

Ganges Township, Allegan County Michigan

Master Plan

March 28, 2007

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Master Plan was developed with the participation and cooperation of numerous community leaders and residents of Ganges Township. Their participation came in many forms: past planning commission membership, committee membership, participation in our survey, submission of petitions, comments at public meetings, and various other comments and letters. At this time, we acknowledge all for their efforts in helping to make this plan one that serves well all the residents of our Township.

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PREFACE

“... we are not absolute owners, but caretakers of land which should not be diminished in quality during our tenure.”

-- The Land Stewardship Initiative of the
Michigan Environmental Council

This phrase states the purpose and goals of revising the land use plan. The purpose is to provide an atmosphere that assures a prime quality of life and safeguards the citizens of Ganges Township. The primary goal is to allow and encourage land uses that best utilize the land while preserving its heritage, protecting the natural resources, and enhancing the economy.

Unplanned growth and careless land practices can cause land use conflicts, environmental problems, and the unnecessary or excessive loss of fertile land.

This plan is one of many necessary tools to help ensure all decision makers implement a successful program to protect the rural character and integrity of Ganges Township. The land is eternal and people vary its use. Past people have affected the present, and people in 2006 will affect the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Allegan County prepared a county plan in 1974, which was known as “The Allegan County General Development Plan.” In this plan, Ganges Township had several pages identified as Gn-1 through Gn-5, including a General Development Plan Drawing for future land use in Ganges Township.

In June of 1989, the Ganges Township Planning Commission appointed a Land Use Plan Committee to revise the township’s portion of the 1974 Allegan County plan. The Plan was intended to be utilized by all Ganges Township decision makers as a guidance tool for revising the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance for future use. The Planning Commission approved the Land Use Plan on July 23, 1991.

The Land Use Plan contains useful and practical information. This is to be utilized as a guide for Township officials in land use, development, zoning and capital improvement decisions. In particular, the vision and goals, along with the future land use map, provide direction for those decisions.

This Plan has been revised and completed by using various tools: expertise of township employees and volunteers, public input within the township and the assistance of a professional planner. This Land Use Plan is the result of over two years of research and development by the township Planning Commission. Many residents, property owners and business owners gave input at numerous public meetings, through a survey and by written correspondence.

HISTORY – PAST AND PRESENT

Ganges Township was the fourteenth settlement in Allegan County. It was settled by Harrison Hutchins in 1837. Organization of the township began in 1847. The first town meeting was at the home of Orlando Weed on April 5, 1847. Twenty seven votes were cast. Positions filled included the supervisor, clerk, treasurer, justice of the peace, school inspectors, and directors of the poor, commissioners of highways, constables, and path-masters.

There are several stories about how the township was named. The one most told is that Dr. Joseph Coats named Ganges Township. Dr. Coats' original petition to the legislature to name the township had to be changed because the name selected was already in use. The reason Ganges was submitted on Dr. Coats' second petition doesn't seem to be known.

During this time the township was mostly forest. Many changes were occurring throughout the township which can be directly associated to the shores of Lake Michigan. The area was covered with a rich forest of beech, pine, and maple trees. Lumber was in great demand for building material in cities and residences developing along the lake shore. There was also a need for tan bark by tanneries, as a result a vast lumber trade developed. After the land was cleared and farm crops were planted, settlers realized that the lake shore climate was ideal for growing, not only garden products, but fruit trees as well. Agriculture soon began to be the popular trade.

Some of the pioneers to the area included Harrison Hutchins, John Billings, Cyrus Cole, James Wadsworth, James McCormick, and Levi Loomis. Other occupants of the township included friendly Indians, who were willing to trade with the pioneers; as well as wolves and deer. The wolves were so numerous that sheep raising was impossible.

Glenn was first settled in 1843. Before 1876 this area was known by many names, including Packards Corner and New Casco. Glenn has been used since 1856. As the land was cleared, crops and orchards were planted. Shipping became necessary, so piers were built out into the lake. The boats that carried fruit into the cities would bring vacation-bound passengers on the return trip. The resort business increased and Glenn grew rapidly. By 1897 the community had developed enough to support three grocery stores, a drug store, a meat market, two blacksmiths, a barber shop, two hotels, and several other businesses. During the 1920's truck transportation replaced the need for the piers. The blizzard of 1937 established Glenn as a community filled with hospitality. Travelers who were marooned in Glenn spread the word about this area's people and warmth. A pancake festival was set up to celebrate the blizzard that next spring. This festival continued until 1941, when World War II forced its cancellation. The festival was revived in the 1960's and continues today. Since the construction of Interstate 196 rerouted traffic, Glenn saw a decline in tourism during the 1960's. The resort businesses were gone and life styles were changed forever.

Plummerville was founded in 1846. This was a joint effort by Benjamin Plummer and Orlando Weed. A sawmill was set up near the creek. A tannery was soon flourishing nearby. Mr. Plummer opened a store. A pier, measuring approximately 400 feet long, was built. The sawmill operated until 1876. When operations ceased, most of the buildings in the area were moved or torn down. Eventually, the pier was washed away.

Pier Cove was laid out by Deacon Sutherland in 1851 as a platted town in Allegan County. A steam sawmill and wood shop were constructed. The wood shop was later made into a grist mill, which was needed in the area. Two piers, measuring approximately 323 foot, were built. This area was thought of as a village, which boasted about its twenty families, four stores, a tavern, post office, grist mill and three hotels. As the cord wood supply was depleted, the fire of 1871 occurred, and the railroad came to Fennville, the Village of Pier Cove diminished in population and importance. One pier remained in service into 1919. Both piers were destroyed by storms in the 1900's and were not rebuilt.

Ganges, located at the corners of 122nd Avenue and 68th Street, was formerly known as the "Johnson corners." Mr. A. A. Johnson owned the land and had a blacksmith shop and later a general store. By 1916, Fred and William Haile purchased some property from Johnson and established a receiving station. They built a large garage with a open second floor that was used for community social gatherings and political meetings. This building is known today as the Plummer Bros. Garage. The Ganges Post Office (discontinued in November of 1954), Ganges Union School, Greyhound Bus line, and a general store (closed 1970) once served the community. Today, the general store is a woodworking shop. But the Ganges United Methodist Church, as well as the Ganges Baptist Church and the Monastery, still hold worship services for the community.

In 1901 the Ganges Canning & Packing Company began business. Although the company reported "fairly successful" years, in 1903 the local banks foreclosed on the cannery. By 1905, the machinery was sold and the building was transformed into a mint processing distillery.

Schools in the area (Glenn & Pier Cove) began in April of 1847. The first classrooms were in the home of James Wadsworth. Between 1847 and 1880 ten school districts were organized. A "unit school system" was approved by voters in 1912. This unit system only lasted two years. The township voters then voted for individual boards for each district. In 1960 the Ganges School annexed with the Fennville school system.

Churches in the area included the Ganges Baptist Church. Its first meetings were in the Lewis School. In 1880, the congregation built its own building. The Ganges Methodist Church was established around 1840. The church constructed a building at Pier Cove in 1867, which was later moved to an area by Johnson's Corner. A fire on February 22, 1929 destroyed the wooden church. In 1931 the new building was dedicated.

The Vendanta Society came to the area in 1969. A retreat and monastery were established. This area was selected at least partially because of the name Ganges, the same name as the Ganges River in India.

The West Michigan Pike (sections of 68th Street and 114th Avenue) went through the area in 1916. An electric light company was organized and started producing electricity in the fall of 1919. The township had a Grange Hall, located at the corner of 122nd Avenue and 66th Street, until it was torn down several years ago.

Ganges Township today is a steadily growing and changing community. Although farming still supplies a base to the area, an extensive amount of farmland has been converted to residential uses during the last several years. The township has grown to include a public school, two fire stations, three general stores, a winery, four cemeteries, two metal fabricating shops, four industrial facilities, three restaurants, one gas station/convenience store, and many other small businesses (including home businesses). The township currently has three bed and breakfast establishments to offer visitors lodging accommodations

Both the Allegan County and Ganges Township parks, as well as other accesses to Lake Michigan, provide lake recreational uses for the township residents and visitors to the area.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE

Climate data in Ganges Township is not readily available due to the lack of reporting stations in the township. The weather summary shown is a composite average based upon reported data from Holland and South Haven. The local weather is affected by the prevailing westerly breezes off Lake Michigan. The spring and summer winds moderate the daily temperatures downward while the fall and winter temperatures are moderated upward. The table below lists the yearly averages.

Table 1
Summary of Relevant Climate Conditions

CLIMATE VARIABLES	AVERAGE CONDITION
Coldest Months	January / February
Average Temperature in Coldest Months	16°F-31°F
Extreme Coldest Conditions	-11°F - -35°F
Hottest Month	July
Average Temperature in Hottest Month	60°F-84°F
Extreme Hottest Conditions	96°F - 100°F
Annual Average Temperature	48.3° F
Average Rainfall	36 inches/91 cm
Average Growing Season	151 Days
Average Annual Snowfall	80 in/203 cm
Elevation Above Sea Level	590 feet
Prevailing Winds	Westerly

Source: USDA Soil Survey. Allegan County. 1987.

TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Ganges Township is relatively flat and ranges from 600 feet above sea level to approximately 730 feet above sea level. The western boundary of the township is the Lake Michigan shore line, which is dotted with sand dunes, none of which are classified as “critical dunes” by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Both the shore line south of the township and the shore line north of the township include areas designated as “critical dunes.” This is visible to the viewer by the way the shore line bank raises to the south and to the north of the township.

The lakeshore area is composed of small summer cottages, large summer and year-round homes for the many lakeshore residents. Along with the beauty, serenity and sunsets of Lake Michigan, the residents are faced with the never ending shoreline erosion and its on-going problems. The lakeshore erosion along the entire western Ganges Township boundary is not unique, but it is a continuous problem along the shorelines of all the great lakes. The situation is exacerbated during periods of higher water levels in the lakes basin. Every foot of bluff that is lost to erosion is a loss of land that is a non-retrievable resource which the township cannot afford to lose.

A small inland lake named Hutchins Lake, located in the northeast corner of the township, provides a reservoir for drainage that flows south and east from the center of the township. The western portion of the township drains into Lake Michigan through the creeks including Pier Cove Creek, Plummerville Creek, and the Glenn Creek. The remainder of the township, basically the southeast quarter, drains into the Black River Basin that starts in the township and runs south and west draining into Lake Michigan at South Haven.

The soils in the township are well documented in the soil survey completed for Allegan County by the USDA Soil Conservation Service in March, 1987. The soil types and classifications are defined in that document and are not discussed here.

The State of Michigan has long been concerned with our shorelines as the state is bounded by Lake Michigan on the West, Lake Huron on the East, and Lake Superior to the North of the Upper Peninsula. There are also many inland lakes, rivers, and streams, which abound across this state.

The State Legislature has provided legislation over the years to protect, control, and administrate the use of these water courses and their interfaces with our ever growing population. These laws are administered by the Land and Water Management Division of the Department of Environmental Quality Resources.

Ganges Township is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program, which is available to all township residents.

AQUIFERS AND HYDROLOGY

The hydrology of the township is characterized by ground water in at least three separate aquifers; a study of these aquifers was started in the 1980's was never completed. The township derives its potable water from groundwater sources. Allegan County Health Department has an on-going program to monitor select wells in the township in order to spot trends that may be developing.

WETLANDS & HIGH QUALITY NATURAL AREAS

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has identified wetlands throughout Michigan by aerial photography. Wetlands are of essential concern in the township due to the integral role that they play in planning, zoning, land use, and the development process. Given the protection afforded wetlands by the state and federal governments, the flexibility for local decision and control relative to wetlands is limited.

A large portion of Ganges Township is located in the Black River Watershed according to the Black River Watershed Management Plan, MDEQ Tracking Code 2002-0067, April 2005. Wetlands act as filters, and have the ability to filter pollutants such as sediment, nutrients and chemical pollutants. Wetlands filter these pollutants out of surface and groundwater through several pathways, including uptake of plant life and absorption into sediments (Cwikiel 2003). Wetlands also store floodwaters and release them slowly, significantly reducing downstream flooding. Analysis of wetland loss indicates that urban and rural development, agriculture and silviculture are primarily responsible (Dahl2000). It has been estimated that Michigan has lost 50% of its original wetland habitats (Cwikiel2003) and significant wetland loss has occurred in the Black River Watershed. According to the Black River Watershed Plan, further loss should be prevented, and any wetland restoration or reconstruction should be encouraged.

Several high quality natural areas exist in the Black River Watershed. These properties include a variety of habitats, such as wetlands, floodplains and upland forests, and support a diversity of plant and animal life. Additional high quality natural areas exist in private ownership. The State of Michigan, DNR also owns a considerable amount of land in the watershed, approximately 12,000 acres of this land is located in the watershed. This game area is highly diverse, containing over 800 plant species, and 30 threatened or endangered species. (MI DNR 1993) (Black River Watershed Management Plan-April 2005) Ganges Township has about 1,215 acres of DNR owned land within this watershed.

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The Federal I-196 Interstate and the State of Michigan M-89 (124th Avenue) carry much of the regional traffic through the township. County primary paved roads include Blue Star Highway, 62nd St., 70th St., 113th Ave., 114th Ave., 118th Ave., 122nd Ave. , and 66th Street between 113th and 114th Ave. There are no primary unpaved roads in Ganges Township. The “all-season” primary roads include the Blue Star Highway, 118th Avenue and part of 62nd. Several county and township roads assure excellent traffic flow throughout the township. Lakeshore Drive (70th Street) runs north and south; starting at M-89 running through the township along Lake Michigan until it reaches the Village of Glenn. This county road provides access for the many lakeshore residents, as well as tourists traveling through the scenic lakeshore area.

The township roads are classified as local paved and local unpaved. Of the township local roads 17.8 miles are unpaved gravel. The township contains approximately 72.06 miles of roads, of which 38.17 miles are local roads and 33.89 miles are primary roads. Also, the township has a primary bridge located on 113th Avenue.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Ganges Township has only one public facility - the Township Hall, located at the corner of 119th Avenue and 64th Street. This structure, formerly the Reid School, is used to hold township meetings and township elections. This facility was extensively remodeled in 2006, allowing for central location of records and an office space for township officials. The township has an on-call fire department and first responder unit, which maintains two fire stations: one located in Glenn and one near the intersection of 62nd Street and M-89.

The township currently has five active churches: the Glenn United Methodist Church, Ganges Baptist Church, Gold Coast Fellowship, The Pentecostal Holiness Church and Ganges United Methodist Church. Also located in the township is a monastery known as Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat Vedanta Society. The Lakeshore Interfaith Institute/Mother’s Trust/Mother’s Place is another religious group in the community.

Verizon Communications Inc. serves the Ganges area land-line telecommunications. There are several cellular communications companies who provide service within the township.

Consumers Energy currently supplies the area with electrical utilities. Comcast Corporation supplies cable television and broadband internet access to numerous residents throughout the township.

Michigan Gas Utilities, Inc. continues to expand and offer their services throughout Ganges Township. Projects which have been completed include extending service to the Hutchin's Lake neighborhood (1990), to Vivekanda Monastery (1988), along 121st Avenue to the Lakeshore Drive areas (1991, 1992, and 1995), on 68th Street/Blue Star Highway (1993), in Lake Park Mobile Home Park (1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, and 1997), on Lakeshore Court (1992), and 66th Street (1997). Services were later extended to Lakewood Beach subdivision and the Glenn area. No further update is available at this time regarding expansion projects.

Ganges Township has a private campground known as Campit, which is located on 118th Avenue and a seasonal resort known as Lake Park Trailer Resort on 70th Street.

There is a school facility in Glenn. Glenn Public Schools is the oldest 2-room rural schoolhouse still in use in Michigan and only serves grades K-5.

The only active post office in the township is located at Glenn. This post office has PO Boxes and no delivery. Township residents who would like home delivery receive their mail from the Fennville and South Haven post offices.

Ganges Township maintains four cemeteries: Hutchins (Crane) located at M-89, Loomis at the corner of 122nd Avenue and 63rd Street, Taylor on Blue Star Highway just south of M-89, and Plummerville on Lakeshore Drive north of 120th Avenue.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The residents and visitors of the township are fortunate to have access to several public beaches in this community. The West Side Park is maintained and operated by the Allegan County Parks Division, whereas Pier Cove is a township park and there is public beach access to Lake Michigan available at 114th Avenue. There are two road-end access easements to Lake Michigan; they are located at 118th Avenue, and 121st Avenue. However, parking spaces are very limited or non-existent. Public access to Hutchins Lake Sanctuary is located off 60th Street, just south of M-89.

The West Side Park, Glenn Community Center and Glenn Public School have areas for outdoor recreational activities, such as baseball and soccer. The township's youth can also enjoy playing basketball at the Glenn Public School's court. The Todd Farm, a State of Michigan facility, is open for goose hunting and general observation in the fall and has become a major sightseer delight. The township also has a 70-acre sanctuary known as Pier Cove Ravine Trust. In 2006, a 365 acre land preserve was donated to the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, by the William Erby Smith estate. This large parcel is known as Wau-ke-na and is located on Lakeshore Dr. Fenn Valley Winery has also placed a large parcel of land into a land conservancy. The township is a popular vacation spot for those who enjoy boating, fishing, or other types of water and beach recreational activities. The Ganges Township Lake Michigan shoreline is a part of the SW Michigan Underwater Preserve. The area is also known for its many working

artists studios scattered throughout the countryside and the popular Blue Coast Artists tour of studios. Other recreational opportunities and activities are readily accessible in Fennville, Holland, Allegan, South Haven, and other areas within a half an hour of travel time from the township. A winery and several farm markets are other destination spots.

