

Mason County Master Plan Update 2013-14





Mason County Board of Commissioners

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MASON COUNTY, MICHIGAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RESOLUTION TO AMEND MASTER PLAN

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At a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Mason County, Michigan on November 12, 2013, Commissioner VanderWall offered, and Commissioner Posma supported the following resolution.

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) Act 33 of 2008 authorizes the Mason County Planning Commission to prepare and amend a Master Plan for the use, development, and preservation of all lands in the County; and

WHEREAS, the Mason County Planning Commission proposed amendments to the Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Mason County Board of Commissioners for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Mason County Board of Commissioners authorized distribution of the proposed updated Master Plan on May 14, 2013 to the notice group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, Mason County noticed and distributed the proposed updated Master Plan for the required review and comment period per the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Mason County Planning Commission held a public hearing on September 24, 2013 to consider public comment on the proposed updated Master Plan and to further review and comment on the proposed updated Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Mason County Planning Commission finds that the proposed updated Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the County.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Adoption of the 2013 Master Plan Recommended. The Mason County Planning Commission recommended for approval the proposed 2013 Mason County Master Plan at the September 24, 2013 meeting, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.

2. Distribution to the Mason County Board of Commissioners and Notice Group. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 the Mason County Board of Commissioners has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed updated Master Plan and therefore the approval signifies a final recommendation to the Mason County Board of Commissioners.

3. Findings of Fact. The Mason County Board of Commissioners has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the County, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, a review of the most recent demographic data available, input received from the public, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the updated Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the County's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in the Mason County.

Roll Call Vote:

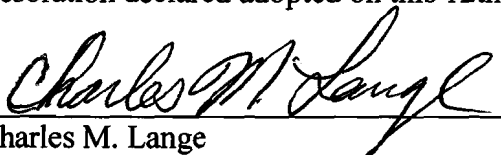
AYES: Commissioner Lenius, Commissioner Carpenter, Commissioner Lange,
Commissioner VanderWall, Commissioner Nichols, Commissioner Andersen,
Commissioner Posma

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Resolution declared adopted on this 12th day of November, 2013.



Charles M. Lange

Chairman

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the purpose of this Master Plan is to provide policy that guides decision making for future land and infrastructure development within Mason County. Specifically, key planning issues are identified; community character is described; goals and policies are outlined; existing and future land uses are described and mapped; public facility standards are established; transportation improvements are identified, and specific implementation measures are recommended.

Specific Objectives of the Plan (adapted from the 2006 Master Plan Update) include:

- To prepare a plan that is consistent with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008 as amended.
- To provide the framework for the Mason County Planning Commission to serve in a proactive, coordinating capacity for all planning committees and commissions within the county.
- To provide a legal basis for county zoning in those portions of the county under county zoning pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended.
- To prepare a plan that is technically sound, internally consistent, and that focuses on current issues and future needs.
- To provide a means for residents to participate in determining the future of their community.
- To provide a broad framework for the county's decision-makers to assist them in both long-term and day-to-day matters.
- To search for innovative, creative, and sound ways in which to improve life in Mason County consistent with community goals.
- To minimize land use conflicts and inappropriate uses of land.
- To designate areas of land for uses in keeping with the natural soil properties, vegetation, terrain and availability of public sewer and water in anticipation of future development.
- To insure public use of land for recreational, civic, educational, and religious needs.
- To provide for an improved system of public services according to current and projected needs.

PLAN PURPOSES

This Plan is adopted by the Mason County Planning Commission to promote public health, safety, and welfare through planning for the appropriate use of land and water resources and the provision of adequate public facilities and services. Although this Plan states specific land use and development policy and proposes specific land use arrangements, it has no regulatory power. It will be implemented by county and local zoning decisions, public facility and infrastructure improvements and the actions of private property owners acting consistent with the Plan.

Photo 1-1
Mason County Lake Michigan Shore



Photo by Robert Garrett

The Planning Commission adopts this Plan pursuant to authority in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008. The Mason County Master Plan will be used most frequently to guide decisions by the Mason County Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners in review of proposed rezoning requests by landowners under County Zoning; and on whether or not to approve local plans and rezoning approvals submitted for review under the appropriate planning or zoning enabling act. The Plan will also guide recommendations made by the County Planning Commission to county and state authorities on roads, parks, county buildings and other infrastructure, as well as on future PA 116 Farmland and Open Space Preservation applications, and grant requests.

The land area covered by this Plan includes the entire area of Mason County and all 20 units of local government in the county. It is intended to promote sensible and sustainable inter-jurisdictional land use planning. It is hoped that this Plan will guide the formation of Township, City and Village plans consistent with it and that subsequent local zoning and infrastructure decisions will also be made consistent with it.

All proposed future land use arrangements and policies presented in this Plan were developed based on a blending of:

- The natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of development or use and the important natural functions played by unique land and water resources in the area.
- The relative future need for residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial land uses; as well as the existing land use distribution.
- The relationship of agricultural and undeveloped lands to existing community character and the economic base of the county.
- The capabilities of the transportation network to sustain different types of development in different areas of the county.

- The desires of local residents and public officials as expressed through their participation in visioning sessions, the local leader survey and public Planning Commission meetings.

This Plan has a time orientation of twenty years into the future. It is heavily influenced by the “Concept of Sustainability:” that a community should make decisions today that meet the needs of the present without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

This Plan is an update of the Master Plan prepared by the Planning and Zoning Center in 2006. The planning process to prepare this Plan carried on a Mason County tradition of providing broad public input opportunities. A County-wide land use and planning survey was conducted in 2012. The survey was statistically valid and sent to a random sample of property owners to result in a 95% confidence interval. An identical digital survey was administered to offer all residents an equal opportunity to participate. The mail-in survey yielded 203 responses while the on-line survey yielded 599 responses. The survey results were used to develop updated goals, objectives and implementation steps. Survey results are included in the appendix.

Additionally, a Town Meeting was held in 2012 at the Ramada Inn for any resident to participate. Over 70 people attended and were asked to develop “Big Ideas” for Mason County as well as a vision statement. Key areas of focus included:

- ☐ Trails/Recreation
- ☐ Economy/Economic Development/Technology/Agriculture
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Quality of Life

The full report is included in the appendix along with survey results. Notices of each meeting and survey availability were announced in the *Ludington Daily News*, and posted locally. The planning process used in developing the Mason County Master Plan included many meetings of the County Planning Commission.

A word cloud for Mason County, Kentucky. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the center. The largest words are "MASON" and "COUNTY", both in a dark blue, bold, sans-serif font. Other prominent words in orange include "RESOURCES", "ECONOMIC", "FUTURE", "ACCESS", "TRANSPORTATION", "AGRICULTURE", "WATER", "VISITORS", "PUBLIC", "COMMUNITY", "HEALTH", "CITIZENS", "ENERGY", "SCENIC", "POPULATION", "COMMERCIAL", "ORIENTED", "INCREASED", "EDUCATION", "THROUGH", "INVOLVED", "RETAIL", "GENERATIONS", "DEFINED", "HIGH", "LOOSE", "ALLOWED", "SAFETY", "VIBRANT", "ATTRACTED", "PRODUCTS", "PROTECTING", "PROMOTE", "ENHANCE", "RESEARCH", "PROMOTING", "QUALITY", "ADDED", "LIFE", "AROUND", "CONNECTED", "BASE", "RECREATIONAL", "NATURAL", "PRESERVING", "AMENITIES", "TECHNOLOGY", "EXISTING", "CARE", "EXTENSIVE", "AREA", "KNOWN", "BENEFITS", "LEADING", "CITY", "PLACE", "COUNTY", "CITIZENRY", "PLANNED", "CENTERED", "PLAN", "BEST", "PRO-BUSINESS", "DEVELOPMENT", "COUNTRIES", "BETTERMENT", "CONSCIOUS", "BUILDING", "PROTECTION", "STRONG", "CONSCIENTIOUS", "DESTINATION", "OPPORTUNITIES", "SIGN", "SCENIC", "NEIGHBORS", "COMPLIMENT", "CONSCIOUSNESS", "TRAILS", "ORIENTED", "INCREASED", "EDUCATION", "THROUGH", "INVOLVED", "RETAIL", "GENERATIONS", "DEFINED", "HIGH", "LOOSE", "ALLOWED", "SAFETY", "VIBRANT", "ATTRACTED", "PRODUCTS", "PROTECTING", "PROMOTE", "ENHANCE", "RESEARCH", "PROMOTING", "QUALITY", "ADDED", "LIFE", "AROUND", "CONNECTED", "BASE", "RECREATIONAL", "NATURAL", "PRESERVING", "AMENITIES", "TECHNOLOGY", "EXISTING", "CARE", "EXTENSIVE", "AREA", "KNOWN", "BENEFITS", "LEADING", "CITY", "PLACE", "COUNTY", "CITIZENRY", "PLANNED", "CENTERED", "PLAN", "BEST", "PRO-BUSINESS", "DEVELOPMENT", "COUNTRIES", "BETTERMENT", "CONSCIOUS", "BUILDING", "PROTECTION", "STRONG", "CONSCIENTIOUS".

Other documents also help to inform Mason County decision makers and help them plan for the future. These include the Mason County Recreation Plan, that describes specific park and recreation projects for the near future. The Mason County US-10/US 31 Access Management Plan, which was developed in 2006, sets forth goals and recommendations for improving safety and efficiency of travel along the US-31 and US-10 highways.

VISION BASED PLAN

A primary challenge of a vision-based Master Plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those needs and desires, as matched by the ability of a municipality to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. Such planning will minimize the potential for land use conflicts and inappropriate uses of land for the long term betterment of all residents.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

There are six critical components to using this Plan as a decision making guide.

- First is the background information in the Mason County Data Book, as a separate document that provides basic information and trends in demographic, economic, land use, natural resources, tax base, transportation and public facilities of the county.
- The second component is the vision, goals, objectives and strategies in Chapter Two. These are based on public input from 2012 and reflect where citizens want their county to be over the next twenty years.
- Third is the Future Land Use Plan, Future Land Use Map and associated policies presented in Chapter Three.
- Fourth is the Zoning Plan in Chapter Four. This lays out the changes in county and local zoning that are needed in order to implement the Future Land Use Plan.
- Fifth is the transportation and other infrastructure discussion in Chapter Five. This describes future improvements in roads, sewer and water to accommodate new development over the next 20 years.
- Sixth are the implementation strategies and inter-jurisdictional coordination steps found in Chapter Six. They outline the steps the county, townships, cities and villages need to take in carrying out the recommendations of this Plan.

This Plan is a statement by the County Planning Commission regarding the present and desired future character of the county and strategies to assure that character. As a formal and tangible document, this Plan is intended to instill a sense of stability and direction for county, city, village and township officials, and for Mason County citizens and businesses.

Every effort has been made to present factually correct, up to date and complete information in this Plan and the accompanying Mason County Data Book. Information was obtained from local, state and federal sources. Ultimately though, this Plan is a general document, and any site-specific decisions should be thoroughly investigated with original research materials before proceeding. The Plan is not regulatory like zoning. It is a policy guide to give direction to many future actions, including changes to the County Zoning Ordinance.

Chapter 2

VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

VISION STATEMENT

Introduction

Mason County residents, businesses, and visitors have diverse needs, desires, and dreams, and satisfying them is a big challenge for any community. This chapter describes those needs, desires, and dreams in a vision for the future of Mason County, and includes goals, objectives, and strategies to reach that vision.

The vision statement that follows describes Mason County as the County Planning Commission and residents at a town meeting and/or by survey (held in 2012) wanted it to be in the year 2030. The vision is organized into topic areas that separately focus on key elements of the County. The vision statement plus goals, objectives, and strategies from the Mason County 2006 Master Plan were the basis for goals, objectives, and strategies of this plan.

When reading this vision, it is necessary to mentally “*transport*” yourself into the future to the year 2030. Thus, there are references “*back*” to the early 2000’s.

21st Century Mason County

Mason County residents and businesses enjoy a rich quality of life and are reaping the benefits of commitments to future generations made years ago. Beginning in the early 2000s, proactive policies and initiatives, economic development plans, and resource preservation plans were undertaken which went well beyond common practice of the day. These initiatives improved the quality of life, and retained and attracted people and businesses to the county. The results of this hard work are obvious to visitors and residents alike.

Mason County has become a true reflection of sustainability (meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). Businesses, farms, neighborhoods, parks, schools, local government, and natural resources are healthy and self-sustaining in 2030. Mason County continues to have a strong agricultural identity and commitment to its farming heritage while cities, towns, and villages within the County preserve the mainstays of the past while promoting forward thinking and progressive initiatives for the future.

When asked about Mason County, residents use terms like “successful,” “beautiful,” “scenic,” “clean,” and “stimulating.” Residents are also quick to say that Mason County is an outdoor recreation paradise and a great place to raise families or retire.

Economic Development - A County of Opportunity

Mason County has a strong business base that is centered around technology, agriculture, health care, and education. A business friendly identity has drawn valuable economic opportunities into the area and established Mason County as a family friendly community that boasts economic stability. The cities, villages, townships and county continue to work together on an aggressive economic development program aimed at retention, expansion, and attraction of business and industry within the county. The primary objective is to create and maintain a healthy and growing economy in Mason County with high paying jobs. To appreciate the success of this initiative one needs only to visit the clean, unobtrusive, and compact industrial and business districts, successful farms, and productive forests in the county.

A high quality-of-life and strong community values have been part of the attraction of new jobs to the county. By continually reinvesting in compact and efficient sewer and water systems, utilities and transportation, communities within the county have demonstrated the capacity to satisfy basic industry requirements on par with any community in Michigan. A marketing program which proactively solicits business and industry has also been a significant factor in the economic success of the county.

Strong Neighborhoods and Diversified Housing

Revitalized older neighborhoods have provided an affordable housing market for families of various sizes and ages. This was in part due to significant reinvestment by owners, but also to strict enforcement of the local building, housing, and rental codes. Many of the county's least expensive neighborhoods have become some of the most popular for first time homebuyers. New affordable housing in subdivisions and condominium developments has been located within existing cities and villages and between Johnson Road and US-10/31. Through clustering and conservation principles, these new developments have protected sensitive environments. Residents of all ages and stages of life are able to find housing suitable to their needs. Older adults find that they can continue to reside in their cherished hometown in attractive and affordable retirement communities. Young adults and young families are able to find comfortable housing and communities are strengthened by broad homeownership opportunities.

Where the visual character, sounds, dust, smells, and level of activity of commercial and industrial development would not be compatible with residential neighborhoods and important scenic views, they are separated or buffered. Where commercial development can serve residential needs, it has been built adjacent to residential neighborhoods with an architectural design and layout that fits the character of the neighborhoods.

New housing developments emphasize the concept of connectivity and are constructed near existing homes with access to parks and trails, schools, retail and commercial outlets, health care facilities, and municipal services. Residents benefit from living in neighborhoods where

ease of travel by vehicle, bicycle, bus, or by walking increase connectivity and ensure a strong quality of life. Those choosing to live in rural areas are stewards of the land and continue the strong heritage of preserving and protecting the abundant open spaces and recreation amenities of the County.

Scenic Natural and Agricultural Landscape Character Preserved

The most common landscape view in Mason County continues to be a mix of woods, meadows, wetlands, river and lakeshores, and farm fields. This agricultural landscape includes commercial wind generators taking advantage of winds off of Lake Michigan.

Rather than succumbing to sprawl and the attendant loss of scenic and natural visual character that is occurring throughout the rest of the State, the alluring characteristics that initially attracted residents and tourists to the county have been maintained, and in some cases enhanced. (The visual character of a community is set by the style, size and upkeep of its homes, businesses and civic places such as parks, stores, schools and government buildings. It is also set by the presence or absence of water and vegetation, hills and highways.)

The rural landscape does more than simply provide scenery. The benefits of nature to residents' mental well-being and the attraction for tourists are important. Farming continues as a viable economic sector. Woods and fields help with water infiltration, maintaining biological diversity, and providing habitat for wildlife. Property owners have coordinated the retention of green space connections to create ecological corridors, enhance recreation, and provide a more continuous natural scenic view. Rivers, streams and lakes have buffer plantings that help protect water quality.

Photo 2-1
Mason County Woods in the Winter



Photo by Ron Carter

New growth and development have occurred in compact form and in locations that retain ample open space throughout the county, reinforcing the scenic visual character rather than detracting from it. In Mason County, large-scale changes to the landscape (especially of vegetation, views, open spaces, and the water's edge), have been minimized by encouraging thoughtfully designed and buffered new development, and redevelopment, in select locations.

Locations that were unattractive or lacked scenic character in 2005 have been improved. This philosophy has been applied to both residential and non-residential development. Existing and new development, particularly along transportation and scenic corridors has been screened with buffer plantings in character with Northern Michigan. Parking lots, big buildings, and outside storage areas can hardly be seen through thick vegetation. The number of signs has been reduced and remaining signs are well designed to enhance commerce and way-finding without detracting from scenic views.

A public well-versed in land and water protection approaches has been deeply involved in making decisions about preservation. Working with conservancies and the State Purchase of Development Rights Program, key parcels have been preserved through development rights purchases, donations, and other approaches over the past two decades. As a result, wetlands, forests, farmland, and green spaces that comprise the scenic character and ecosystem of the county are being permanently protected.

City and Village Centers

Mason County citizens and officials long ago recognized that for a city or village to remain "alive," it must be a vital place for citizens and businesses. This emphasis on placemaking is evidenced by the structures and places of historical and architectural significance that have been protected and renewed and serve as reinforcing elements of visual character. City and village sidewalks are lined with shops and amenities and as a result are full of people. Community events make these centers the place to be on a regular basis. Parks and streets lined with stately trees welcome visitors and residents alike, while public art is evident in all public spaces. Strip commercial corridors have had visual improvements such as tree planting, to make them fit into the scenic Northern Michigan setting.

Transportation and Connectivity

Mason County is well known for its extensive non-motorized trails and access to public transportation. These amenities have attracted growth and visitors. New developments have been designed to complement existing transportation systems and serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and automobile drivers safely and efficiently. The cities of Ludington and Scottville, as well as the villages in the county are known as walkable communities, providing safe connections, separate from roads when practical, between residential areas and the many types of destinations within the community: shops, businesses, public buildings, churches, schools, parks and restaurants. As a result of its increased

walkability, more active residents are able to enjoy a greater level of health than in previous years.

Links continue to be established between residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial development to provide safe, attractive, and low cost pedestrian and bike routes as alternatives to automobile circulation. There are also links to undeveloped open land close to urban areas with trails that extend beyond Mason County into the region. These greenways serve both as recreational opportunities in themselves and to connect destinations such as the towns, parks, and shores of Lake Michigan, Hamlin Lake, and the Pere Marquette River.

Quality of Life - A County of Education and Stimulation

The county has long held education as an important aspect of quality of life. Mason County public and private school systems provide excellent, state recognized educational opportunities. Students are enthusiastic, respectful, computer literate, and have the opportunity to pursue varied endeavors. Occupational programs offered to students at West Shore Community College in Scottville focus on the development of employable skills in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and emphasize real world applications.

Involved and active citizenry allows parents, teachers, faculty, and school boards to develop a wide range of programs that prepare students for secondary education, higher education, and technical skills that are career focused. The community as a whole takes it upon itself to provide ample educational opportunities and this is demonstrated in the community events, civic infrastructure, and public engagement geared towards academic achievement for Mason County residents.

Citizens can continue higher education, obtain technical, job-related training, and can take adult enrichment courses in a wide variety of subjects. Music, art, and museum events in many civic and private facilities continue to provide entertainment for all generations of Mason County citizens. Youth and adult programs incorporate intergenerational learning opportunities that support a lifestyle of shared learning opportunities in Mason County,

Quality of Life- Arts, Culture, and Local History

A strong commitment to the arts keeps Mason County culturally engaged and provides residents with enriching experiences that are community oriented. Local organizations sponsor, support, and encourage participation in and appreciation for the arts. Community events engage citizens and nurture the development of the arts. People of all ages can expect to find resources, classes, and events that enrich and enliven creativity.

A regional center for the arts provides a venue for music, dance, theater, and traditional arts and ensures a high level of civic engagement. Annual fairs, festivals, and shows highlight Mason County's local history and strengthen regional Northwest Michigan identities in agriculture, maritime

history, and natural surroundings. Public art is a prominent feature of retail and commercial space, parks, town centers, schools, and municipal buildings. Streets and walkways benefit from a strong public art presence and enhance walkability and place making in cities, towns, and villages throughout Mason County.

Quality of Life - Recreation

The county has long held recreational opportunity as an important aspect of quality of life. Mason County is a destination for connected scenic recreational opportunities promoting health, safety, and economic benefits. Mason County residents enjoy increased access to Lake Michigan compared to two decades ago, as well as a variety of recreation opportunities at local and county parks, Ludington State Park, National Forest lands, public access sites, golf, and other facilities. Trails link many parts of the county, extend beyond the county and provide opportunities for fitness and enjoyment of the outdoors. Boating on the inland lakes as well as on Lake Michigan continues to be a popular pastime.

Mason County has established one of the most Master regional recreation programs found in the State. By 2030, a county wide recreation program would ensure that residents have ample opportunities to enrich their lives through physical activity and coordinates efforts among various recreation organizations. Various venues could include public schools, West Shore Community College, and public access sites that provide ample recreation opportunities for all seasons.

Photo 2-2
Youth Ice Hockey Game



Photo Courtesy of Ludington Daily News, Copyright 2004

Friendly, Cooperative Community

County business and government leaders long ago recognized that working together is critical to the long-term economic and cultural vitality of the county. Civic groups also play an important role, assisting in keeping Mason County clean, attractive, and healthy with a sustainable environment and positive community spirit. Participation in community events, music concerts, and festivals such as the Petunia Parade and Freedom Festival is high.

