

# **GOLDEN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

**Prepared by the  
Golden Township Planning Commission**

**November 2002**

**GOLDEN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN  
OCEANA COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

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## INTRODUCTION

Golden Township presents different images to different people. Year-round and seasonal residents, farmers, business owners, and elected and appointed officials have differing perceptions of the Township's image, and of what the future might hold. These perceptions likely include:

- An agricultural community;
- A resort community;
- A busy tourist destination with a bustling business near the shore of Silver Lake;
- A quiet rural area with beautiful natural features;
- A great rural area with beautiful natural features;
- A convenient place to take a vacation;
- A rural Township with large tracts of undeveloped land, some of which is ideally suited for development; and
- An area with limited and fragile natural features and natural resources.

While each group's perception differs as to what the Township might become in the future, a number of views are likely held in common. Some of these are:

- Golden Township is becoming more developed as trends and conditions change in the region, state and nation.
- Without regulatory tools, Township officials have a limited ability to influence how vacant land is developed, how land uses are established over the short and long run, and how natural features and resources are protected and preserved.
- The interests of year-round and seasonal residents, and members of the Township's agricultural, business, tourism and developmental communities must be balanced in order to preserve those qualities that make the Township a desirable place in which to live, retire, do business and visit.
- In order to benefit the entire community, present and future, and to preserve the unique character of the area and its natural features and resources, future development must occur in a planned and coordinated manner.

Originally developed in November, 1992, adopted in January, 1993, and amended in July, 1997, the Golden Township Master Plan has aided the Township's Planning Commission and Board of Trustees in the on-going process of striking a balance between competing interests by guiding land use and development. This updated plan builds upon the foundation laid by the 1992 plan, as amended and will serve a number of purposes. It will:

- Provide a basic plan that is consistent with the intent, purpose, and requirements of the Township planning Act;
- Provide goals and policies for future land use and development which recognize and reflect the interrelationship between economic, environmental and social interests;
- Provide a means for residents to participate in determining the future of their community, recognizing the validity of the township's varied interests and interest groups;

- Support the continued strength and vitality of the Mears and Silver Lake business districts;
- Provide goals and policies to preserve and protect the Township's natural resources and features, and scenic characteristics, including its lakes and streams, shorelines, sand dunes, ground water, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and abundance of recreational amenities;
- Promote the preservation of natural features that contribute to the Townships character and its tourism-oriented economic base;
- Promote a coordinated land use plan that is consistent with the goals established during the planning process, designating areas of land in keeping with the natural soil properties, vegetation and terrain as development ensues;
- Provide policies describing how future land uses should be established, and how land and natural resources should be preserved and/or protected when altered or developed over time;
- Provide a tool for use by Township officials during the process of reviewing future land development project proposals; and
  - Outline methods by which this plan may be implemented.

**COMMUNITY PROFILE**

**POPULATION TRENDS**

Table 1.1 presents an overview of population growth trends and projections between the years 1960 and 2010. Oceana County's population increased by 4,419 persons (almost 20%) between the 1990 and 2000 Census. Over the same time period, the Township's population increased by 508 persons (almost 40%).

Population growth projections indicate the Township's population could increase by approximately 10% by the year 2005 and an additional 10% by the year 2010. Those projections would seem to be conservative, considering the 40% increase in the Township's population between 1990-2000.

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2010</u>
Golden Township	787	871	1358	1302	1810	1980	2166
Oceana County	16547	17984	22002	22454	26873	29399	32162

Source: West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

**AGE OF POPULATION**

Table 1.2 presents a breakdown by age groups within the Township, county and state populations. The largest segment of Township population is the mature family (45-64-) age group, followed by the family forming (25-44) and school age (5-19) age groups. Retirees and seniors (65 plus, college/young adults (20-24) and the under five age groups represent the balance of the population. The distribution of persons across age groups differs from county and state figures in the mature family age group where the Township is quite a bit higher.

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Golden Township</u>		<u>Oceana County</u>		<u>State of Michigan</u>	
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
Under 5 years	8%	5%	8%	6%	7%	7%
5-19 years	19%	21%	23%	24%	19%	19%
20-24 years	7%	5%	6%	5%	11%	11%
25-44 years	26%	23%	29%	26%	32%	32%
45-64 years	25%	30%	20%	24%	19%	19%
65 years plus	15%	16%	14%	14%	12%	12%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Whereas the age characteristics of the population have remained steady for the State of Michigan between 1990 and 2000, both Oceana county and Golden Township have experienced age shifts in several age groups.

