

CHAPTER 4. LAND USE PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wells Township embodies the rural lifestyle that includes wooded natural areas, agricultural fields, and low-density residential uses.

Reports for the year 2010 are based on actual United States Census Bureau reports. The Population Estimates Program disseminates the official estimates of selected economic characteristics 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 official estimates. Other dates and sources are noted.

Land Uses

The current land use designations in Wells Township are recreational, business, residential, manufactured home park, and agricultural.

Figure 4.1 shows the SEV for the various land uses in Wells Township. The SEV constitutes a community’s tax base, and is equal to approximately one-half of the true market value of real property and certain taxable personal properties. The majority of the Township’s taxable property falls under the individual residential category, followed by the agricultural category.

Figure 4.1. Distribution of State Equalized Values – *2009, **2016

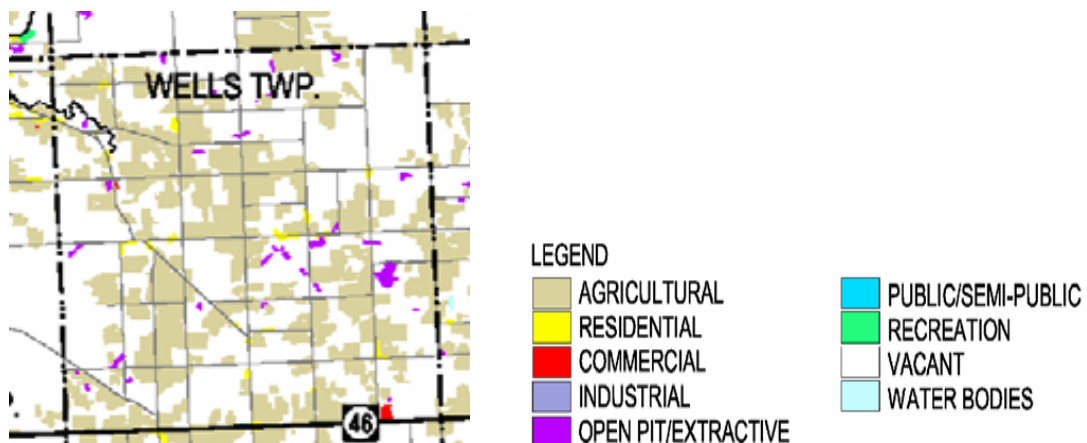
Land Use	SEV 2009	SEV 2016	Percentage of Total
Agricultural	19,137,700	21,028,800	35%
Commercial	235,900	219,900	Less than 1%
Industrial	186,100	306,700	Less than 1%
Individual Residential	41,109,400	38,767,100	64%
Timber Cutover	0	0	0%
Developmental	0	0	0%
Total	62,077,100	60,322,500	100%

*From Michigan Department of Treasury State Tax Commission 2009,

**Assessed and Equalized Valuation for Separately Equalized Classifications – Tuscola County Equalization Report 2016

Map 4.1 illustrates the existing land use in Wells Township. The current zoning map is shown as **Map 4.2**.

MAP 4.1. EXISTING LAND USE



Parcel figures supplied by the Tuscola County Equalization office are described in **Figure 4.2**, based on a total of 1195 parcels of assessable real property in the Township. In addition, there are 21 government-owned parcels within the Township, and 11 of those are DNR parcels.

Figure 4.2 Total Assessable Real Property Parcels by Land Use, 2016

Land Use	Parcel Count	% of Total Parcels
Agriculture	203	17%
Residential	981	82%
Commercial	5	.5%
Industrial	6	.5%
Totals	1195	100%

Housing Characteristics

Building Permits for Single-Family Homes

Building permits can be a solid indication of investment. The table below represents the number of permits pulled for new home construction in Wells Township between 2001 and 2014. The real estate slump and economic uncertainty at the time of this writing has clearly affected the local housing market.

Figure 4.3. Single Family Home Construction

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
# of Permits	7	14	9	8	9	4	2	3	3	1	5	3	0	1	1

Housing Age

According to the 2010 Census, 19.3% of the housing structures were built between the years 1980 and 2010. Built between the years 1940 and 1979 were 57.6% of the structures, and 19.3% of the dwellings were built in the year 1939 or earlier. In comparison with other townships in Tuscola County, no other township has a higher percentage of homes built more recently in the 1980 to 2010 year time period, indicating that Wells Township is generally a “newer” community compared to the County overall.

Housing Type and Tenure

The majority of housing structures in Wells Township are single family, or 1-unit structures, making up 82.7% of the total types of structures. Mobile homes make up 17.3% of the dwellings in Wells Township, and no multi-unit structures were reported. In Tuscola County overall, the number of single family structures is slightly lower at 80.5%, and the number of mobile homes is markedly lower, making up only 11.2% of county structures.

As expected, multiple-unit structures are found in larger municipalities where utilities are able to support them. Figure 4.4 helps to illustrate the comparisons.