Mason County is a friendly and caring place to live and visitors feel the hospitality. The community is supportive of its citizens and helps provide constructive guidance. Members of all generations of the community share in its identity. Both cultural and natural resources are preserved through wide community support by citizens who understand the value and principles of preservation.

Leaders work to encourage a high level of citizen involvement from both residents and nonresident property owners. In return, leadership is responsive to the direction expressed by citizens. Leaders hold the public's trust when enforcing regulations that protect the environment, implement the Master Plan, and otherwise ensure protection of public health, safety, and welfare.

Sustainability and Community

Mason County is a leader in West Michigan of green energy and long-range sustainable energy production.

By the year 2030, Mason County will have developed an Energy Plan that will reflect County needs and scale of uses in our community. The plan will be developed by active, involved citizens and will emphasize energy conservation and renewable energy sources that are in keeping with the scale of our community. New energy solutions will be prioritized contingent upon being green, clean, and supported by thorough research. The development and addition of alternative energy sources within the community will be thoughtfully planned and collaboratively enacted with residents' needs, community values, and scenic preservation in mind.

Intergovernmental Cooperation/Coordination

A shared set of policies structured around a common vision of the future serves as a framework for decision making between all governmental entities in Mason County that enhance transparency of government and increase customer satisfaction.

The common vision and related policies recognizes the autonomy of each unit of local government, but also establishes a mechanism for dealing with issues extending beyond local concern. Communities apply the dual principles of respect and cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Narrow interests and points of view no longer prevent achievement of area-wide interests and the uniqueness of each local government is celebrated.

Coordination of costs, timetables, responsibilities, and resources to continue upgrading the quality of life of the area are all included as an integral part of these cooperative policies. All county and local public services and facilities are coordinated, as are state, federal and private services and facilities when appropriate to do so.

While local land use decisions are guided by both county and local zoning standards, issues extending beyond local concern are subject to input from surrounding local governments both within and outside the county before a final decision is made. Special ad hoc committees aid communication among county and local governments in this process and help ensure adequate public participation.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The vision statement plus goals, objectives, and strategies from the Mason County 2006 Master Plan were the basis for goals, objectives, and strategies of this Plan. These statements are also consistent with the Ten Smart Growth Tenets of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council and the Smart Growth Principles of the Michigan Association of Planning.

Goal: Goals are broad-based statements of intent and establish the direction for the Mason County Master Plan. Goals could generally be thought of as the desired "ends" of successful implementation of the County Plan.

Objective: Objectives are the stated "means" of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be carried out in the process of realizing goals.

Strategies: Strategies are action statements in order to accomplish the goal and objective.

I. GOAL – PRESERVE MASON COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE BEAUTY OF ITS LANDSCAPE.

A. Objective – Provide for planning mechanisms and regulatory techniques that will preserve forests, wetlands, sand dunes, and other natural resources as well as farms and other vegetated landscapes.

1. Strategy – Local governments support applications of agricultural land owners to enroll in agricultural land preservation programs.
2. Strategy – The County and local planning commissions adopt design guidelines for small parcels and large parcel development that promote voluntary approaches to the protection of natural resources and scenic quality.
3. Strategy – The County and local governments encourage the creation of conservancies and land trusts to acquire or obtain development rights to important natural resource and scenic parcels.
4. Strategy – The County and local governments support the voluntary donation of conservation easements for important natural resources and scenic areas, especially roadside areas along scenic corridors.
5. Strategy – Encourage careful land use management on the part of County officials and landowners alike.
6. Strategy – Encourage cluster zoning, farm and open space preservation techniques in rural areas and compact settlement patterns in villages, cities, and in urbanized parts of Pere Marquette and Amber Townships where the proper infrastructure is available.
7. Strategy – Further develop and refine greenbelt zoning techniques via maps and other tools to consistently protect and preserve sensitive areas.
8. Strategy – Work with individual jurisdictions to establish uniform floodplain protection ordinances.

Photo 2-3
**Water is an Important Part of the
Scenic Beauty of Mason County**



Photo by Ron Carter

9. Strategy – Review existing High Risk Erosion Area and Critical Dune permit procedures and experiences and recommend modifications as appropriate.
10. Strategy – Work with the County Road Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation, and local jurisdictions to refine private road standards to limit construction on steep slopes and to restrict private roads that contribute to erosion.
11. Strategy – Adopt ordinances that limit construction clearing on steep slopes and set performance standards for any construction on steeper slopes.
12. Strategy – Develop design guidelines that illustrate the least damaging building approaches for slopes.

B. Objective – A greenspace system of interconnected, undeveloped land, buffers, ecological corridors, forests, floodplains, wetlands, and other open space in private and public ownership is identified and protected in Mason County.

1. Strategy – Develop guidelines for property owners, developers, and business owners on how to preserve or sensitively develop near wildlife corridors.
2. Strategy – Adopt conservation subdivision (a subdivision that uses a maximum lot size that is smaller than the density requirements of the zoning district in return for permanent preservation of large blocks of open space) and cluster ordinances, and promote the use of these techniques for new development of both residential and commercial development.

Consider creating a transfer of development rights program to make clustering more likely.

3. Strategy – Develop educational materials and programs for residential and commercial property owners on how to foster wildlife while protecting properties from wildlife damage.

C. Objective – The public is well informed about the value and importance of threatened and endangered species and plans for their protection are formulated by interested groups.

1. Strategy – Request volunteer groups to provide educational programs for the public regarding the value of preserving wildlife habitat and alternative preservation methods.

2. Strategy – Request volunteer groups to develop and implement preservation plans for areas of threatened and endangered species in cooperation with appropriate state and federal authorities.

II. GOAL – INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION WILL GUIDE AND APPROPRIATELY REGULATE THE TYPE AND AMOUNT OF GROWTH.

A. Objective – Ensure county and local regulations are properly directed to growth management and intergovernmental coordination.

1. Strategy – Periodically review local zoning ordinances and update as necessary to ensure their consistency with the Master Plan.
2. Strategy - Zone all areas of the county to prevent over-crowding of land and overuse of natural resources while maximizing efficiency of public utilities as the Plan indicates.
3. Strategy – Through existing federal, state and local laws and procedures, ensure that if property has any of the following characteristics, those portions of the property with those characteristics shall not be built upon:
 - a) Flooding, as determined by National Flood Hazard maps (encourage FEMA to complete floodplain mapping in the county)
 - b) Inadequate drainage as determined by County Drain Commissioner
 - c) Soil formations with contra-indications for development as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service)
 - d) Severe erosion potential, especially in the designated, high risk erosion area along Lake Michigan as determined by the MDEQ
 - e) Topography with steep slopes as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - f) Designated critical sand dunes as determined by the MDEQ
 - g) Inadequate water supply and sewage disposal capabilities as determined by the District Health Department and/or the MDEQ, and/or the responsible local public agency
 - h) Wetlands as determined by the MDEQ.
4. Strategy – Maintain formal site plan review procedures and standards for environmental protection of each of the environmental features listed above, and for groundwater protection in rural areas of the County.

B. Objective – Develop and maintain county and citizen involvement in the growth management process.

1. Strategy – The County Planning Commission and local jurisdictions meet annually to discuss growth and land use issues.
2. Strategy – Review the Master Plan every five years and update as necessary.

3. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities and leadership on planning and zoning techniques to manage growth. This could be done as part of an annual educational workshop on topics of contemporary interest that incorporates the first strategy above.

III. GOAL – ESTABLISH A SET OF REGULATIONS AND A PROGRAM OF ENFORCEMENT THAT PROTECTS QUALITY OF LIFE AND IS FAIR AND CONSISTENT FOR PROPERTY OWNERS.

A. Objective – Keep the county and local zoning ordinances consistent with this Plan, up-to-date, and ensure zoning enforcement is professional, fair and consistent.

1. Strategy – Encourage local officials to stay abreast of changing laws and regulations regarding planning and zoning and implement changes when necessary.
2. Strategy – Enforce the zoning ordinance in a consistent and fair manner.
3. Strategy – Modernize and utilize clearly defined procedures for granting or denying variances and rezoning efforts in an objective, measurable manner consistent with the Master Plan.
4. Strategy – As appropriate, make zoning variances the exception rather than the rule.
5. Strategy – Implement the recommendations in Chapter Four of this Plan.
6. Strategy – Educate the public regarding the role of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and the procedures outlined above.
7. Strategy – Continue to provide the office of the County Zoning Director with adequate funds and legal support to properly enforce the County Zoning Ordinance.

IV. GOAL – UPDATE AGRICULTURAL ZONING TO BRING IN LINE WITH MODERN DAY FARMING METHODS AND EXPAND AGRICULTURAL TOURISM AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES.

A. Objective – Minimize the incompatibility of non-farm rural residential areas and large farm production facilities.

1. Strategy – Engage in a review of the Michigan Right to Farm Act to determine the extent that local control and/or input is allowed and educate the public about the findings.
2. Strategy – Encourage those farm practices that minimize odor, noise, and environmental risk.
3. Strategy – Encourage the Health Department to develop a program to maintain the quality of water wells by establishing protection zones around each well.

B. Objective – Harness the potential of agricultural uses and practices as tourism opportunities.

1. Strategy – Develop zoning provisions to allow for agri-tourism and agri-business activities to co-exist with active farms.

Photo 2-4

Farming is a Major Business in Mason County



Photo by Robert Garrett

V. GOAL – INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS AND COMPETITION IN THE COUNTY.

A. Objective – Ensure land suitable for commercial and industrial development is adequately served with public sewer, water, and other essential public services and facilities.

B. Objective – Increase awareness of available land and strengths of area businesses.

C. Objective – Promote involvement of county and local governmental units in economic development decisions.

D. Objective – Encourage the establishment of businesses that provide year-round employment and offer quality jobs.

E. Objective – Recognize the changing dynamics of business resulting from technological advances.

1. Strategy – Encourage the preparation and periodic update of a countywide economic development plan.
2. Strategy – Encourage cooperation and regular coordination between economic development activities and the County Planning Commission.
3. Strategy – Work toward ensuring that further processing of agricultural and natural resource products harvested from the county would, where feasible, be undertaken within the county.
4. Strategy – Work toward wi-fi availability within the County's primary employment centers, neighborhoods and rural areas by allowing future communications infrastructure as well as co-location on existing towers by amending the zoning ordinance to lessen requirements.
5. Strategy – Modify the zoning ordinance to allow small-scale home based businesses in Townships as permitted (in some districts) with approval by the Zoning Administrator, instead of by Special Land Use.

VI. GOAL – VILLAGE AND CITY CENTERS HAVE AN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY.

A. Objective – Create vibrant and bustling villages and cities that are functional, people-oriented, and the center of cultural activity within the county.

1. Strategy – Existing civic and cultural facilities are retained in village and city centers and new or expanded civic and cultural facilities are placed in or very close to village and city centers.
2. Strategy – Maximize existing public infrastructure by utilizing brownfield redevelopment strategies to revitalize areas of the county.
3. Strategy – Encourage the preservation of historic structures through maintenance and renovation that retains historic character.
4. Strategy – Encourage pedestrian activity in cities and villages through the design and construction of sidewalks and small public spaces that are safe and filled with trees, art and other amenities.
5. Strategy – Promote voluntary participation in community and cultural activities.
6. Strategy – Encourage businesses and institutions to install public art, flowers, trees, benches and fountains.
7. Strategy – Expand the number and type of festivals and fairs especially in the lower activity months.
8. Strategy – Encourage residential densities, through infill and redevelopment, that are within a ¼ mile of existing development.

Photo 2-5
City of Scottville



VII. GOAL – PROVIDE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CITIZENS OF THE COUNTY.

- A. Objective – Ensure a wide range of housing choices.**
- B. Objective – Allow for reasonable and fair low to moderate-income housing where compatible with other housing types.**
- C. Objective – Meet the most urgent unmet housing needs of the physically and developmentally disabled, those with low and moderate incomes, the elderly, and those who are on public assistance.**
- D. Objective – Continue to provide for compatibility among and between housing types for neighborhood stability.**

- 1. Strategy – Continue to allow for Mobile Home Parks and manufactured homes in designated zoning districts.
- 2. Strategy – New housing developments/subdivisions should occur only in areas where public sewer and water are available or economically feasible.
- 3. Strategy – New housing developments should be compatible with existing and planned, neighboring land uses and their circulation network should connect to the existing grid system of roadways.
- 4. Strategy – The area east of Dennis Road, west of Stiles Road, north of US-10 and south of Johnson Road, should be targeted for a housing density that permits persons of low and moderate income to affordably live there.

VIII. GOAL – PROVIDE AN ATMOSPHERE WHEREBY AREA YOUTH HAVE A STAKE IN THE COMMUNITY.

A. Objective – Promote area education, recreational and cultural opportunities to citizens of all ages.

B. Objective – Encourage continuation/expansion and better awareness of the local education, recreational and cultural opportunities.

C. Objective – Encourage involvement of youth in their community.

1. Strategy – Provide direction and policy assistance so that entities like West Shore Community College can attract the best students, faculty, and facilities in conjunction with the statewide network of 4-year institutions.
2. Strategy – Outreach to students, whenever and wherever possible, in local governing, planning and collateral activities such as through representation on various County committees.
3. Strategy – Utilize existing recreational centers at area schools and the community college.
4. Strategy – Utilize existing cultural centers such as West Shore Community College and the Ludington Area Center for the Arts, to expand and enhance the diversity of cultural information available.
5. Strategy – Support Community College/Public School System collaboration on educational initiatives such as the West Shore Education District.

Photo 2-6
**West Shore Community College Provides
Key Cultural and Recreational Opportunities**



Photo Courtesy of West Shore Community College

**IX. GOAL – MAINTAIN THE VIABILITY OF THE INLAND LAKE RESIDENTIAL
COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTY.**

A. Objective – Provide for planning and zoning mechanisms to maintain current levels of attractiveness and viability of the inland lakes in the county.

B. Objective – Execute steps necessary to achieve improvement and enhancement of overall water quality for these lakes and connecting waterways.

1. Strategy – Strictly enforce current or revised lakefront zoning.
2. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and other forums to educate lake residents regarding fertilizer practices and other actions that could affect water quality.
3. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and property associations to implement best management practices as recommended in lake studies including grant acquisition.
4. Strategy – Encourage the development of appropriately sited public access sites/boat launches for all citizens.

X. GOAL – PROVIDE UPGRADED TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND BETTER MANAGED ACCESS WHERE THEY WILL PROVIDE THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO THE PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, AND TOURISTS IN THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE.

A. Objective – Safe and efficient movement of people and goods with a variety of transportation modes.

1. Strategy – Encourage the expansion of public transportation to a countywide system.
2. Strategy – Continue to support air, rail, and harbor transportation.
3. Strategy – Develop a non-motorized transportation plan of blueways, greenways and marked pathway system that connect employment and population centers to local and regional destinations and trail networks.

B. Objective – Provide reasonable access by all segments of the population to jobs, services, recreation, and other opportunities.

1. Strategy – Encourage transportation infrastructure development that complements anticipated future land use patterns. In particular, implement the proposed connecting roads described in Chapter Five.
2. Strategy – Work with local units of government, the Michigan Department of Transportation and others to cooperatively implement plans for the commercial and industrial development of the US-10/US-31 corridor between Ludington and Scottville.
3. Strategy – Pave or improve only those roads where soils and other natural features will adequately support traffic from increased development.
4. Strategy – Facilitate a coordinated approach to transportation planning among responsible government units.

C. Objective – Provide complete streets along major and minor county corridors through proactive planning and design with the County Road Commission.

1. Strategy – Encourage the development of design standards and targeted locations for complete streets such that any County road improvement or repaving activity accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists, where feasible.
2. Strategy – Actively support the reduction of lanes and/or lane widths in support of complete streets designs that accommodate ample, protected, and well marked bike lanes and sidewalks, where feasible. Areas in particular include Lakeshore Drive between Iris Road and

Pentwater and Jebavy with a minimum 18" or wider paved shoulder for bicyclists.

3. Strategy – Develop tools and techniques to enhance pedestrian safety along and crossing US-10, especially near Meijer and Home Depot.

XI. GOAL – PROVIDE A RANGE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY, WHICH MEETS PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORTS THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

- A. Objective – Public sewer and water is provided to businesses and residents efficiently and in locations in which development does not negatively affect natural resources and community character or promote sprawl.**
- B. Objective – Public facilities, services, and programs provide for the health and safety needs of Mason County citizens, workers, and visitors.**
- C. Objective – Helping to ensure the health care and housing needs of our aging population are adequately addressed.**
- D. Objective – Police, fire and emergency services are consistent with public need and the ability to finance improvements in the most cost-effective manner.**
- E. Objective – Solid waste, recyclable and hazardous materials are disposed of safely, effectively, and efficiently according to the adopted Solid Waste Management Plan.**
- F. Objective – An intergovernmental plan, prepared by the county in conjunction with cities, townships and villages details when, and under what circumstances sewer service will be extended to new areas of the county consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan. The county will continue to cooperate with cities, villages and townships in the provision or expansion of other public utilities, as appropriate.**
- G. Objective – Police, fire, and emergency services respond as rapidly and effectively as possible in a largely rural county.**
- H. Objective – Residential development without public sewer service is limited to locations within the county where construction of on-site septic systems is not prohibited by soils.**

1. Strategy – Support expansion of sewer and water into an area only when consistent with the planned intensity of land use for that area and scheduled as to affordability.
2. Strategy – Encourage county participation in regional management of solid waste and recycling.
3. Strategy – The county and other local governments adopt site plan review regulations and support using septic system inspection programs to protect the quality of groundwater, inland lakes, and streams.
4. Strategy – Expansion of public facilities (especially sewer and water) should be timed to guide future development into particular areas consistent with the demand for additional service.
5. Strategy – The county will continue to ask the County Planning Commission to review and comment on proposed county facilities so as to ensure continued conformance with this Plan.
6. Strategy – Maintain a map for the whole county that indicates the appropriate location of public facilities, extensions of sewer and water service, and new development.
7. Strategy – Review the county's ability to satisfy long-term solid waste disposal needs in a cost effective manner and expand recycling services through five-year reviews of the Solid Waste Plan.
8. Strategy – Coordinate infrastructure construction, repair, or maintenance with road construction, repair, and maintenance.
9. Strategy – Cooperate regionally in the provision of public safety and emergency services, community facilities, and programs.
10. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities to residents regarding emergency, social and health services, and self-help actions to reduce risk.
12. Strategy – Work with the City of Ludington to limit dead-end water lines in favor of looping lines to maintain water pressure.

XII. GOAL – ENCOURAGE COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

A. Objective – Provide for better living conditions and business opportunities for the largest contiguous area possible.

1. Strategy – Encourage the involvement and cooperation of local governments, citizens, and businesses in the development and construction of water and sanitary sewer systems as appropriate for future growth.
2. Strategy – Continue inter-governmental cooperation by forming advisory boards and (where possible) unified operational boards to more cost-effectively deliver services.

XIII. GOAL – PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES SERVE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO THE AREA ECONOMY.

- A. Objective – Continue to maintain and periodically update the County Recreation Plan.**
- B. Objective – Coordinate efforts with local jurisdictions and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to implement the recommendations of the County Recreation Plan.**
- C. Objective — Identify and explore new opportunities for recreational projects with local jurisdictions as a means of better serving residents and enhancing tourism.**
- D. Objective – Link new and existing recreation areas and facilities with non-motorized trails.**
- E. Objective – Improve youth recreational opportunities throughout the county including indoor and outdoor sports activities.**
- F. Objective – Expand recreation opportunities to include heritage, ecological, and agricultural experiences.**

1. Strategy – Support coordinated recreation planning at the state, county, and local level and involve private partners and the schools.
2. Strategy – Develop a funding program for the purchase of recreational lands in planned areas where a need has been determined or where a special opportunity exists.
3. Strategy – Develop a funding program for enhancing recreational programs and facilities throughout the county.
4. Strategy – Give priority to funding recreational projects that utilize existing facilities, underutilized facilities, and those locations that do not generate increased traffic in light traffic areas.
5. Strategy – Support development of a Mason County Heritage Trail which links cultural and historic attractions across the county and enhance wayfinding to all County park facilities.
6. Strategy – Promote opportunities for eco-tourism and agri-tourism.
7. Strategy – Support trail links throughout the county with a special focus on preservation of any abandoned railroad right-of-way.
8. Strategy – Support efforts of Ludington State Park to maintain and improve its facilities through coordination of public and private partners and the schools.
9. Strategy – Endorse and support four-season recreation, including the snow mobile trail facilities.

GOAL IX. MASON COUNTY BECOMES A LEADER AND A DESTINATION IN WEST MICHIGAN FOR GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION, MANUFACTURING, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

A. Objective - Achieve measurable reductions in energy use, water consumption, and waste generation.

B. Objective - Support small scale renewable energy generation when it is appropriately sized, in scale with the immediate surrounding context, and located in safe distance from surrounding uses.

C. Objective - Maintain and enhance educational and outreach regarding the importance of sustainability in business.

1. Strategy- Develop a Master Energy Plan that collects data, establishes benchmarks, and sets goals, strategies and objectives to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse emission levels, while exploring the potential of wind, geothermal, water, and other natural resources for sustainable development.

2. Strategy- Provide information on best practices for sustainable land use and land development practices and provide that information for public outreach and education programs.

Chapter 3

FUTURE LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents information on future land use in the context of existing land use in Mason County. It begins by describing existing community character (for a more complete description of existing land use, see the Mason County Data Book, Chapter 4 and 5). It then discusses key issues and key policies intended to respond to those issues (Part A dealing with townships under county zoning and Part B for townships, cities and villages not under county zoning). Finally, this chapter describes how different land use categories are proposed to be managed in the future.