There are several lodging accommodations that attract people to the Ganges Township area. Many of these accommodations include summer apartments and house rentals to cabins and Bed and Breakfast establishments on Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake. The township's B & Bs are listed below:

- Glenn Country Inn, 1286 64th Street
- The Seymour House, 1248 Blue Star Highway
- Heritage Manor Inn, 2253 Blue Star Highway
- Glenn Manor, 7018 114th Street

The rural location and natural settings draw people from as far as Chicago, Detroit, and Indiana to these establishments. According to the business owners, their businesses could expand if there were more recreational activities available in the township. However, these activities can be obtained in the South Haven, Saugatuck, and Holland areas. Overall, the location of Ganges Township leads to its character and country charm. The natural beauty, wildlife, and limited recreational activities bring people to this area and many become residents of the community.

DEMOGRAPHICS & THE ECONOMY

POPULATION AND HOUSING

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Ganges Township land area consists of 32.5 square miles, resulting in 77.7 persons per square mile. The 1997 and 2004 Land Use Plan Survey indicates the township is made up of people primarily interested in rural living.

Table 2
Historic Population - Ganges Township and Surrounding Areas, 1950-2000

TOWNSHIP	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	INCREASE 1950-2000	GROWTH 1950- 2000
GANGES	1,356	1,672	2,061	2,009	2,124	2,524	1,168	86.1%
Saugatuck*	1,292	1,735	2,067	2,701	2,916	3,590	2,298	177.9%
Clyde	1,131	1,575	1,575	2,099	2,001	2,104	973	86.0%
Lee	1,016	1,327	1,934	2,249	2,672	4,114	3,098	304.9%
Casco	1,591	2,009	2,304	2,839	2,856	3,019	1,428	89.8%
Allegan Cty.	47,493	57,729	66,575	81,555	90,509	105,665	58,172	122.5%

*Does not include City of Saugatuck or Village of Douglas
Source: 1950-2000 - U.S. Bureau of Census

Table 3
Population Change 1990-2000

Community	1990	2000	Total Change 1990-2000	% Change 1990- 2000
Casco	2,856	3,019	163	6%
Clyde	2,001	2,104	103	5%
Douglas City	1,040	1,214	174	17%
Ganges	2,124	2,524	400	19%
Lee Township	2,672	4,114	1,442	54%
Saugatuck City	954	1,065	111	12%
Saugatuck Twp.	1,876	2,376	500	27%
South Haven Twp.	2,916	3,590	674	23%
Allegan County	90,509	105,665	15,156	17%

*Source: US Census Data

POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS

Information on the age groups of Ganges Township residents provide useful information on the economic, transportation, and recreational needs for specific age groups and how these needs will change as the population changes. In 1980, the median age for Ganges Township was 31.1 years, by 1990 it had increased to 34.7, and by 2000 to 39.6. This has been consistently higher than Allegan County (28.5, 31.9, and 35.2) and the State of Michigan (28.8, 32.6, and 35.5). These data indicate that the shift to the middle-age and older groups is increasing.

Table 4
Year 2000 Profile of Selected Communities

Local Unit Of Government	Pre-school ≤5 years	School 5-19 Yrs.	College/ Early Work 20-24 Yrs.	Working Years 25-54 Yrs.	Working/ Early retire 55-59 Yrs.	Working/ Retire 60-64 Yrs.	Retired ≥ 65 Yrs.
Casco Township	5.6%	23.3%	5.2%	43.1%	5.8%	4.6%	12.2%
Ganges Township	6.1%	21.2%	4.4%	42.6%	5.0%	5.1%	14.7%
Saugatuck Township	5.6%	17.1%	2.8%	45.5%	6.2%	5.1%	17.8%
South Haven City	5.4%	20.3%	4.1%	39.1%	6.3%	4.5%	20.3%
Allegan County	7.2%	24.2%	5.4%	43.7%	4.7%	3.7%	11.1%

*Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

INCOME

Overall the income for Ganges Township residents is relatively high. As shown on the Figure below. Ganges Township exhibits a lower level of poverty than that of Allegan County.

Ganges is comparable to the State of Michigan in Median Household Income and Per Capita Income, but is below the \$53,457 Median Family Income of the state.

Incomes had increased dramatically between the years of 1990 and 2000, per capita income in the township increased from \$12,227 to \$22,753.

**Table 5
Median and Per Capita Income, 2000**

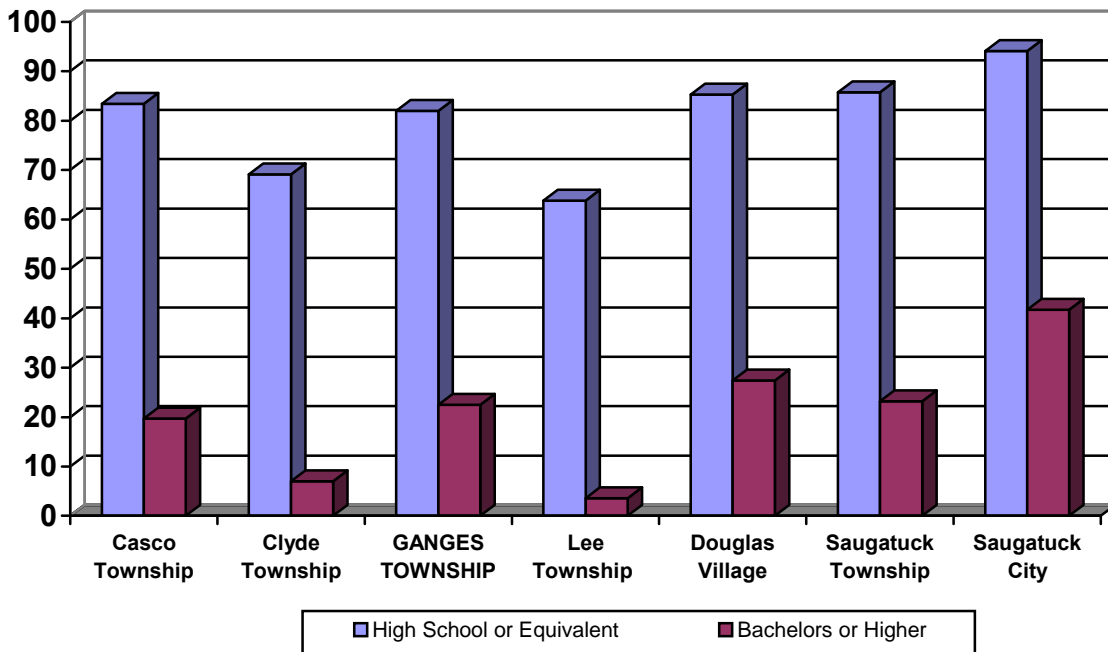
	Median Family Income	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	Poverty Level
Allegan Co.	\$51,908	\$45,813	\$19,918	7.3%
Casco Twp.	\$49,821	\$45,043	\$22,356	8.5%
Clyde	\$46,806	\$42,717	\$15,986	9.5%
GANGES TWP.	\$52,333	\$47,113	\$22,573	5.9%
Douglas Village	\$49,750	\$41,250	\$26,517	8.7%
Lee Twp.	\$32,697	\$30,875	\$11,386	21.1%
Saugatuck Twp	\$49,600	\$43,771	\$30,056	5.4%
Saugatuck City	\$64,583	\$44,318	\$34,382	6.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

EDUCATION

Educational levels affect the planning process by a developing need for libraries, certain education and leisure activities, as well as housing character. All communities along Lake Michigan have a higher rate of education, as compared to the inland communities.

**Figure 1
Education Attainment**



Source: US Census, 2000

EMPLOYMENT

Township employment has changed over the years, most residents work outside of the Township in Holland, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and other metropolitan areas.

Table 6
Average Work Commute

Community	Average Work Commute Time
Allegan County	23.4 minutes
Casco Township	27.4
Clyde Township	26.0
Douglas Village	25.6
Ganges Township	27.7
Lee Township	26.2
Saugatuck City	22.6
Saugatuck Township	23.3

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census 2000

HOUSING

The 2000 U.S. Census indicated there were 1,384 total housing units with an average household size of 2.71 persons per household for Ganges Township, which was lower than the county average of 2.81, but higher than the state average of 2.66.

