

## **CHAPTER 9. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

This section of the Master Plan builds upon the goals and objectives and translates the Township's vision into a future land use plan for physical development. This land use plan provides the basis for the range and location of zoning districts. In addition, a zoning plan is provided, which relates the future land use categories to the current zoning districts of the Township, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. **Map 9.1** and the supporting narrative below are meant to be a guide for the Township. This Wells Township Future Land Use Map establishes a general blueprint of land use to foster efficient growth patterns that preserve the community's rural character, while permitting certain types of development in specific identified ways.

Throughout the planning process, several recurrent themes or priorities were acknowledged. The future land use framework generally supports these concepts:

- Accommodate use of productive farmland
- Maintenance of the Township's important rural character
- Conservation of natural features
- Lack of need for commercial and industrial land uses

The Future Land Use Map reflects the Township survey results, the study of trends within the Township, and consideration given to the Tuscola County General Development Plan and the master plans of adjoining townships. This Master Plan is designed to be a resource to be used by decision makers as well as the public. If the principles outlined herein form the basis for each land use and development decision, Wells Township will realize its vision for the future.

### **Future Land Use Considerations**

Population density has an effect on the amount of land consumed for residential purposes. Wells Township has the land available to accommodate population growth that may occur within the 20-year span of this plan, however the implications for agriculture in the Township may be substantial. The fragmentation of agricultural lands through land splits and the subdivision of parcels renders farming operations on many properties impractical. Non-farm development can have a domino effect, undermining the economics of scale in agricultural production that is afforded with relative size and proximity of highly productive or unique soil classifications. When buffers do not exist between agriculture and residential uses, problems can occur.

An alternative to new housing for all new residents is re-occupation by new owners of currently vacant housing. Many dwellings are available in Wells Township. When the condition of present dwellings discourages re-occupation, removing those dwellings and erecting new ones on properties already in residential use may be an alternative. This tackles the problem that vacant housing causes in a community, depressing the sense of

community and leading to blighted conditions. It also addresses the issue of the loss of agricultural land to residential uses.

Intense land uses are not appropriate unless the availability of public utilities, provision for adequate roadways, effect on public services, and environmental characteristics support such development. Major growth pressures are not expected during the 20-year time frame of this Master Plan, although it is possible that with the prime location of Wells Township near the Tier I Urban Service Area of Caro, growth pressures beyond current projections may occur within the next 20 years, specifically in the northwest corner of the Township nearest to Caro. This is where “urban spillover” is most likely to occur, and land in this area is already zoned for more dense residential occupation.

The Township should remain open-minded to some of the new land use concepts that are gaining popularity, considering the northwest corner of the Township as the possible home for this development in the future. One such concept is open-space development. Given need for more densely inhabited development, open-space development clusters homes and preserves part of the development site as open space and provides a buffer zone between the homes and agricultural or other land uses. In some cases, the buffer also filters the view from major roads into a neighborhood of homes.

As a means to preserve natural and agricultural areas and the rural aesthetic, it is prudent for the Township to begin to apply some of the basic principles of open space development in the rural residential setting. Creativity and variety in lot design, deep setbacks from roadways, and adequate buffering from other land uses are some elements of open space development that can begin to be incorporated in residential land use.

Recently, a consideration for future land use within the Township involves Tuscola County Airport zones. These zones restrict population density and some land uses. Much of Wells Township is included in the restricted zone.

### **Future Land Use**

The following descriptions support and are meant to be used in conjunction with **Map 9.1**.

All of Wells Township falls within the Agricultural/Forestry/Residential, Medium Density Residential, Manufactured Housing Park, Commercial, and Industrial categories. While individual parcels have been zoned for commercial or industrial use over the years, the future land use map for the Township recognizes that haphazard commercial or industrial growth is not in keeping with the goal of preserving the rural character of the Township.

#### **Agricultural/Forestry/Residential**

This land use designation acknowledges rich productive soils that should be preserved as much as possible, and is meant to accommodate farming activities and related uses and to recognize the desire of residents to maintain the Township’s farmland and rural character. Agriculture is an important component of the heritage of Wells Township and the region. The Agricultural/Forestry/Residential designation is therefore crafted to encourage farmers to continue operating in the Township, while addressing the desire for low-density, single-family homes in rural environments. This designation is meant to accommodate country

living, while also protecting the very features that characterize it. Future extension of public water and sewer into these areas is not contemplated over the life of this Master Plan, and densities should therefore be low. This category covers the largest land area in the Township.

Medium Density Residential

This land use category allows for more dense single-family residential occupation. Two general locations are included. The largest area is in the northwest corner of the Township nearest Caro, the other is along a stretch of Bevens Road at its intersection with East Dayton Road. Availability of public utilities, provision for adequate roadways, effect on public services, and environmental characteristics must support such development. Use of open space concepts may direct standards.

Manufactured Housing Park

The location of this land use category is along M-46 at the southern edge of the Township and has been adjusted to be closer in proximity to the Tier II Urban Service Area of Kingston.

Commercial

Most commercial land uses will continue to be sought in Caro and Kingston, where infrastructure supports such development. A section bordering M-46 at the southern edge of the Township is the location for this category, in the section of the Township nearest to Kingston. Standards including adequate buffers and nuisance-free operation may be considered.

Industrial

Two industrial land uses are considered within the Township. One is toward the southwestern corner of the Township just north of Wells Road near its intersection with Rossman. The other is an area at the southeastern corner of the intersection of East Dayton and Riley roads. Other industrial land uses will continue to be located in Caro and Kingston, where infrastructure supports such development. Standards including adequate buffers and nuisance-free operation may be considered.

**Zoning Plan**

The zoning plan explains which zoning districts of the Township implement the recommendations of the future land use designations. The following table outlines an approach to guide zoning decisions under this Master Plan. It identifies zoning districts that are both supported by and compatible with each of the future land use designations.

| <b>ZONING PLAN</b>                      |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Future Land Use Designations</b>     | <b>Suggested Corresponding Zoning Districts</b> |
| Agricultural/Forestry/Rural Residential | A/F/R   |
| Residential – Medium Density            | RM  |
| Manufactured Housing Park               | MHP   |
| Commercial                              | C   |
| Industrial                              | I   |