**HOUSING**

Table 1.3 illustrates increases in the Townships housing stock since 1980. These figures reflect increases both in the number of year-round and seasonal dwellings. It is interesting to note that there were about the same number of year-round homes built in the Township between 1990 and 2000, but almost twice as many seasonal homes built in that period. The Township can expect continued second and seasonal home development similar to other waterfront and resort communities throughout Michigan.

	1980	1990	2000
Year-Round	555	633 (up 78 or 14%)	712 (up 79 or 12%)
Seasonal	983	1155 (up 172 or 17%)	1491 (up 339 or 29%)
Total	1538	1788 (up 250 or 16%)	2203 (up 415 or 23%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Census & Township Zoning Permit Data

Table 1.4 illustrates the percentage of year-round and seasonal homes. Seasonal home figures suggest that Golden Township experiences a population increase well in excess of 100% (assuming 100% occupancy) during the summer season. The Township will experience continued seasonal home construction and conversion for year round use over the short and long term.

Type of Dwelling Unit	Pentwater Township		Golden Township		Benona Township	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Year Round	50%	45%	34%	32%	52%	48%
Seasonal	50%	55%	66%	68%	48%	52%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

TABLE 1.5 illustrates the age of the Township's housing stock. The table indicates that the Township experienced the greatest increase in numbers of homes built between the years 1960 and 1979. While the exact number of seasonal homes built during that period is unavailable, it is likely that second home construction activity constituted a major portion of those figures. The Township continues to experience dramatic growth in its housing stock.

Year Built	Number of Homes Built	Total Number of Homes
1939 & earlier	305	305
1940-1949	51	356
1950-1959	64	420
1960-1969	476	896
1970-1979	577	1473
1980-1990	315	1788
1001-2000	415	2203

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## NATURAL FEATURES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural features are interrelated biological systems that provide tangible benefits to residents and visitors, and influence the suitability of land for various types of land uses. Although they are basically areas from which to steer development, they make the Township unusually attractive for development, they make the Township unusually attractive for development, and may be responsibly utilized as focal points of community action.

- Wetlands provide important wildlife habitat, and play an important role in the hydrologic cycle. Wetlands store and filter storm and flood waters.
- Woodlands provide renewable timber resources, important wildlife habitat, passive and active recreational opportunities, and help purify the air we breathe and the water we drink.
- Lakes and streams support aquatic and shoreline habitat, and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities.
- Dune formations provide uniquely scenic views and recreational opportunities.
- Roadway corridors establish accessibility to and within the township.
- Prime and unique farmlands provide food and fiber, and are an integral element of the Township's historic and visual character, and economic base.
- Groundwater serves as the sole source of drinking water for Township residents.
- Soil influences the suitability of land for a variety of land uses and types of development, facilitating some and precluding others.
- Frequency and velocity of air flow in certain areas of the Township provide an opportunity for wind generated power sources.
- Mineral deposits, such as sand and gravel, can be utilized in the construction and maintenance of area and regional infrastructure.
- Mineral deposits, such as petroleum, natural gas and chloride, have commercial value.

In many communities natural resources have been utilized and/or compromised for short-term economic gain or short-sighted development, with little consideration for long-term impacts on local or regional quality of life. In such cases, utilization of non-renewable resources, and over-utilization of renewable resources have degraded their tangible value, and resulted in irreparable impacts on future quality of life. If managed over the long term, natural resources benefit regional and local economies, and local and regional quality of life. An overview of natural features and natural resources follows.

### WETLANDS

Wetlands are found along streams, creeks, at the bottom of natural drainage ways, and along the shorelines of lakes. Wetlands play an important role in the hydrologic cycle by serving as groundwater recharge areas, and by retaining and filtering sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants from storm water runoff. Wetlands also provide habitat for a variety of plant and animal life, and are a visually pleasing element in the Township's character.

According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources "Wetland Protection Handbook", a wetland is an area "where water is a controlling factor in the development of plant and animal communities. It may be standing water above the ground, or a underground water table that is close to the surface. The water may be present during the entire year, or only during part of the year. Wetlands are often transitional areas between upland habitats and aquatic habitats."

