

## PREVIOUS COMMUNITY REPORTS AND SURVEYS

Such reports and surveys can provide insight regarding the justification of past decisions, as well as an understanding of on-going community concerns. The following Ross Township reports and surveys will be reviewed in this section.

- I. Strategic Water Resource Management Planning Committee Final Report, September 1998 (SWRM Report).
  - II. Convening Our Community; A Random Survey of Kalamazoo County, including the Ross Township Area.
  - III. Previous Ross Township Community Surveys (1992, 1995, 1996).
  - IV. The Four Township Water Resources Council Water Resources Paper, 2001.
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- I. **Strategic Water Resource Management Planning Committee Final Report, September 1998 (SWRM Report).**

This report was the result of a two-year effort to document and address water resource issues within the Township. Four topics were focused on by the SWRM Committee; (1) wellhead protection; (2) buffer zones and greenbelts; (3) runoff; and (4) wetland protection.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the report provided the following insight on each issue:

✓ Wellhead Protection

The SWRM Committee notes that Ross Township almost entirely relies on private and semi-private wells as its source of potable water. Therefore, protection of the community's groundwater is essential. Protection can be obtained using the following management and educational approaches:

1. Use of a wellhead protection overlay zone
2. Monitoring and control of groundwater access and recharge
3. Specific ordinances to manage land use in and around surface water<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Township SWRM Planning Committee Final Report, September 1998, pig's.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 4.

✓ Buffer Zones

Use of buffer zones around wetlands and surface waters are recognized as effective in protecting water resources from degradation. The SWRM report recommends review and adoption of buffer zoning ordinances similar to those adopted in other states and within Michigan, as well as an educational outreach to Ross Township residents emphasizing the impact of lifestyle patterns which adversely affect the Township's valued water resources.<sup>3</sup>

T Runoff

Surface pollutants from developed areas, which lose some of the natural ground recharge areas due to parking lots and building footprints, can be introduced into the Township's surface and groundwater. Automobile oil and cleaning chemicals are an example of surface pollutants which can taint groundwater. The SWRM report proposes education and ordinance options, as well as a review of what other municipalities have done, to proactively address the impact of water runoff.<sup>4</sup>

✓ Wetland Protection

Wetlands are an essential community asset in Ross Township, and account for almost 15% of land use in the Township. Wetlands provide groundwater recharge, flood control, nutrient removal and transformation, and are an important natural habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. While the report acknowledges that wetland protection exists through legislation at the state and federal levels, the SWRM Committee emphasizes that local protection measures are necessary, especially for smaller wetland areas not included in established state and federal wetland regulations.<sup>5</sup>

### **SWRM Committee Report Recommendations**

The SWRM Committee report recommends two strategic approaches for Ross Township water resource protection – regulation and education. Regulation options to implement can include overlay

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<sup>3</sup> Ross Township SWRM Planning Committee Final Report, September 1998, pg's.

<sup>4</sup> Ross Township SWRM Planning Committee Final Report, September 1998, pg's.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 5

zones for wetland protection, restrictions on developmental activities in sensitive wetland areas, oversight and review, as well as related regulatory approaches used successfully in other municipalities. Educational efforts should be coordinated with any regulatory effort, ensuring that residents work toward the shared goal of preserving and protecting Ross Township's rural character and natural environment.<sup>6</sup>

## **II. Convening Our Community; A Random Survey of Kalamazoo County, including the Ross Township Area**

In 1998, an urban consultant and author David Rusk was hired by the Kalamazoo Consortium for Higher Education to investigate land use planning and instigate growth management research concerning Kalamazoo County. Rusk's central themes are that for five decades two factors have shaped urban America's development patterns – sprawl and race – and that “elastic” cities, those able to expand through annexation or consolidation, are far healthier than the inelastic, boundary-choked cities of the Northeast and Midwest. He advocates new state laws to require regional land use planning, regional revenue sharing, and regional “fair share” affordable houses to counter the decline of inelastic central cities and many older, inner suburbs.

From Rusk's research and resulting The Kalamazoo County Compact report, a local Convening the Community countywide effort was implemented to pursue local input and support for regional planning coordination. Public forums were held at Kalamazoo College, as well as an all-day planning workshop at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Also, a countywide Convening the Community survey was produced, distributed and analyzed by the Kercher Center for Social Research at Western Michigan University as part of the local effort. Upon request, Dr. Hannah McKinney of Kalamazoo College, and a Convening the Community project group leader, distributed a random survey in Ross Township using the Convening the Community countywide format. Results of survey responses: 3,258 responses countywide, with 50 responses from Ross Township (using the identical countywide Convening the Community survey instrument Township-wide on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2000, via a random mailing of 200 surveys). The

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 5

study area considered Ross Township in the Convening the Community survey includes those residents who responded in Richland, and the villages of Galesburg, Vicksburg and Schoolcraft. This broad inclusion of other communities is due to the Convening the Community’s effort to differentiate urban from rural areas in Kalamazoo County.

