intersection for business purposes.

As a general principle for the future, the Township should avoid commercial development that is randomly scattered throughout the community.

Public Lands

This classification consists of the acreage that is included in the State Game Area and the Township Park.

important to note that the Future Land Use Map is **NOT** a Zoning Map. Instead, the map is intended to serve as a guide for shaping the Township's long-range land use and development pattern. The map is also intended to guide zoning and other land use decisions as development occurs.

The Future Land Use Map portrays a land use pattern for Marion Township as the community develops over an extended period of time (i.e., 15 to 20 years). This means that achieving the land use pattern shown on the map will likely be a very gradual process. The relationship of this long-range concept to short-term land use decisions (especially zoning) is discussed further in the Township's ***Action Program*** for carrying out the Master Plan.

C. Future Land Use Map

The recommended locations for the planning districts are shown on the Future Land Use Map. The official Future Land Use Map is a large, display-sized document that is separate from the Master Plan text and maintained by the Township. However, the map is also a part of the Master Plan by reference. It is

Chapter 6

Action Program

Introduction

The Marion Township Master Plan has been prepared to serve as a guide on both short-term and long-range issues which the Township will face as it develops in the future.

In addition, implementation of Marion Township's Master Plan should involve the following major elements, as described in the remainder of this section.

A. Public Involvement and Education

Public involvement and education are critical to the success of any plan. The community must be aware of the plan's existence and it must also accept the plan's findings and recommendations. The Planning Commission will have the main responsibility for working to achieve community involvement in the planning process and support for planning in general.

B. Acceptance and Use of the Plan by the Township Board

The current statutes do not specifically require adoption of the plan by the Township Board. However, as the elected legislative body of the Township, it is imperative that the Board members accept the Master Plan and use it in the governing process. As a first step in this direction, the Township Board should be asked to endorse the plan, following its adoption by the Planning Commission.

C. Plan Updates

Community planning is a dynamic process. In order for the Master Plan to remain a viable document, it must be periodically updated. The Planning Commission should conduct a basic review of the document on an annual basis. Modifications should be made as necessary. The result is a plan that is always current and based on the best available information. These periodic plan updates do not need to be lengthy or elaborate. Depending on the subject matter, an update might be presented in a memo of a few pages. However, the Planning Commission should note that plan.

amendments must be handled in the same manner as the adoption of the original plan with respect to public notice and hearing requirements.

D. Annual Implementation Program

As an extension of the annual plan review process mentioned previously, the Planning Commission should also evaluate the implementation progress that has been made in the previous year. Following this review, the Planning Commission should prepare a list of specific objectives to be accomplished in the coming year and over the next five years. This list should then be ranked to identify the Planning Commission's priorities, and it should include both capital and non-capital projects.

The Planning Commission should submit the draft implementation program to the Township Board for review.

The Township Board and the Planning Commission should then meet jointly to discuss the program and to reach a consensus on the Township's priorities for plan implementation in the coming year. Like the plan updates, the annual implementation program can be a simple report in a memo format.

E. Update the Township Zoning Ordinance

The Township Zoning Ordinance is expected to remain the single most important tool for plan implementation. As such, it is extremely important to update and revise the ordinance to reflect this Plan's land use recommendations.

Following adoption of the Master Plan, it will be appropriate to pursue an in-depth review and thorough revision of the ordinance.

The land use districts presented in the Master Plan have been designed to reinforce and strengthen the current Zoning Ordinance.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, and the identification of other desirable changes can be expected to result from the ordinance updating process.

F. Use of the Master Plan In Zoning Decisions

The Master Plan should be consulted prior to making zoning decisions.

Experience indicates that the lack of such consultation often results in decisions that are in conflict with the plan's recommendations. Zoning actions that are contrary to the Master Plan will diminish the public credibility of the document and will also limit the plan's potential benefit if the Township became involved in zoning litigation.

G. Maintain Consistency Between the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance

Once the Zoning Ordinance is revised to be consistent with the plan, this consistency must be maintained. If zoning decisions are made that are contrary to plan recommendations, it is important that the Planning Commission review the documents and consider a possible plan revision to reflect the zoning action. Plan amendments will also be necessary if issues arise where the plan does not offer sufficient guidance. In such a case, new or expanded material should be added to the plan to address the new issues.