Table 7
Housing Occupancy

Community	Total Housing Units	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Seasonal Vacant	Other Vacant
Allegan Co	43, 292	88.2%	82.9%	17.1%	7.3%	4.5%
Casco Twp	1,827	59.3%	86.4%	13.6%	33.8%	6.9%
Clyde Twp	840	84.3%	88.6%	11.4%	11.9%	3.8%
GANGES	1,384	71.%	88.3%	11.7%	24.1%	4.9%
Lee Twp	1,807	72.7%	70.3%	29.7%	16.7%	10.6%
Douglas Village	853	68.8%	73.1%	26.9%	25.4%	5.8%
Saugatuck City	928	59.1%	62.5%	37.5%	34.4%	6.4%
Saugatuck Twp	2,089	75.7%	81.8%	18.2%	19.8%	4.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

Table 8
Ganges Township Residential Permit Issuance

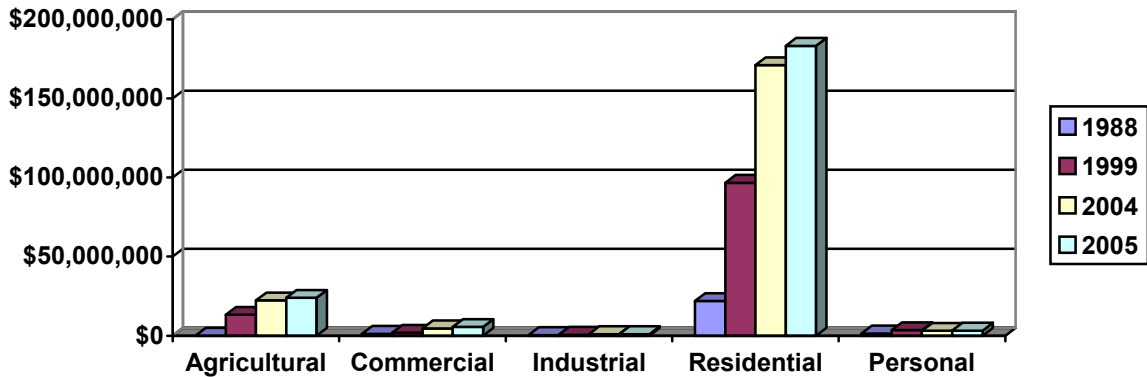
YEAR	RESIDENTIAL PERMITS ISSUED	TOTAL PERMITS ISSUED	PERCENT OF TOTAL
1998	43	122	35%
1999	44	137	32%
2000	38	133	28%
2001	38	118	32%
2002	47	131	35%
2003	35	120	29%
2004	32	94	34%
2005	23	85	27%

Source: Ganges Township Building Permit Records

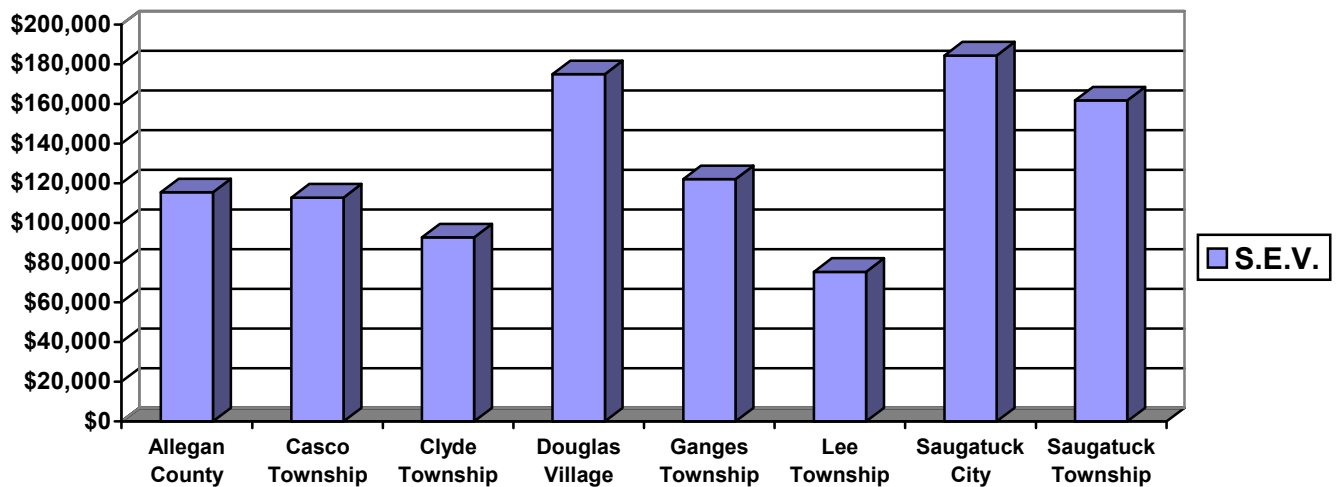
The number of residential building permits has shown a steady decrease in recent years. Most of the residential growth is occurring along existing roadways. This sprawl is not as efficient to serve with utilities as cluster developments. To help maintain the rural character and to preserve green space Ganges Township will look at implementing “Smart Growth” techniques. The township has experienced a slow decline in agricultural land and an increase in residential land use.

As the residential housing units increased, so did the property state equalized values. In fact, the state equalized values (S.E.V.) by each tax classification have accelerated over a ten year period, as they have throughout Allegan County. Figure #2 illustrates the total ad valorem property equalized values by tax assessment classification.

**Figure 2
Ganges Township S. E. V. by Class**



**Figure 3
2000 Average SEV for Owner-Occupied Housing**



Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

EXISTING LAND USE

Over the last 2 decades, the trend in land use in Ganges Township has been a slow decline from agricultural use, accompanied by a steady increase in residential use. The growth of residential land use is occurring in areas of the township that have not traditionally been used for residential development. The result is a decline in the township's agricultural and forest resources. This can have a significant impact on the quality of the township's air, land, and water unless great care is taken to protect these vital resources. There are no parcels residential, commercial or any classification currently served by public water and sanitary sewer systems, and there are no plans to develop these public services within the foreseeable future.

Table 9
Ganges Township Land Use: Real Property - Parcels Per Class

CLASS	1986	1992	1998	2003	2004	2005	Change 1986/2005
Agriculture	314	285	273	222	218	217	(-30.89%)
Commercial	41	39	43	47	48	51	24.39%
Industrial	10	10	11	12	12	12	20.00%
Residential	1,332	1,481	1,648	2,001	2,008	2,041	53.23%
TOTAL	1,697	1,815	1,975	2,282	2,286	2,321	36.77%

Source: Allegan County Equalization Report - 1986, 1992, 1998, 2003, 2004 & 2005

Table 10
Existing Land Use in Ganges Township
Parcel Use vs. Zoning Classification

Land Use Category	Zoned Acres	Acres Used
Industrial	313.7	284.34
Commercial	1,401.8	271.81
Agricultural	6,298.4	10,014.69
Agricultural Residential	10,424.5 (This zoning category is reported as both Ag and Res uses)	
Residential	1,955	9,433.01

Source: Allegan County LIS Office – March 2006

*The remaining lands in the township (451 acres more or less) are properties which are exempt from taxation such as churches, schools, parks, government lands, highways, etc.

In the 2005 tax assessment, there are 1,943 parcels of property classified as residential. In the 2006 the Allegan County LIS Office reported that these parcels occupy a total of 9,433 acres of land. Commercially classed parcels total 51 in count and cover 272 acres. There are 12 industrial parcels with a total area of 248 acres. Consumers Energy utilizes 8 of these 12 parcels as electrical transmission right-of-ways.

Table 11
Ganges Township Allowable Density

Zoning Classification	Total Number Of Acres	Allowable Density	Average # People Per Household - 2000 Census
Agriculture	6,298.4	2 acres	2.72
Ag/Res.	10,424.5	1.5 acres	2.72
Residential	1,955	0.75 acre	2.72
Commercial	1,401.8	1.5 acres	2.72
Industrial	313.7	2 acres	

Source: Allegan County LIS and US Census

AGRICULTURE

Farmland is a valued and economically important resource that provides the essential and irreplaceable basis for production of dairy products, livestock, hay, grains, vegetables, fruit, nursery plants (ornamental trees, shrubs and groundcovers) and greenhouse crops.

Allegan County states that the selection of farmland to be preserved has been, and will continue to be, accomplished through survey of the agricultural business in Allegan County and through the USDA Soil Survey of Allegan County. Ganges Township has many “prime farmlands” soil types. However, a survey of Agricultural businesses would provide information concerning areas of “unique farmland” which are of importance and are at risk due to residential sprawl in Ganges Township. These “unique farmlands” may include but are not limited to crops consisting of blueberries, grapes, onions, Christmas trees, greenhouses and tree fruits.

Ganges Township is very unique with different soil types and favorable climate conditions for growing crops and raising livestock. Some of the horticulture crops include apples, tart and sweet cherries, grapes, blueberries, peaches, apricots, pears, nectarines, plums, strawberries, and raspberries. Vegetable crops that can be grown are onions, carrots, asparagus, cauliflower, peppers, Brussels sprouts, and much more.

Cash grain farming has become more extensive in the township with corn, wheat, soybeans, oats, and hay being grown. Livestock farming includes beef cattle, hogs, goats, sheep, and horses. Indoor agriculture includes greenhouses, as well as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) for dairy farming and hog farming.

Horticulture farming and agriculture is still an important part of the township as it employs people, provides commercial and recreational opportunities, promotes wildlife and retains the rural, country charm of the area.

According to the Allegan County LIS Office, there are approximately 20,800 acres in Ganges Township. There are 10,014.69 acres of this land is used for agricultural purposes, of which 1,215 acres are maintained by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as part of the Allegan State Game Area, located on the eastern boundary of the township along 118th Avenue. Agricultural land use represents about 49% of the overall land use in the township. As of March, 2006 there are 217 parcels classified in the assessment roll as agricultural.

