

CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Population and demographic change are among the most important measures to express growth or decline and its likely impact on land uses in a community. Therefore, it is helpful to recognize the Township’s “community characteristics” in preparing a realistic and meaningful Master Plan.

Reports for the year 2010 are based on actual United States Census Bureau reports. The Population Estimates Program produces and disseminates the official estimates of the population and housing units via the United States Census Bureau website for years in between official census reports. Therefore, data from this chapter dated 2010 refers to actual census information, while information for other years is taken from the official estimates.

Recent Population Growth

It is appropriate to examine population growth in the Township in the past few decades, including information regarding most recent population trends. Since 1970, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the Township’s population increased from 1,002 to 1,773 in 2010, or by a total of 771 persons. Therefore, the average increase is 19.3 people per year over that 40-year period. This represents a 77% increase over 40 years. Census figures for the Township are expressed numerically in the following figure.

Figure 3.1. Total Population by Decade for Wells Township, Michigan 1960-2014

Year	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	**2014
# of residents	805	1,002	1,501	1,528	*1,743	1773	1714
# change from previous census	-	+197	+499	+27	+215	+30	-69
% change from previous census		+24.5%	+49.8%	+1.8%	+14.1%	+1.7%	-3.9%

*Revised and corrected from 1,946 to 1,743 according to the TWENTY-SECOND DECENNIAL CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES, count as of April 1, 2000

**Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau (chart updated 11/2016)

As Figure 3.1 shows, the Township experienced much growth in the 1970’s, which has never been duplicated. It is clear that the population trends in Wells Township are not consistent from decade to decade, making projections difficult. Most recent U.S. Census population estimates are used whenever possible to help indicate most recent trends.

Population growth figures since the 2000 Census are presented in the Figure 3.2. Figure 3.3 shows population figures for Wells Township and Tuscola County. Although there is slight variation, Wells Township is projected to continue to contain about 3% of the total population for Tuscola County.

Figure 3.2. Population by Year for Wells Township 2000-2014

Year	2000	*2001	*2002	*2003	*2004	*2005	*2006	*2007	*2008	*2009	2010	*2011	*2012	*2013	*2014
# of residents	1,743	1,751	1,752	1,761	1,759	1,753	1,741	1,727	1,707	1,686	1773	1626	1714	1714	1673
# of residents - change from previous year		+8	+1	+9	-2	-6	-8	-14	-20	-21	+87	-147	+88	+0	-41

*Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau (updated 11/2016)

Figure 3.3. Population by Year for Wells Township and Tuscola County 2000-2014

Year	2000	*2001	*2002	*2003	*2004	*2005	*2006	*2007	*2008	*2009	2010	*2011	*2012	*2013	*2014
# of residents Wells Township	1,743	1,751	1,752	1,761	1,759	1,753	1,741	1,727	1,707	1,686	1773	1626	1714	1714	1673
# of residents Tuscola County	58,266	58,176	58,038	58,162	57,954	57,484	57,042	56,703	56,066	55,395	55,729	55,392	54,714	54,222	53,993
% Wells population in Tuscola County	2.99%	3%	3.02%	3.03%	3.04%	3.05%	3.05%	3.05%	3.04%	3.04%	3.18%	2.94%	3.13%	3.13%	3.1%

*Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau (updated 11/2016)

The overall growth rate between 2000 and 2010 for Tuscola County indicates a loss of 4.4%, with 2,537 residents leaving the county. Wells Township shows a population gain of 30 residents and total increase of 1.7%.

Figure 3.4 compares projected population losses since the 2000 Census for Wells Township with those of adjoining townships, ordered largest gains to largest losses. Of the adjoining townships, Wells Township is one of only townships showing population gains within the 10-year period.