EXISTING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Mason County is characterized by large areas of farmland and forest. Along the Lake Michigan shoreline, there are extensive bluff and dune areas. Pristine rivers and streams flow through the county from east to west and empty into Lake Michigan. There are many small lakes, and large Hamlin Lake sits behind a dam and the dunes at Ludington State Park. Small wetlands dot the landscape. Many other wetlands in the agricultural areas were drained long ago. Most of the privately owned shoreline of Lake Michigan and the inland lakes is developed with cottages, seasonal and year-around homes. The City of Ludington is a deep water small port city, where tourists and industry both co-exist. Ludington's waterfront is largely dedicated to deep water facilities (including the pier complex for the Ludington to Manitowoc, Wisconsin ferry) and industry, but is converting to marinas, parks and water-related condominiums. Highway corridors are also important. US-31 is a freeway that comes from Muskegon to US-10 just east of Ludington. US-10 extends from the port at Ludington nearly due east to the county line and beyond to Clare and Bay City. It has become an important commercial corridor near the interchange. The US-10/US-31 corridor east of the interchange is rapidly developing, generally in a scattered and low intensity pattern. US-31 splits from US-10 at Scottville and extends north to the county line and the City of Manistee a short distance farther. Scottville is a small city in the center of the county and there are three rural villages, Custer, Fountain and Free Soil. There are 15 townships and one, Pere Marquette, is a charter township.

The diversity of landscapes in Mason County is highly prized by those that live and visit here. Orchards and farm fields, beaches and dunes, forests and wetlands, rivers and lakes provide a rich tablet for the eye to behold in the changing seasons. The small towns combined with a complete complement of retail and urban service options add to the variety of living, shopping, working and recreating opportunities. But changes to the landscape and to the job base have begun to threaten confidence that these prized characteristics will remain intact for enjoyment by future generations. This Plan proposes measures to restore confidence in a sustainable future.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

Mason County faces a number of issues related to current trends and its vision for the future. Two issues are much more important than the rest and guide key policies in this Plan. They are discussed below.

Economic Base in Land Resources and Industry

Mason County's economy is based on agriculture, tourism and industry. Industry is suffering and there are land use trends working against sustained agriculture and tourism. The county needs to provide a means for new industry to become established, while at the same time, protecting agriculture and tourism.

About all a county can do to provide for new industry is to work with its cities, villages and townships to ensure an adequate supply of land that is well-served by all-weather roads, railroad, shipping and air service, and has public sewer and water to industrial sites. Of course the land must be suitably zoned and located so as to not undermine the integrity of adjacent land uses. The county can also participate in job retention and marketing activities to promote the benefit of siting in the county. Once these measures are taken, it will be a high quality of life for industry owners and workers that attract them to the area: good schools, medical care, arts, culture and recreation are chief among these amenities. Mason County has all these amenities and by valuing and sustaining them, it can attract new jobs for a prosperous future.

Protecting the environment is key to the survival of agriculture and tourism and to sustaining a high quality of life. Those environmental elements that should be protected include surface and groundwater, wetlands, shorelines, forests, productive farmland and habitat for threatened and endangered species. Mason County will need to be aware of the thresholds of the effects of unplanned development on the environment. The county will need to make sure that scattered residential and commercial development does not tip the county over the thresholds that seriously weaken its agriculture and tourism economies.

People are retiring at a younger age than the previous generation and many are moving north, looking to places such as Mason County as a retirement location. Many of them demand services they formerly enjoyed that are not currently available, thus putting pressure on budgets that are already under pressure from inflationary, and rising worker benefit costs. With this influx comes many challenges, from increased traffic to increased pressure on agricultural lands, forest lands, lakes and streams. For example, in Mason County today, recreational land is often selling for more money per acre than average agricultural land.

Agriculture is important in Mason County, but is facing sustainability problems. The conversion of agricultural land to residential use threatens the future of both the agricultural economic sector and the rural character that residents and tourists enjoy. As non-farm residences are built in farming areas, it becomes more difficult for farming operations to continue as non-farm residents often complain about noise, dust, odor, fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides and many of the farm practices necessary on a modern farm.

Photo 3-1
Cottage on Big Sable



Photo by Ron Carter

Mason County is blessed with highly diverse agriculture and tourism. Agriculture includes orchards, row crops, livestock, Christmas trees, hops, blueberries and confined animal feeding operations. Tourism activities and attractions include camping, boating, historic sites, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, and going to the beach. There are many motels, restaurants, a State Park, National Forest lands, a full compliment of retail stores, festivals, the county fair, the ferry to Wisconsin and primary and secondary homes on lakes and in the woods. This diversity is healthy, necessary for the economy, and the environment needs to be protected in order to maintain that diversity.

Maximize Existing Public Investments in Infrastructure—the Ludington to Scottville Corridor

The US-10/US-31 corridor is developing rapidly and is shifting the center of retail and service business from downtown Ludington to the freeway interchange of US-10 and US-31. Commercial and industrial uses are scattered all the way to Scottville.

Local communities and MDOT have already invested heavily in the corridor. There are several thousand acres of undeveloped land that should be built upon over time, in order to make efficient use of the existing investment in public sewer, water and the five lanes of US-10/US-31 itself. Building on the undeveloped land in the corridor will take development pressure off of rural land. This protects the agriculture and agri-tourism economies of the County, and protects the quality of life of those already living in rural areas. In addition to making good use of existing infrastructure, it delays the need for infrastructure investment elsewhere. It also improves opportunities for affordable housing as higher density is feasible.

Yet, there are reasons to be concerned about new development on the corridor. First, if it robs jobs and sales from existing businesses in Ludington or Scottville, then there is no net gain to citizens, only more empty storefronts in the two cities in the county. Second, if it happens too fast, or at too low a density it will underutilize the infrastructure

investment if stores close from lack of a market or others can not be built because too much land is used to serve too few. Third, the corridor serves as one of the main entryways into the county and the City of Ludington, and some citizens are already concerned that its visual character presently reflects poorly on the community's sense of place. New development should be more carefully designed with an eye to an improved aesthetic. Fourth, if the design and layout is not carefully done, and if new parallel roads are not constructed as recommended in Chapter Five, then traffic safety and congestion will become problems as the corridor develops.

Encouraging a compact growth pattern for the corridor that includes residential, commercial, and industrial development in appropriate locations will be essential to the efficient provision of public services and sustainability of corridor businesses. While this Plan recommends a general arrangement of industrial and commercial development on the south side of US-10/US-31, commercial on the north side, and residential development north of the commercial, the over-arching purpose is job development with nearby affordable housing in neighborhood oriented clusters. This must occur in staged increments only as the market permits and only after all measures to properly build out Ludington and Scottville are taken.

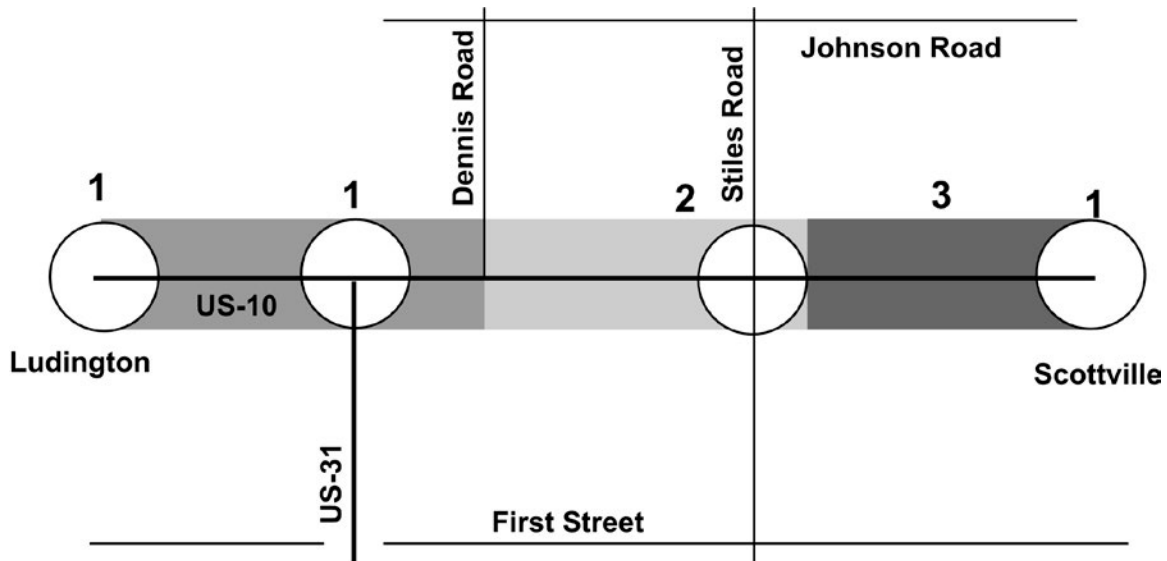
KEY LAND USE POLICIES—PART A

This section describes key land use policies in Mason County in townships subject to county zoning. It is intended to provide an overview of the direction the county intends for land use change in the future. Map 3-1 illustrates those key policies.

In general, the intent is to concentrate future development along the US-10/US-31 corridor from the interchange to Scottville, while preserving rural lands and natural features elsewhere. Development of the US-10/US-31 corridor would take place in stages (see Figure 3-1), with the first stage (from present up to about 20 years into the future) focusing first on Ludington and Scottville, and then development in the center part of the corridor. A node at the freeway interchange of US-10 and US-31 would continue to be devoted to “Big Box Retail” development. In the second stage (after about 20 years), new development would center around the intersection of Stiles Road and US-10/US-31. In a final stage (30 or more years from the present), development of the corridor from Stiles Road east to Scottville would take place. Job centers in the villages of Custer, Free Soil and Fountain are also encouraged, within defined community service areas once both public sewer and water are available.

These time frames are based on rates of change in 2012. If change accelerates, then less time will pass before a stage is complete and vice versa. The biggest impediment to successful implementation of this policy is developers who do not use the developable part of property (i.e. avoid all wetlands) intensively enough. That will result in prematurely using up the scarcest resource in the county—undeveloped land served (or servable) by both public sewer and water. It will also push development into the rural areas of the county which should be preserved for their renewable natural resource value.

**Figure 3-1
Staged Development**



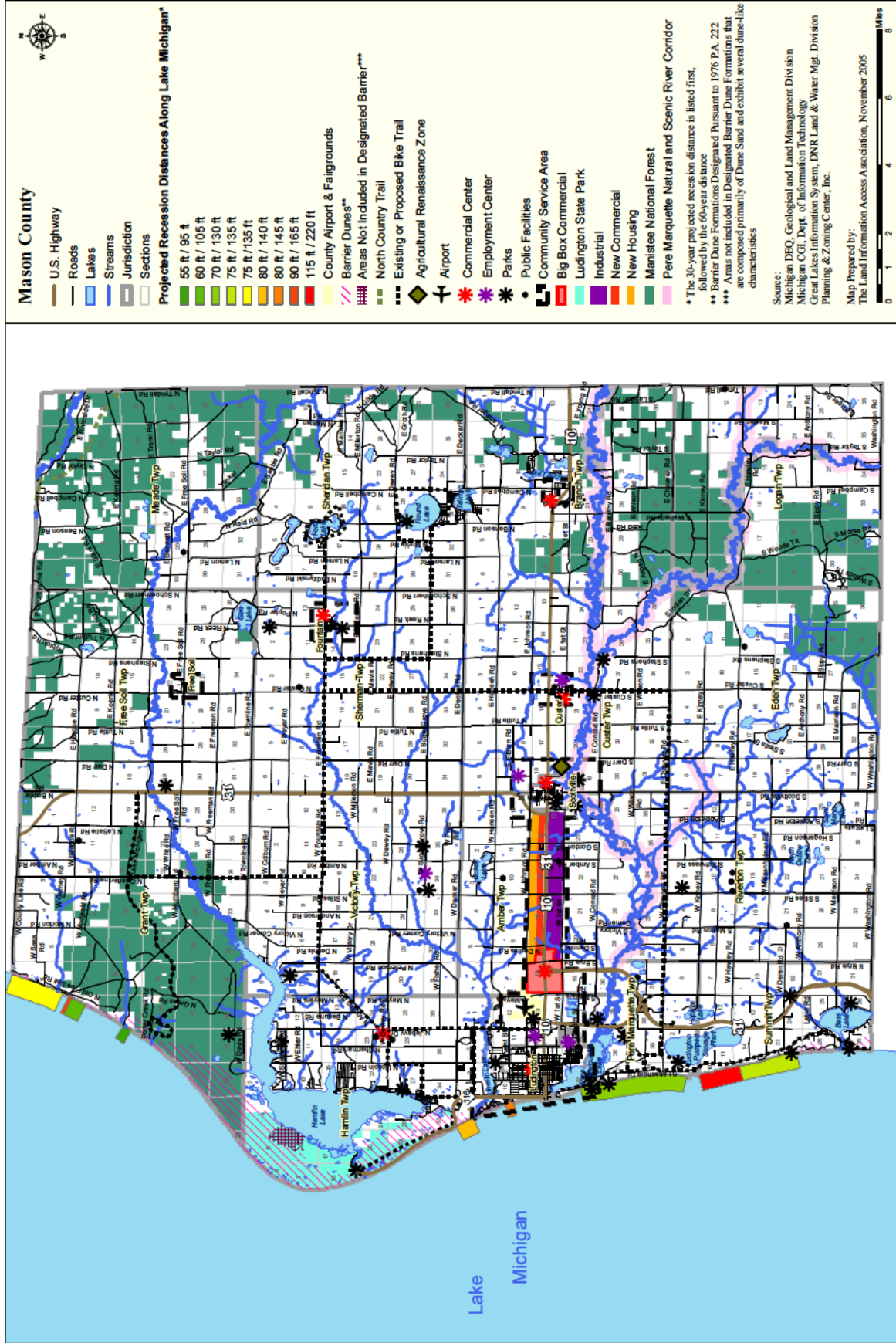
US-10/US-31 Corridor

The US-10/US-31 corridor from the freeway interchange to Scottville should be the focus of future development in order to take pressure off of rural areas and make the corridor an employment center. There will be a mix of uses, including commercial, industrial and residential in order to improve economic vitality and make maximum use of the investment the county has already made in existing public infrastructure. The highway will provide excellent access and the construction of new parallel roads as well as an efficient layout of commercial and industrial properties can help reduce congestion and traffic accidents. Attractive building, sign design, and landscaping will improve visual character. North of the highway commercial development, mixed office, small commercial and both medium density (4 dwelling units/acre) and high density (8-12 dwelling units/acre) housing will provide for walkability and convenience to work and shopping.

The corridor will extend about one half mile north of the highway to Johnson Road and one half mile south of the highway to First Street. Commercial development will be the designated land use in the first $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on both the north and south side of the highway. There can be some mixing of industrial and office uses in this area as this is already a characteristic. In the next band south, down to First Street, the primary use will be industrial in order to take advantage of the railroad. Commercial establishments with a large number of employees may locate in the industrial area on the south side of the highway.

The US-10/US-31 corridor development area will require zoning changes in order to provide for mixed use development, changed designation of zoning districts and to address the appearance of the corridor. The area south of the highway in the corridor is presently zoned commercial, with only a small area zoned industrial. The industrially zoned area of the corridor needs to be much larger. See Chapter 4, Zoning Plan for more information.

Map 3-1 Key Mason County Land Use Policies



Eventually the development of this corridor will extend all the way east to Scottville. However, in the first stage, new residential, commercial, and industrial development will only extend to Dennis Road.

Currently, the US-10 corridor east of Scottville has commercial and higher density residential zoning along the south side of the highway all the way to Custer. There should not be any commercial or high density residential zoning between Scottville and Custer except for the first one half mile east of Scottville and about one quarter mile west of Custer on the north side of the highway. This is because of the lack of public sewer and water, and the presence of both utilities plus a five-lane road west of Scottville.

Big Box Commercial Designated Area

The area around the US-10/US-31 interchange will be designated as “Big Box Commercial.” This is where establishments known as “Big Box Stores” should be encouraged to locate (such as the Meijer, Home Depot, Lowes and WalMart that are already there). This location will provide better access for the larger stores, and will allow for a mix of other types of commercial, industrial and residential uses farther east along the corridor, where a variety of smaller businesses are located, and where the transportation and site impacts of “big box” stores could be more difficult to manage. There is a need for new connecting roads in this area as described in Chapter Five.

Protection of Important Natural Features

In order to protect water quality and sensitive environments in Mason County, careful development approaches will need to be used along rivers, streams, lakes, floodplains, wetlands and dunes. A continuing educational effort will be needed regarding the value of natural features and regulatory and volunteer methods to protect those resources.

Wetlands, Rivers and Streams

Of particular concern are wetlands, rivers and streams. These are shown on Map 3-2, Floodplains and Wetlands. Very few of the floodplains in the county have been mapped through the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program. The FEMA maps help identify areas that should not be built upon in order to limit the potential for property damage and to limit the potential increase in flooding due to floodplain development. Local units of government must request FEMA to produce the maps. Floodplain areas not mapped by FEMA should be identified and development limited in those areas. Map 3-2 provides clues to where some of the floodplains are for which FEMA floodplain maps have not yet been requested. These clues include river segments with multiple stream channels or frequent switchbacks and bends. As of 2013, FEMA has been updating the floodplain maps which should be adopted by 2014.

Wetlands shown on Map 3-2 were identified by the National Wetlands Inventory. Wetlands exist across most of Mason County, which means that development will have to be designed very carefully in order to protect valuable wetland functions. Wetland functions include stormwater storage and cleansing, groundwater recharge, spawning area for fish, nesting habitat for birds and other animals, and natural scenery.

Map 3-2 shows the location of rivers and streams in Mason County, most of which are of very high quality, supporting desirable species of game fish. Rivers and streams should be protected by setting development back from shorelines, providing vegetative filter

strips, directing stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces away from surface water and preventing sediment, toxic chemicals and warmed water from entering the water.

Map 3-1, Key Policies, indicates streams that have protective greenbelt zoning provisions. The Pere Marquette River is designated as a state Natural River, and as a federal Scenic River. These designations mandate certain provisions to help retain the naturalness of the shoreline and to help protect river water quality. Those provisions include deeper setbacks for buildings, greater minimum lot widths, limitations on the size of signs, deeper setbacks for septic systems, a natural vegetation buffer strip, limitations on the clearing of shoreline vegetation and control of access to the river. The county will support enforcement of those provisions in order to protect this economic and quality of life asset.

High Risk Erosion Areas

Map 3-1 indicates where the state has identified Lake Michigan shoreline at high risk for erosion. The map legend indicates the projected rate of recession (erosion of shoreline bluffs in a landward direction), with shoreline segments identified by green bands likely to experience comparatively slower rates than the segments identified by yellow and red bands. The recession rate is expressed by two numbers, with the first representing the distance of projected recession over a 30 year period, and the second number the rate projected over a 60 year period. Development of shoreline properties should not be permitted within the projected recession area. Other measures, such as planting or retaining vegetation on dunes and bluffs, and directing the runoff from impervious surfaces away from the top of bluffs should be required. This will require careful coordination with the DEQ which administers high risk erosion area regulations.

Barrier Dunes

Map 3-2 shows the location of designated barrier dunes. These were originally identified as part of PA 222 of 1976. The "Critical Dune Area" portion of the law was separated out as Part 353 of the Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, PA 451 of 1994 and retained the title of "Sand Dune Protection and Management", which is administered by the DEQ's Land & Water Management Division. The mining regulation became Part 637 with the title "Sand Dune Mining", and is administered by the DEQ's Geological Survey Division.

There are designated critical dune areas along the shore from the City of Ludington north into Grant Township. Much of this area is in public ownership, either Ludington State Park or the Manistee National Forest. In those areas that are privately owned, the county and local units of government should work closely with the MDEQ and MDNR to ensure that development or mining activities proceed in a manner that will ensure the sustainability of the shoreline dune environment.

Photo 3-2
Mason County Dunes



Photo by Robert Garrett

Public Facilities

The locations of existing public facilities are shown on Map 3-1. While some communities plan improvements to existing facilities (see the Mason County Data Book, Chapter 7, Public Facilities and Physical Services), there are no known plans for the construction of new facilities in the near future. All proposed new public facilities in the county by any governmental entity should be reviewed by the County Planning Commission for consistency with this Plan.

Recreation

Recreation is an important part of the tourism economic sector and of the quality of life for residents of Mason County. Map 3-1 shows the locations of parks, Ludington State Park, Manistee National Forest, the North Country Trail, and existing or proposed bike and snowmobile trails. Completing the proposed bike trail routes and providing for pedestrian and bike connections from residential areas to other points of attraction will be important in making the county more attractive for new businesses and residents. It will also help promote an active and healthy lifestyle for county residents.