GANGES TOWNSHIP VISION STATEMENT

Ganges Township's preferred future is focused on protecting and maintaining its existing rural character and high quality of life in an atmosphere of continued growth. The Township's desired future includes preservation of the Township's agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas and natural features. Protection of agricultural uses, lakes, wetlands, groundwater and dunes is paramount. Also critical is insuring that land uses are targeted to areas that have the capacity to accommodate those uses. The Township, therefore, intends to encourage multi-use growth in its Village areas, while providing for growth of appropriate residential and commercial uses throughout the Township. Only light industrial uses will be encouraged.

In order to maintain the beauty of the area and to preserve its rural character, the Township intends to maintain the integrity and intent of this Plan through its consistent application.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

RURAL CHARACTER

1. Accommodate growth in housing and population without sacrificing the rural character of the Township or the quality of the natural resources.
 - a. Rural site design should encourage clustering of dwellings, protection of natural open space, and inclusion of pedestrian walkways to minimize the spread of low-density non-contiguous development.
 - b. Implement innovative site design standards for all commercial, industrial and residential development within the Township to ensure the preservation of open space and the rural character of the Township.
 - c. Through the use of landscaping and natural features preservation, require commercial developers to maintain the rural character of the Township.
 - d. Require installation of underground electric power and telephone lines wherever possible.
 - e. Adopt and enforce strict sign regulations.
2. Preserve landscaping along roadways in the agricultural portion of the Township, and where such landscaping is not present, protect the vistas that show the open spaces, fields, and rural character.
 - a. Pursue Natural Beauty Road designation for appropriate roads within the Township.
 - b. Establish deep setback and natural buffer standards along County roads for developments in the Agricultural and Residential districts.
 - c. Promote alternatives to strip residential development along road frontages by establishing access management standards and incentives for shared driveways.
3. Protect existing agricultural areas and natural features in the Township in order to preserve the rural character of the Township.
 - a. Educate the public and property owners on the value of preserving open space and seek resources such as grants and donations to enable the purchase and preservation of open space.
 - b. Encourage participation by Township farmers in the Allegan County Farmland Preservation Program.

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4. Adopt local regulations to preserve the significant, existing natural features in the Township.
 - a. Create regulations to require setback buffers around natural features.
 - b. Consider creation of regulations to protect precious surface and groundwater resources.

AGRICULTURAL/RESIDENTIAL

1. Accommodate growth in housing and population without sacrificing the rural/recreational character of the Township or the quality of the agricultural lands and natural resources.
 - a. When residential development does occur in the Agricultural area, techniques such as cluster development and open space preservation should be encouraged to limit impacts on the agricultural uses.
 - b. Appropriately designate areas on the Future Land Use Map as Agricultural in order to limit the expansion of residential development in agricultural areas.
 - c. Discourage non-farm residential development in the Agricultural district.
 - d. Create a variety of tools and incentives to control the spread of development, in AG areas, such as the Purchase of Development Rights(PDR) program, sliding scale zoning, open space planning, and requiring special land use permits for single-family homes in the Agricultural district on lots less than a determined size.
2. Allow value added agriculture related uses to enhance the incomes of farm families in other ways besides development.
 - a. Allow farmers to sell locally grown produce and other materials to residents and visitors of the Township at approved farm stands that meet established criteria.
 - b. Promote enrollment in the P.A. 116 program and encourage the sale of development rights for farmers in need of income or retirement funds
3. Achieve a variety of well-planned, quality residential neighborhoods in the Township to serve all members of the community, and to be located in areas designated for such use.

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- a. Limit higher density residential development to areas planned for those uses, which are provided with adequate services for the expected densities, and provide reasonable standards in the Zoning Ordinance for those uses to ensure quality development.
 - b. Continue to enforce the Township Codes and Ordinances to ensure the aesthetic and physical character of housing and housing sites is preserved.

COMMERCIAL OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

- 1. Concentrate future commercial development in the existing village settings of Glenn and Ganges, so as to encourage the continued development of walkable, village settings.
 - a. Establish compatible clusters of uses in Glenn and Ganges that will serve the surrounding Township population.
- 2. Encourage high quality commercial developments within the Township through the use of architectural and site design guidelines.
 - a. Establish a coordinated design that is similar to and reflective of the existing character in the Villages of Glenn and Ganges, using classic architectural details and quality building materials.
 - b. Encourage reuse and aesthetic improvements of existing structures and sites.
 - c. Encourage the development of uses similar in scale and scope to those already existing in the community while acknowledging the limitations of the infrastructure and the marketplace to support large scale commercial uses.
 - d. Through the use of landscaping and natural features preservation, require commercial developers to maintain the rural character of the Township.
- 3. Encourage and retain mixed use residential/commercial uses as they exist in Township.
 - a. Develop standards for accessory commercial uses and home occupations on residential properties, including maximum permitted size, intensity of commercial uses, traffic, parking and signage permitted.
 - b. Provide standards to accommodate the unique commercial uses that exist in the Township.

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4. Encourage clustering of uses along the M-89 and Blue Star Highway corridors near existing developed areas.
 - a. Consider developing access management techniques for commercial development located along M-89 and Blue Star Highway within the Township.
 - b. Limit commercial development at freeway interchanges unless and until public utilities (public water and sewer) are provided to accommodate the increased land use intensities.

INDUSTRIAL OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

1. Restrict industrial development to the areas of the Township master planned for industrial development.
 - a. Restrict industrial development to areas of the Township that have appropriate public facilities and transportation networks to support industrial intensities.
 - b. Discourage scattered industrial uses throughout the Township.
2. Protect the natural resources and the rural character of the Township from the potential impacts of industrial development.
 - a. Provide requirements that will protect adjacent residential uses from potential impacts of industrial uses, including groundwater and soil contamination.
 - b. Eliminate substantial negative impacts of industrial development on sensitive environmental areas, including ground water contamination, by requiring all significant environmental impacts be documented prior to approval.
 - c. Through the use of landscaping and natural features preservation, encourage industrial developers to maintain the rural character of the Township.
3. Provide for moderate industrial growth near existing industrial uses.
 - a. Adjust current land use plan based on existing marketplace, demand, and public input.
 - b. Maintain room for moderate growth to allow for additional jobs and tax growth.
 - c. Encourage growth of light industrial uses.

NATURAL RESOURCE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Natural resources shall include sensitive areas of significant value including but not limited to wetlands, dunes, high erosion areas, floodplains, groundwater, prime soils, rivers, streams, inland lakes, and Lake Michigan.

1. Prevent environmental degradation of the natural resources in the Township.
 - a. Ensure that all development - residential, commercial, or industrial - has received any and all necessary permits from local, county, state, and/or federal regulatory agencies.
 - b. Require new development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of the air, soil, surface water, and groundwater.
 - c. Potential for impact on the natural environment will be a consideration of approval when reviewing development applications in areas including or surrounding sensitive areas or requiring the use of wells.
 - d. Establish setbacks and buffers around sensitive areas such as wetlands, streams and waterways, including Lake Michigan.
 - e. Develop additional regulations for protection of Lake Michigan frontage and/or Hutchins Lake frontage properties (i.e., overlay district)
2. Protect, preserve, and enhance the unique and desirable natural amenities of Ganges Township.
 - a. Require that all natural features be clearly delineated on site plans submitted for approval.
 - b. Improve the quality of development adjacent to watercourses and wetlands within the Township by requiring buffer areas, suitable landscaping, and restoration to natural condition.
 - c. Elimination of light pollution caused by the unnecessary illumination of parking lots, buildings, and similar areas.
 - d. Insure that development within and adjacent to the Fennville State Game Refuge is appropriate and will not negatively impact the State Game Refuge.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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1. Create a functional, safe circulation system throughout the Township.
 - a. Promote the establishment of an internal road network between adjacent developments through stub streets, access easements, or similar devices along property lines within developments.
 - b. Require adjacent developments to tie into the internal road network in order to be approved.
 - c. Establish a program to pave and maintain major roads providing access to the freeway and to Blue Star Highway, in order to provide for safe movement of people and goods.
 - d. Create a system of access management through regulations in the Zoning Ordinance and coordination with the Allegan County Road Commission to manage access points on M-89 and Blue Star Highway.
 2. Maintain the rural character of the Township while improving and maintaining the circulation system.
 - a. Maintain the natural beauty and rural character of Township roads as they are improved, if safety is not compromised or sacrificed.
 - b. Pursue Natural Beauty Road designation for appropriate roads within the Township.
 3. Create opportunities for active and passive recreation in the Township.
 - a. Encourage purchase of parkland by the Township in order to permanently preserve environmentally sensitive areas with unique and attractive natural features, and create preserved greenways and waterways.
 - b. Promote passive recreational opportunities, such as walking and biking trails along roadways and greenways, and provide pedestrian and non-motorized linkage with Village areas.
 - c. Produce a Parks and Recreation Plan that satisfies the DNR checklist in order to position the Township for potential grant money.
 - d. Work to provide additional public access to the Lakes.
 4. Discourage extension of public water and/or sewer into Township from adjoining municipalities, except where needed for Township residents' health and safety.