While this survey does not provide a good community measurement tool for the Township, given the low response rate and study area considered Ross Township, some insights can be drawn as general Township concerns. Of note;

Quality of Life Questions: A basic quality of life question was asked: “In general, are you satisfied with the quality of life in your township, village, or city?” Most who responded were very or somewhat satisfied. Table 1 displays the quality of life responses according to a respondent’s jurisdiction. A smaller percentage (32.2%) of City of Kalamazoo residents were very satisfied with the quality of life than others in the county. Those in Climax, Charleston, and Wakeshma Townships were less satisfied with their quality of life than other county residents. The Ross Township respondents were also less satisfied.

**Table-1 – Quality of Life Questions**

| <b>Satisfaction with Life in township, City, or Village</b> |                       |                           |                      |                 |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Area</b>   | <b>Very Satisfied</b> | <b>Somewhat Satisfied</b> | <b>Not Satisfied</b> | <b>Not Sure</b> |
| Kalamazoo City  | 32.2%                 | 57.1%                     | 9.0%                 | 1.6%            |
| Portage   | 54.4%                 | 43.0%                     | 2.3%                 | 0.3%            |
| Kalamazoo, Comstock Townships, Parchment                    | 45.4%                 | 48.5%                     | 4.8%                 | 1.3%            |
| Alamo or Cooper Township                                    | 50.5%                 | 43.5%                     | 3.5%                 | 2.5%            |
| Richland or Ross Township                                   | 51.0%                 | 45.1%                     | 3.3%                 | 0.6%            |
| Oshtemo or Texas Township                                   | 45.4%                 | 49.0%                     | 4.4%                 | 1.3%            |
| Climax, Wakeshma, Charleston Townships                      | 37.8%                 | 48.7%                     | 12.2%                | 1.3%            |
| Prairie Ronde, Schoolcraft, Pavilion, Brady Townships       | 51.8%                 | 42.7%                     | 4.8%                 | 0.6%            |
| Augusta, Galesburg, Vicksburg or Schoolcraft Villages       | 46.3%                 | 44.9%                     | 7.8%                 | 1.0%            |
| Ross Township   | 44.0%                 | 46.0%                     | 8.0%                 | 2.0%            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>46.5%</b>          | <b>46.8%</b>              | <b>5.4%</b>          | <b>1.3%</b>     |



The question “Do you plan to continue living in the Kalamazoo County area or do you think you will move elsewhere in the next 5 years?” was asked in the July Ross Township Convening the Community survey. This question received a response indicating a strong retention of residents staying in the Township (66%). The responses to this question, with the cumulative response of the countywide Convening the Community responses also noted, are highlighted on Table 2

**Table 2 – Do you plan to continue living in the Kalamazoo County area or do you think you will move elsewhere in the next 5 years?**

|               | Stay here | May move | Not sure | No answer |
|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Ross Township | 66.0%     | 16.0%    | 6.0%     | 12.0%     |
| Total         | 75.9      | 13.3%    | 9.2%     | 1.7%      |

The quality of life responses from the Convening the Community survey was also compared to quality of life responses found in other community surveys. A 1999 survey of Michigan residents conducted by the Public Sector Consultants for the Kellogg Foundation asked a similar question and found that 20% of respondents felt life in their community was “excellent” and 55% said it was “good.” The Convening the Community survey respondents indicated they were more upbeat about changes in their family’s quality of life than respondents in the 1999 Perception Survey by the Greater Kalamazoo United Way in which 53% of respondents felt that quality of life was unchanged; 15.8% felt it had decreased; 18.3 % felt it had increased; and 13% were unsure.

Table 3 provides a summary of Convening the Community survey respondents perception of the area in which they live. Ross Township residents, both in the countywide survey and separate Ross Township survey, indicated they have an overwhelming perception that Ross Township is rural in character.

