

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.

Land Uses

The current land use districts in Wells Township described in the Zoning Ordinance are Agriculture/Forestry/Residential, Medium Density Residential, Manufactured Housing Park, Commercial, and Industrial.

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.

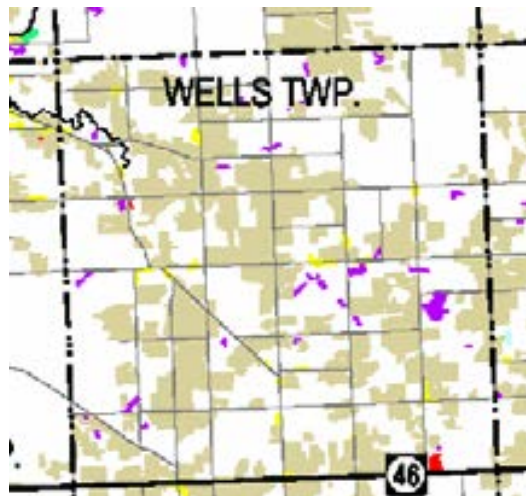
Figure 4.1. Wells Township Distribution of State Equalized Values 2009, 2022

Land Use	SEV 2009	% of Total 2009	SEV 2016	% of Total 2016	SEV 2022	% of Total 2022
Agricultural	19,137,700	31%	21,028,800	35%	19,591,200	27%
Commercial	235,900	Less than 1%	219,900	Less than 1%	247,600	Less than 1%
Industrial	186,100	Less than 1%	306,700	Less than 1%	381,100	Less than 1%
Individual Residential	41,109,400	66%	38,767,100	64%	52,233,000	72%
Timber Cutover	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Developmental	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Real Property	62,077,100	100%	60,322,500	100%	72,452,900	100%

Michigan Department of Treasure State Tax Commission 2009
 Tuscola County Equalization Report 2016
 Tuscola County Equalization Report 2022

Map 4.1 illustrates the existing land use in Wells Township.

MAP 4.1. EXISTING LAND USE



LEGEND

AGRICULTURAL	PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC
RESIDENTIAL	RECREATION
COMMERCIAL	VACANT
INDUSTRIAL	WATER BODIES
OPEN PIT/EXTRACTIVE	

Amended 2025

Parcel figures supplied by the Tuscola County Equalization office are described in **Figure 4.2**, based on a total of 20,948 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 2010 and 2022

Land Use	Parcel Count 2010	% of Total Parcels 2010	Parcel Count 2022	% of Total Parcels 2022
Agriculture	241	20%	213	17.6%
Residential	933	79%	982	81.3%
Commercial	7	.6%	6	.5%
Industrial	4	.3%	7	.58%
Totals	1185	99.9%	1208	99.98%

Tuscola County Equalization Report 2022

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 2000 and 2023.

Figure 4.3. Single Family Home Construction by Year 2000-2023

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
# of Permits	7	14	9	8	9	4	2	3	3	1	6	3
Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
# of Permits	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	1	2	5	2	4

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

Housing Age

According to the 2000 Census, 38.1% of the housing structures were built between the years 1980 and 2000. Built between the years 1940 and 1979 were 43.5% of the structures, and 18.4% of the dwellings were built in the year 1939 or earlier. In comparison with other townships in Tuscola County, only one township has a higher percentage of homes built more recently in the 1980 to 2000 year time period, indicating that Wells Township is generally a “newer” community compared to the County overall.

Figure 4.4. Estimated Housing Age by Year

Wells Township	Total Units	2020 or later	2010 to 2019	2000 to 2009	1990 to 1999	1980 to 1989	1970 to 1979	1960 to 1969	1950 to 1959	1940 to 1949	1939 or before
# of Units	652	3	14	77	129	73	157	57	38	29	75
% of Units	100%	.46%	2.1%	11.8%	19.8%	11.2%	24%	8.7%	5.8%	4.4%	11.5%

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

Percentages rounded

Housing Type, Tenure and Foreclosures

The majority of housing structures in Wells Township are single family, or 1-unit structures, making up 74.7% of the total types of structures. Mobile homes make up 25.4% of the dwellings in Wells Township. In Tuscola County overall, the number of single family structures is slightly higher at 81.8%, and the number of mobile homes is markedly lower, making up only 9.8% of County structures. Wells leads its surrounding townships with the highest percentage of mobile homes.

As expected, multiple-unit structures are found in larger municipalities where utilities are able to support them. **Figure 4.5** helps to illustrate the comparisons.