Figure 3.4. Population Losses for Wells and Adjoining Townships 2000-2010

Township Name	Ellington	Wells	Koylton	Dayton	Almer	Kingston	Fremont	Novesta	Indianfields
# of Residents lost	+28	+30	+12	-21	-161	-37	-142	-112	-189
% of Population lost	+2.1%	+1.7%	+0.8%	-1.1%	-1.7%	-3%	-5.7%	-7.2%	-12.1%

(updated 11/2016)

Population Projections

Projections have implications regarding future land use needs Revised 11/2016 various public services and capital improvements, and they help to understand the future

position of the Township in terms of growth and total population. Studies of population growth by decade since 1970 show inconsistent growth patterns which, when averaged for projection purposes, may lead to incorrect assumptions in light of today’s economy. It is clear that past growth and current decreased population numbers create conflicting projections.

Given current conditions, it is likely that population fluctuations will continue to mirror economic conditions.

Demographic Data

Aging Trends

Contemplating age characteristics can assist in determining the type of housing and community services that may be needed.

In 2010, the median age of Wells Township residents was 38.8 for males, and 37.5 for females, which is similar to the County (37 years), and slightly older than the State and the U.S. (35.5 and 37.2 years, respectively). The median age represents the mid-point in the range of all ages within the Township when all ages are listed in order.

As the post World War II baby boomers age, median age may rise substantially.

Gender and Ethnicity

In 2010, males made up 50.5% of the population, with females making up 49.5% of the population.

Regarding ethnicity characteristics, as of the 2010 Census, 97% of the Township is White Non Hispanic, 0.5% is Black or African American, 1.2% is American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.1% is Asian, 1% indicated that they were two or more races, and 0.3% indicated that they were a race not listed. This information is not likely to affect land use in the Township.

Educational Attainment and Income

In addition to age, gender, and ethnicity characteristics, it is appropriate to catalog educational attainment trends in the community. This information may be an indicator of local school district quality and the opportunities for higher education in the region, which are often significant concerns for families moving to an area.

The 2010 Census indicates that within Wells Township the educational attainment levels are comparable to county, state, and national high school graduation levels. Most significant is the difference in the attainment of a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, which shows much lower levels in Wells Township, as the following table illustrates.

**Figure 3.5. Educational Attainment Comparisons, 25
Years and Older, Year 2014***

	Wells Township	Tuscola County	Mic	Revised 11/2016
% High School Graduate	89.0	88.2	89.3	86.3
% Bachelor’s	10.3	13.5	26.4	29.3

degree or higher				
------------------	--	--	--	--

*Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau
(updated 11/2016)

State legislation taking effect for students graduating in 2016 and thereafter requires that students must remain in school until age 18, an increase of the current 16-year age requirement. The legislation assumes that this increase will urge more students to complete high school, thereby increasing graduation rates in 2016 and beyond.

Following are those statistics in comparison with County, State, and U.S. numbers.

Figure 3.6. Economic Characteristic Comparisons 2000 - *2014

	Wells Township		Tuscola County		U.S.	
	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014
Median household income (dollars)	43,200	42,688	40,174	44,017	41,994	53,482
Mean household income (dollars)	46,513	54,579	48,058	53,520	56,604	74,596
Families below poverty level	6.5%	6.5%	5.4%	11.2%	9.2	11.5%
Individuals below poverty level	9.8%	12.7%	8.2%	15.3%	12.4	15.6%

*Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau
(updated 11/2016)

Economic data lines up most closely with Tuscola County figures, although the 2014 estimation shows a lower poverty level. The median household income is the middle data point when all of the data are listed in order, and the decrease may indicate that the highest earnings represent a lower concentration of households or show a wider spread of dollar amounts.

IMPLICATIONS – COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

1. The data defining community characteristics may be re-examined as soon as fresh figures become available.
2. Growth must be expected and planned for, both in additional residences and by filling vacant properties. The Township should be prepared to accommodate this growth without infringing on the rural attributes that define it. Zoning practices will determine the effect that growth has on the rural character of the Township and the future quality of the natural environment.
3. As the median age of the population rises, the need for services offered closer to home may also increase. Consideration of the Township Hall as a location for some services and recreational opportunities may benefit Wells seniors.

Revised 11/2016