

OVERRIDING CONCEPT

The future distribution of land use in Ross Township will be based upon the overriding concept of the preservation of the Township's natural resources. This concept will be demonstrated through the conservation of the agricultural landscape; the preservation of open space and rural character through appropriately located and designed residential development; and concentrated, well-managed commercial and service centers.

Future residential development is projected to consist of an estimated additional 500 housing units (25% increase) by the year 2040. The Township proposes to accommodate this projected growth within desirable and efficient land use patterns. Specifically, residential clustering and open space patterns, designed to take advantage of (and preserve) the natural environment of the Township, will be encouraged. This method of development is a diversion from the linear pattern of residential development that has occurred in preceding decades. That pattern created medium and large size lots that depleted usable agricultural resources, increased access conflicts, and detracted from the sense of 'openness' that defines rural character.

A more effective approach to attaining the Township's land use vision is to go beyond the standard types of residential subdivisions and concentrate development in 'pockets' or 'clusters,' separated by expansive open space areas. These development pockets should be located to minimize impacts on sensitive natural resources and agricultural land while being easily accessible to public facilities and utilities.

The proposed future distribution of land set forth in this Plan was developed using previous community studies and reports, the June, 2000 Ross Township Community Survey, the results of the Land Use Planning Charrette held at Brook Lodge in October, 2000, and Township Planning Commission direction provided during the 2011 and 2022 Master Plan Update processes. The land use vision derived from that input is set forth-in detail in the Goals and Objectives contained in Section VI. Overall, the future land use patterns proposed in this Plan consist of the following:

- the existing concentrations of residential development around the Township's lakes, specifically Gull Lake, Stony Lake and Sherman Lake, will remain; however, further concentrated residential growth in these areas will not be encouraged;
- future concentrated residential growth will be focused around the Village of Augusta and in defined clustered/open space patterns off 44th, 46th and 48th Streets and in portions along "G" Avenue;
- high density residential growth will be directed to areas in close proximity to established service centers and existing planned infrastructure;
- the balance of the Township will remain primarily in open space and agriculture; the existing institutional uses (primarily MSU) and linear residential use patterns along County roads are recognized as existing land use patterns;
- commercial development will be directed to the Township's commercial core located at the southern end of Gull Lake;
- industrial land use will be limited to the area located between Custer Road and the Conrail line.

TABLE VII-1 – ROSS TOWNSHIP POPULATION – LAND AREA PROJECTIONS

Estimated Population 2017						4,837
Estimated Population 2040						6,000
Total Additional Population 2017-2040						1,163
Year Increments	2017-2020	2021-2025	2026-2030	2031-2040	2017-2040	
Additional Population	137	200	205	621	1,163	
New Total Population	4,974	5,174	5,379	6,000	6,000	
Median Household Density	2.35	2.35	2.35	2.35	2.35	
New Housing Units from In-Migration	58	85	87	264	494	
New Housing Units from Existing Population	2	3	3	10	18	
Sub-Total New Housing Units	60	88	90	274	512	
Total (X 4% vacancy factor)	62	91	93	285	531	
92% Single-Family Units	58	84	86	262	490	
4 % Duplex Units	2	4	4	11	21	
4% Multiple Family Units	2	4	4	11	21	
New Single-Family Units						
70% Clustered Units	41	59	60	183	343	
Acres Needed @ 1.5 Units/Acre plus streets	32	47	48	146	273	
Additional Open Space (50%)	32	47	48	146	273	
Total Additional Acres	64	94	96	292	546	
30% Un-Clustered Units	17	25	26	79	147	
Acres Needed @ 1 Unit/Acre	17	25	26	79	147	
Total Additional Acres (Single-Family)	81	119	122	371	693	
New Duplex Units						
Total Acres Needed @ 2.5 Units/Acre	1	2	2	4	9	
New Multiple Family Housing Units						
Acres Needed @ 8 Units/Acre	1	1	1	2	5	
TOTAL NEW RESIDENTIAL ACRES NEEDED	83	122	125	377	707	

SOURCE: Ross Township, 2020

LAND USE PLAN CLASSIFICATIONS

The Future Land Use Map is an important component of the Ross Township Master Plan because it illustrates the vision and recommendations for the physical development of the Township through the creation of land use plan classifications. The Master Plan is also designed to serve as the basis of the Zoning Ordinance, a key implementation tool of the Plan. As a result, an understanding of the relationship between the land use plan classifications and the districts in the Zoning Ordinance is crucial.