Golden Township has an array of wetlands, as illustrated by the wetlands map on page 25.  
(INSERT WETLANDS MAP)

#### OPEN SPACE

Undeveloped open space contributes to the Township's rural character and visual appeal. Open space includes farmlands, woodlands, and shrub and herbaceous fields.

#### WOODLANDS

Woodlands provide wildlife habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal life, contribute to hydrologic and groundwater recharge cycles, serve as holding and filtration areas for storm water runoff, prevent soil erosion, and afford a variety of recreational opportunities. If properly managed, woodlands provide profitable renewable timber resources.

The Township's forested areas contribute to the community's historic rural character. Many are found on slopes and hillsides, creek valleys, and adjoining wetlands areas. Woodlands are scattered throughout the Township, most notable in the northern and southern sections.

#### LAKES AND STREAMS

Lakes and streams support aquatic, shoreline, and stream bank wildlife habitats. A significant segment of the Township's tourism industry is dependent on water recreation. Poor land development practices adversely impact the quality of surface waters, and damage shoreline and stream bank ecosystems. Land use decisions, the activities allowed by those decisions, and the practices employed by those activities determine the delivery of pollutants to waterways. Water quality degradation results from, among other causes, soil erosion, warming of the water due to tree removal, lawn fertilizer runoff and the movement of effluent from septic systems into high water table areas around lakes.

The hydrology map on page 26 shows locations of major water bodies in the township (INSERT HYDROLOGY MAP)

#### TOPOGRAPHY

The Township's topography is characterized by rolling hills, majestic sand dunes, and sandy beaches along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Higher elevations in the Township's central portion afford views of Lake Michigan and the Silver Lake sand dunes. The steepest slopes are generally associated with the sand dunes of Lake Michigan and Silver Lake.

The topographical map on page 27 indicates elevations in the township. (INSERT TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP)

#### SLOPE

Degree OF slope influences the capability of land to accommodate septic systems, roadways, building foundations, and other improvements. Slopes of 12 percent or less are typically viewed as presenting slight limitations to development. Slopes between 12 and 18 percent present limitations which must be overcome by careful site planning, building design, and construction methods. Michigan Department of Health standards for septic system absorption fields indicate that slopes in excess of 12 percent are to be avoided. Slopes in excess of 18 percent are generally considered unsuited to development. Such slopes can be suitable for timber management, passive recreation, wildlife habitat, and other low-intensity uses.

## SOILS

Soil maps and detailed soil descriptions appear at pages 28 through 30. (INSERT MAPS FROM OCEANA COUNTY SOIL SURVEY)

Soil characteristics present opportunities for the development of certain land uses, and limitations for others.

Permeability, filtration capability, load bearing capacity, shrink-swell potential, and slope influence the ability of land to accommodate septic systems, building foundations and roadways. Other features influence productivity of agricultural and forestry operations, wildlife habitat, recreational uses, and the potential for surface and groundwater contamination.

Descriptions of soil characteristics which influence the suitability of land for intensive development appear below.

### Hydric/Wetland Soils

Hydric/Wetland soils are generally unsuited for septic system installations, road construction and building site development. These soils tend to be of insufficient strength to support building foundations. Shrinking and swelling of soils during freeze/thaw cycles can damage building foundations unless soils are modified with appropriate fill material.

### Septic Limitations

High water table, wetness, slow permeability, slope, rapid permeability, and poor filtration capability influence the ability of septic systems to function properly. Hydric wetland soils are characterized by slow permeability and wetness and are unsuited for septic system installations.

Soils exhibiting rapid permeability and poor filtration capabilities are unable to adequately filter septic system effluent. The threat of groundwater contamination from septic system effluent exists when septic systems are constructed in areas of soils exhibiting these characteristics. Intensive development in areas with these types of soils may pose a threat to groundwater supplies.

Even under the best of conditions, concentrations of septic systems on lots less than three-quarters of an acre in size (such as are found in most older platted subdivisions in shoreline communities) can result in the pollution of ground and surface water. Threats to ground and surface waters increase when soils are rapidly permeable, or have poor filtration capability, or when a high water table is present.

Densely developed waterfront areas are often occupied by cottages and summer homes that have been converted from seasonal to year-round dwelling units. In many cases, these homes rely upon older, poorly designed septic systems that worked well during times of occasional use, though failed when subject to constant and increased use. Such failures have been documented as a cause of groundwater and surface water pollution.