Rural Areas

It is the policy of the county that the use of rural lands be devoted to agricultural and forest production and the occasional non-farm residence. Privately owned rural areas are shown in white on the Key Policies Map (Map 3-1). Two changes are needed to see this policy become effective. One, the permitted zoning density on existing agricultural and forest lands should be changed from one dwelling unit per acre, to something substantially less; in the area of one dwelling unit per 40 acres would be best. This is known as a quarter-quarter system. The maximum lot size for each dwelling unit would be 2 acres (unless the District Health Department required more because of soil conditions for the septic system). Thus a farmer with 120 acres would be permitted 3 dwellings on 2-acre lots. This protects large amounts of farm and forest land for long-term farming and forest management. If a landowner desired a higher density, they would have to pursue rezoning to a zone which allowed a higher density. This change

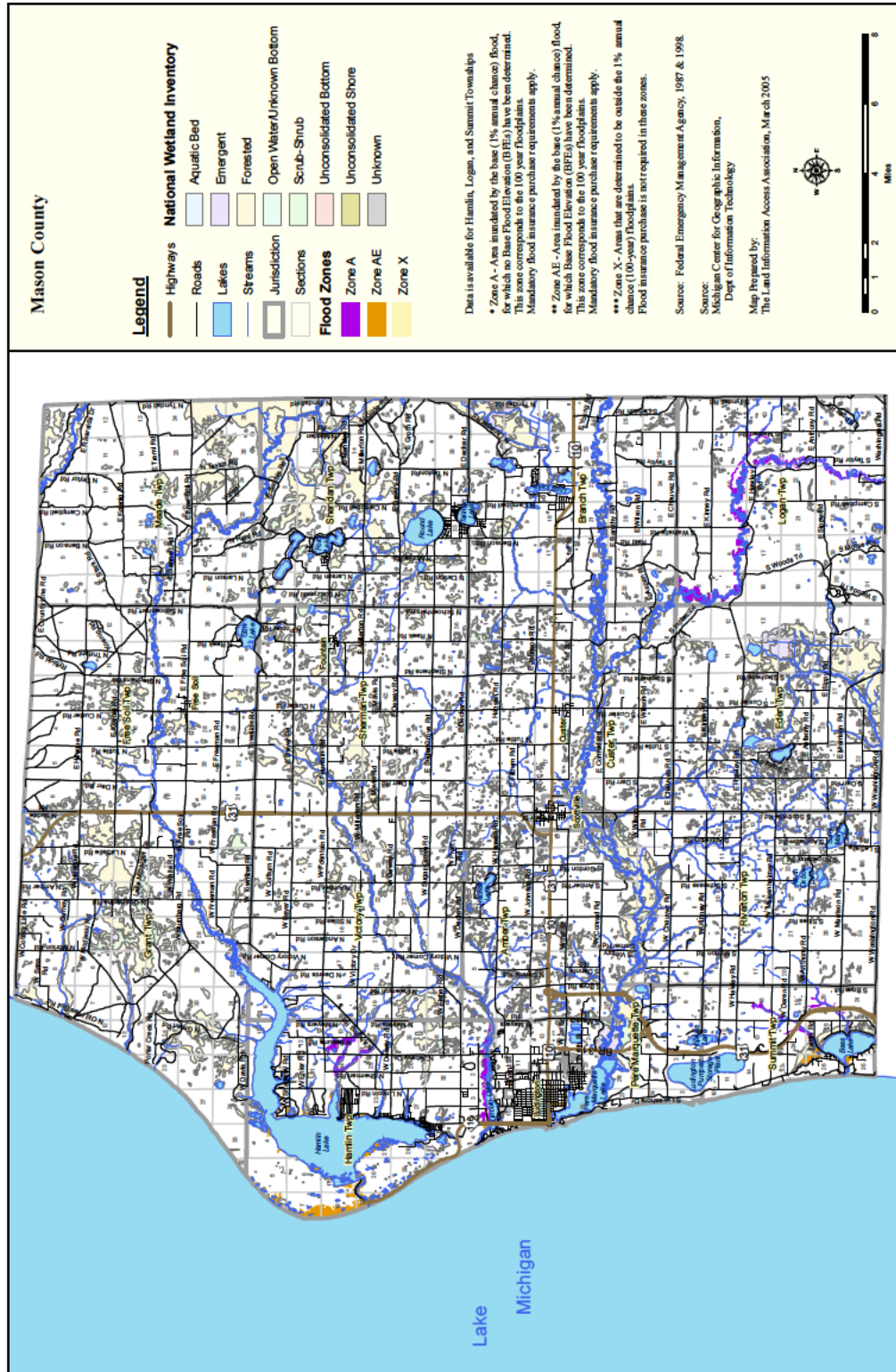
would allow farmers to score higher on the state or federal purchase of development rights (PDR) programs. These are long-term preservation programs where government pays farmers for the development rights to farmland. However, there are other options that should be considered if there is insufficient political support for moving to the quarter-quarter system. These other options are described later in this chapter. Second, the county should explore creating its own PDR program and a transfer of development rights (TDR) program as well. Development rights programs require new ordinance provisions. A TDR program requires the identification of “sending zones” and “receiving zones.” In Mason County, sending zones would be identified in agricultural areas where soils are especially suited for farming and where they may be under imminent threat of conversion from agriculture to other uses. Receiving zones would be set up where more concentrated development is desired, such as in the area designated for medium and high density residential along the US-10/US-31 corridor.

Photo 3-3
**Rural Areas Should be Devoted Primarily
to Agriculture and Forestry**



Photo by Robert Garrett

Map 3-2 Floodplains and Wetlands



KEY LAND USE POLICIES—PART B

This section describes key policies toward land use in townships, cities and villages in Mason County that are not subject to county zoning. It is intended to provide an overview of the direction the county intends for land use change in the future, and how those communities not subject to county zoning can participate in preparing for a common future with other communities in the county. Map 3-1 illustrates key policies.

In general, the intent is to concentrate future development in specific areas while preserving important natural resources, agriculture, forestry and rural character. Development areas include the US-10/US-31 corridor from the interchange to Scottville and in the existing cities and villages when public sewer and water are provided.

Not all of the important Lake Michigan shoreline, inland lakes, rivers and streams in Mason County are under county zoning. Important stretches are in Grant, Hamlin and Pere Marquette Townships, as well as in the City of Ludington, all of which have their own zoning. It is important to coordinate protection of important environmental features across all contiguous jurisdictions, as nature does not respect jurisdiction boundaries.

Community Service Areas

The Key Policies Map (Map 3-1) shows the outline of proposed community service areas around existing cities and villages. Inside these lines is where future commercial or high density development should occur, but only when public sewer and water are provided. The purpose of community service areas is to help communities manage the timing and location of growth so that community services can be provided efficiently and cost-effectively. In order for communities to provide affordable public sewer and water, there will need to be a sufficient number of and concentration of hook-ups to homes and businesses and participation by the development community. The Community Services Area lines shown on Map 3-1 indicate the proposed limits of community service areas over at least the next twenty years. As time passes, an evaluation of growth trends can be used to guide decision making on whether the area designated for community services should be expanded or contracted, and in what directions.

Protection of Important Natural Features

Although more highly developed, the three townships, two cities and three villages not under county zoning have extensive wetlands, rivers, streams and lakeshores. The protective greenbelt zoning for rivers and streams in townships under county zoning should also be adopted by those communities that do not have it. Wetlands and floodplain ordinances should also be adopted. Protection of lands at high risk of erosion along Lake Michigan and protection of designated sand dunes should continue to be coordinated with the DEQ.

MANAGEMENT OF LAND USE IN THE FUTURE

Introduction

This section describes how land is presently used within Mason County and discusses how land is proposed to be used in the future by land use type. The discussion of future land use includes the general distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land for agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreational, and other land uses. The categories listed here correlate closely to the zoning districts in the Mason County Zoning Ordinance. As in the Mason County Zoning Ordinance, the residential land use category is divided into several residential land use types according to general characteristics, purpose, location and density. Generalized existing land use is shown in the Mason County Data Book on Maps 4-4 (1978 aerial photograph data) and 4-5 (2001 satellite data). Future land use is illustrated in this chapter on the Future Land Use Map, Map 3-3. The legend uses standard colors for the land uses depicted. At some point the colors on the county zoning map should be changed to the same colors as on this map. Additionally, local governments in the county are urged to use the same colors on local future land use plans and zoning maps.

Land and Water Resource Conservation

Agricultural

Agricultural land makes up about one-quarter of the land in Mason County. Much of the designated agricultural land use is comprised of prime farmland soils (as is and if drained), and farmland of local importance. This district is designed to maintain the economic viability and character of productive farmland and to allow for agri-tourism practices necessary for education and promotion of Michigan-made products.

Most of this district generally matches the areas of prime soils in the county. However, these soils and registered lands in the P.A. 116 Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program may be fragmented within this district. Agriculture is planned as the primary use for at least the next twenty years. If farmers remain committed to farming, then agriculture will be the primary use for much longer. Within this district, all non-farm related residential development including premature, scattered or sprawling strip residential development will be discouraged.

Forty acres should be considered to establish residential density using the quarter-quarter system. Each new dwelling would be on a parcel no more than 2 acres in size unless more area is required by the septic system requirements imposed by the Health Department. This preserves much more land for farming. In order to permit more housing on a parcel, the land would have to be rezoned. Large landowners would be encouraged to cluster permitted units in a small area instead of scatter them throughout a site.

However, other options should also be considered if there is inadequate support for the quarter-quarter system. These options in descending order on the table below do a poorer job of protecting farmland while increasing the number of new residences in the rural area. More residences not only increase pressure on farmers to get out of farming (through complaints and rising property values—hence taxes), they also raise demands for public services—hence taxes over time. They also pose challenges for compatibility between districts and may require a transition zone between areas where farmers commit to long term agriculture and areas of rural large lot zoning.

Other Options to Consider

Technique	Comment
<p>Quarter-Quarter Zoning as proposed above with one dwelling unit per quarter-quarter section (or 40 acres) being the base permitted density. Existing lots less than 40 acres in size would be nonconforming and could be used for residential purposes, but if zoned agricultural, could not be divided further.</p>	<p>Very effective at farmland preservation for as long as farmers want to farm. If farmers want to develop they must seek a rezoning. A variation is to establish zoning standards to guide the district options which would be approvable when a rezoning is requested. For example, if farmers on adjoining lands are committed to long term farming, then the next lowest density would be selected. If surrounding lands are at a common density, such as one dwelling unit (DU) per 10 acres, then that density should be selected. If surrounding land is at a variety of densities, such as 1DU per 10 acres, 1 DU per 5 acres, and 1 DU per 2 acres, then the lowest compatible density should be selected (perhaps part of the farm at one density and the rest at another).</p>
<p>Quarter-Quarter Zoning as proposed above, but only farmers that petition to be rezoned into this district would be so rezoned. This requires a second agricultural zone as well, usually with a one DU/20 acre standard.</p>	<p>This eliminates the political problem, but it may not result in many protected acres. The benefit to farmers would be the higher score to participate in the state PDR program, or in an exclusive agricultural district tax benefit, if that legislation ever passes.</p>
<p>Quarter-Quarter Zoning as described above, but allowing two dwelling units per quarter-quarter section instead of one. The rest would be the same as above.</p>	<p>More residences in agricultural areas slowly undermines long term farming, so this technique is not as good as standard quarter-quarter zoning. It would still need standards to guide rezoning.</p>
<p>Twenty acre minimum lot size in the agricultural district (1 dwelling unit per 20 acres).</p>	<p>Not nearly as effective at saving farmland as quarter-quarter and over time results in 32 dwelling units/square mile which will create a long term public service burden at some future point. Plus, it is much harder for committed farmers to purchase additional farmland, as the land value is higher for residences.</p>
<p>Such other techniques as still protect considerable farmland while keeping the total number of residences per square mile low. These may be combinations of the above, or variations not even mentioned.</p>	<p>If density in the agricultural area is lowered below one DU/20 acres, virtually no farmland will be protected as the minimum unit size for most agricultural operations is 40 acres.</p>

Forestry

Forest cover comprises about 51% of Mason County. This land use includes a mixture of private timber operations, private seasonal recreational holdings, and large lot, low density residential development. As indicated by the name, this land use is primarily wooded. The intent of this district is to assure the continued harvest of forest products and opportunities for forest recreational activities for at least the next twenty years. Land in this district neither requires nor is planned to receive intensive county services such as a high level of road maintenance, transit or public sewer and water service. Within this district, only very low density residential development using the same quarter-quarter method as in the agricultural district. Clustering of permitted units would be encouraged so as to leave very large areas undisturbed.

The lands placed under the Forest District in the zoning ordinance should be carefully examined to ensure the land is presently used for and well suited for long term forest management. Both Norman Township and Stronach Townships to the north of Meade have 40 acre minimum lot sizes on private land in the National Forest. Norman Township sent back comments on the draft Plan saying forty acre minimum lot size zoning in the Mason County Forestry District was consistent with their plan and zoning ordinance. Forty acres is the usual minimum parcel size for economic forest management.

Proposed Transition Zone

If the quarter-quarter zoning or some higher density is ultimately approved in the agricultural areas, then a transition zone with a density in the one dwelling per 10 acre range may be necessary to serve as a buffer around farmland committed to long term agricultural use. However, any density greater than one dwelling per 10 acres will exceed the capacity of gravel roads and put great demand on the Road Commission to pave those roads. Paving will only increase demand for more dwellings in agricultural and forestry areas, so great care should be exercised before establishing a transition zone, or establishing any density greater than one dwelling per 10 acres.

Greenbelt District

This overlay district applies to relatively large, contiguous environmentally sensitive areas within Mason County, along rivers and streams to a depth of 300' on each side. This land use category reflects the desire to maintain the environmental quality of ecological systems not yet severely degraded by intensive development. Segments of the Manistee River, Big Sauble River, Lincoln River and the north and south branches of the Lincoln River are prominent among the rivers and streams included. While residential lots of a minimum of ½ acre are permitted in this district, provisions such as a native vegetation strip, limitations on construction within the floodplain, and setback requirements for septic systems are also included. While the greenbelt zoning district provides specific standards, on site evaluation of development proposals will remain important.

Natural River District: Pere Marquette Natural and Scenic River Corridor

The Pere Marquette River from the Pere Marquette Highway bridge east to the county line, and including several branches are designated as both a Natural River by the State of Michigan, and a Scenic River by the Federal government. The Natural River designation requires increased setbacks and lot widths, a natural vegetation strip with limited vegetation clearing, limits on signs, and other provisions for a corridor extending 400' landward from each side of the river. The Federal Scenic River designation extends

approximately ¼ mile inland from the centerline of the river on each side. Scenic rivers are those rivers or river segments that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads. Scenic rivers are managed to help prevent damage due to overuse or misuse of the shoreline.

Natural river regulations may be enforced by the federal or state governments, as well as by county and local governments. Public access should continue to be provided, but the impact of those access sites should be minimized and periodically evaluated. Treatments to eradicate Lamprey Eels are permitted. Educational opportunities about the importance of the natural and scenic river designations and appropriate management of the rivers should be provided.

Public and Conservancy Land Uses—Manistee National Forest and Ludington State Park

These lands provide for recreational opportunities and the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. This designation includes lands in the Manistee National Forest, Ludington State Park, other Michigan Department of Natural Resources lands, local parks and any land conservancy properties. To date, the efforts of land conservancies in Mason County have been primarily focused on providing expertise for the management of ecosystems, rather than on acquisition of land for long-term preservation.

Photo 3-4
Ludington State Park

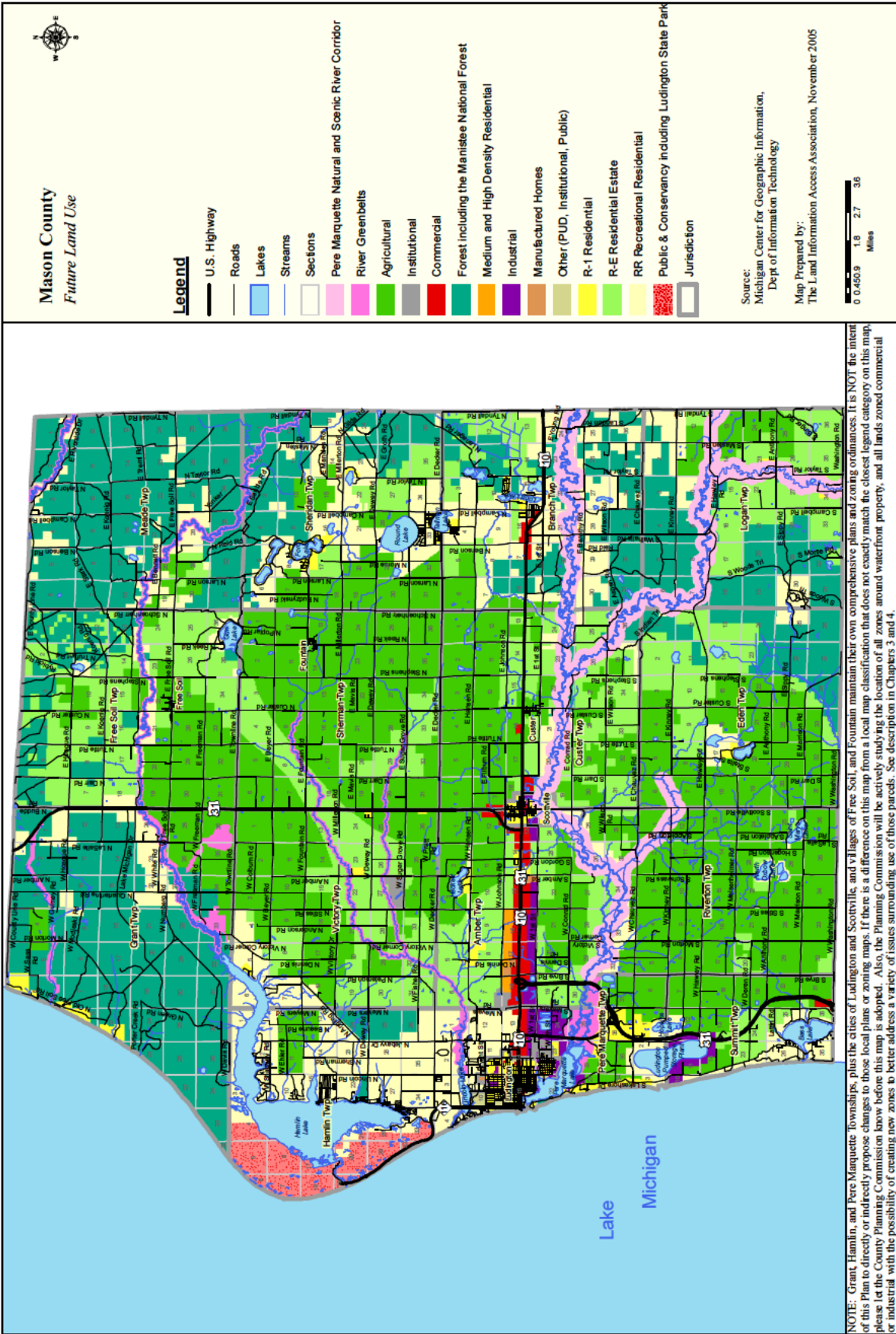


Photo by Robert Garrett

The county and local units of government should actively participate in discussions on the management of these lands in order to help promote citizen interests and ensure the continued benefit of these largely public lands. Sensitive environments such as wetlands, floodplains, sand dunes and areas of threatened or endangered species not already in public ownership should be protected by the acquisition of those lands by public entities or private conservancies where possible.

Local educational opportunities regarding sustainable management of public and conservancy lands should be encouraged, including guidance on appropriate management of private lands adjacent to public and conservancy lands.

Map 3-3 Mason County Future Land Use



Urban and Built Lands

Lands that are built upon comprise only 3.8% of Mason County. These include residential, commercial and industrial development. While only a small percentage of the area of the entire county, they have a significant visual and environmental affect. The discussion that follows describes how residential, commercial and industrial land uses should be managed in the future in order to insure that urban land uses have a positive affect on the county.

Rural Estates Residential

This land use district is intended to provide land for residential growth of a rural character in areas that are presently without public sewer and water and likely to remain without such services. It is also intended to permit continued agriculture, and to serve as a transition from agricultural uses to residential uses. The Rural Estates Residential district is spread throughout the county, but generally is not on prime agricultural lands. This district accommodates low density single family development on large lots where there may also be large gardens, limited farming, horses and other livestock managed by the gentleman or gentlewoman farmer. Residential development is presently permitted on lots of one acre or more. Conservation subdivisions and clustering should be encouraged within this land use as a means of preserving open space, and where feasible, the continuation of farming. Farms within this district are encouraged to continue in farming, and non-farm residents should be provided educational opportunities regarding the dust, noise, smells and chemical use that are part of normal farming operations, and the importance of farming to the local economy.

Recreational Residential

This land use district is intended to provide for the orderly development of areas bordering on or adjacent to publicly owned recreation lands and/or undeveloped portions of inland lakes of the county. Most of the areas of this district occur in large blocks, such as in Hamlin Township, as well as among National Forest lands in the eastern part of the county, and in small tracts bordering inland lakes and rivers. Activities relating to recreational pursuits occur within or adjacent to this district and provide for such services as hotels and motels, boat liveries and community commercial service. Public sewer and water do not exist in these areas and county services are minimal. In some instances lake boards or associations have been created to represent riparian land owners within this land use district. Owners of these parcels should be encouraged to practice stewardship of the natural resources adjacent to their properties. This means protecting lake water quality by limiting imperviousness, limiting the use of fertilizers and pesticides, providing a vegetation strip along lakeshores and riverbanks and making sure sediments do not enter surface waters. Private land owners adjacent to public lands can also practice stewardship by ensuring that fires do not spread to forest lands, junk is not deposited on public lands, and clearing of vegetation is limited. Land owners in this district should be provided educational opportunities on lake stewardship and forest land management practices.

- Presently this district is being “asked” to do too much and it isn’t working very well to meet either landowner needs or natural resource protection needs in many places. One problem is that the district has a 1/3 acre minimum lot size requirement, but many waterfront lots are already much smaller. Continue to monitor the policy adopted in the Zoning Ordinance that lessens setbacks in the RR district based on the width of the lot.

R-1 Residential

This district is intended to provide for medium density single-family residential development. Lot sizes of ¼ acre are permitted in areas where public sewer and water are available. Larger lot sizes are necessary in places where public sewer and water are not available, and lot size is determined by the ability to adequately provide for both an on-site well and a septic system. This district is limited in area in the county, and is located along US-31 and along the Lake Michigan shore in Pere Marquette Township, along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Grant Township, along Hanson Road in Amber Township and in scattered locations in the eastern part of the county. It should be the minimum district density for new development south of Johnson Road, east of the US-10/US-31 freeway interchange and west of Stiles Road.

Manufactured Home Parks

There are manufactured homes in manufactured home parks (also called mobile home parks) in Mason County and on individual parcels. Two manufactured home parks are provided for as a future land use in the US-10/US-31 development corridor. One is on the south side of the highway by Amber Road and the other is on the north side, adjacent to and just north of Meijers. In addition to existing mobile home parks in Pere Marquette Township, they are expected to be adequate for the provision of manufactured home parks for the near future. It is important that manufactured home parks be located where there is adequate sewer and water service, and all-weather roads adequate for the traffic load. That makes them an eligible land use along the US-10/US-31 development corridor.