The following list of land use plan classifications and zoning plan is intended to describe what land uses are desired in different parts of Ross Township, and explain how those land use plan classifications translate into zoning districts.

Agricultural

The lands within this Plan classification are primarily those associated with the MSU W.K. Kellogg Biological Station located on the east side of Gull Lake in Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; MDNR property located in Sections 9 and 10; the Kellogg Experimental Forest in Sections 22 and 27; the former Brook Lodge property in Sections 21 and 28, and Fort Custer State Park Land in the southeast corner of the Township (Map VII-1). Individually, these



properties represent large areas of agricultural activity and open space that play a primary role in creating the rural character of the Township. Collectively, these same properties combine to establish natural resource and wildlife corridors important in the preservation of that rural experience unique to Ross Township.

Beyond the outright purchase of these lands for the purposes of preserving them as agriculture or open space, options for controlling the location and pace of development and preservation are limited to public or nonprofit land use controls. Within the set of land use controls currently available, the most widely used is zoning. The Township has embraced a zoning concept intended to preserve large

agricultural or conservation areas through the use of sliding scale density standards. These are designed to limit the number of non-farm residences and manage the arrangement of non-agricultural land within identified areas. The 'AG' Agricultural Preservation District has been created in the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the implementation of this concept. Ross Township remains committed to promoting the retention or preservation of its agricultural lands and conservation areas.

A 'Purchase of Development Rights' (PDR) program is another available zoning concept designed to promote the preservation of agricultural land. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act allows for the purchase of development rights for special agricultural lands and land that can be used for open space, historic preservation or other public uses that are contiguous to special existing agriculture. The concept of purchasing development rights is intended to preserve these lands from development while enabling the landowner to be paid or compensated for the development value. The result is the perpetual retention of the property for agriculture and other uses in the public good. Implementation of a PDR program within the Township would require the adoption of a development rights ordinance, which may be adopted as part of the Zoning Ordinance.

Residential-Rural

The history and the character of Ross Township is defined by its natural resources, particularly Gull Lake, Augusta Creek, and the area's extensive wetlands. Agricultural activity, especially row crop production, is also characteristic of the Township's landscape. Both long-time and recently settled residents of the Township want the area's natural resources, as well as the historic and rural elements of its character, preserved. Consequently, this Plan promotes the preservation of open space (forests, shrub and grasslands), wetlands, and agricultural land within the framework of existing residential land use and the residential growth that is projected to occur.

Lands within this classification include open space, namely forested areas, shrub and grasslands, wetlands, and rural residential land use currently in existence along County roads. Further, 30 percent of the total increase in single-family

residential units in the Township (147 units) is projected to develop within these rural areas, outside of areas identified for concentrated residential growth (ie. Residential-Low Density).

Consistent with the overriding goal to conserve the Township's natural resources and rural character, existing open areas of forest, shrub, and/or grassland, as well as agricultural lands, are identified for conservation. Residential development is proposed to be limited to single-family use at densities and in patterns designed to stabilize and protect the essential rural characteristics of the area. Specifically, development will consist of either larger lots along County roads or smaller lots within or near existing residentially developed areas. Additional concentrations of residential growth around the Township's lakes will not be encouraged.

The "R-R" Rural Residential District established by the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance has been designed to implement the objectives of the Residential-Rural Plan Classification. This district will encompass land in rural areas of the Township where land use consists primarily of single-family residential dwellings, farms, and other compatible rural activities. Although it is recognized that much of the land area within this district may eventually be converted from farm and vacant fields to residential use, it is intended to allow low density residential development while encouraging the preservation of large tracts of land for agriculture or conservation.

Residential-Low Density

The increase in residential development within the Township, as well as the substantial acquisition and development of land for golf courses, has had the greatest single impact upon the Township's rural and agricultural landscape. The need to accommodate the number of households forecast to be created within the Township while retaining agricultural land and preserving open space remains as the Township's primary land use issue.