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- a. Public utilities should not be extended into areas master planned for agricultural uses in any case. Lands master planned for agricultural uses are not appropriate for high intensity uses requiring public sewer and/or water.
 - b. Establish a review system to analyze the implications of any proposed private wastewater treatment plant and/or community septic system.

FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map is the culmination of months of effort by the Planning Commission and the citizens of Ganges Township. Based on a comprehensive planning process, the plan serves as a guide for the community's vision of the next 20 to 30 years. It is based on an analysis of land use issues facing Ganges Township, existing uses and conditions, demographic and housing statistics, circulation patterns, community input and the goals and objectives developed by the community.

In order for the Plan to function effectively, it has been crafted to be both flexible and general. A number of possibilities for future development have been left open, and the land use proposals identified on the plan map should be considered generalized areas for development which do not need to follow current property lines or define specific sites. This Future Land Use Map, coupled with this text, constitutes the development policy of the Township. As the Township grows, the Future Land Use map and text should be updated to address the impacts of growth affecting the community.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Land use planning principles are used as a guide in evaluating development alternatives and public policy decisions. The following are general planning principles that should be applied to all land use categories:

- 1. Consistency with the Plan**
Development should be reviewed for general consistency with the intent of the Land Use Plan, as well as sub-area or regional plans. In addition, other governing bodies, such as the State or County, should be encouraged to use the Land Use Plan in considering programming or decisions for Ganges Township.
- 2. Concurrency and Compactness**
Growth should generally be compact and in most cases directed to areas that maximize the use of the public infrastructure. While Ganges Township currently has no existing public sewer or water facilities, should facilities become available, higher intensity development should be located in areas that are served by public utilities. Additionally, development should occur concurrently with the provision of infrastructure, like roads and utilities.
- 3. Sustainability of Natural Systems**
Special consideration should be given when development is proposed in environmentally sensitive and open space areas, particularly around the Township's lakes, surface water, ground water recharge areas and agricultural lands.

4. **Human Scale**

The community should be designed on a human scale with a land use pattern balanced around the existing activity centers of Glenn and Ganges. For the most part, commercial uses, existing neighborhoods, community facilities or similar amenities should be focused in these Village areas. Pedestrian access should be considered in all new development projects.

5. **Compatibility of Uses**

Special attention should be given to developing transitions between uses of greater intensity (e.g. commercial and industrial uses) to uses of lower intensity (e.g. residential uses).

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The land use categories are graphically displayed on the Future Land Use Map (Map 1) and are described in this section of the Master Plan. The amount of land dedicated to each use on the Future Land Use Map is shown below in Table 12. The elected and appointed officials of Ganges Township will be responsible for the interpretation of the intent of the Future Land Use Map and the land use categories. At their discretion, they shall revise the Map and the categories to facilitate the needs of the Township and its residents.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

The Agriculture future land use district fulfills two key purposes in Ganges Township. First, it provides economic opportunities for Township residents; certain areas of the Township are home to active agricultural operations. As a result, farming remains a viable economic component of the Ganges Township economy. Development of agricultural lands for residential purposes effectively removes this economic opportunity forever. Second, these areas help define the rural character of the Township. Many residents choose to live in Ganges Township because of the Township's open spaces and rural vistas. If development were to spread throughout the Township, many of these attractive qualities would be eliminated or greatly lessened.

Non-farm related development should be limited or managed in the Agriculture future land use areas, to insure the continued viability of agricultural operations. For instance, if non-farm related residential development does occur in Agriculture areas, it should be developed through cluster housing or open space preservation options. Likewise, if non-farm related commercial or industrial activities occur in Agriculture areas, their activities must be managed so as not to impact permitted agricultural related land uses. In these ways, agriculture and open space characteristics and activities may still be preserved.

Through this Master Plan, the Township is identifying areas which should remain primarily agricultural. There are a number of reasons why non-farm related development in these Agriculture areas should be limited or managed:

- Sporadic residential development in the agriculture portion of the Township creates land use conflicts between residential and agricultural activities. Moreover, Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs), as promulgated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, might restrict expansion of active agricultural operations, premised upon the expansion and addition of new residential uses in agricultural areas.
- Limiting residential development protects agricultural land from being permanently removed from the Township's inventory.
- The Agriculture future land use district will allow for some development to permit landowners to provide housing for farm workers and family or to recover costs for needed farm improvements.
- Limiting residential development, and encouraging the use of cluster housing or open space preservation, may help limit the amount of strip residential development along the Township's roads, thereby protecting rural scenic views and the scenic beauty of the Township.

To further protect the value of the land in the Agriculture future land use areas, permitted and special approval uses in this area should be expanded. As conventional farming becomes less secure, alternative income producing activities need to be available to the farm owner, so that he or she may resist developing their property for residential development, if they choose to do so. For instance, value-added agricultural uses could be encouraged in the Agriculture area. These types of activities might include farm production facilities, boutique commercial uses, wineries, agri-tourism and similar facilities. By providing more flexibility for these uses, these properties can remain in a rural / agricultural state and avoid the conversion to residential and/or commercial development necessary to remain economically viable.

The Master Plan includes several sections designated as an agricultural future land use. (Agriculture) These areas were designated such based on a composite of the following land characteristics: Township's preference for continued agricultural opportunities and rural lifestyles; prime agricultural soils; size of parcels; contiguousness of large parcels; location of parcels enrolled in PA 116; location of active agricultural operations; presence of natural features; proximity to the Township's main transportation corridors and proximity to areas master planned for higher intensity land uses. The Future Land Use designation of Agriculture reflects the Township's commitment to maintaining these areas for primarily agricultural activities.

Residential densities in the Agriculture future land use areas should emphasize preservation of these lands for agricultural purposes. Therefore, the minimum lot size in

the Agricultural district should be higher (i.e., 3 - 4 acres) than that permitted under the existing zoning (2 units per acre). As noted above, different zoning or land use techniques can be employed to permit farm related residential development, while minimizing the large scale turn over of agricultural lands for residential development. Also, future zoning ordinance text amendments may be considered for this district to allow expanded use of these properties. Permitted or special approval uses may include roadside stands, seasonal events, home based businesses, agri-tourism and farm processing facilities.

RESIDENTIAL/AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

The Residential/Agricultural future land use designation is designed to create a buffer between the commercial and residential areas along M-89/ Blue Star Highway and rural residential and agricultural uses in the rest of the Township. This land use category provides an opportunity for residents to live the Township's traditional rural residential lifestyle, if they choose. Additionally, agricultural activities are appropriate for this land use designation. This is the largest future land use district, reflecting the community's desire to maintain its rural residential character, as well as the community's ongoing transition from a formerly agricultural area to a rural residential area. The majority of future residential development in the Township will be in these areas. In addition to single family residential development, public and quasi-public uses such as schools, parks, churches, and municipal facilities are also appropriate, when located on paved county primary road or a road of a higher classification.

Two techniques that may be used for residential development in this district include open space development¹ and planned unit development (PUD). Each of these allows for more flexibility in the design of the development and provides an opportunity for the developer and the Township to work together to accomplish mutual goals. Open space development provides an opportunity to develop homes on sites that are smaller than the Ordinance allows in order to protect open space or desirable natural features on the site. PUD's allow for the Township and developer to negotiate flexible application of the Zoning Ordinance standards, including the uses allowed on the site, in order to enhance the quality of the development and the impact on the community. Both tools could be effectively used in the Residential/Agricultural area.

It is envisioned that development in the Residential/Agriculture future land use category will have a density of 1 ½ - 2 acres per unit. This will allow for larger home sites, greater protection of open space and preservation of rural vistas. It is not anticipated, nor is it the Township's intent, that public utilities will be available in the Residential/Agriculture area within the timeframe of this Master Plan.

¹ Open space preservation development permitted under the Township Zoning Act ('16h) requires a maximum density of 2 units per acre, if no public sewer is available, or 3 units per acre if public sewer is available.

The areas defined by the Township as appropriate for Residential/Agriculture residential development were chosen based on the following factors: current land uses and development; Township preference for continued agricultural opportunities and rural lifestyles; proximity to areas master planned and zoned for higher intensity uses along M-89 and Blue Star Highway; parcel sizes; contiguousness of large parcels; natural features constraints (i.e., high water table, poor soils for septic, regulated wetlands);

It is envisioned that the Residential/Agriculture areas will maintain its rural character and appeal regardless of future development activity. Care should be taken in the planning and design of the development to ensure that the resulting site layout will have minimal impact on the surrounding properties, natural features, and character of the area. This shall be done through protection of natural features, preservation of setbacks and buffers along primary roadways, minimal disturbance to the existing site, and use of flexible zoning tools such as Open Space Zoning and Planned Unit Development.