Medium to High Density Residential

This district is intended to provide for single-family homes with a density greater than four units per acre and preferably 8-12 units per acre. This density is usually associated with small lot subdivisions, condominium development, mobile home parks and multi-family housing. These areas need to be close to job centers, shopping and other activities. High density residential is only available where there is public sewer and water available, and will help support publicly-provided infrastructure. For the near future, the only new areas of high density residential will be in Ludington, Scottville and along and north of the commercial area on the north side of the US-10/US-31 corridor between Ludington and Stiles Road. High density residential as infill where parts of this district are not already developed at maximum density would be an effective use of existing infrastructure. This district should also include sidewalks and bike trails that connect to schools, shopping, offices, industries, parks and civic facilities. Bike and walking paths should also connect into rural areas of the county.

Commercial

This land use district includes areas of concentrated commercial development along with areas planned for future permanent commercial activities. The intent is for this district to encourage retail, business and service uses to be concentrated within areas that allow for high volumes of traffic flow, are provided with public sewer and water, contiguous and adjacent to similar land use activities.

The primary areas of commercial land use are along the US-10/US-31 corridor from Ludington to Scottville. Other commercial areas include the US-31 corridor immediately north of Scottville, but not any farther north along US-31; the first half mile east of Scottville along and on the south side of the US-10 corridor; along and on the north side

of the US-10 corridor west of Custer; along a half mile segment of the US-10 corridor in Branch Township and in a few other isolated locations.

All commercial areas should be designed in order to contribute to a high-quality visual character of Mason County. They should also employ access management principles as detailed in the Mason County US-10/US-31 Corridor Access Management Plan.

Industrial

This district includes both existing areas of, and desired areas for industrial development. It provides for manufacturing, as well as assembling and fabrication activities in a manner that will minimize the effects on abutting land use districts. Industrial districts are intended to be located in areas that typically provide full public services such as public sewer and water, or where they can be easily extended. It is also the intent to provide sufficient space and traffic flow for industrial activities, and buffering from less intensive land uses or environmentally sensitive areas.

Photo 3-5
Mason County Industry



Photo by Robert Garrett

The industrial land use district includes existing industrial businesses both in the industrial park in Ludington and those in other areas, such as in Pere Marquette Charter Township. It includes the area both south and north surrounding the Ludington Pump Storage Facility. It also includes a new industrial area along and to the south of the US-10/US-31 corridor between Ludington and Scottville. This is an area served by both railroad and highway. Because drainage is a problem in this corridor, special attention must be paid to on-site storage of stormwater. Other small industrial areas will also exist in Scottville, Custer and other villages. Because of the wide variation in industrial uses a distinction should be made between “heavy” and “light” industrial districts. This will require rezoning some parcels. See Chapter Four for more information.

Industrial sites should be designed to have a positive visual character, to protect sensitive environments and to have buffers with less intensive uses, such as residential.

Analysis of Plans and Ordinances of Adjoining Jurisdictions

How one community develops at its borders affects the communities on the other side of that border and vice versa. It is important for Mason County to understand the potential affect of adjacent community plans and ordinances while developing its own plan. The proposed arrangement of future land uses described in this chapter and the policies proposed to support that arrangement are compatible with existing plans in adjoining jurisdictions. Zoning in jurisdictions within Mason County were evaluated to ensure consistency along county borders.

Chapter 4 ZONING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with a general description of a zoning plan. It is followed by a brief explanation of the relationship between this Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance of Mason County and individual community Zoning Ordinances within the county. Next, the intent and key dimensional standards of the zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance are briefly described. As they exist, the districts are consistent with the Future Land Use Map and land use descriptions in Chapter 3, but they could be revised to be significantly closer to that proposed in Chapter 3. If the districts are changed, this chapter should be updated to reflect the changes made.

WHAT IS A ZONING PLAN?

A “zoning plan” is required per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended. The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises in the county. It must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the county and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted. That inventory of conditions is found in the Mason County Data Book and this Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO MASTER PLAN UPDATE

This Master Plan update sets forth the vision, goals and policies for growth and development in Mason County for approximately the next twenty years. It includes a specific strategy for managing growth and change in land uses and infrastructure in Mason County over this period, and will be periodically reviewed and updated at least once each five years. This chapter presenting the Zoning Plan, along with the rest of the relevant parts of this Master Plan, is intended to guide the implementation of and future changes to the Zoning Ordinance. However, existing permitted uses of land, including density, setbacks and other related standards are as established in the Zoning Ordinance as this Plan is not a regulatory ordinance.

DISTRICTS AND DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

Following are the general purposes and characteristics of zoning within Mason County. The specific purpose of each zoning district and permitted land uses are listed in the Mason County Zoning Ordinance. The Section references indicate where detailed ordinance language is located within the ordinance. Table 4-1 presents a summary of key dimensional standards under the Zoning Ordinance requirements. Chapter 3 presented information on future land use that should be used to update the district purpose/intent, dimensional and use regulations in order to be consistent with the Plan.

ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential Districts

The following zoning districts are considered “residential districts.”

Article VI	RE Rural Estates District
Article VII	R-R Recreational Residential District
Article VIII	R Single Family Residential District
Article IX	MHP Manufactured Home Park District

The principal purpose of these districts is to provide for a range of residential dwelling types at various densities within individual zones tailored for specific uses.

Single Family Cluster Housing (Section 3.21) may be permitted on parcels 10 acres or larger under single ownership and control. The resulting density can be no greater than if the parcel was developed according to minimum lot size for that residential zone. There are additional spacing and height requirements.

Commercial and Industrial Districts

The following zoning districts are presently considered “commercial and industrial districts.”

Article X	C Commercial District
Article XI	I Industrial District

The basic purpose of these districts is to provide opportunities for regulated commercial, office or industrial activities serving both local and area shopping needs and industrial production. Minimum lot areas are not set, but depend on the needs of the business. These needs include off-street parking, loading, screening and other factors.

Resource Production Districts

The following zoning districts are considered “resource production districts”.

Article V	AG Agricultural District
Article XIV	F Forestry District

These districts are designed for low intensity use due to the suitability of the lands for agriculture or forestry, and historic uses of agriculture and forestry. Other uses include agri-tourism (seasonal events, bed and breakfasts, temporary commercial, and retreat centers) and agri-industry.

Resource Protection Districts

The following zoning districts are considered resource protection districts:

Article XIII	GB Greenbelt District
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These districts are designed to maximize preservation of existing environments, particularly those of streams and wetlands, by requiring deep setbacks from the edge of the water for buildings and septic systems, providing for vegetative buffers and limiting the visual impact of development (along the designated natural river segments). The minimum lot area for a single family home in these districts ranges from 20,000 s.f. (green belt zone) to 30,000 s.f. (Natural River tributaries) or 40,000 s.f. (Natural River main stream and Big South Branch).

Photo 4-1
Mason County Industrial Facility



Airport Zoning Overlay Zone

The public investment in and safety of airport operations is protected by an “airport overlay zone.”

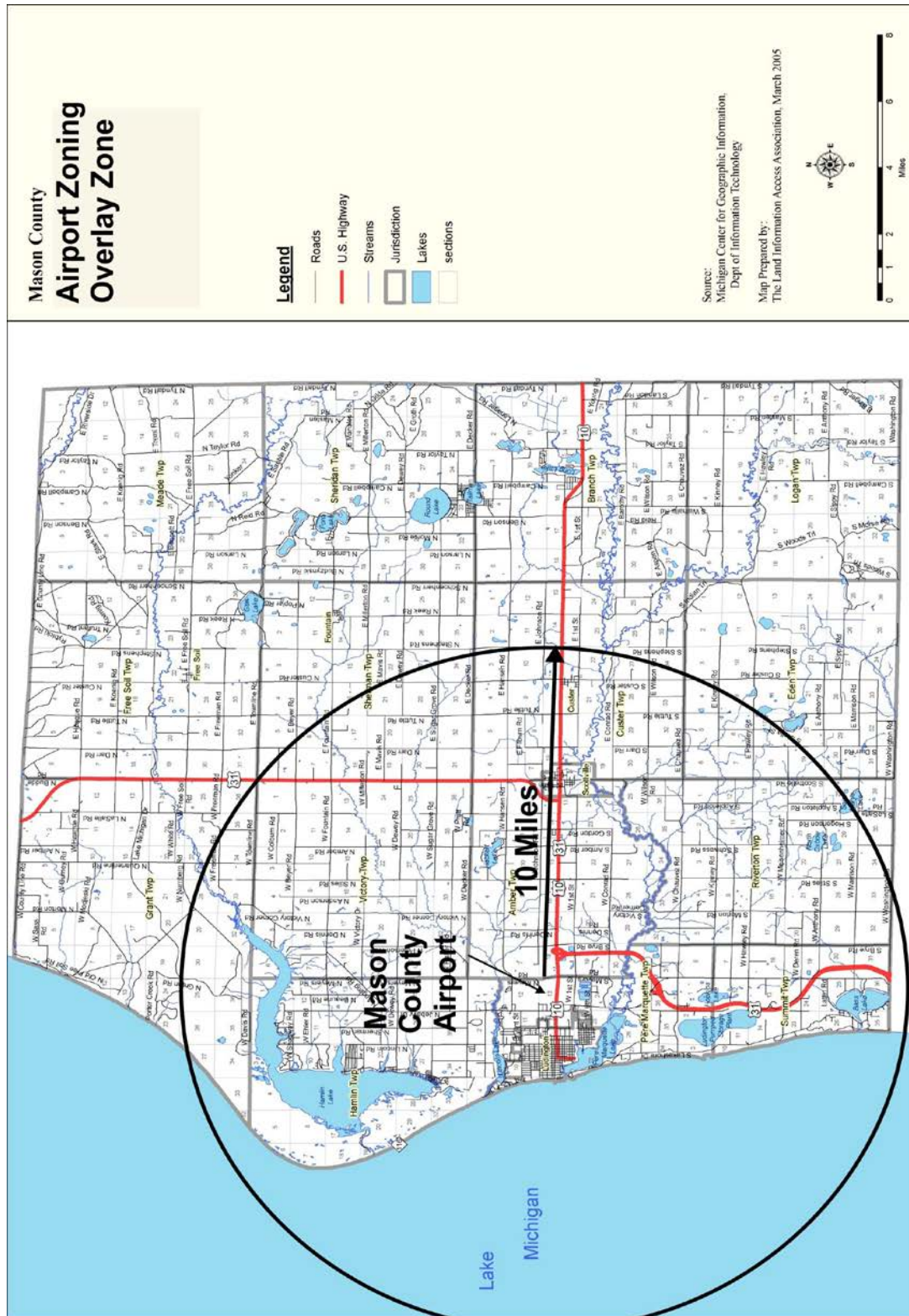
Article XV

Airport Zoning Overlay Zone

The purpose of the Airport Zoning Overlay Zone is to prevent the creation of hazards to aircraft landing and taking off on the flight paths related to the airport runways. The overlay zone provides for regulations on land within a 10 mile radius from the Mason County Airport. The ordinance establishes height restrictions so that immediately adjacent to the runways, structures and vegetation is limited to a height of 25'. This limitation increases to 500' at the outer edge of the 10 mile radius. The height restriction area is cone shaped with a greater slope closest to the center (by the airport) and is illustrated in detail on the 10 Mile Radius Map.

Map 4-1 roughly illustrates the affected area.

Map 4-1
Airport Zoning Overlay Zone



RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 3 set forth a number of recommendations for changes to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to best implement this Plan. Those recommendations are incorporated into this Chapter by reference and some are discussed again briefly below. In addition, other changes to the Zoning Ordinance are proposed to address day-to-day problems encountered with zoning administration.

Agriculture Zone

Most of the land zoned AG in Mason County is land whose soils are especially well suited for agriculture, or whose owners have continuously managed it for agricultural use for over 100 years. Property in AG districts that is not part of an existing farm operation is subject to a 1-acre minimum lot size requirement. If all agriculturally zoned land were ultimately developed this way, it could threaten the low-density character of the district as there is no density cap that would deny a subdivision-style development on 1-acre lots (except where it were close to an existing confined animal feeding operation). The primary focus of the AG district needs to be protection of bona fide agricultural operations and with it protection of this critical component of the economy of Mason County. To that end, density based zoning should be implemented that permits one dwelling per forty acres, but the residence would occupy a lot with a maximum of two acres unless more land is required by the Health Department to meet septic system requirements. The same change should be made in the Forestry District.

Recent appellate court rulings on GAAMPS and Right-to-Farm provisions should be reviewed and if necessary, additional changes to the zoning ordinance should be made to conform with recent rulings. The Right-to-Farm Act, PA 93 of 1981 establishes protections for farmers from nuisance suits if they are engaged in generally accepted agricultural management practices (GAAMPS). GAAMPS are adopted by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

In 2011, Mason County went through a considerable conflict that reflected varying viewpoints regarding “rural character” in an agricultural community when posed with a utility scale wind turbine development. Wind turbines are a special land use in the agricultural and industrial districts. The County should study setbacks for wind turbines from residential areas to reduce future conflict in the agricultural districts. By way of reviewing setbacks, sound and shadow flicker impacts will also be reviewed.

Additionally, the setbacks of the Agricultural District should be revised to be consistent with the Rural Estates district to better accommodate accessory building and structures.

The Rural Estates zone prohibits the owners of parcels smaller than three acres from keeping animals. Yet this is a common use in those areas. Consideration by the Planning Commission should be given to changing the RE zoning for small lots so that chickens, horses, cows and related animals are permitted provided these uses comply with GAAMPS.

Industrial

Increase the area zoned for industry. There is relatively little industrially zoned land in Mason County and this hampers the potential to grow more industry. Specifically, the area along and south of the railroad from Ludington to Scottville in a band ¼ mile wide should ultimately be zoned in an industrial classification. This area is between First Street and the CSX railroad tracks. There are other industrial properties north of this

area up to US-10/US-31 and these should be zoned for industrial use. There are already a number of homes in this area on large lots that back up to the railroad, and they will need to be buffered as industrial uses develop in this corridor. The Industrial District provisions should be reviewed to ensure only industrial and some limited office and commercial uses are permitted in that zone if carefully designed and buffered from industrial uses.

The creation of a “light” industrial district such as small product assembly should be considered to permit less intensive industrial uses as a buffer when next to existing residential subdivisions, churches or schools. The new district name should be LI, and the existing industrial district should be renamed HI. Existing industrially zoned property should be reclassified on the Zoning Map into LI or HI as appropriate to the existing use. The Zoning Map should be amended after careful study and only after the Future Land Use Map (Map 3-3) is first amended as described in Chapter Three.

Commercial

There should be no new commercially zoned land along the US-31 corridor north of Scottville, or along US-10 east of Scottville that is not within the limits of the community service area around Scottville or Custer.

Residential

In order to provide for a more transitional use between commercial and low-density residential uses, a higher density residential district should be established directly north of the commercial district along and on the north side of the US-10/US-31 corridor between the interchange and Stiles Road. The minimum density when averaged across the entire parcel should not be less than four dwelling units per acre, nor more than twelve, depending on the proposed use and market conditions.

The Zoning Ordinance already provides for cluster development and planned unit development (PUD). These should be encouraged. Also, conservation subdivisions should be permitted by right in all residential districts. A conservation subdivision is one that preserves open space by requiring residential lots to have a maximum lot size that is substantially smaller than the zoning density of the area while permanently preserving at least 50% of the site in open space. For example, if a 100 acre parcel in an area zoned at a density of one dwelling unit per ten acres, is proposed for residential development, under a conservation subdivision ordinance in which the permitted maximum lot size of a dwelling unit is 3 acres, ten three-acre lots could be platted, using thirty acres and preserving seventy acres as open space.

In waterfront areas, consideration should be given to creating several new waterfront zones as described in Chapter 3. This would result in rezoning nonconforming RR Land into new waterfront zones (such as WR-1 and WR-2) that fit existing lot sizes (width and area) so that far fewer nonconforming lots were affected. This would reduce the number of people who have to go through the variance process to build on a waterfront lot. These would be very limited districts and no new land could be divided at these lot sizes under these new districts. The RR district would still apply to undivided land along waterfront areas. The Planning Commission should jointly consider these options, and any others that are relevant, and the Future Land Use Map (Map 3-3) should be updated before the zoning ordinance is amended to accommodate such change.

Throughout

The Planning Commission should add language to the site plan review criteria to ensure that applicants have allowed adequate space to accommodate infrastructure replacement on-site.

Photo 4-2
Waterfront Residential Property



Photo by Robert Garrett

Other recommended specific changes to the Zoning Ordinance include the following:

1. Revisions to the requirements for private roads that address: what design standards are appropriate for private roads; the appropriate threshold for constructing private roads; when benefiting parties must pay their fair share of private road expenses; what mechanism will be used to collect funds to pay for private roads; and how these issues can be equitably handled in light of appropriate public and private interests.
2. The Planning Commission should review and consider incorporating the sample groundwater protection standards developed as part of the MSU Groundwater Education in Michigan initiative in the 1990s. These standards have been adopted by hundreds of Michigan communities. They require that site plans indicate all storage areas for hazardous chemicals, secondary containment facilities, floor drains and related facilities which if improperly designed could lead to groundwater contamination from leaks and spills of hazardous chemicals.
3. The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to allow for greater extent of wi-fi internet connection through large and small towers serving various distances. Wi-fi availability will enhance small and home-based businesses which rely on internet communication and commerce.
4. The dimensions of the agricultural district should be reviewed since frequent variances have been granted for parcel not meeting yard requirements.

5. Conditional rezoning is a practice of rezoning that is tied to a contract that is offered by an applicant and mutually agreed upon by the municipality. The County Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include a review and approval process for these types of requests.
6. Home based business standards should be reviewed to allow for more administrative approval. Additionally, home occupations, which do not have a sign (or rely on street exposure for business), should be exempt from zoning requirements.
7. The non-conforming building provisions should be modified to allow modifications to buildings which do not increase the degree of the non-conformity, without requiring a variance.
8. The minimum area of a single-family dwelling should be reviewed. The County should consider the change in demographics and preferences for smaller homes. Smaller homes are more energy efficient and require less maintenance.
9. Review access management requirements and consider lessening the threshold triggering access management review.
10. Review accessory building size requirements and consider revising to accommodate larger buildings based on lot area provided a deed restriction is filed limiting future land division unless the accessory building is removed.

Chapter 5

TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly examines the infrastructure policy necessary to implement the vision described in Chapter 2, and the future land use and zoning recommendations in Chapters 3 and 4. The word “infrastructure” is used broadly to refer to the large-scale public systems, services, and facilities within the county that are necessary for economic activity and improved quality of life, including: roads, airports, harbors, public transportation, non-motorized transportation, public sewer and water, communications, power, schools, medical facilities, police and fire facilities, local government facilities, and parks and recreation facilities. For a description of Mason County Infrastructure see Chapter 6 Transportation, and Chapter 7 Public Facilities and Physical Services in the Mason County Data Book.

TRANSPORTATION

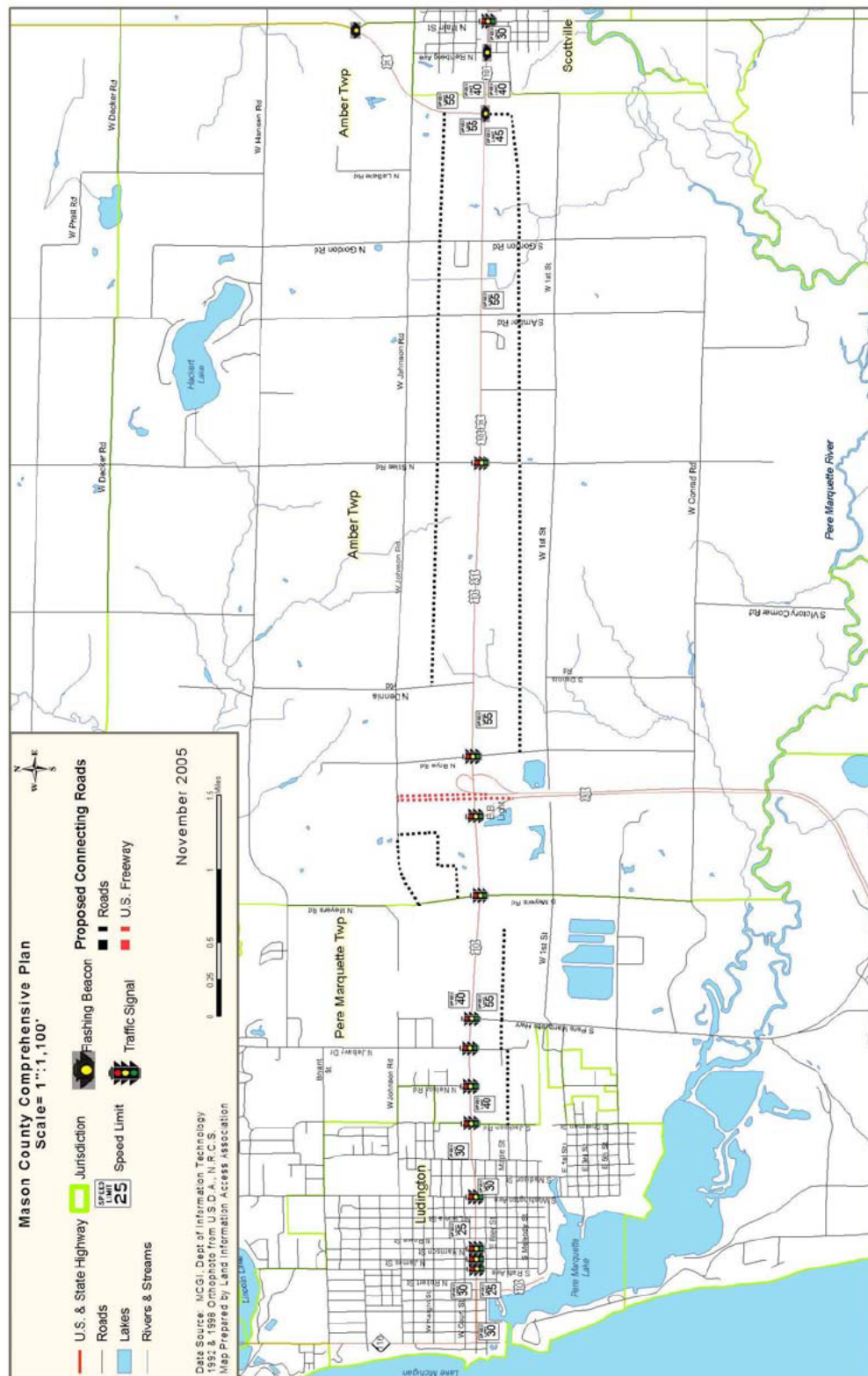
Roads

A quality system of interconnected city streets, county roads and state highways is the most essential component that facilitates economic activity, and for most people, daily life. The road system in Mason County is well established, largely in very good condition and in key places has considerable excess capacity to accommodate traffic growth for many decades. It is very important that this system be properly maintained and incrementally expanded when the need for such expansion is evident. In most cases, road (as well as sewer and water) expansion costs should be borne by the private sector as each new business, subdivision or condominium development is constructed. In a few cases there is a growing need to expand the existing street network to improve traffic safety and flow in congested areas.