Figure 4.5. Type of Housing Structures – Wells and Surrounding Townships 2022

Township	Occupied Housing Units	% of the Type of Structure 2022						
		% 1 Unit Detached	% 1 Unit Attached	% 2 apartments	# 3 or 4 apartments	% 5-9 apartments	% 10 or more apartments	% Mobile Homes
Wells	594	74.4%	.3%	0	0	0	0.0%	25.3%
Almer	890	71.2%	.4%	.4%	0	1.6%	5.6%	20.7%
Dayton	840	89.9%	0	0	0	0	0	10.1%
Ellington	426	85.2%	0	0	0	.9%	0.7%	13.1%
Fremont	1,453	84.5%	1.7%	1.1%	.8%	1.4%	0	10.5%
Indianfields	849	78%	.5%	.6%	1.9%	.2%	0	18.8%
Kingston	535	87.1%	0	0	2.4%	1.5%	1.7%	7.3%
Koylton	529	86%	0	0	1.3%	0	0	12.7%
Novesta	576	89.2%	0	0	0	.9%	0	9.9%
TUSCOLA COUNTY	23,977	81.8%	1.1%	1.3%	1.8%	2.4%	.4%	9.8%

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

In 2022, 91.1% of housing structures were occupied, while 8.9% were vacant. The number of vacant housing units is 58, and comparisons with townships neighboring Wells is available in **Figure 4.6**.

Figure 4.6. Percent of Housing Structure Occupied and Vacant 2022

	Wells	Almer	Dayton	Ellington	Fremont	Indianfields	Kingston	Koylton	Novesta
% Occupied	91.1	95.3	78.4	90.3	93.1	93.2	87.6	84.9	89.4
% Vacant	8.9	4.7	21.6	9.7	6.9	6.8	12.4	15.1	10.6
# Vacant	58	44	231	46	107	62	76	94	68

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

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 4.7. Assessed and Equalized Valuations for Tax Year 2022
Wells Township, Adjoining Townships, and Tuscola County**

Township	Number of Acres Assessed	Total Real Property Valuations	Personal Property Valuations	Total Real Plus Personal Property
Wells	20,948	72,452,900	2,913,700	75,366,600
Almer	21,491	109,377,800	3,417,700	112,795,500
Dayton	22,915	97,416,850	2,350,400	99,767,250
Ellington	23,800	71,291,700	1,550,600	72,842,300
Fremont	22,359	122,175,200	5,420,300	127,595,500
Indianfields	19,243	83,189,800	7,874,200	91,064,000
Kingston	22,267	77,410,000	2,754,182	80,164,182
Koylton	22,619	86,689,900	3,013,600	89,703,500
Novesta	22,651	72,689,700	1,460,400	74,150,100
Tuscola County Total	512,435	2,584,937,350	524,478,924	3,109,416,274

Tuscola County Equalization Report 2022

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 36.8 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. Therefore, 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 2000 Census was 9%, and is currently reported as 16%, with job growth of -8.69%. Future job growth over the next ten years is predicted to be 6.62%. www.bestplaces.net

The following **Figure 4.8** lists occupations for the 631 civilian members of the workforce 16 years and over in Wells Township. As of 2022 reporting, 41 persons are unemployed, none are in the armed forces, and 600 are not in the labor force. In the workforce, there are 526 or 83.4% in private wage and salaried positions, 58 or 9.2% are government workers, and self-employed workers not in an incorporated business were 47, or 7.4% of the workforce.

Figure 4.8. Occupations for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over 2022

Occupation	Number	Percent
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	159	25.2%
Sales and office occupations	145	23%
Service occupations	96	15.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	125	19.8%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	106	16.8%

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

Industries providing employment for the 631 person workforce are listed in **Figure 4.9**. The list is ranked from highest to lowest percentages reported in 2014, and shows the fluctuation for industry numbers in 2022 and how the rank changed in the eight year period.

Figure 4.9. Industries for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over

Industry	Rank 2014	Rank 2022	Number	Percent
Manufacturing	1	1	187	29.6
Educational, health and social services	2	2	103	16.3
Retail trade	3	4	66	10.5
Construction	4	5	46	7.3
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	5	3	69	10.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	6	11	12	1.9
Public administration	7	8	23	3.6
Other services (except public administration)	8	9	20	3.2
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	9	6	43	6.8
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	10	12	11	1.7
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	11	7	31	4.9
Wholesale trade	12	10	13	2.1
Information	13	13	7	1.1

American Community Survey, Data.census.gov

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 Housing Community
 Commercial
 Industrial
2. 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. The current trend is toward decline, but Single-family home growth may be 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 2020 figures are updated within the 10 year general census dates. These 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.

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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.