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Single Family Residential category characterizes residential development located along, or within close proximity to, the Township's lake frontages. Ganges Township is proud of its Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake shorelines and understands how precious these resources are. Therefore, a separate land use category has been created to apply to those properties with frontage along or in the immediate vicinity of these lakes.

Residential development in these areas has occurred at a higher density than elsewhere in the Township, due to the desirability of lakefront and lake access property.

Existing land uses in these areas include single family homes located on parcels or in subdivisions, with some scattered commercial development. This Master Plan does not intend that there be new land rezoned for this use or that any new development occurs at this density elsewhere in the Township.

It is expected that the primary use in this future land use category will be similar single family residential development, occurring either as platted subdivisions or as site condominiums. Appropriate residential densities in this district would range from 1 acre (if public sewer and water are unavailable) to 1/2 acre lots (22,000 square feet +/-), if public water and sewer are available.

While there are no plans at present for the extension of public utilities into Ganges Township, some proposed residential developments in the Single Family Residential future land use area include private wastewater treatment facilities. In such cases, greater residential densities can be achieved, over and above what may be permitted if individual wells and septic systems are used. In these cases, the Township needs to insure that any development in the Residential future land use area provides adequate wastewater and water services to residents. As several properties in the Township are currently affected by groundwater contamination, compromising the livability and value of these properties, the Township should insure that new development will not adversely impact the Township's natural resources.

MANUFACTURED HOUSING DISTRICT

Manufactured houses and mobile homes are a segment of the housing stock in Ganges Township. Whether these are full-time residences or seasonal homes, they have an impact on the Township and must be considered in the planning for the future.

The Master Plan designates a location for a Manufactured Housing District, wherein a manufactured housing park may be built. Any manufactured housing park would have to satisfy both the specifications of the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance and the Michigan Manufactured Housing Commission. The designated location, on the west side of 66th Street, immediately south of the area master planned for Commercial Corridor District, was chosen because of its frontage on a paved county local road, and state highway (M-89). Additionally, the manufactured housing district, if developed, would serve as a buffer between commercial uses permitted along M-89 and the Residential/Agriculture areas master planned to the south.

VILLAGE MIXED USE DISTRICT

The Village Mixed Use future land use designation is envisioned as a mixed-use, commercial/residential category, encouraging higher quality development than is allowed under conventional development standards. Higher quality is desired in the traditional village locations of Ganges and Glenn. These village areas have served as focal points for Ganges Township throughout its history. Additionally, both Ganges and Glenn are located at entryways to the community and provide first impressions of the Township. The higher quality is also in exchange for flexibility to be provided by the Township. This designation allows for a mix of commercial and residential uses and encourages the use of Planned Unit Development (PUD), which allows for flexible application of zoning standards.

It is this Plan's intent that a majority of future retail growth will occur in these Village Mixed Use areas. Residential uses shall be integrated into the overall development to create a cohesive design scheme. Architecture and signage shall be coordinated. Setbacks and layouts shall be created to retain the existing Village character and feel of the surrounding area after development. Form based design and development standards may be considered for use in defining and effectuating development in the Village areas.

Commercial development in the Village Mixed Use District shall be the focal point, at least from the public road frontage. It shall be of a scale and intensity similar to the existing commercial development. Commercial development shall also be pedestrian friendly. Although adequate parking must be provided, parking should not dominate the development or the view from the road. Buildings shall be oriented towards the public roads, internal roads, and pedestrian paths. This shall create the desired community

atmosphere and allow for the inclusion of several opportunities for public spaces, gathering spots, and other places for social interaction and exchange. Residential development in the Village Mixed Use District shall include primarily attached single-family residential uses, townhouses, apartments, apartments above commercial uses, and other similar uses. This is an opportunity for higher density housing and multiple family housing in the Township. Nonetheless, it will be required to be quality development and cohesive with the overall plan for the area. Developments in the Village Mixed Use District should address the following:

- High quality, traditional architecture in keeping with the Township guidelines (when established), and coordinated with the other buildings in the Village area;
- Limited access points onto the adjacent county primary road;
- Design that is pedestrian friendly and includes internal pedestrian and non-motorized amenities and connections to any paths on adjacent properties, if applicable;
- Design that is harmonious with natural features and sensitive areas on site;
- Connection to the public water and sewer system, if available;
- Internal vehicular connections to adjacent developments and centers, thereby creating an alternative road network;
- Landscape, streetscape, traffic, and architectural solutions that are superior to typical design and visually enhancing the local community.

GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

The General Commercial future land use designation includes many parcels currently master planned and zoned Commercial. The Planning Commission intends to maintain these sporadic areas of commercial land use and zoning throughout the Township in this Master Plan.

It is important to acknowledge, then, that the potential impacts of some of commercial land uses on nearby permitted land uses must be managed. Therefore, it is critical that the Zoning Ordinance be reviewed to determine if adequate setbacks, screening, signage and lighting standards for commercial uses are included. Additionally, groundwater protection measures, such as a groundwater or wellhead protection overlay district, should be considered.

Most of the areas master planned for General Commercial are scattered throughout the Township, on parcels representing existing commercial zoning. These parcels are isolated locations of commercial zoning and/or development that are not consistent with

the land uses master planned around them. However, as the Planning Commission and Township Board are committed to insuring property owners' rights to use their properties as currently zoned, these commercial areas are master planned for General Commercial use.

Several of these parcels are large and have the potential, if developed, to negatively impact surrounding permitted land uses. To that end, it is critical that the Township update the Township zoning standards to manage and guide development of these isolated commercial parcels. Under current zoning ordinance provisions, any of these parcels could be developed with a wide range of commercial activities. The impacts of large scale commercial uses on adjoining permitted residential property owners, absent necessary development requirements and guidelines, could be detrimental.

CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

The Corridor Commercial future land use district encompasses lands with frontage on M-89 and Blue Star Highway in Ganges Township. This district reflects the Planning Commission's acknowledgement that further study of commercial uses along these corridors is necessary. In certain areas of the Corridor Commercial future land use district, commercial uses have already been established and are appropriate. In other locations, environmental constraints make further commercial development inappropriate. Likewise, aggregation of commercial uses along sections of Blue Star Highway or M-89 may render one section of highway more appropriate for continued commercial expansion. Other areas, which are primarily residential in nature may be more appropriate for less intense land uses.

In addition to the further study of commercial locations, the Corridor Commercial future land use district also reflects the Planning Commission's intent to manage and limit commercial uses along these Township corridors. Following adoption of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission intends to continue to study development of different levels of commercial zoning. The more stringent commercial zoning districts could then be located in areas buffering areas developed and master planned for residential uses. More intense commercial districts could be located near mixed uses or higher intensity uses.

The depth of a Corridor Commercial District is recommended to be 500 feet deep from the center of the street, but could be deeper, if topography and land uses make a greater depth appropriate.

Last, the Planning Commission intends to pursue development of a Corridor Commercial Overlay zoning district, to provide additional guidelines and development standards for properties with frontage on M-89 and Blue Star Highway. A Corridor Commercial overlay zoning district, which imposes additional zoning restrictions over and above the regulations of the underlying zoning district, should include, at a minimum:

- Right of way preservation;
- Building and parking setbacks;
- Access Management, including driveway spacing and locations;
- Development standards to insure high quality commercial development, including design guidelines, signage standards, landscaping and buffering standards;
- Preservation of existing natural features, rural vistas and character;
- Groundwater protection;
- Permitted uses and special approval uses.

By providing an additional level of zoning regulation, the Township will be better able to manage the effects of commercial development along the Township's main transportation arteries.

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

The Light Industrial future land use designation is provided along M-89, abutting M-89's intersection with Blue Star Highway. This area is the most appropriate for industrial uses, as it has good transportation access to M-89, Blue Star Highway and the I-196 expressway. Additionally, much of this area is already zoned and developed for industrial use. The area master planned for industrial uses has been downsized from the previous master plan, indicating the Township's reluctance to encourage more industrial users without adequate public facilities (public water and sewer) to support such high intensity uses. The Planning Commission and Township Board feels it most appropriate to encourage light industrial land uses, such as warehousing, storage facilities, office and research facilities or other light industrial uses, which will not require

public water and sewer.² As noted above, Ganges Township has no current plans for extending public water or sewer into Ganges Township. Therefore, higher intensity land uses, including light industrial uses, have been targeted towards areas already developed with such uses, as well as towards lands likely to receive public facilities, if they become available. No expansion of lands for industrial uses has been indicated on the Master Plan.

Also critical with respect to future light industrial uses is an acknowledgment of their potential effect on surrounding permitted land uses. At present, there are several Township homes east and west of the I-196 expressway that have contaminated wells. The well contamination has been traced to the commercial and industrial uses located near the intersection of M-89 and Blue Star Highway. It is important to recognize that groundwater and wellhead protection should be incorporated into the standards governing the industrial or light industrial zoning districts. Likewise, industrial uses should be landscaped and buffered from adjoining residential uses. Setbacks for industrial uses may be greater, to force separation of uses. Last, traffic impacts from industrial uses should be minimized, through access management issues, as well as through appropriate site design and size to insure truck maneuverability on site.