## GROUNDWATER

All Township residents rely on groundwater as their sole source of drinking water. Ground water is susceptible to pollution from a variety of land uses, including, but not limited to: inadequate and overcrowded septic systems, unplugged wells, loss of wetlands and the cleansing process they provide and leakage from discarded vehicles. Due to the sandiness of the soil so predominant in the Township, its groundwater is very vulnerable to widespread contamination. Once polluted, it is difficult, if not impossible, to remediate pollution in an efficient and cost effective manner.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Infrastructure may be defined as “capital facilities necessary or available for the conduct of commerce and residency.” Examples are roads, waterways, and community water and sewer, as well as public and private utilities. These elements, to the extent they are or are not available, have a significant impact on patterns of development and their consequences.

**TRANSPORTATION**

There is currently no rail transportation in the township.

Water transportation is primarily recreational.

There is no public transportation operating in the township.

The transportation map on page 31 provides information on locations of roads in the Township, differentiated as hard surfaced, gravel, improved and unimproved. The Township assesses a road mileage of 2 mills, which makes it economically possible to maintain its roads in good condition. The more traveled roads in the Township are paved, improved roads are well maintained; and roads which are described as unimproved are in good condition. While there are no State roads in the Township, Silver Lake State Park would be well-served by a State trunkline as are all other State parks in Michigan. (INSERT TRANSPORTATION MAP)

**COMMUNITY WATER AND SEWER**

The availability of community water and sewer plays an important role in the direction and extent of development. Although development can, and often does proceed in a rural area without benefit of these services, they can proved for or prevent development.

Density of development and consequential proliferation of septic systems in areas that are sensitive to contamination of surface water and /or ground water also create a need for community sewer systems including wastewater treatment processing. This situation exists in Golden Township and alternative solutions are being explored.

**OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE**

In terms of other infrastructure, Golden Township appears to be well serviced with electric power by consumers Energy and Great Lakes Energy, a rural cooperative. Natural gas is not available in the township, fuel oil and liquid petroleum gas are provided by various companies. Telephone service is provided by Verizon North.

New technology and changes in law have had a great effect on citizens of the township. Changes in the law allow private companies to sell electricity to utility companies. Telephone service is also continuing to be deregulated and the Michigan Public Service Commission estimates that within the next several years there will be very little regulation of either electric or telephone companies.

The increase in cellular telephone usage has caused construction of call transmission towers nearby, primarily near state highways. Additional call transmission towers or “repeaters” might be needed to furnish cellular service throughout the Township. Advances in computer communication are creating opportunities for new businesses and the in-home conduct of computer based services. Conventional telephone service is considered good, and the cost and availability of specialized digital service and the quality of computerized communication continues to improve.

## EXISTING LAND USE

This portion of the Master Plan presents an overview of existing land use, which is illustrated by the Land Use map on page 32. (INSERT EXISTING LAND USE MAP)

### FARMLAND AND OPEN SPACE

Most of the land in the Township is used as farmland or is undeveloped woodlands or open space.

### RESIDENTIAL

Single family homes represent the Township's dominant developed land use. Homes are located on lots ranging in size from less than one-half acre to more than 100 acres in size. The majority of home sites are less than an acre in size, and are located in platted subdivisions surrounding Silver Lake and Upper Silver Lake. Other concentrations of smaller home sites are located along the north side of Morris Lake.

As of December, 2000, approximately 68 percent of the Township's 2,203 dwelling units consisted of seasonal or second homes. This figure is 13 and 16 percentage points higher than figures for Benona and Pentwater Townships, respectively.

### BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL

There are several business established in the Township, including restaurants, resorts, campgrounds, mini-warehouse storage facilities, vehicle sales and repair facilities, and a variety of other retail and service establishments which are operated on a year-round or seasonal basis. While the majority of businesses are located in the areas described below, many are scattered throughout the township and operated as approved home occupations, special uses, or as legal nonconforming uses.

#### \*Village of Mears

The unincorporated Village of Mears is a traditional rural village center with a business district along Fox Road. The Golden Township Hall, Mears Post Office, a general store, a restaurant, a historic museum, an electronics repair business, a school and a church are located along Fox Road to the east and west of 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Along 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Polk Road to Taylor Road several businesses are also located, in leap-frog pattern, including a farm market, a home craft shop, a bakery, an electrical contractor, a bike rental facility and a wood working shop. Single family homes are located on platted lots adjoining the business district.