To provide for rational, efficient residential development and facilitate the retention of agricultural lands and extensive open space in the outlying rural areas, this Plan calls for the majority of new residential growth to occur in concentrated patterns within defined development areas within the Township.

Specifically, a target of 70 percent of new single-family housing (343 units) will be encouraged to be accommodated through the cluster/open space form of development. The 'R-1' Low Density Residential District established by the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance has been designed to implement the objectives of the Residential-Low Density Plan Classification.

Residential-Cluster/Open Space Development

Within cluster/open space developments, residential land use will be characterized by concentrations of housing in clusters separated by large, contiguous open spaces that are allocated to recreation, trails, the protection of unique environmental features, or other natural areas. The same number of units can be built in a cluster development as a traditional subdivision, because the developer is allowed to decrease the lot size as defined in the Zoning Ordinance, thereby increasing the density of the developed portion of the project and creating open/natural/recreation space in the balance of the project. The cluster/open space approach is more efficient, aesthetic, and environmentally sensitive than traditional forms of residential development.

The following figures depict traditional samples of subdivision design and cluster/open space development. Figure 1 show a traditional subdivision where the entire parcel is developed with single-family lots. Figure 2 show the same parcel as a residential cluster development with each lot area reduced in size and the balance of the parcel allocated to natural open space. Figure 3 is another depiction of a sample cluster/open space development similar to the type that could potentially be established within Ross Township.

The proposed geographic distribution of clustered developments in the Township takes into consideration these location factors: the area is currently being or could be considered for large scale residential development on larger parcels that have been assembled or can be assembled; the area will have the least impact on the depletion of prime agricultural lands; the area's soils are not conducive to wetness or flooding; the area offers protection of surface water and groundwater; the availability of public utilities; and the area's existing primary street network.

The Clustered Land Development and the Open Space Preservation Development zoning provisions have been established to facilitate the cluster/open space development approach. These development options are intended to allow for innovation and flexibility in both the scope and design of residential developments, while allowing for the management of residential growth consistent with the overriding concept for future land use distribution in the Township, as well as the goals and objectives of both the Residential-Rural and Residential-Low Density Plan Classifications.



Figure 1

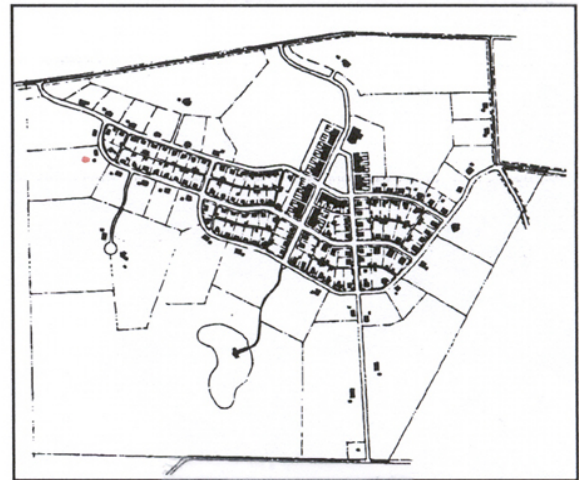


Figure 2

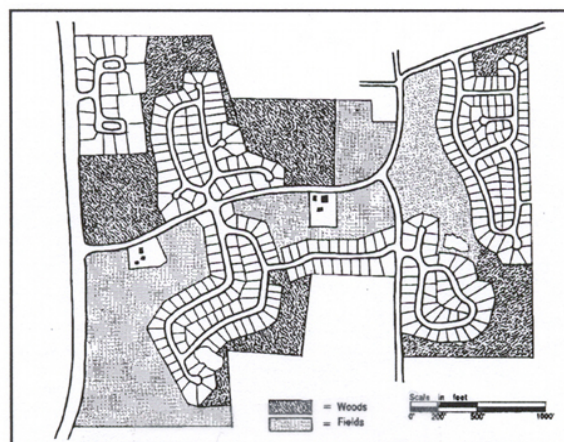


Figure 3

SOURCE: Rural by Design by Randall Arendt; American Planning Association 1994

Residential-Medium Density

The Residential-Medium Density Classification is designed to allow the Township to plan for projected housing needs and an efficient system of providing services by concentrating development. The Classification will provide opportunities for a higher density of single- and two-family residential land use where adequate facilities and services can be provided. Using an average net density of 2.5 units per acre, land area projections suggest a need for the Township to provide an additional nine acres of land for medium density single-family and two-family housing development over the course of the next 20 years. (Table VII-1)