Table 3: Perception of area in which respondent lives

**Which of the following best characterizes the area you currently live**

|  | AREA Character of |             |               |                       |           | Total          |
|--|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
|  | Suburban          | Urban       | Rural         | Small Town<br>Village | Not       | Total          |
| Kalamazoo # of responses   | 142<br>39.9       | 195<br>54.8 | 2<br>.6       | 5<br>1.4              | 12<br>3.4 | 356<br>100.0   |
| Portage # of responses   | 303<br>80.4       | 56<br>14.9  | 5<br>1.3      | 5<br>1.3              | 8<br>2.1  | 377<br>100.0   |
| Townships of Comstock or # of responses<br>Comstock or City of Parchment               | 210<br>54.3       | 71<br>18.3  | 61<br>15.8    | 35<br>9.0             | 10<br>2.6 | 387<br>100.0   |
| Townships of Alamo or # of responses<br>Cooper   | 116<br>29.7       | 10<br>2.6   | 236<br>60.4   | 25<br>6.4             | 4<br>1.0  | 391<br>100.0   |
| Township of Richland # of responses<br>or Ross   | 51<br>13.5        | 6<br>1.6    | 223<br>58.8   | 9<br>25.15            | 4<br>1.1  | 379<br>100.0   |
| Township of Texas # of responses   | 213<br>54.9       | 28<br>7.2   | 119<br>30.7   | 14<br>3.6             | 14<br>3.6 | 388<br>100.0   |
| Townships of Climax or # of responses<br>Wakeshma, or Charleston, Village<br>of Climax | 5<br>2.1          | 7<br>3.0    | 171<br>73.4   | 49<br>21.0            | 1<br>.4   | 233<br>100.0   |
| Townships of Prairie Ronde, # of responses<br>Schoolcraft, Brady or Pavilion           | 40<br>10.1        | 6<br>1.5    | 279<br>70.6   | 65<br>16.5            | 5<br>1.3  | 395<br>100.0   |
| Village of Augusta, Vicksburg, # of responses<br>Schoolcraft, or Galesburg             | 11<br>3.7         | 3<br>1.0    | 57<br>19.3    | 224<br>75.9           |           | 295<br>100.0   |
| Ross Township # of responses   | 4<br>8.0          | 3<br>6.0    | 35<br>70.0    | 8<br>16.0             |           | 50<br>100.0    |
| Total # of responses   | 1,095<br>33.7     | 385<br>11.8 | 1,188<br>36.5 | 525<br>16.1           | 58<br>1.8 | 3,251<br>100.0 |

**.Table 4 – The Major Issues in the County Today (% listing this issue as a problem)**

|   | CRIME | JOBS  | FARM  | CLOSS | RACE | SCED  | ENVI  | TRANS | RICH  | TAX   | FREE  | Other |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Kalamazoo County                                      | 64.75 | 65.03 | 40.98 | 34.15 | 32.0 | 71.86 | 35.79 | 18.31 | 34.15 | 38.52 | 13.66 | 17.21 |
| Portage City  | 65.1  | 63.8  | 44.01 | 29.69 | 15.1 | 70.31 | 41.67 | 35.16 | 26.56 | 26.3  | 23.96 | 14.58 |
| Kalamazoo, Comstock Townships, Parchment              | 62.94 | 53.81 | 50.76 | 33.76 | 21.1 | 71.57 | 47.46 | 22.59 | 29.7  | 23.35 | 18.53 | 11.67 |
| Alamo or Cooper Township                              | 52.26 | 42.71 | 70.85 | 29.4  | 7.54 | 63.32 | 48.99 | 19.35 | 29.65 | 14.32 | 29.9  | 12.56 |
| Richland or Ross Township                             | 50.77 | 38.97 | 75.38 | 32.56 | 5.13 | 67.95 | 54.87 | 22.31 | 29.74 | 19.49 | 23.33 | 16.15 |
| Oshtemo or Texas Township                             | 51.79 | 49.74 | 67.44 | 32.31 | 9.23 | 59.49 | 55.38 | 26.67 | 24.1  | 12.82 | 26.92 | 17.69 |
| Climax, Wakeshma, Charleston Townships                | 47.9  | 38.24 | 73.95 | 40.34 | 4.2  | 63.45 | 56.3  | 12.18 | 22.27 | 15.13 | 38.24 | 17.64 |
| Prairie Ronde, Schoolcraft, Pavilion, Brady Townships | 50.75 | 41.46 | 75.63 | 27.64 | 5.78 | 53.02 | 58.79 | 18.34 | 21.36 | 11.81 | 32.41 | 18.09 |
| Augusta, Galesburg, Vicksburg, or Schoolcraft         | 52.03 | 49.66 | 70.95 | 34.12 | 7.09 | 62.16 | 48.65 | 16.22 | 26.01 | 11.49 | 26.35 | 21.28 |
| Ross Township   | 48.0  | 36.0  | 70.0  | 42.0  | 0.0  | 80.0  | 54.0  | 22.0  | 34.0  | 2.0   | 22.0  | 16.0  |
| Total   | 55.5  | 49.3  | 62.9  | 32.3  | 12   | 65    | 49.6  | 21.8  | 27.3  | 19.5  | 25.4  | 16.1  |

Key: CRIME=Crime/drugs/violence; JOBS=jobs/economy; FARM=loss of farmland and open spaces to development; CLOSS=loss of a sense of community; RACE=race relations; SCED=schools/education; ENVI=environmental problems; TRANS=transportation problems; RICH=gap between the rich and the poor; TAX=declining tax bases; FREE=decrease in personal freedoms; Other= other response. Cells with more than 50% responding for this issue are highlighted.