#### \*Silver Lake Business District

The Silver Lake business district is located along both sides of Hazel Road east of Silver Lake, and along the east side of Silver Lake Drive to the southern boundary of the Silver Lake State Park campground. The business district includes private campgrounds, restaurants (both dine-in- and carry-out), motels, small scale amusement parks, a strip mall with a variety of seasonal businesses, a Laundromat, a bakery, rental cottages, and other business and retail establishments catering to a seasonal trade.

The district also extends along the north side of Hazel Road in strip or leap-frog fashion and north on 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Taylor Road. Uses in this portion of the district include a party store, a RV Park, a motel and a mini-warehouse storage facility. There are no business or commercial establishments along the east side of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, nor are there any along the south side of Hazel Road east of the Jellystone Park campground/resort.

**\*Silver Lake Dunes ORV Area**

This area is located at the western end of Fox Road at the entrance to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Silver Lake Sand Dunes off-road vehicle area. This sub-area includes jeep rental business and other businesses specializing in ORV parts and service.

**\* Silver Lake Road and 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue Area**

This area is located along the south side of Silver Lake, and includes the Mac Woods Dune Ride business and a seasonal carry-out restaurant.

**\* Polk Road Corridor**

Polk Road between 56<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Avenues has been designated as an area well suited to commercial development in the midst of agricultural uses. This area includes a body shop, a salvage yard, a farm market and a mini-warehouse storage facility.

**PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS (PUDs)**

Four Planned Unit Development zoning districts have been established in Golden Township.

**\* Val Du Lakes Mixed Use Development**

Val Du Lakes is a mixed-use entertainment and recreational complex providing concert, campground, transient lodging, restaurant, softball and volleyball facilities on a seasonal basis.

**\* Silver Hills Antique Mall**

Silver Hills is a farm building complex providing space for antique dealers to house and display goods on a seasonal basis.

**\* Hideaway Campground**

Hideaway is a campground and resort providing facilities for camping and lodging to the public on a seasonal basis.

**\* Golden Pond Estates**

Golden Pond Estates is a multi-use development of single family constructed homes north and east of the corner of 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Polk Road, with a proposed party store/gas station/office space facility at the corner of those roads.

**PUBLIC USES**

**\* Golden Township Parks**

Township parks are located a) on Lake Michigan at the foot of the Lighthouse Drive (unimproved aside from a paved parking area);b) on the southwest side of Round Lake (unimproved); and c) two parks in the Village of Mears.

**\* Cedar Point County Park**

This park is located on Lake Michigan off Ridge Road near the Township's northern boundary. The park has a picnic area, waterfront access and restroom facilities.

\* Silver Lake State Park

The Silver Lake State Park includes the majestic critical sand dune and ORV areas west and north of Silver Lake and a campground on the north shore of Silver Lake along both sides of Silver Lake Drive. The historic Little Point Sable lighthouse is located at the end of Lighthouse Drive.

\* Pere Marquette State Forest

This State forest occupies substantial portions of Sections 1,2 and 3 of the township, and is contiguous to state forest land in Pentwater Township to the north.

\* Hart-Montague Berry Junction Bicycle Trail State Park

This popular facility traverses the Township's southeastern corner. It is a year-round, improved, multi-use trail with rest areas.

**CEMETERIES**

The Township has two cemeteries: Mears Cemetery is located on Fox Road, and Round Lake Cemetery is located on Deer Road.

**GENERAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

Participants in the Township's planning process identified a variety of concerns and issues they perceived will influence the Township's future. These concerns served as the foundation for a strategy which can be used in an on-going process of influencing use of land and natural resources over the short and long-term. This strategy consists of two elements: goals and implementation steps are employed by elected and appointed Township officials, then the Township will be able to influence its future in a positive, planned, and strategic manner. Participants in the planning process identified goals and implementation steps for a variety of subject areas, both general and specific, as set forth below.

**GENERAL LAND USE GOALS**

1. Retain and enhance the Township's scenic and rural character; preserve its natural resources and attractiveness.
2. Achieve a mix of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial development which provides access to agricultural goods and services, quality living environments, recreational activities, commercial goods and services, employment opportunities for residents, and a strong and varied tax base.
3. Development limited to areas adequately and efficiently served by public roads, utilities and other public services.
4. Presence of activities which have a low ecologic impact.
5. Well designed private roads.
6. Diminution of non-conforming uses.
7. Controlled variance issuance.
8. Controlled growth, both in type and quantity, resulting in avoidance incompatible land uses. Existence of transition areas between agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial land uses.
9. Continued open space or wooded buffers along existing public roadways.
10. Availability of area recreational and cultural opportunities for citizens and visitors.
11. Cooperation with other local units of government in the development of infrastructure improvements across jurisdictional boundaries.
12. Citizen involvement in the growth management and natural resource preservation processes.
13. Area youth involvement in community affairs.

**GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

1. Participation by Township officials in educational and information-sharing programs, such as Oceana County Chapter MTA meetings, planning and zoning workshops sponsored by Michigan Society of Planning Officials and Michigan Township Association, as well as pertinent workshops by other organizations.
2. Perform a cover-to-cover zoning ordinance review, and revision where necessary, addressing definitions of terms, land use zoning categories, permitted and special uses in the various categories. Review and update zoning ordinance periodically and amend as necessary to ensure its consistency with this Master Plan.

3. Create processes and procedures (or use existing processes and procedures, if present) to ensure areas shall be deemed unsuitable for development if they possess any of the following conditions:
  - a. Flooding, as determined by National Flood Hazard maps
  - b. Inadequate drainage
  - c. Soil formations/content with contra-indications for development
  - d. Severe erosion potential
  - e. Unfavorable topography
  - f. Inadequate water supply
  - g. Inadequate sewage disposal capabilities
  - h. Inadequate fire and police protection
4. Provide for planning mechanisms and regulatory techniques which will preserve open space, wetlands, groundwater, historic sites, and recreational opportunities.
5. Prepare and adopt an ordinance for the protection and regulation of wetland and wetland buffer areas in the Township.
6. Develop and refine greenbelt zoning techniques via maps and other tools to consistently protect and preserve sensitive areas.
7. Enforce the zoning ordinance in a consistent and fair manner.
8. Enforce the Junk and nuisance related ordinances.
9. Make zoning variances the exception rather than the rule.
10. Discourage poorly designed private roads.
11. Adopt site plan review guidelines for protecting groundwater and other essential resources (e.g. requirement to cap and plug abandoned well heads).
12. Direct new development away from areas exhibiting environmental constraints such as steep slopes, flood plains, wetlands and unsuitable soils.
13. Cooperate with other local governments, citizens and businesses in the development and construction of sanitary sewer systems as appropriate for existing development and future growth.
14. Involve, whenever and wherever possible, youth in local governing, planning and collateral activities.
15. Retain the services of qualified consultants. Continue escrow policies which require developers and other applicants for zoning approvals to place fees in escrow at the time an application for site plan review, special use approval, or PUD zoning is filed. The Township can draw funds as necessary to pay for services rendered by its consultants (attorney, planner and /or engineer, for example) during the review process.
16. Prepare a parks and recreation plan. Funding assistance for acquisition of waterfront property for recreational or other public use is available from a number of sources. The Township would be well served to prepare and adopt a recreation plan for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Once approved by the MDNR, the plan would establish eligibility for funding assistance for acquisition and improvement projects.

Over the long term, the Township should use this Master Plan as a building block for future planning efforts. It is recommended this Plan be updated periodically when conditions in the community appear to have evolved to the point where revisiting goals and implementation steps becomes advisable, in addition to review and updating as required by law and when new census data becomes available.

AGRICULTURAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

GOALS

1. Continued vitality of generalized and specialized farming and forestry activities.
2. Minimal fragmentation of farmland and woodlands.
3. Non-agricultural land uses only on land poorly suited to farming and forestry.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Establish zoning regulations which discourage the fragmentation and conversion of farmland and forestland to non-agricultural land uses.
2. Explore programs ( including, but not limited to , Purchase of Development Rights, Transfer of development Rights and conservation easements ) to preserve productive farmland and forestland.
3. Review the Michigan Right to Farm Act to determine the extent to which local control and/or input is allowed.

**LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

GOALS

1. Planned, low density residential development.
2. Generalized and specialized farming and forestry activities in areas suited to such activities.
3. Minimal fragmentation of woodlands and wildlife habitat.
4. Development within open space preservation standards, including conservation or cluster zoning.
5. Landscaping which emphasizes the rural and wooded qualities and natural habitats of the Township.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Limit the number of driveways along public roadways.
2. Require that open space or wooded buffers be maintained along existing public roadways.
3. Limit new housing developments to areas where soils are suitable for on-site sewage treatment.
4. Limit new housing developments to areas with adequate infrastructure (sewer and water) and compatibility with neighboring land uses.
5. Encourage residential clustering and donations of conservation easements.

**SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

GOALS

1. Maintain the historic and visual appeal of the Village of Mears.
2. Maintain an area on a Village scale, which is relatively free from encroachment by heavy commercial or industrial uses.

IMPLEMENTATION STEP

1. Require new development to be of a scale and design compatible with existing buildings and uses.

**RESORT RESIDENTIAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

GOALS

1. On-going year-round and seasonal home neighborhoods free from encroachment by non-residential uses.
2. Future residential development only at densities sensitive to the capability of soils to safely accommodate septic systems.
3. Permanent, natural greenbelt buffers along shorelines where possible as a means of protecting water quality.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Continue to provide that lots in these land use areas should be at least three-quarters of an acre in size or larger to mitigate the potential for ground and surface water pollution.
2. Require PUD review procedures for proposed waterfront subdivisions and condominium projects.
3. Enforce keyhole regulations to prevent overcrowding of remaining undeveloped shoreline open space, recognizing the interests of residents in areas developed for single-family residential use.
4. Conduct a sanitary sewer feasibility study for this area to resolve concerns over existing and future concentrations of septic systems.
5. Execute steps necessary to achieve improvement and enhancement of overall water quality of lakes in these areas.
6. Strictly enforce lakefront zoning.
7. Utilize lake boards and other forums to inform and educate lake residents regarding fertilizer practices and other actions which could affect water quality.
8. Utilize lake boards and property associations to implement superior management practices as recommended in lake studies.

**RESORT COMMERCIAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

GOALS

1. Maintain formal and historically recognized center(s) for tourism and resort-oriented business uses.
2. Development and redevelopment of year-round and seasonal service and retail business establishments.
3. Maintain a boundary between a business district and adjoining residential uses and undeveloped areas.
4. Future development should occur with deference to adjoining residential neighborhoods.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Provide adequate screening along lot lines shared with residential neighborhoods.
2. Conduct a sanitary sewer feasibility study in an effort to encourage future business development in these areas.
3. Provide that parking and loading areas be of adequate size, and be designed to accommodate the needs of all businesses.
4. Limit the number of driveways serving individual parcels to prevent creation of traffic hazards, especially along Hazel and Silver Lake Roads. Provide for shared driveways.
5. Require that exterior lighting fixtures be of a type and quality to limit illumination to individual properties without causing glare or off-site spillover.
6. Limit freestanding monument and pole-type signs to prevent the creation of visual clutter and resultant traffic hazards.
7. Prohibit business development along the east side of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and the south side of Hazel Road east of the Jellystone campground/resort.

**COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

GOALS

1. No encroachment by commercial development upon existing residential neighborhoods.
2. Any new industrial development limited to avoid potential adverse impacts from, among other things, resulting traffic, noise and odors.
3. Land use conflicts avoided or minimized.

IMPLEMENTATION STEP

1. Direct any new commercial and/or industrial development to selected areas which have good road access and utility services, or are planned to receive them, and where conflicts with other land uses do not exist or can be minimized.

**PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

**GOALS**

1. Use of land consistent with its character and adaptability.
2. Preservation of farmland, orchards, forestland, open space, visual and community character, and protection and preservation of natural features and natural resources.
3. Orderly development of land and orderly layout of lots.
4. Development in accordance with permitted and special uses allowed in the underlying zoning district.
5. Enhanced housing, employment, shopping, traffic circulation and recreational opportunities for the Townships citizens.

**IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

1. Establish and employ design standards.
2. Require use of zoning district construction, use and occupancy regulations.
3. Establish and employ rezoning approval standards, even though PUD application may be denied notwithstanding if such approval standards are met.
4. Continue escrow policies which require applicants for rezoning approval to place fees in escrow, enabling the Township to draw funds to pay for services of qualified consultants during the review of such applications.

## FUTURE LAND USE

This section of the Master Plan presents a strategy for future land use and development consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the preceding section. This strategy is intended to serve three broad purposes:

- It recognizes that Golden Township's land and natural resource base presents both opportunities for and constraints on development.
- It provides guidelines describing how land uses should be established, and how land and natural resources should and should not be altered within each future land use area.
- It sets forth zoning categories for various types and densities of use.

This strategy is dependent, in part, on formally recognizing factors which are relevant to future land use and development.