Medium density residential development is designated for areas north of the Village of Augusta (on Augusta Drive) and on the south end of Gull Lake (on “D” Avenue) in close proximity to the commercial core. These are intended to be general locations for descriptive purposes and should not preclude the consideration of expanding medium density residential development into areas in close proximity (1/4 mile) to the Village and the Village ‘Center’ on the south end of Gull Lake. The ‘R-2’ Medium Density Residential District established by the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance will be used to identify specific sites planned for medium density single-family and two-family residential development within these general areas.

Residential-High Density

The Residential-High Density Plan Classification is intended to provide opportunities for a wider variety of housing types, as well as variations in density and housing arrangements. Using an average net density of 8 units per acre, land area projections suggest a need for the Township to provide an additional five acres of land for high density residential development over the next 20 years. (Table VII-1)

High density residential development should be restricted to areas where adequate roads and utilities are provided and has been designated for areas north of the Village of Augusta (on Augusta Drive) and on the south end of Gull Lake in close proximity to the commercial core. The ‘R-3’ High Density Residential and ‘R-4’ Mobile Home Park Districts established by the Ross Township Zoning

Ordinance will be used to direct high density residential development within these areas.

Commercial

An additional 110 acres of retail/service commercial development is estimated to be added to the Township's land use inventory. This expanded commercial development will be directed to the southern end of Gull Lake (38th Street/"D" Avenue/M-89 area) and serve as the commercial core of the Township, outside of the Village of Augusta.

This commercial core is envisioned to be developed within a 'village center' concept, with a relatively high-density mix of retail stores, marina operations and residential units. The 'C-1' Bay Commercial District established by the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance will be used to implement these objectives of the Commercial Plan Classification. Mixed land use, neotraditional design concepts, pedestrian-friendly architectural requirements, and site and corridor design and safety considerations, including access, landscaping, and parking, will be achieved through the application of the planned unit development concept and/or the 'bay-commercial' zoning approach.

Limited commercial development will also be provided through small neighborhood commercial centers designed to provide convenient services to surrounding residential areas. An overlay zoning approach will be used to establish standards of design and ensure compatibility with nearby residential properties.

With a proposed additional 110 acres of commercial land use area, the total commercial land area within the Township will encompass less than one percent of the Township's geographic area by the year 2040.

Industrial

Industrial development will be limited primarily to a 111-acre area located between Custer Road and the Conrail line in Sections 25, 35, and 36. The area identified for industrial development is in close proximity to the Fort Custer

Industrial Park west of Springfield, which offers a comprehensive package for industrial development.

The industrial area is intended to provide land for industries of a manufacturing or service nature where all work is carried on within an enclosed building and produces little external effect of an objectional nature to surrounding properties. The 'I-R' Restricted Industrial District established by the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance has been designed to implement the objectives of the Industrial Plan Classification and will be used to direct industrial development to this area of the Township. Appropriate site planning that provides for building design, setback, landscaping, signage, parking, and environmental impacts will be achieved through the application of the planned unit development concept and/or an 'industrial park' or 'planned industrial' approach.

Any proposed industrial expansion within the Township should consider the proximity of convenient transportation systems, availability of adequate and reliable utilities, impacts on adjacent non-industrial users, and the threat of encroachment of non-industrial users.

Institutional

This Plan presumes that Township public facilities will remain essentially in the same locations, as they currently exist. That includes the Township's cemeteries, the Township Hall and Fire Station on M-89, as well as the Fire Station and Library located in the Village of Augusta. While there may be modifications and expansions to these facilities over the next 20 years, it is not anticipated that new facilities of any significant size will be constructed on additional parcels.

Public and quasi-public institutional properties within the Township are also expected to remain essentially as they are today (see Table IV-2). Any modifications or expansions to existing facilities will likely occur within existing boundaries.

The school districts serving Ross Township (Gull Lake and Galesburg/Augusta) do not currently propose the expansion of existing facilities or the establishment of

new facilities within the Township in the near future. Any plans for facility expansion should be proposed consistent with a District-wide facility improvement plan developed and implemented in coordination with the Township's overall planning efforts.