Table 4 outlines the major concerns of respondents according to their area of jurisdiction. Schools and education topped the list of important issues with over 50% of respondents (regardless of jurisdiction) listing it. Schools and education was followed by concerns about crime, and farmland and open space losses. Jobs and the economy as well as environmental problems were also cited as top concerns by almost 50% of the respondents. In Ross Township, schools/education ranked as a major issue by 80% of respondents. Loss of farmland and open space to development was considered a major concern by 70% of the 50 responding to the specific Ross Township survey, and environmental problems earned a 54% response.

### III. Previous Ross Township Community Surveys (1992, 1995, 1996)

In 1992, Ross Township updated their Master Plan. The update included a community survey. The 1992 survey had 665 responses, while both the 1995 and 1996 surveys had 392 responses each. A review of these surveys provides the following general observations;

- ✓ Over 50% of respondents in the 1992, 1995 and 1996 community surveys supported the sustaining of Township agricultural land use, as well as the use of two agricultural zoning classifications (one limiting residential development and one permitting residential development).
- ✓ 86% of respondents in the 1992, 1995 and 1996 community surveys felt the Township should try to preserve large areas of open space (such as wetlands and natural areas) as undeveloped.
- ✓ The desire for additional industrial and commercial development in Ross Township was discouraged, with the majority of respondents in the 1992, 1995 and 1996 community surveys desiring that such development stay the same or decrease.
- ✓ The previous Ross Township community surveys assessed future community growth as follows:

|                  | <u>1992</u> | <u>1995</u> | <u>1996</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A. Grow Rapidly  | 6.9%        | 3.3%        | 3.3%        |
| B. Stay the Same |             | 41.5%       | 34.2%       |
|                  |             |             | 34.2%       |
| C. Grow Slowly   | 50.8%       | 56.9%       | 56.9%       |
| D. No Answer     | 0.8%        | 5.6%        | 5.6%        |

The results indicate a consistent view that growth should take place slowly or remain the same within Ross Township.

- ✓ Ranking the following departments and services in the Township as Good or Fair using the previous community surveys provide the follow response;

|                        | <u>1992</u> | <u>1995</u> | <u>1996</u> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A. Roads               | 73.8%       | 67.5%       | 67.6%       |
| B. Police Service      | 77.1%       | 83.8%       | 83.9%       |
| C. Fire Service        | 73.1%       | 86.9%       | 87.0%       |
| D. Ambulance Service   | 80.0%       | 76.2%       | 76.3%       |
| E. Building Department | N/A         | 43.5%       | 43.6%       |

Reviewing the results of Township departments and services Good or Fair rankings, the departments appear to have provided consistently good to adequate service for Ross residents.

#### **IV. The Four Township Water Resources Council Water Resources Paper, 2001.**

The Four Township Water Resource Council (FTWRC) is a cooperative regional effort involving the Kalamazoo County communities of Richland and Ross Townships, and the Barry County communities of Prairieville and Barry Townships. A Water Resources Paper was completed, with the assistance from an EPA grant, in 2001. The intent of the Water Resources Paper was to provide land use planning and zoning tools which could aid in the protection and improvement of water quality. Given the area's rich water resources, the report is a valuable reference to assist in addressing watershed and land use planning issues.

Specifically, the FTWRC Water Resource Paper presents a variety of "issue papers":

- Water Resource Paper #1: Farmland Preservation

- Water Resource Paper #2: Open Space Protection
- Water Resource Paper #3: Surface Water and Groundwater Protection
- Water Resource Paper #4: Environmentally Sensitive Areas Protection
- Water Resource Paper #5: Lake Access and Overcrowding

Again, the FTWRC Water Resource Paper is a valuable reference to assist in better understanding the common ties of water resource planning with overall land use planning. Ross Township has been an active member in the FTWRC, and many of the Water Resource Paper land use preservation tool suggestions were integrated into this Comprehensive Plan (such as Cluster Development and Farmland Preservation).