The future development proposed in Chapter 3 along US-10/US-31 will create large traffic congestion problems unless a parallel road system is also constructed, and unless at the appropriate time, both Johnson and First Streets are improved for all season traffic between US-31 (freeway) and Scottville. Parallel roads will take local trips off of US-10/US-31 and allow it to continue to serve longer distance travelers well. The public, through MDOT, has made an enormous investment in converting this segment to five lanes with paved shoulders and it would be inappropriate to allow new development to usurp this capacity without building parallel roads to handle the new local traffic. Such a requirement will take changes to the County Zoning Ordinance to properly implement.

Map 5-1 illustrates the location of proposed new roads along this vital corridor. Improvements west of the US-31 interchange with US-10 will likely be paid for with a combination of public and private sources, whereas those east of Dennis Road on the north side of US-10/US-31 and east of Brye Road on the south side are likely to be paid for by private funds as development proceeds. It may be necessary for developers to build longer segments and then enter into payback agreements with abutting property owners, or for the county to bond for some of the segments and be paid back by special assessment of the benefiting properties. These and other financing options should be explored at the appropriate time.

Proposed New Connecting Roads



The justification for these roads and their integral relationship to access management issues is explained in detail in the Mason County US-10/US-31 Access Management Plan which is adopted by reference as a part of this Plan.

Access Management

Along the non-freeway segments of US-10 and US-31 throughout Mason County are dozens of unnecessary existing driveways, poorly designed driveways, driveways that are too close to intersections and other driveways, unconnected parking lots and few service drives. This leads to unnecessary risks of traffic crashes, congestion and reduced traffic flow. Over time, these problems can all be corrected, or at least improved, and future problems can be prevented through a coordinated system of local access management regulations. That means vehicular crashes can be minimized, damage to vehicles reduced, and personal injuries and deaths can be prevented. Such a benefit cannot be readily calculated, but it is huge, well worth doing and well within the ability of local governments in the county to achieve.

Representatives of the City of Ludington, Pere Marquette Charter Township, Amber Township, City of Scottville, Village of Custer, Grant Township, Mason County Road Commission, Mason County Planning Commission and MDOT worked cooperatively for six months in 2005 to identify problem areas along US-10/US-31 and develop cooperative solutions. These are embodied in the Mason County US-10/US-31 Access Management Plan.

It is very important that each of these jurisdictions with zoning authority adopt a common access management ordinance so that uniform standards are in place to guide future driveway and related access decisions consistent with the recommendations in the Access Management Plan. A sample ordinance is provided in the Appendix of the Access Management Plan to facilitate such action. Periodic meetings to discuss proposed development along the corridor using common site plan review procedures is also essential to consistent implementation of access management regulations. A mechanism for such meetings is described in the Access Management Plan.

Photo 5-1
Access Management Can Improve Traffic Safety



Photo by Mark Wyckoff

Highway Noise

A little considered, but very important future issue will be the impact of noise that comes from high speed highways—and in particular, the freeway portion of US-31. Currently traffic along this freeway segment is very low (for a freeway). Similarly, existing land use adjacent to the freeway is largely limited to farming, very low density residential and the pumped storage facility—so very few people are negatively affected by highway noise. But highway noise will rise as traffic volumes increase. While existing land uses are not proposed to be changed over the life of this Plan, it will be important to understand that if any new subdivisions are approved within 1/6 mile of the freeway portion of US-31, that those developments are not eligible for future noise walls or other noise mitigation measures, should highway noise become a problem. This is because both federal and state policies do not cover highway noise mitigation in this situation where the noise sensitive land use (like a residential subdivision) moves in close to the highway noise source—after the highway was constructed. The cost for any future noise mitigation measures would have to be borne by the landowners in the subdivision.

Of course such a situation is highly preventable by only allowing noise compatible land uses next to highways. These include agricultural, forestry, and open space uses (among others). If noise sensitive land uses like homes, churches and schools are proposed next to the highway, they should be required to be sound proofed and designed to minimize highway noise impacts. MDOT is working on sample zoning regulations and design guidelines to assist local governments with this task. The County Planning Commission should be alert to future opportunities to reduce the negative impacts of highway noise through various noise compatible land use planning and regulatory techniques.

Airport

The Mason County Airport is an important asset for attracting some types of economic development. It is an important asset that should be carefully managed and maintained to meet the demand for air travel and air freight shipment. The airport overlay zone in the County Zoning Ordinance is an important vehicle for ensuring the height of future structures do not exceed maximums established via the ordinance.

Harbor

The Ludington Harbor is a unique asset that is home not only to a Lake Michigan crossing that links both parts of US-10, but it also permits deep draft ships to dock in the harbor. The future potential economic benefits of this asset should never be underestimated, nor should future deep draft vessel opportunities be foreclosed.

Public Transit

Presently the county has a limited “dial-a-ride” service that provides public transportation to a small clientele. However, for many of those served, it is an important lifeline to work, medical care, shopping and education. As more people retire to Mason County and the existing population ages, and as new jobs develop along the US-10/US-31 corridor, the demand for fixed route, short headway, public transit service between Ludington and Scottville will grow. It will be important for the county to stay on top of this rising demand and to take the necessary steps, in cooperation with other benefited parties and jurisdictions, to provide public transit at a level of service necessary to meet the needs of an expanding ridership. Implementation of the proposed future land use arrangement described in Chapter 3 (especially the new residential) along the US-10/US-31 corridor will significantly improve the potential for expanded ridership and may speed the availability of fixed route service.

Non-Motorized Transportation

A well coordinated and integrated system of pedestrian sidewalks, bicycle trails and pathways that link common destinations is critical to a high quality of life and to active healthy living. The most important livability improvement a city or village can usually make is to add an integrated sidewalk system if it does not already have one. Similar livability benefits can occur in townships—even very rural ones—if the pathways are connected and lead to common destinations like schools, recreation facilities and retail areas. Key parts of such a system are already in place in the county, but expansion is necessary in order to reach critical mass where use levels are high. In rural areas, trails should be designed for bicycle and pedestrian use in the summer and snowshoeing, cross country skiing and snowmobile use in the winter.

Railroad Service

Map 3-3, Future Land Use shows a major concentration of new business and industrial development south of US-10/US-31 between Ludington and Scottville. This policy is largely premised on the continued availability of excellent road and rail service, as well as public sewer and water. Quality rail service was provided to Mason County long before the current quality road service. Important employers such as Oxy Chem rely on rail service for both in- and out-bound shipments. Retention of long term rail service to this corridor (and beyond into Lake County and then south to Grand Rapids) should remain an economic development and transportation priority in Mason County. Rail service from Walhalla to Manistee also presents opportunities for new economic development in Fountain and Free Soil and should also be retained.

Photo 5-2
Cartier Park Trails



PUBLIC SEWER AND WATER

For most new commercial, office or industrial development in Michigan, and for all higher density residential development, the presence of both public sewer and water is an essential element for economic viability. In most rural communities, these public services are either in limited supply, or are not associated with a quality road system that has

underutilized capacity. Yet on the US-10/US-31 corridor from Ludington to Scottville, these elements are all in place. Rather than spending significant public and private resources to build new sewer and water infrastructure elsewhere, it is most cost-effective to wisely use the infrastructure that is already in place. The future land use pattern and staging plan presented in Chapter 3 proposes to do this along US-10/US-31. As each new increment of development takes place, the sewer and water would be extended out from US-10/US-31 and linked to create loops with adjacent development. This would occur as the new streets in this area were constructed. It will be necessary to ensure that the site plan review standards in the County Zoning Ordinance adequately require use of public sewer and water by extending existing public sewer and water infrastructure as each new development occurs. It is also important to ensure that new development does not underutilize property. Since property served by both sewer and water is a relatively scarce commodity, it is important that as each new development occurs, it is dense and intensely uses these vital urban services so that there is little pressure to develop on rural land elsewhere in the County where there are limited public services. Another important policy is to not extend public sewer or water into any areas not shown as a community service area on Map 3-1.

Small villages that lack sewer or water service and wish to provide expanded land uses may need assistance from the county in backing bonds for installation of sewer or water service. However, except for Custer, these should be freestanding facilities and not extensions of the existing sewer and water service along US-10/US-31, or else other rural parts of the county will be subject to sprawl and the desired intensity of use along the US-10/US-31 corridor will not occur.

COMMUNICATIONS

The lines between traditional communication competitors such as television, radio, internet and telephone, are rapidly being obscured. The lines will continue to blur for some time. The important concern for Mason County is not to get lost in the transformation. High speed communications are essential to contemporary business models and to a high quality of personal and family life. Any opportunities the county has to assist in upgrading communication options should be seized. A dozen urban communities in Michigan are in the process of offering high speed wireless service to all businesses and citizens. Oakland County is among them. While the resources available to Oakland County far outpace those available to Mason County, the benefits to future job and residential growth in the county cannot be overlooked. While no rural county in Michigan has yet gone down this path, some will. When the opportunity is ripe, Mason County needs to be ready. The early adapters will have a significant leg up on the last ones in, and when it comes to attracting new high tech economic development (every community's dream), high speed communications is essential.

NATURAL GAS & ELECTRIC

The presence of natural gas and all phase electric service is another critical component of new job producing development and higher density residential development. Again, these services are already available in the corridor targeted for future development between Ludington and Scottville. Public resources should not be spent to promote improvements to natural gas or electricity service elsewhere in the county unless there are extenuating benefits.

SCHOOLS

High quality K-12 educational facilities have long been a factor in attracting new businesses to a community, because it is easier to attract employees to an area with a reputation for quality schools. This reason alone (and there are many more) justifies a huge public effort to build and maintain quality schools. It is at least as important to ensure that the West Shore Community College remain a viable institution which produces graduates that employers need. New businesses are attracted to areas that have a well-trained workforce, and the necessary vehicles (like a community college) to quickly train many more workers. Continuing education opportunities are also of growing interest to retired persons and few sources of local circulating income are more stable than the pensions of retired persons. In short, there is never too much importance placed on building and maintaining a quality educational system in a community. While the county has little ability to influence decisions related to improvements to public schools, it should always help facilitate decisions that improve the economic competitiveness of the county and that help to better meet the educational needs of its citizens. When it comes to siting new school facilities, the county should be an active player and attempt to strongly influence siting decisions so that new school facilities are located in already developed or developing areas and strongly discourage, if not prevent the location of new schools in rural locations without adequate public roads, sewer and water facilities.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

Rural communities are often at a significant disadvantage when it comes to attracting new jobs because they have limited medical facilities. However, Mason County has a much broader range of medical facilities, including a hospital, within the county than is typical. Again this is an economic development and quality of life asset that should not be overlooked. As with schools, the county has little direct ability to influence the scope and quality of available medical facilities, but it should always try to facilitate improvements that enhance the ability to attract new jobs and better meet the medical needs of its residents.

POLICE AND FIRE FACILITIES

Presently the police, firefighting and EMS services within Mason County are being adequately met through a series of inter-jurisdictional cooperative agreements and private sector contracts. This is a great way to cost-effectively provide the needed services. However, future physical facilities like fire halls and police stations should be located within established developed areas so that these new public facilities do not contribute to sprawl.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

The same can be said about city, village, township and county general government buildings. They should be located within established cities, villages or well developed suburban areas--not in the "middle of nowhere." Where and how the public spends

infrastructure dollars greatly influences private sector spending on new development. The public sector should lead by engaging in new facility siting practices that result in locations that are consistent with the policies of this Plan, and those of the County Zoning Ordinance. Similarly, the public should always build buildings using quality materials that last, and use well designed exteriors so as to set the bar on quality design for the private sector to emulate.

PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

Last but not least, the number, size, location and characteristics of public parks and recreation facilities in the county has a lot to do with citizen contentment over quality of life. The state park and federal forests in Mason County are very important resources in this regard, but alone they cannot meet the daily recreation needs of local citizens. Active living leads to healthy people and high satisfaction over living choices. It also leads to fewer and often less serious medical needs. Thus, it is important that local parks and recreation facilities be constructed and maintained in locations that best meet the needs of the people who will use them. The county has and regularly updates a County Park and Recreation Plan that contains an inventory of existing county park and recreation facilities, needs and a strategy for future improvements. That Plan is a prerequisite to eligibility for many state and federal funds targeted at park and recreation facilities. It is very important for the county to continue to prepare and periodically update a County Park and Recreation Plan and then go after state and federal funds to help pay for future parkland acquisition and improvement.

Chapter 6

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION & INTERJURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

INTRODUCTION

As important a benchmark as this Master Plan represents, the initiatives proposed in this Plan will not implement themselves. It will take the concerted efforts of citizens, elected officials and local and county administrative officials to bring this Plan from concept into reality. It will take continued support and commitment for many years. However, the goals of this Plan and the strategies proposed to implement it offer the promise of a much better future than that likely to occur if recent trends continue unchanged.

Benefits to all groups will be numerous and most visible in terms of an increased quality of life that can retain and attract new businesses and jobs, and greater satisfaction of residents. An increased quality of life comes from improved use of the transportation system, improved public facilities, creation of more distinctive residential neighborhoods and commercial areas and retention of the scenic character of the landscape (so cherished by residents and visitors). Many indirect benefits will also occur. These include improved access to information needed for decision-making and better cooperation among units of government.

The central ingredients to successful Plan implementation will be:

- Commitment by the County Planning Commission, the County Board of Commissioners, citizens and support from local units of government. Implementation of the Master Plan will require the county and local governments, businesses and citizens to drop some old habits and adopt some new approaches. This is not always easy to do. However, the desired vision will not be reached without commitment by all involved.
- A better educated citizenry and local officials. While many citizens and officials want trends to change, they lack the knowledge to make them change or do not understand the cause and effect link of actions they take on an ongoing basis. Information about more appropriate residential development patterns, the fiscal and land use constraints of extending urban services, modern farming and forestry methods, scenery and open space preservation, natural resource protection and other tools to sustain the quality of life in Mason County need to reach citizens and officials or they will not understand why and how local decision-making must change.

FOCUSING ON PRIORITIES

It is easy for a Planning Commission at either the county or local level to become distracted with ongoing tasks or ad hoc, controversial issues. Still, the Commission needs to prioritize its tasks. Time needs to be set aside for high priority items. These include the preparation of an annual report and work program for the next year, and when appropriate, the five-year Plan update. These are discussed below.

Annual Tasks

An annual report on all activities undertaken by the County Planning Commission with a special focus on actions taken to implement the Plan should be made to the County Board of Commissioners. A proposed work program that identifies priorities and projected expenses for the next year should also be prepared and submitted in time to be included in the annual budget process. The Planning Commission should also continue to review proposed public facilities in the county for consistency with the Plan. Periodically, and at least once each five years, the Master Plan should be thoroughly reviewed and updated by the County Planning Commission.

Top Priorities

The Planning Commission can not be expected to accomplish all of the strategies listed in the goals, objectives and strategies. Many of these can only be accomplished by other agencies or groups. It is key that discussions begin with those groups so that they understand the goals, find agreeable common ground where there are differences and obtain a commitment to the action.

One approach to establishing priorities is to use the following standards:

- Make a high priority those actions that are the precursor to other steps. One example is the strategy to develop a regional economic development plan. This needs to happen before the county and local governments can insure that public infrastructure and services can be provided to appropriate lands.
- Those actions that are assigned to a particular group are a high priority.
- A lower priority may be those actions that do not assign a group or broadly identify the "county," as the responsible party.
- If an action does not list a responsible party, it remains a lower priority until a group or agency steps forward.

The following activities should be the key priorities of the Planning Commission for the next five years:

1. Update the County Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with this Plan as recommended in Chapters 3 and 4.
2. Work with the County Road Commission, bike and recreation groups, and other stakeholders to develop a Complete Streets plan which would identify key roads and corridors which will accommodate pedestrian and bike facilities. The plan will be consistent with the County Parks and Recreation Plan and identify key community employment centers, areas of residential density, and popular bicycle routes to connect these attractions together. The Plan will include cross-sections for roadways planned for complete streets amenities and phasing. Phasing should comport with County priorities for roadway improvements, including reconstruction and repaving, when possible, however, bike lane and sidewalk enhancement should not be dependent upon it.
3. Educate all local units of government in the county about the vision, goals, objectives and strategies of the updated County Master Plan and provide technical assistance in the integration of these elements into local plans and zoning decisions through monthly updates to the County zoning ordinance. Consider a County Planning and Zoning related Facebook page that could be updated regularly with agenda, packets, relevant land use matters, and Master Plan implementation projects.

4. Educate all citizens about the vision, goals, objectives and strategies of the updated County Master Plan and provide technical assistance in the integration of these elements into property owner development and redevelopment efforts. Consider a County Planning and Zoning related Facebook page that could be updated regularly with agenda, packets, relevant land use matters, and Master Plan implementation projects.
5. Directly use this Plan in the analysis and review of proposed rezonings, zoning text amendments, and new or amended master plans submitted to the County Planning Commission for statutory review and approval. This means recommending approval for actions consistent with the Plan and denial or modification for actions inconsistent with this Plan.
6. Exercise review authority in ways to improve local decisions by guiding decisions toward integrated and coordinated solutions based on the core objectives and strategies in this Plan.
7. Provide training and technical assistance to local governments on general planning, zoning and capital improvement programming.
8. Monitor local and county agency decisions and periodically inform local governments and the County Board of Commissioners on the status of efforts to improve land use decision making in Mason County.
9. Strongly advocate the county budget for and maintain digital parcel records of all property in the county with the system fully in place and regularly updated.
10. Support FEMA in its efforts to get the Townships to adopt the floodplains ordinance consistent with their mapping efforts.
11. Provide technical assistance and guidelines on alternative approaches to deal with identified land use and infrastructure problems.
12. Join efforts with others outside the county to modernize planning and zoning enabling legislation and to authorize new tools to better manage growth and preserve open space.
13. Design guidelines should be developed and promoted by the County Planning Commission that illustrate how to protect rural and scenic character and open space values on private residential, commercial, industrial, public and institutional properties. An example is the Grand Traverse Bay Region Development Guidebook that illustrates a preferred development approach that protects scenic quality, open space, water quality and sensitive environments.
14. Residential development standards should be prepared that set aside open space and utilize vegetative buffers along roadsides and where there are sensitive environments, greenways and potential trail and wildlife corridors. These standards should be adopted as part of site plan review, cluster ordinances, conservation subdivision ordinances, site condominium ordinances and planned unit development ordinances.
15. Important vistas in the county should be identified and wherever private land is involved an effort to preserve the vista should be initiated through either voluntary measures by the landowners, purchase of development rights or conservation easements, or through smart designs that protect the vista as a part of the development process. The County Planning Commission should pursue creation of design guidelines as the first educational initiative after the vistas have been identified.
16. The number of county parks should be expanded per the elements of the Mason County Park and Recreation Plan, but special attention should be given to

- establishment of new county parks in the northern and eastern parts of the county and along the Pere Marquette River.
17. Preparation of a county subdivision control ordinance.
 18. Development of a county-wide affordable housing plan and implementation strategy.

DEALING WITH ISSUES OF GREATER THAN LOCAL CONCERN

Local jurisdictions frequently deal with issues that have implications beyond the jurisdiction (both intra-county and inter-county). Public interests that are broader than simply local interests include (but are not limited to) those in Table 6-1.

Photo 6-1

Recreational Facilities are Abundant in Mason County



Photo by Mark Wyckoff

Table 6-1 Issues of Greater than Local Concern

Protecting the Environment and Natural Resources

- Watersheds and water quality
- Wetlands protection
- Floodplain protection
- Land pollution (contaminated sites)
- Soil conservation and stormwater pollution
- Air pollution
- Groundwater pollution
- Oil and gas pollution
- Noise pollution
- Water pollution of inland lakes (esp. Hamlin Lake, Round Lake and others), rivers and streams (Pere Marquette, Sable and others)
- Protection of sand dunes and areas with steep slopes
- Wildlife corridors and fish and wildlife habitat protection
- Protection of unique and endangered species
- Sustainability of privately owned forest land
- Water surfaces that are under control of multiple local jurisdictions, especially as relates to keyhole development
- Use of public access sites
- Maintaining a “sense of place” where that sense is the major attraction for tourists and the service sector economy.