The Institutional Plan Classification is not intended to relate to a specific zoning district in the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance but instead serves to identify the boundaries of existing public and quasi-public facilities and properties.

Recreational

Aside from the existing Township Park on Gull Lake, no new public park sites are proposed to be set aside for recreational use.

In January, 2020, the Township adopted the 2020-2025 Ross Township Recreation Plan. Informed by a township survey and public involvement in the planning process, the Plan sets forth an Action Program focused on both the use and conservation of the Township's natural attractions; recreational opportunities in the Ross Township Park; non-motorized recreational connectivity; and education.

Since many of the recreational facilities within the Township are under institutional ownership, the Township will concentrate its recreation efforts on improvements to the Ross Township Park and the development of a scenic trail that provides connections between the Township activity centers and recreation areas.

The development of a master bike system or linear park plan should be accomplished as a foundation for guiding any expansion of the bike path system within the Township. Both the development and the implementation of such a plan should be done in conjunction with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, MDOT, Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT), Gull Lake Area Trail (GLAT), and surrounding jurisdictions to facilitate coordination, financial assistance, and a region-wide bike path/trail system.

New bike lanes could be placed along County Roads and a linear hiking/biking trail could potentially be developed along Augusta Creek, running the entire

north/south length of the Township. The portion of the North Country National Scenic Trail, (a trail network from the New York State/Vermont border to central North Dakota), within Ross Township is currently open and will continue to be improved. The North Country National Scenic Trail enters Ross Township along B.L. 94, at the Kalamazoo County line winding west to Augusta and then north through the Kellogg Forest Area and Cheff Center area to the Barry County line.

The Recreational Plan Classification is not intended to relate to a specific zoning district in the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance but instead serves to identify the Township's existing recreational facilities.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

ZONING PLAN

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires the Master Plan to include a Zoning Plan, which ‘includes an explanation of how the land use classifications on the land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.’ Table 12 summarizes the land use classifications and identifies related zoning districts as outlined in the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance, as well as providing recommendations for implementing the Master Plan through the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.

TABLE VII-2 ZONING PLAN

Future Land Use Classifications	Corresponding Zoning Districts
Agricultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG Agricultural District • This district is intended to apply to large tracts used for farming or conservation and to allow primarily agricultural and specialized rural uses with limited non-farm residential use. • A sliding scale density approach is envisioned.
Residential-Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-R Rural Residential District • The primary purpose of this district is to allow low density, rural residential development while encouraging the preservation of agriculture or conservation. • Residential densities of 1 unit/acre are allowed.
Residential-Low Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-1 Low Density Residential District • This district is intended to provide for single-family residential development that is clustered so as to retain the rural character and preserve open space. • Residential densities of 2 units/acre are allowed.
Residential-Medium Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-2 Medium Density Residential District • This district is designed to provide opportunities for a higher density of single- and two-family residential use where adequate facilities are provided; specifically, near the Village of Augusta and the south end of Gull Lake near the commercial core. • Residential densities of 3-4 units/acre are envisioned.
Residential-High Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-3 High Density Residential District & R-4 Mobile Home Park District

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These districts together provide for a wider variety of housing type, as well as variations in density and building arrangement. • This district will allow the most intensive residential development, including two family and multi-family uses at densities not to exceed 8 units/acre.
Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-1 Bay Commercial District • This is a unique district designed to promote development within a ‘village commercial’ concept that allows a small-scale mix of commercial and residential land use. • Neo-traditional design promoted through site development standards specific to the district.
Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-2 Neighborhood Commercial Overlay District • This district is intended to allow the limited establishment of small neighborhood commercial centers convenient to nearby residential areas. • The overlay approach is used to apply standards of design.
Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-R Restricted Industrial District • This district was developed to allow planned industrial development or an ‘industrial park’. • This district is intended to apply to the area between Fort Custer Drive and the Conrail Line. (Section 25, 35, & 36)
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no corresponding district to this classification. • The classification largely identifies the boundaries of existing facilities/properties.
Recreational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no corresponding district to this classification. • The classification largely identifies the boundaries of existing recreational facilities/properties.