FUTURE LAND USE TABLE

Table 12 below summarizes the amount of land designated on the Future Land Use Map, for each of the Future Land Use designations.

**Table # 12
Future Land Use Designations
Ganges Township, 2007**

CATEGORY	ACRES	PERCENT
Agriculture District	6,926.6	33.4%
Residential/Agriculture District	10,095.5	48.7%
Single Family Residential District	1,858.8	9.0%
Manufactured Housing District	21.7	0.1%
Village Mixed Use District	156.1	0.8%
General Commercial District	462.7	2.2%
Corridor Commercial District	1,085.7	5.2%
Light Industrial District	102.0	0.5%

Source: Allegan County Land Information Services, 2007.

² Heavy industrial uses might be appropriate in areas master planned for light industrial future land use, with a special land use approval.

APPENDIX

In the initial stages of the master planning effort, the Planning Commission conducted a survey of Township property owners to assess their opinions about various issues relevant to the Master Plan. Approximately 415 filled-out surveys were received by township, which is a 28% response and from statistical purposes is considered a good sampling. Total citizen response totaled more than 415 because of household (i.e. husband & wife) responding to one survey.

The planning commission held an open house and received 128 written responses and verbal comment from the approximately 166 citizens who attended the event.

Ganges Township Citizen Questionnaire Survey Results

Question: *How long have you lived owned property in Ganges Township?*

(655) <u>Owned</u>	(69) <u>Lived/Rented</u>	
27	8	Less than one year
132	13	1 to 5 years
208	29	6 to 15 years
290	29	16 or more years
		N/A (1)

Question: *Using the attached map, please check the area block where you live or have a house:*

- **53** - Area 1 **212** – Area 3 **2** – N/A
- **80** – Area 2 **77** – Area 4

Question: *How many people are in your household, including yourself? Please fill in with a number for each category:*

<u>Mem. in household:</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age Group</u>
1 – 84	Males – 588	Under 5 years – 6
2 – 221	Females – 520	5 to 17 years – 42
3 – 227		18 to 64 years – 229
4 – 87		65 years & over – 65
5 – 10		
6 – 4		
Over 7 – 5		

Question: *What is your residence status in Ganges Township? Check one.*

- **269** – Year round **109** – Seasonal (6 mo. Or less) **34** – Weekend only

Question: Which of the following factors influenced your decision to move to your present residence:

- 19 – Quality of schools
- 42 – Closer to work
- 99 – Affordable Housing
- 135 – Closer to friends & family
- 219 – Neighbors not too close
- 127 – Lower Taxes
- 5 – Retirement
- 373 – Prefer Rural Living
- 1 - Location
- 1 – Farm
- 26 – Near Lake Michigan
- 3 – Hutchins Lake
- 7 – Commercial/Industrial

Question: From the list below, check the occupation that best describes your current employment status:

- 214 – Professional
- 65 – Laborer
- 36 – Agricultural
- 58 – Homemaker
- 86 – Home Business/Self-employed
- 210 – Retired
- 1 – Other

Question: Should Ganges Twp. Implement an aggressive plan to coordinate the new residential development?

- 402 (yes) 203 (no)

Question: If more single family residences are added, where would you prefer they be located? Using the attached map, select an area:

188 – Area 1 153 – Area 2 128 – Area 3 191 – Area 4 184 – No New Development

Question: If more apartment complexes, condominiums or planned unit development (PUD) are added, where would you prefer that they be located?

- 81 – Lakeshore areas
- 91 – Ganges Community
- 101 – Village of Glenn
- 25 - None/No New Development
- 72 – Hutchins Lake Area
- 40 – Rural Township Areas
- 128 – Area 1
- 68 – Area 2
- 69 – Area 3
- 113 – Area 4
- 1 – Detroit

Question: If mobile homes are added, where should they be located?

- 349 No more mobile homes
- 181 Mobile home parks Only
- 37 Rural Twp. Areas
- 67 Any Residential Area

Question: *What type of living conditions best describes your current situation?*

- **241** On a large parcel, country setting
- **170** On a small parcel, country setting
- **80** On a smaller lot in a residential area
- **9** Condo or Apartment
- **1** Farm Site
- **26** Medium Lot country/agr.

Question: *If you are planning on purchasing/moving within the next 5 years, what type of living situation best describes your needs?*

- **252** – On a large parcel, Country Setting
- **73** – On a small parcel, Country Setting
- **43** – On a smaller lot in Res. Area
- **53** – Condominium or Apartment
- **9** – Subdivision
- **6** – A mobile home park
- **80** – Not Planning on moving
- **2**- Small lot, Industrial
- **1** – Retirement Community
- **3** – Lakeshore Area
- **4** – Appt. w/God / Plan on dying
- **78** – N/A

Question: Which of the following business types would you prefer to see est. in the twp?

- **272** Service (Hair salons, restaurant)
- **160** Commercial (Pharmacies, Food Centers)
- **150** Tourism
- **133** Residential Care Facilities
- **132** Finance, Banking, Insurance, Real Estate
- **77** Professional Services- Dr., Atty.,etc.
- **63** Comparison Goods: Clothing, Appliances
- **63** Manufacturing/Industry

Question: *Using the attached map, where would you like to see these businesses located?*

- **162** – Area 1
- **158** – Area 3
- **5** – Blue Star/M-89
- **141** – Area 2
- **311** – Area 4

Question: Select the top five activities/facilities that you would prefer to see developed within the next five years. Please rank (1) as the top choice thru (5) as the last choice.

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Camping	18	18	20	20	25
Parks/open areas	135	43	55	27	44
Fishing	20	23	26	19	15
Boating	14	13	19	14	25
Swimming	29	28	46	16	25
Nature Trails	74	107	115	39	25
Bike Trails	39	58	104	35	30
Canoeing	15	19	25	17	30
Hunting Areas	25	17	18	6	18
Picnic Areas	16	20	49	48	33
Golf Courses	20	13	42	7	33
Hiking Trails	20	41	100	72	39
Cross Country Ski	22	21	51	33	37
Ice Skating	10	11	22	12	18
Horseback Riding	21	10	16	9	19
Family Play areas	20	37	34	23	41
	N/A – 39			None – 31	

Question: Would you support additional millage to develop any of the above activities/facilities?

- **355** – Yes **299** – No

Question: What are your priorities for how the township spends your tax dollars:
High priority 1- 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 Low priority

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Twp. Administration	66	65	127	56	72
Implementing a Master Plan	153	67	70	50	95
Cemetery Main./Beautification	18	29	98	69	80
Enforcing Ordinances	105	86	81	51	45
Road Main./Improvements	154	115	99	31	20
Fire Protection	259	137	69	45	12
First Resp. Unit Service	187	111	96	33	32
Park & Recreation Services	51	90	134	78	64
Twp. Hall Maintenance	9	8	45	34	17
Ambulance Service	82	54	47	41	19

Question: Would you like to have the township pursue the following:

- **133** – Area wide sewer system **103** – Area wide water system
- **134** – Area wide cable television **221** – Area wide natural gas
- **240** – Area recycling

Question: *Would a central located, staffed township office be a benefit to you in coordinating township business?*

- 112 – Yes 459 – No

Question: *Where? (to locate a township hall)*

- 4 – Current Twp. Hall 2 – Glenn Area 1 – M-89 1 – Blue Star Hwy.

Do you agree with the following statements:

Question: Agricultural Land in the township should be preserved?

- 579 - Yes 98 – No

Question: *Scenic views of farms and fields with pastoral views in the township be preserved?*

- 581 - Yes 74 - No

Question: *Scenic views of inland lakes and Lake Michigan in the township be preserved?*

- 659 – Yes 39 - No

Question: Township create financial incentives for land owners to keep Open Space and Agricultural lands?

- 499 Yes 139 No

Question: If it is the only way to preserve the open space and Agricultural lands in the township, would you support the township buying these lands through taxes or a bond issue?

- 379 Yes 258 No

Question: Should the Township look into the state program to purchase the Development Rights to preserve its open space and Agricultural lands?

- 423 Yes 200 No

Question: Do you support selling locally grown agricultural products in the township?

- 660 Yes 17 No

Question: Should “high density” agriculture be developed and promoted in the township?

- 149 – Yes 382 – No

Question: *The development of single family, non-farm homes should be restricted in the agricultural areas of the township:*

- **411** – Yes **211** – No

Question: *Industrial development within the township should be encouraged and promoted:*

- **187** – Yes **453** – No

Question: *Commercial development within the township should be developed and encouraged:*

- **301** – Yes **282** – NO

Question: Should protection of groundwater quality be a major factor controlling future growth in commercial and industrial areas of township?

- **623** yes **27** No

Question: Public access to inland lakes and Lake Michigan be expanded in the Twp.?

- **342** – Yes **272** – No

Question: *Home business within the township should be encouraged and promoted?*

- **483** – Yes **118** – No

Question: *Is the township's current zoning ordinance:*

- **223** – Effective **247** – Not Effective