- Golden Township possesses unique scenic characteristics and natural resources that are worthy of enhancement and preservation.
- No advantage can be gained, and unfavorable consequences can result, by permitting development which overburdens the Townships financial ability to provide adequate services and infrastructure.
- While privately funded infrastructure projects may appear to be consistent with the intent and purpose of this plan, they should be subject to a comprehensive review process to assure that such projects do not result in unintended, Township-wide secondary social and /or environmental impacts.
- The Townships agricultural areas and its business districts are essential elements of its economic base.
- Business and commercial development outside of the current business districts should not be encouraged.

Descriptions of future land use zoning categories are as follows:

Agricultural zones include lands occupied by existing farming operations. These zones also include woodlands and other open space not ideally suited to farming. Farming and farmland are resources which are important to Golden Townships economic base, and its historic, rural and aesthetic character. Agricultural land use areas have been established to encourage the continuation of all current farming activities, and to discourage the fragmentation of productive agricultural lands.

Agricultural zones also encompass land characterized by more rugged terrain and potentially productive woodlands. These areas may present opportunities for timber production if large tracts of land remain intact rather than becoming fragmented. Wooded areas should be preserved intact for continued timber management purposes, and to provide wildlife habitat. Non-traditional agricultural land uses in agricultural zones might include game preserves.

Purchases and/or transfer of development rights and conservation easements might not be out of the question in the future, as means to prevent fragmentation of the land.

#### LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This land use category provides land for continued agricultural use, potentially productive woodlands and wildlife habitats, as well as residential activities of a semi-rural character.

#### SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

This land use category consists of small lot residential neighborhoods which are similar in scale and character to farming community villages throughout Michigan and the Midwest.

Because of limited lot size, established setback lines should be adhered to when new construction or renovation of existing buildings is considered.

#### RESORT RESIDENTIAL

The resort residential zone includes the most densely developed portions of the Township in areas near Silver Lake, Upper Silver Lake, Lake Holiday, and along the Lake Michigan shoreline. This land use category recognizes a need to provide for seasonal and year-round residential development which will not be subject to encroachment by business and commercial land uses.

This land use area is similar to many waterfront and near waterfront areas throughout west Michigan in that many of the platted subdivisions are developed at a density in excess of three homes or cottages per acre of land. In many cases, development has occurred at a density which may exceed the capacity of the underlying soil to effectively filter septic system effluent before it reaches the underlying water table and/or adjoining surface waters.

Even under the best of conditions, concentrations of septic systems on lots less than three-quarters of an acre in size (such as are found in most older platted subdivisions in shoreline communities) can result in ground and surface water pollution. Threats to ground and surface waters increase when soils are rapidly permeable, when a high water table is present, or when filtration capability is poor.

Densely developed waterfront areas are often occupied by cottages or homes that have been converted from seasonal cottages to year-round dwelling units. In many cases, these homes rely upon older, poorly designed septic systems which were adequate when used occasionally, but which are inadequate for increased usage. Failures of such septic systems have been documented elsewhere in Michigan as a cause of pollution of surface water, ground water and drinking wells. While not all older septic systems fail and pollute, the larger the concentration of such systems, the greater the likelihood of pollution, especially in areas of inappropriate soil conditions.

#### RESORT COMMERCIAL

This land use category will continue to be a focal point of the area's seasonal economic base over the long-term. This zone is recognized as the Township's primary area for seasonal and tourism oriented business establishments. This land use area presents many opportunities for attractive renovation and development.

Demographic trends suggest that the number of area homes occupied on a year-round basis will increase over both the short and long term. This will likely result in an increased need for year-round retail and service establishments within this land use zone.

#### COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

These land use areas are logical location for future commercial development because of their proximity to the US 31 interchange and to City of Hart municipal sewer and water service. Future development should be sensitive to traffic hazards which would be created by numerous driveway curb cuts and excessive or ill-advised signs.

**PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS (PUDs)**

There are no land areas set aside as future PUD locations. PUDs may be established in all land use zones except Resort Commercial, subject to recommendation by the Planning Commission and subsequent approval by the Township Board. PUDs must be consistent with the intent and purpose of this Master Plan and the Township Zoning Ordinance, and be in accordance with permitted and special uses allowed in the zoning district in which the PUD is proposed to be located.

**STATE OF MICHIGAN OWNED LAND**

The State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources own several parcels of land in Golden Township, totaling in excess of 3,100 acres.