Siting Public Facilities or Providing New Public Services

- Solid waste and recycling
- Emergency services (fire, ambulance, police) – to achieve greater efficiency (involves the U.S. Forest Service, and DNR)
- Transportation/roads
- Public transportation
- Trails (siting of) – federal, state, local, and property owners
- “Regional” park facilities (very large, e.g. pool or hockey rink – needs a large customer base)
- District library and district boundaries for libraries
- Mental and other health facilities
- Provision of senior services – location of facilities, including handicapped services
- Extension of utilities
- Schools (especially if consolidation is considered)

Maintaining a Sustainable Economy and Promoting Economic Development

- Real (livable) wages, job opportunities for young adults and families with children
- Lack of seasonal workers – lack of an intermediate job base
- Harbors (Ludington and Pere Marquette Township)
- Adequate lifelong educational opportunities for all citizens: health of the West Shore Community College
- Adequate affordable housing for middle and low income persons

Table 6-1 (Continued) Issues of Greater than Local Concern

Land Use

- LULU's (locally unwanted land uses that meet a regional need, such as gravel pits, junk yards, landfills, communication towers, electric generating windmills, etc.)
- Large scale development (resorts, shopping center, airports, etc.)
- Density in some rural areas that is too high to cost effectively service and a current zoned density that will exacerbate this problem.
- Compact settlement pattern vs. dispersed settlement pattern and the associated impacts on infrastructure extensions or establishment of infrastructure
- Siting affordable housing—especially mobile home parks
- Lack of similar regulations and enforcement across jurisdiction boundaries
- Compatibility of land uses along jurisdiction boundaries regarding zoning and land use issues
- Loss of open space
- Regional focus on open space preservation and farmland preservation
- Protecting important viewsheds and rural corridor views.

Other

- A growing nonresident (largely seasonal) population that (for the most part) does not vote locally, but does pay taxes locally
- Lack of a tax or fee of users of state and federal resources here
- Inter-jurisdictional equity issues
- Intergenerational equity issues
- Sustainability

In many instances, these issues of greater than local concern revolve around common environmental features (which do not respect municipal boundaries), infrastructure, and the needs of special populations.

It takes a basic change of attitude toward other jurisdictions to effectively deal with these issues. It takes recognition that the citizens of both (or several) jurisdictions face the same potential loss or gain. It takes acceptance that the other jurisdiction is not in competition or opposition, at least not on every aspect of the issue. It takes the ability to exercise mutual respect in areas of overlapping responsibilities and mutual support where responsibilities are separate, but compatible in pursuit of common goals and a common vision of the County. By jointly engaging the issues, common ground can usually be found. It is the common ground that is most often used as the basis for effective inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

ROLE OF KEY PLAYERS

It will take the efforts of many different groups to implement the Mason County Master Plan. Key among them are the local planning commissions and governing boards, the County Board of Commissioners and the County Planning Commission.

The framed text on Table 6-2 on the next three pages lists the traditional roles and responsibilities of local planning commissions, local governing bodies, the County Board of Commissioners and the County Planning Commission. These traditional roles are proposed to be continued, but some changes are also proposed to strengthen the ability of these entities to take actions to implement this Plan. These changes are summarized in the text following Table 6-2.

Table 6-2
Traditional Responsibilities of the Local Government Decision-makers

County Board of Commissioners

The County Board of Commissioners must take the lead in order to initiate planning in Mason County. Its basic statutory and administrative responsibilities are as follows (not all of these are currently being performed):

- Adopt the County Master Plan.
- Periodically hold a joint meeting with Planning Commission to go over issues of common interest. This could begin by meeting with a Committee of the County Board of Commissioners as opposed to the entire Board.
- Adopt amendments to the Mason County Zoning Ordinance and adopt subdivision regulations.
- Continue funding for the planning/zoning program each year including funds for training and continuing education of commissioners and staff, and for public education on planning and zoning.
- Continue hiring consultants as recommended by the Planning Commission and pursuant to an approved work program and budget.
- Continue to provide adequate funds for Zoning Ordinance administration and enforcement.
- Ask Planning Commission to prepare an annual report of activities and a proposed work program for the next year, in enough time to be considered in the budget process.
- Ask Planning Commission to review proposed capital improvements for consistency with the Plan prior to the County Board or other public agency action.
- Develop regional contacts and initiate and coordinate activities with representatives of other units of government on various issues of greater than local concern.

County Planning Commission

The County Planning Commission is responsible for:

- Preparing and maintaining a plan for the development and protection of the County. It will adopt the Master Plan as a replacement for its 2006 Plans.
- Preparing and proposing amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance, and conducting required public hearings.
- Making recommendations on proposed Township plans and/or rezoning or text amendments.
- Attempting to prevent incompatible planning and zoning along governmental boundaries.
- Reviewing and commenting on proposed new public lands, facilities or improvements for consistency with the Master Plan.
- Review and comment on proposed PA 116 Farmland and Open Space Enrollments.
- Periodically reviewing and/or preparing various state or federal grant applications.
- Receiving, storing and sharing data from the Michigan Resource Inventory Program.
- Providing information and education services for the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- Serving as County Council for the Resource Conservation and Development Program of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.
- Receiving citizen comments on local planning and zoning issues and acting upon or referring those comments as appropriate.
- Educating citizens and representatives of local units of government on various county planning and zoning issues.

Table 6-2 (Continued)
Traditional Responsibilities of the Local Government Decision-makers

- Learning about and staying up-to-date on the responsibilities of the Planning Commission and on various tools available to implement local plans.
- Coordinating planning and associated development regulations with other governmental units and public agencies.

Local Governing Bodies

Local city or village councils and township boards of trustees also have specific planning and zoning responsibilities. These include:

- Appointment of qualified persons to serve as members of the local Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Adoption of ordinances recommended by the Planning Commission for implementation of the Master plan, including when supported by the governing body, a zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations.
- Providing an adequate budget for the Planning Commission to carry out its responsibilities including keeping the Plan and Zoning Ordinance current, and receiving proper training on their roles, responsibilities and new tools and techniques for improving the community.
- Providing adequate staff and financial resources (including setting fee levels) for proper enforcement of adopted regulations.
- Conducting required public hearings prior to acting on zoning, subdivision or infrastructure development matters.
- Receiving and acting upon citizen complaints related to planning and zoning issues and as appropriate, referring matters to the Planning Commission for action.
- Coordinating actions with representatives of other units of government on issues of greater than local concern.

Local Planning Commissions

Planning commissions in cities and villages in the County are organized under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008. Township planning commissions are organized under PA 33 of 2008. Some of their principal responsibilities include:

- Creating, adopting and maintaining a local Master (or master) plan to guide future land use change and to serve as the legal basis for the local zoning ordinance.
- Creating, maintaining and administering responsibilities under the local zoning ordinance (for those municipalities with local zoning).
- Advising the local governing body on proposed rezonings, text amendments, plats, land divisions, capital improvements and related planning and zoning decisions.
- Responding to the recommendations of the County Planning Commission on planning and zoning issues.
- Making recommendations on special projects or delegated responsibilities (e.g. zoning ordinance enforcement)
- Working with property owners in order to try and achieve good development (or redevelopment)
- Educating citizens on the values and benefits of planning
- Receiving citizen comments on local planning and zoning issues and acting upon or referring those comments as appropriate.
- Learning about and staying up-to-date on the responsibilities of the Planning Commission and on various tools available to implement local plans.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

This Master Plan represents hundreds of hours of input by the County Planning Commission, citizens and local government officials in Mason County over the past year. The circumstances it is intended to address did not occur overnight and they will not be resolved overnight. However, this Plan sets forth another option to a future that will inexorably be created if existing trends and uncoordinated decisions continue. Existing trends are fueled to a very great extent by existing plans, regulations and institutional relationships. To create a future different from existing trends, then current plans, policies, regulations and institutional relationships must also be changed.

Perhaps the catalyst for that change is for the preferred vision of Mason County, and what it takes to get to that vision, to be part of the "story" of Mason County that every resident, of every age, knows by heart. So, for example, if all Mason County residents know by heart that clustering, conservation subdivisions, community service districts, farmland preservation, design guidelines and vegetative buffers are necessary for Mason County to remain largely rural and scenic and continue to have a high quality of life, there is a greater chance that Mason County will have these characteristics. It is up to the County Planning Commission with support of the County Board of Commissioners to achieve this level of citizen understanding of and support for this Plan.

Photo 6-2

**Citizens will need to Commit to Preserving the Characteristics
Necessary to Maintain a Desired Quality of Life**



APPENDIX

Mason County

Master Plan Update



Appendices

1. Mason County Data Book
2. Mason County Public Meeting Report
3. Mason County Community Survey

Mason County DATA BOOK 2013



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This publication was prepared as part of the process to update the Mason County Comprehensive Plan in fall 2012. The fundamental purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to enable a community to establish a direction for physical development, capital investment, and growth.

The Mason County Comprehensive Data Book provides information citizens and county officials can use to help them review county-wide information and assist in the preparation of private and public plans for future projects that improve the quality of life for county citizens. Mason County's last Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2006 and reflected current conditions and trends at the time. The effort to update it in 2012 will enable the county and its jurisdictions to focus on particular challenges rather than restrict the effort to a more general overview.

The reader should note that only chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 were updated in 2012. Chapters 4, 6 and 7 remain unchanged from 2006.

USES

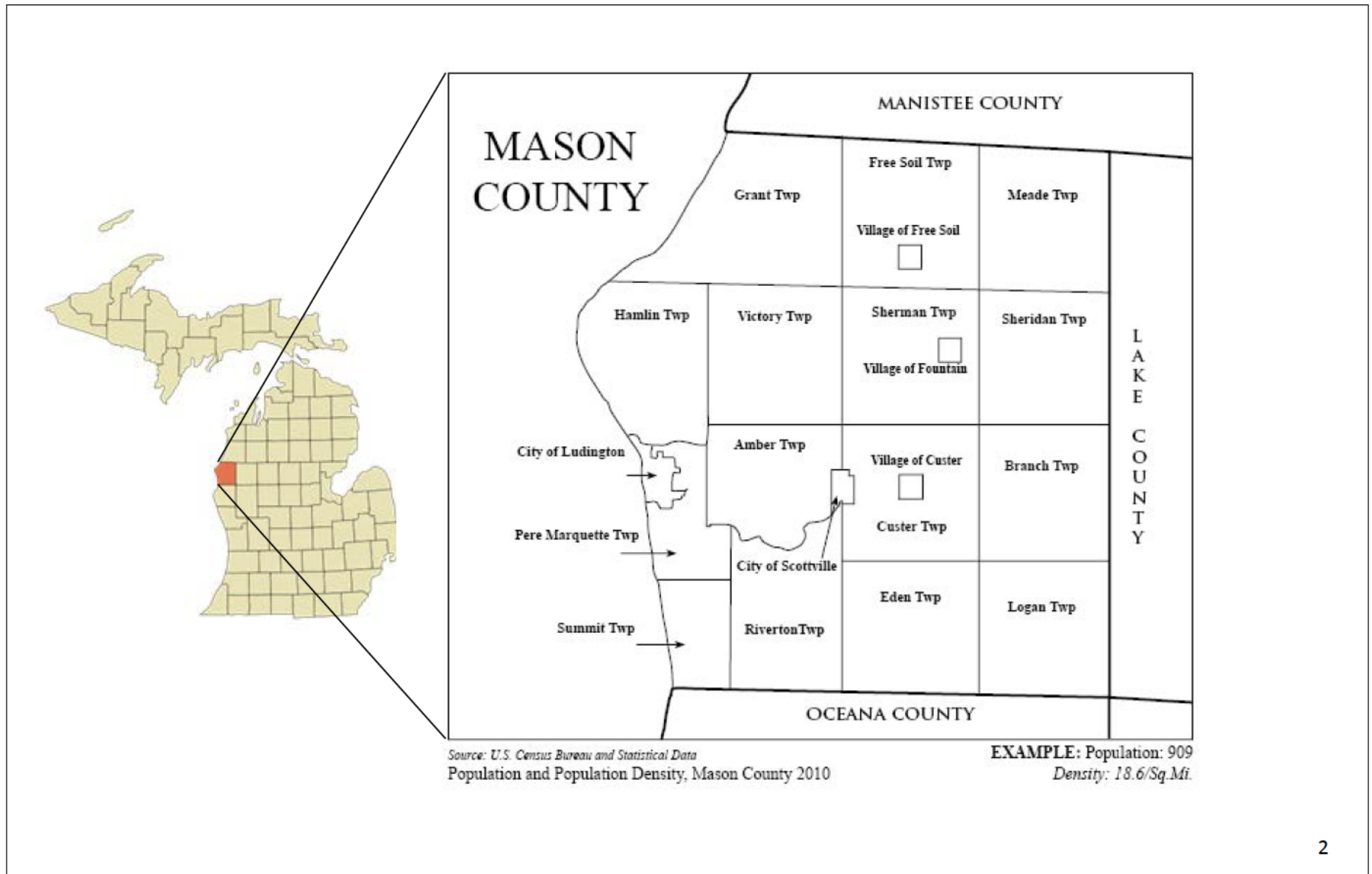
The data and trends presented in the Mason County Comprehensive Plan Data Book should be studied by elected and appointed officials, community leaders, service organizations, developers, realtors, and interested citizens. The results can help inform decisions involving Mason County land, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, and transportation systems.

OVERVIEW OF AREA

Mason County is located along the western shore of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The county includes 15 townships, 2 cities and 3 villages and is spread over 1,241 square miles. Map 1-1 shows the location of Mason County within Michigan and the location of townships, cities and villages within the County. The county seat is the City of Ludington. Please see map on following page.

Map 1-1

Mason County and County Jurisdiction



DATA BOOK CHAPTERS

In addition to this introduction, this Mason County Data Book contains the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Demographics. This chapter provides a profile of the Mason County population and how it has changed over the past thirty years. Trends in population change are presented, as well as projections based on these trends. Population and housing characteristics are discussed at both the county and local levels. Among the demographic characteristics presented are population size, age minorities, housing, income, poverty, and educational attainment. Updated in 2012.

Chapter 3: Economy and Economic Development. This chapter provides an overview of important economic indicators, such as jobs and business growth in Mason County. It discusses the size of the labor force, employment, and unemployment, the sectors in which Mason County residents are employed, the major businesses in the county, and travel time to work. Updated in 2012.

Chapter 4: Natural Resources and Environment. Land, water, and other natural resources provide for the livelihood of Mason County residents and enrich their quality of life. This chapter describes important Mason County natural resources such as soils, agricultural land, and watershed components (wetlands, floodplains, and water quality). Updated in 2006.

Chapter 5: Existing Land Use and Tax Base. How the land is currently used is an important factor in understanding the issues communities face and in planning for the future use of that land. This chapter describes the pattern of different land uses in Mason County, which include agriculture, residential, commercial, and industrial uses, and how those uses may be changing. This chapter also describes a “buildout analysis” that illustrates the potential extent of development if all land is developed according to existing zoning. This can be an eye opening experience for communities that express a commitment to a popular community character, but find they are moving toward a different character because of provisions in local zoning. Updated in 2012.

Chapter 6: Transportation. The transportation system of roads, rail, and air provides access for Mason County residents and visitors to the places and activities that occupy their lives. In addition to access, the transportation network provides for a high level of mobility and a high degree of choice of where to go and when. As the pattern and density of uses of the land evolve or respond to plan for its future, the transportation system will either promote the desired future or limit it. This chapter describes the current state of transportation in Mason so that plans for improvement can be made to complement future demands. Updated in 2006.

Chapter 7: Public Facilities and Physical Services. This chapter identifies the various publicly owned parks, city and township halls, fire stations, schools, utilities, and other facilities, as well as programs and services provided by Mason County. This information is valuable when comparing existing facilities against unmet needs and determining what new facilities and services will be needed by new development. Updated in 2006.

UPDATING AND COMPLETING THE DATA BOOK

The facts presented in this document represent information from the US Census Bureau and the most current Census data (2010) was used. Every attempt was made to acquire the most recent information possible, however, it is recommended that the information in this Data Book be updated and reanalyzed as Mason County changes over time.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHICS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the size, age, sex, poverty status, educational attainment, and other characteristics of the Mason County population. It looks at changes to the population and housing over the past few decades, and projects some trends in the future.

POPULATION PROFILE

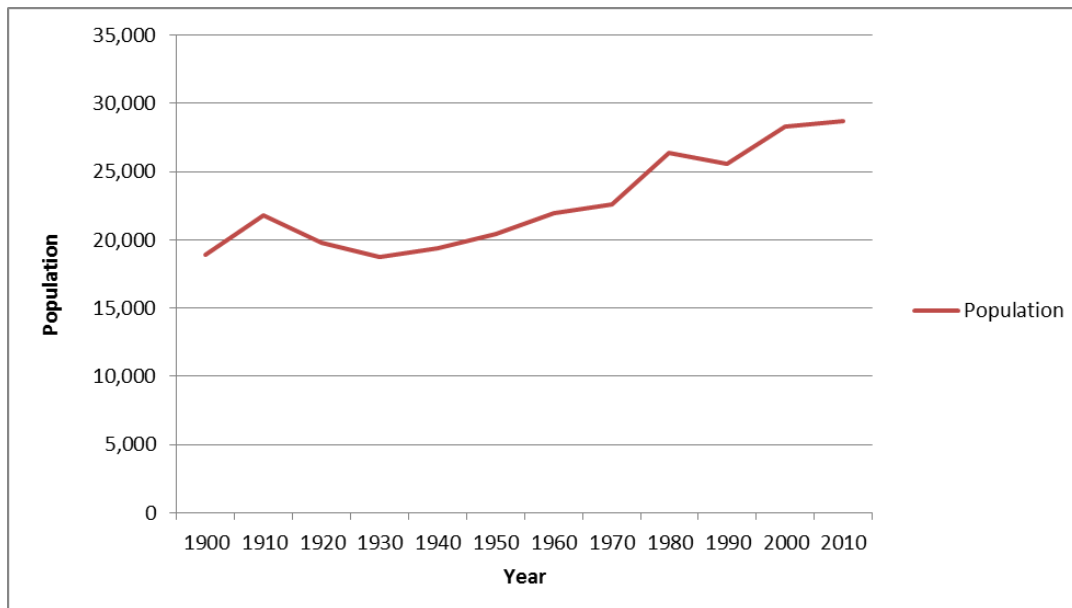
Over the past 100 years (1990-2000), Mason County's population has grown steadily, but the rate of that growth has fluctuated over time. Since 1900, the population has grown by 52% or 9,820 persons, and most of this growth occurred in the last 40 years. **Table 2-1** lists Mason County's population each decade from 1900 to 2010, and **Figure 2-1** illustrates this change. In Mason County, the largest increase in population occurred between 1970 and 1980 (3,753 persons) and 1990 to 2000 (2,737 persons).

Table 2-1
Population Change for Mason County, 1900-2010

Year	Population	Change in Population	Percent Change in Population
1900	18,885		
1910	21,832	2,947	15%
1920	19,831	-2,001	-9%
1930	18,756	-1,075	-5%
1940	19,378	622	3%
1950	20,474	1,096	6%
1960	21,929	1,455	7%
1970	22,612	683	3%
1980	26,365	3,753	17%
1990	25,537	-828	-3%
2000	28,274	2,737	11%
2010	28,705	431	1.5%
Change in Population 1900-2010		9,820	52%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-1
Population for Mason County, 1990-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION PROFILE OF THE LAST DECADE

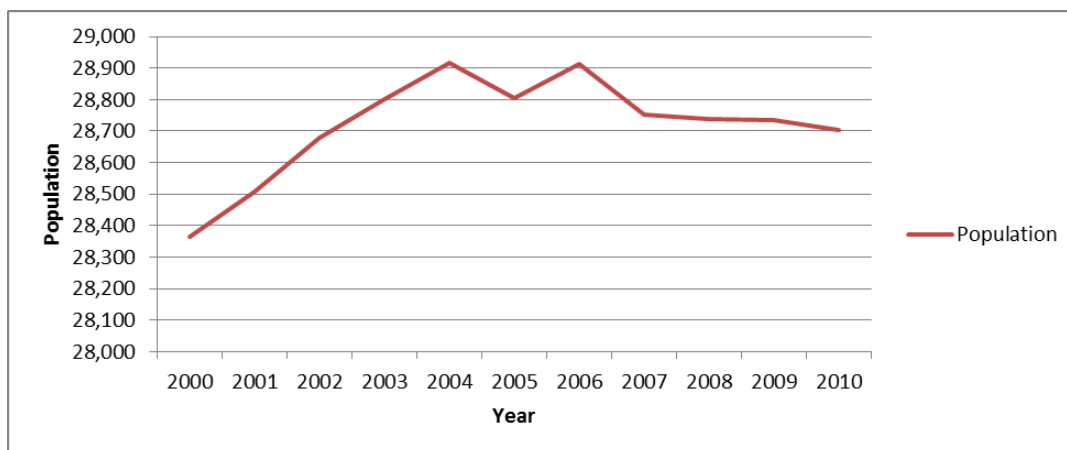
From 2000 to 2010, Mason County saw little change in its population. **Table 2-2** illustrates this change. The greatest growth occurred in the first half of the decade, between 2000 and 2004. Since 2004, Mason County's overall population has been declining, at a rate of roughly -0.2% every year. **Figure 2-2** illustrates this change. Michigan also experienced a decline in population in the first half of the decade, and has experienced slight growth since 2006, at a rate of roughly 0.5%. Overall, the population in Mason County from 2000-2010 increased by 431 persons, or 1.5%.