Figure 4.4. Type of Housing Structures - Comparisons with Surrounding Townships

Township	% 1 Unit Structures	% 2-4 Unit Structures	% Mobile Homes
Wells	82.7%	0.0%	17.3%
Almer	70.1%	3.1%	10.9%
Dayton	84.2%	2.2%	13.5%
Ellington	82.6%	0.0%	17.4%
Fremont	81.6%	4.3%	11.5%
Indianfields	66.7%	11.8%	13.8%
Kingston	77.9%	2.7%	14.1 %
Koylton	82.6%	0.0%	17.0%
Novesta	87.6%	0.6%	11.9%

In 2010, 79.7% of homes were owner-occupied, while 11.3% were renter-occupied. In addition 9.1% of the homes were vacant in 2010. Between 2000 and 2009 there were 40 foreclosures in the Township, with most of the foreclosures occurring late in the decade. Median home cost in 2014 was \$106,400.

Property Value

Property values are a key measure of economic growth and the financial strength of a community. Property values reflect both investment in new development and the degree of growth in the value of those investments. Annually, the Assessors of each jurisdiction report total valuation within their respective jurisdictions, and these reports can provide an illuminating impression of the character of a community. The figure below compares the annual taxable values of real property in Wells Township to those of surrounding communities.

Figure 4.5. Assessed and Equalized Valuations for Tax Year 2016*

Township	Assessed and Equalized Valuation
Wells	60,322,500
Almer	99,915,100
Dayton	78,852,616
Ellington	53,561,800
Fremont	89,107,400
Indianfields	61,780,400
Kingston	62,548,800
Koylton	66,260,727
Novesta	59,363,400
Tuscola County Total	2,137,597,673

*Michigan Department of Treasury State Tax Commission, Tuscola County Assessed and Equalized Total Real Property Valuations 2016

Property values declined since 2009 in seven out of nine townships, including Wells Township.

Employment

Since Wells Township is a rural and agricultural community, there is little employment centered in the Township. However, there are employers in nearby Caro and Kingston. The average travel time of 35.6 minutes indicates that only a portion of the workforce is employed in Caro, which is less than 20 minutes away from the farthest points of the Township. Carpooling is used by 8.3% for transportation to employment, with 87.4% of residents driving alone. A segment of the workforce travels a longer period of time, perhaps toward cities such as Saginaw,

Bay City, Flint, Lapeer, and Port Huron or farther, between our Township and those locations, or further into the thumb area.

The percent of the civilian labor force unemployed as reported by the American Community Survey 5 –Year Estimates 2014 was 9.5%.

The following figure lists occupations for the 683 civilian members of the workforce 16 years and over in Wells Township. In the workforce, there are 551 or 80.7% in private wage and salaried positions, 103 or 15.1% are government workers, and self-employed workers not in an incorporated business were 26, or 3.8% of the workforce.

Figure 4.6. Occupations for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over, 2014

Occupation	Number	Percent
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	145	21.2
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	142	20.8
Sales and office occupations	125	18.3
Service occupations	178	26.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	93	13.6

Industries providing employment for the workforce are listed in the following figure. The list is ranked from highest to lowest percentages.

Figure 4.7. Industries for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over, 2014

Industry	Number	Percent
Educational, health and social services	219	32.1
Manufacturing	123	18.0
Retail trade	75	11.0
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	53	7.8
Construction	42	6.1
Public administration	37	5.4
Other services (except public administration)	33	4.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	32	4.7
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	22	3.2
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	19	2.8
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	18	2.6
Wholesale trade	10	1.5
Information	0	0

IMPLICATIONS – LAND USE PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. The principal land uses for Wells Township are expected to be the following:
 - Agricultural/Forestry/Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Manufactured Home Community
 - Commercial
 - Industrial

2. High numbers of foreclosures in the recent past and current economic issues have left many dwellings vacant. Vacant housing can lead to blighted conditions and a depressed sense of community. Re-occupation by new owners would help reduce this effect. Filling vacant properties already in residential use reduces the amount of land consumed for residential purposes, thereby preserving agricultural land and open spaces. This and other solutions for the vacant housing may be examined.
3. Single-family home growth is expected in the next 20 years, and the Township should be permitted to experience growth, but should make no effort to accelerate growth, because it is important to maintain the Township's rural qualities. Reasonable standards should be required for all single-family dwellings.
4. Census and other sources for population figures may be sought to periodically augment current figures. This newer information will keep up with changes within the Township, as recent economic trends may amend, and the direction of land use patterns and development may need more frequent consideration, especially if unusually rapid growth rates or land uses cause major disruption in the current patterns and life style.
5. Most business, commercial, industrial, and recreational services will continue to be sought in nearby urban service centers of Caro and Kingston, making development of business, commercial, industrial, and recreation services within the Township less important than other land uses.
6. Maintaining Township roads is a major consideration for Township residents, as urban service centers are located outside of the Township, and most of the workforce travels outside of the Township for employment.
7. Open pit/extractive areas, commonly referred to as "gravel pits", exist in the Township. Restoration plans should be a zoning requirement.
8. Development plans such as open-space development are emerging and gaining popularity in the state. It will be important for the Township to keep abreast of the new trends and their benefits and challenges, as these newer plans hold preservation of natural and agricultural areas and the rural aesthetic as priorities. This addresses the concerns of Township residents who wish for preservation of these features.
9. Zoning and related development review tools that encourage residential growth to take natural features such as soils, topography, hydrology and natural vegetation into account in the site design process may be considered.