Table 2-2
Population Change for Mason County 2000-2010

YEAR	MASON COUNTY			MICHIGAN
	Total Population	Population Change	% Change	Yearly Change
2000	28,274			-0.5%
2001	28,509	146	0.5%	-0.8%
2002	28,679	170	0.6%	-0.7%
2003	28,802	123	0.4%	-0.6%
2004	28,918	116	0.4%	-0.02%
2005	28,805	-110	-0.3%	-0.1%
2006	28,912	107	0.3%	0.4%
2007	28,753	-159	-0.5%	0.3%
2008	28,740	-13	-0.05%	0.3%
2009	28,736	-4	-0.01%	0.7%
2010	28,705	-31	-0.1%	0.9%
2011 Population Estimate				28,678
Change in Population from 2000-2010				431
% Change in Population from 2000-2010				1.5%

Source: Michigan Department of Community Health and U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-2
Population for Mason County, 2000-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

MASON COUNTY AND ADJACENT COUNTIES

Mason County is adjacent to four counties: Manistee, Lake, Oceana, and Newaygo. **Table 2-3** illustrates the population change from 1970-2010 for all five counties. Between 1970 and 2010, Mason County had a relatively low change in its population in terms of percent over the last 40 years (29%). However, Mason County had the third highest net change in persons added to the county over that same time (6,462). Together, the five-county area added 45,664 persons or 48% between 1970 and 2010. **Table 2-4** illustrates more recent population changes within the five counties from 1990-2010. From 1990 to 2000, Mason County grew at the slowest rate (12%) in relation to the other four counties, adding 3,168 persons. From 2000-2010, Mason (1.5%), Lake (2%), and Newaygo (1%) had positive population growth, while Manistee (-4%) and Oceana (-1%) experienced population loss. From 1990-2010, the population of the five county area increased by 19% (4,419 persons), and from 2000-2010 the amount of growth decreased to .8% (1,126 persons).

Table 2-3
Mason and Adjoining Counties Population Change 1970-2010

County	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Population Change 1970-2010	Percent Change in Population 1970-2010
Mason	22,612	26,365	25,537	28,274	28,705	6,462	29%
Manistee	20,094	23,019	21,265	24,527	24,733	4,639	23%
Lake	5,661	7,711	8,583	11,333	11,539	5,878	104%
Newaygo	27,992	34,917	38,206	47,874	48,460	20,468	73%
Oceana	17,984	22,002	22,454	26,873	26,570	8,586	49%
Five County Total	94,343	114,014	116,045	138,881	140,007	45,664	48%

Source: Michigan Department of Community Health and U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-4
Mason and Adjoining Counties Population Change 1990-2010

County	1990	2000	2010	Change in Population 1990-2000	Percent Change in Population 1990-2000	Change in Population 2000-2010	Percent Change in Population 2000-2010
Mason	25,537	28,274	28,705	3,168	12%	431	1.5%
Manistee	21,265	25,527	24,733	4,626	20%	-1,194	-4%
Lake	8,583	11,333	11,539	2,750	32%	206	2%
Newaygo	38,206	47,874	48,460	9,968	26%	586	1%
Oceana	22,454	26,873	26,570	4,419	19%	-303	-1%
COUNTY TOTAL	116,045	138,881	140,007	22,836	20%	1,126	.8%

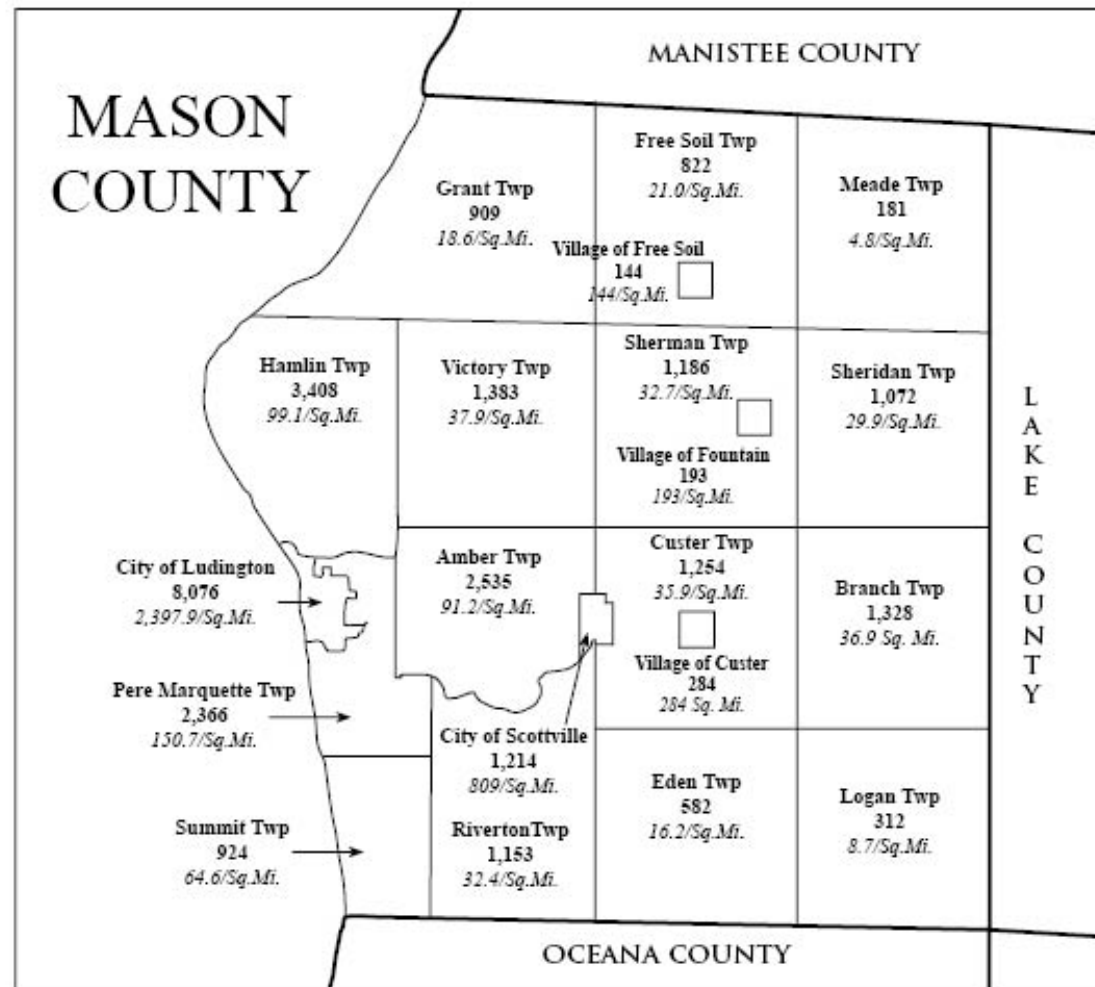
Source: Michigan Department of Community Health and U.S. Census Bureau

TOWNSHIP, CITY, AND VILLAGE POPULATION TRENDS

Mason County consists of two cities, three villages, and fifteen townships. **Map 2-1** is a reference for location, population, and population density of each jurisdiction from 2010. **Table 2-5** lists the populations of each jurisdiction from 1990 to 2010, as well as percent change in population and population density. The jurisdictions that had the greatest percentage increase in population within Mason County between 2000 and 2010 were Amber Township (23% from 2,054 persons to 2,535 persons), whose 23% growth far exceeds the Mason County total of 1.5%. Sheridan Township (11% from 969 persons to 1,072 persons), Branch Township (12% from 1,181 persons to 1,328 persons) and the Village of Fountain (10% from 175 persons to 193 persons) all experienced growth exceeding 10%. Those with the greatest total increase in population were Amber Township (481), Hamlin Township (216), and Branch Township (147).

The population density of Mason County jurisdictions ranged from a low of 4.8 persons per square mile in Meade Township, to a high of 2,397.9 persons per square mile in the City of Ludington, based on the 2010 population. Both Meade Township and the City of Ludington, respectively, have had the lowest and highest population densities for the past decade. In 2010, Custer was the most densely populated village with 284 persons per square mile, and Pere Marquette was the most densely populated township with 150.7 persons per square mile. The population density for Mason County overall in 2010 was 23.1 persons per square mile.

Map 2-1
Population and Density of Mason County Jurisdictions, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Statistical Data
Population and Population Density, Mason County 2010

EXAMPLE: Population: 909
Density: 18.6/Sq. Mi.

Table 2-5
Population and Density of Mason County Jurisdictions, 2010

County Jurisdiction	Area (Sq.Mi)	Total Pop. 2000	Pop. Density (per Sq.Mi) 2000	Total Pop. 2010	Pop. Density 2010	Change in Pop. 2000- 2010	% Change in Pop. 2000-2010
City of Ludington	3.37	8,357	2,479.8	8,076	2,397.9	-281	-3%
City of Scottville	1.5	1,266	844	1,214	809	-52	-4%
Village of Custer	1.0	318	318	284	284	-34	-11%
Village of Fountain	1.0	175	175	193	193	18	10%
Village of Free Soil	1.0	177	177	144	144	-33	-19%
Township of Amber	27.8	2,054	74.4	2,535	91.2	481	23%
Township of Branch	36.0	1,181	32.8	1,328	36.9	147	12%
Township of Custer	35.0	1,302	37.2	1,254	35.9	-48	-4%
Township of Eden	35.9	555	15.5	582	16.2	27	5%
Township of Free Soil	39.1	934	23.8	822	21.0	-112	-12%
Township of Grant	48.9	850	17.4	909	18.6	59	7%
Township of Hamlin	34.4	3,192	92.8	3,408	99.1	216	7%
Township of Logan	36.0	329	9.1	312	8.7	-17	-5%
Township of Meade	37.6	158	4.2	181	4.8	23	14.5%
Township of Pere Marquette	15.7	2,228	141.9	2,366	150.7	138	6%
Township of Riverton	35.6	1,335	37.5	1,153	32.4	-182	-14%
Township of Sheridan	35.9	969	27	1,072	29.9	103	11%
Township of Sherman	36.2	1,094	30.2	1,186	32.7	92	8%
Township of Summit	14.3	1,021	71.4	924	64.6	-97	-9.5%
Township of Victory	36.5	1,444	39.5	1,383	37.9	-61	-4%
MASON COUNTY TOTAL	1,241.9	28,451	22.9	28,705	23.1	431	1.5%

Note that the Mason County Total in this table for the year 2000 (28,451) is different than that reported in Tables 2-2 through 2-4 (28,274). The U.S. Census corrected the 2000 population for Free Soil and Meade Townships but did not officially change the County total population. This Table (2-5) reflects the additional people in the corrected population for those two townships in the County total, raising it from 28,274 reported by the U.S. Census to 28,451.

Source: Michigan Department of Community Health and U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of the County's population, shown in **Table 2-6** indicates that the greatest number of residents live in the City of Ludington (8,076 persons) comprising 28% of the county's total population. Hamlin Township holds the second greatest number of residents (3,408 persons or 12%), and Amber Township (2,535 persons or 9%) has the third largest population in the county. The least number of residents live in the Villages of Fountain (193 or 0.6%), Free Soil (144 or 0.5%), and Custer (284 or 0.9%). Between 2000 and 2010, Amber Township showed the most significant increase in population, from 2,054 residents to 2,535, and held 7% of the population in 2000 and 9% of the county population in 2010.

Table 2-6
Distribution of County Population by Jurisdiction, 2000 and 2010

County Jurisdiction	Total Pop. 2000	Percent of county population	Total Pop. 2010	Percent of county population
City of Ludington	8,357	29%	8,076	28%
City of Scottville	1,266	4%	1,214	4%
Village of Custer	318	1%	284	0.9%
Village of Fountain	175	0.6%	193	0.6%
Village of Free Soil	177	0.6%	144	0.5%
Township of Amber	2,054	7%	2,535	9%
Township of Branch	1,181	4%	1,328	4.5%
Township of Custer	1,302	5%	1,254	4%
Township of Eden	555	2%	582	2%
Township of Free Soil	934	3%	822	3%
Township of Grant	850	3%	909	3%
Township of Hamlin	3,192	11%	3,408	12%
Township of Logan	329	1%	312	1%
Township of Meade	158	0.5%	181	0.6%
Township of Pere Marquette	2,228	7%	2,366	8%
Township of Riverton	1,335	4.5%	1,153	4%
Township of Sheridan	969	3%	1,072	3.5%
Township of Sherman	1,094	4%	1,186	4%
Township of Summit	1,021	4%	924	3%
Township of Victory	1,444	5%	1,383	5%
MASON COUNTY TOTAL	28,451	100%	28,705	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HOUSING UNITS

Mason County had a total of 1,230 new housing units constructed between March 2000 and April 2010. **Table 2-7** illustrates the comparison of housing units in 2000 and 2010. Pere Marquette Township had the greatest percent increase during this period, as well as the most new units added (53.5%, 459 new units). Amber Township (47.5%) had the second highest percent increase with 390 new units added. The City of Ludington (205), Branch Township (112), and Hamlin Township (226) all experienced net increases in housing units, while Pere Marquette Township (-86), Meade Township (-20), the Village of Free Soil (-9), and the Village of Fountain (-6) all experienced net decrease in housing units from 2000-2010. Mason County experienced an 8% growth of housing units, from 16,063 to 17,293 from 2000-2010.

Table 2-7
Housing Units Mason County 1990-2010

Jurisdiction	2000 Total Housing Units	2010 Total Housing Units	Change 2000-2010	% Change in Units 2000- 2010
City of Ludington	4,227	4,432	205	7%
City of Scottville	574	578	4	0.7%
Village of Custer	132	137	5	4 %
Village of Fountain	89	83	-6	-7%
Village of Free Soil	93	84	-9	-10%
Township of Amber	820	1,210	390	47.5%
Township of Branch	921	1,033	112	12%
Township of Custer	550	599	49	9%
Township of Eden	344	391	47	14%
Township of Free Soil	552	566	14	2.5%
Township of Grant	449	524	75	17%
Township of Hamlin	2,123	2,349	226	11%
Township of Logan	388	403	15	4%
Township of Meade	228	208	-20	-9%
Township of Pere Marquette	1,403	1,317	-86	-6%
Township of Riverton	550	564	14	2.5%
Township of Sheridan	1,013	1,062	49	5%
Township of Sherman	509	548	39	8%
Township of Summit	790	866	76	10%
Township of Victory	572	643	71	12%
Mason County Total	16,063	17,293	1,230	8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

Of the 17,293 housing units in Mason County in 2010, approximately 53% (9,128) were owner-occupied housing units, 16% (2,812) were renter occupied housing units, 31% (5,353) were vacant housing units, and 75% (4,051) of those vacant housing units were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Table 2-8 shows a breakdown of housing unit characteristics by jurisdiction. It is important to note that as a result of Mason County's residential tourism industry, many housing units remain unoccupied unless used for recreational, seasonal, or occasional use. **Table 2-9** illustrates the type of occupied housing in Mason County in 2010. Of the 17,293 housing units in Mason County, 76% (13,128) are one-unit detached homes, followed by mobile homes which comprise 11% (1,947) of the total occupied housing units. All other housing types including 1 unit attached, 2 units, 3 or 4 units, 5 to 9 units, or 10 units comprise roughly 12% of total housing.

Table 2-8
Housing Unit Characteristics for Mason County, 2010

Jurisdiction	Total Housing Units	Owner Occupied Housing Units	Owner Occupied Housing Units as % of Total Housing Units	Renter Occupied Housing Units	Renter Occupied Housing Units as % of Total Housing Units	Total Vacant Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units as % of Total Housing Units	Number of Vacant Housing Units for Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	Percent of Vacant Housing Units for Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use
City of Ludington	4,432	1,980	45%	1,569	35%	883	20%	446	50.5%
City of Scottville	578	483	83.5%	180	31%	95	16.5%	13	13.5%
Village of Custer	137	88	64%	22	16%	27	19.5%	2	7.5%
Village of Fountain	83	57	67%	14	17%	12	14.5%	7	58%
Village of Free Soil	84	54	64%	10	12%	20	24%	9	45%
Township of Amber	1,210	745	62%	288	24%	177	14.5%	68	38.5%
Township of Branch	1,033	487	47%	78	7.5%	468	45%	403	86%
Township of Custer	599	431	72%	61	10%	107	18%	37	35.9%
Township of Eden	391	201	51%	27	7%	163	42%	147	90%
Township of Free Soil	566	309	55%	36	6%	221	39%	177	80%
Township of Grant	524	338	60%	37	7%	149	28.5%	138	92.5%
Township of Hamlin	2,349	1,337	57%	103	4.5%	909	39%	774	85%
Township of Logan	403	126	31%	25	6%	252	63.5%	232	92%
Township of Meade	208	70	34%	10	5%	128	61.5%	116	91%
Township of Pere Marquette	1,317	796	60%	119	9%	402	30.5%	335	83%
Township of Riverton	564	398	70.5%	44	8%	122	21.5%	59	48 %
Township of Sheridan	1,062	404	38%	58	5.5%	600	56.5%	552	92%
Township of Sherman	548	392	71.5%	65	12%	91	16.5%	62	63%
Township of Summit	866	360	41.5%	39	4.5%	467	54%	419	90%
Township of Victory	643	451	70%	73	11.5%	119	18.5%	73	61%
Mason County Total	17,293	9,128	53%	2,812	16%	5,353	31%	4,051	75%
AVERAGE- FOR TOTAL OF 20 JURISDICTIONS									
Owner Occupied Housing Units as Percent of Total Housing Units				57%	Vacant Housing Units as Percent of Total Housing Units				32%
Renter Occupied Housing Units as Percent of Total Housing Units				12%	Percent of Vacant Housing Units for Seasonal, recreational, or Occasional Use				65%

Note that the Mason County Total (17,293) does not include the total combined housing units for the villages, which total 304.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-9
Type of Occupied Housing in Mason County, 2010

Type of Housing Unit	Mason County	As % of Total Housing Units	Michigan
1 unit- detached	13,128	76%	72%
1 unit attached	271	2%	5%
2 units	403	2%	3%
3 or 4 units	397	2%	3%
5 to 9 units	390	2%	4%
10 or more units	740	4%	9%
Mobile homes, RV, boat, van	1,947	11%	5.5%
Total housing units	17,293	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

AGE OF HOUSING IN MASON COUNTY

The age of housing stock has implications for affordable housing, community character, and the potential need for neighborhood revitalization. A majority of housing in Mason County consists of older housing structures, with half (51%) of all structures built before 1969 (**See Table 2-10**). A large percentage of the housing stock was built prior to 1939 (26%) and also from 1970- 1979 (15%).

Table 2-10
Age of Occupied Housing Units in Mason County, 2000

Year Structure Built	Number of Units	% of Total
Built 2005 or later	374	2%
Built 2000 to 2004	1,315	8%
Built 1990 to 1999	2,355	14%
Built 1980 to 1989	1,513	9%
Built 1970 to 1979	2,539	15%
Built 1960 to 1969	1,718	10%
Built 1950 to 1959	1,892	10%
Built 1940 to 1949	939	5.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	4,535	26%
Total Housing Units	17,180	

Note that total housing units (17,180) does not include village housing units.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-11
Building Permits Mason County, 2007-2011

Community	2011		2010		2009		2008		2007	
	Single Family	Mobile Homes	Single Family	Mobile Homes	Single Family	Mobile Homes	Single Family	Mobile Homes	Single Family	Mobile Homes
Ludington	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	1
Scottville	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Amber	2	2	2	2	5	4	4	4	3	6
Branch	1	0	6	0	1	3	3	1	5	2
Custer	2	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	3	1
Eden	3	0	0	0	2	0	3	2	3	0
Free Soil	2	0	1	0	3	1	0	2	8	0
Grant	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	8	0
Hamlin	17	7	13	1	13	2	17	3	18	3
Logan	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	0
Meade	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0
Pere Marquette	2	0	5	0	4	0	9	0	10	0
Riverton	1	1	1	1	3	0	3	1	3	0
Sheridan	0	1	1	1	5	2	4	2	8	3
Sherman	2	2	0	0	1	2	3	1	7	1
Summit	3	0	3	0	1	1	7	2	6	1
Victory	4	1	2	1	4	3	3	2	7	3
County Total	44	17	40	7	46	22	62	21	97	21

Source: Mason County

POPULATION PER HOUSEHOLD

According to the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, the average number of persons per household fell for Mason County by 0.06, from 2.43 persons per household in 2000 to 2.37 persons per household in 2010 (**See Table 2-12**). All jurisdictions experienced a decrease in the average number of persons per household with the exception of the City of Scottsville, the Village of Fountain, and Meade Township. The community with the highest population per household is the Village of Fountain (2.72), a change from 2000 when the highest population per household was in Riverton Township (3.01). The community with the lowest population per household was Logan Township (2.07).

Table 2-12
Population per Household in Mason County, 2000-2010
**Average Household Size*

Community	2000	2010	Change in PPH 2000-2010	% Change in PPH 2000-2010
City of Ludington	2.21	2.19	-0.02	-0.9%
City of Scottsville	2.40	2.51	0.11	4.6%
Village of Custer	2.66	2.58	-0.08	-3%
Village of Fountain	2.46	2.72	0.26	10.5%
Village of Free Soil	2.36	2.25	-0.11	-4.6%
Township of Amber	2.64	2.41	-0.23	-9.8%
Township of Branch	2.33	2.35	0.02	0.8%
Township of Custer	2.63	2.55	-0.08	-3.5%
Township of Eden	2.68	2.55	-0.13	-4.8%
Township of Free Soil	2.41	2.35	-0.06	-2.5%
Township of Grant	2.62	2.42	-0.20	-7.6%
Township of Hamlin	2.38	2.37	-0.01	-0.4%
Township of Logan	2.21	2.07	-0.14	-6.3%
Township of Meade	2.26	2.26	0	0
Township of Pere Marquette	2.60	2.50	-0.10	-3.9%
Township of Riverton	3.01	2.61	-0.40	-13.3%
Township of Sheridan	2.33	2.31	-0.02	-0.9%
Township of Sherman	2.63	2.60	-0.03	-1.1%
Township of Summit	2.56	2.32	-0.24	-9.3%
Township of Victory	2.72	2.64	-0.08	-2.9%
Average (of 20 listed communities)	2.50	2.43	-0.07	-2.9%
Mason County	2.43	2.37	-0.06	-2.47%
State of Michigan	2.56	2.49	-0.07	-2.73%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

CHANGES IN AGE DISTRIBUTION

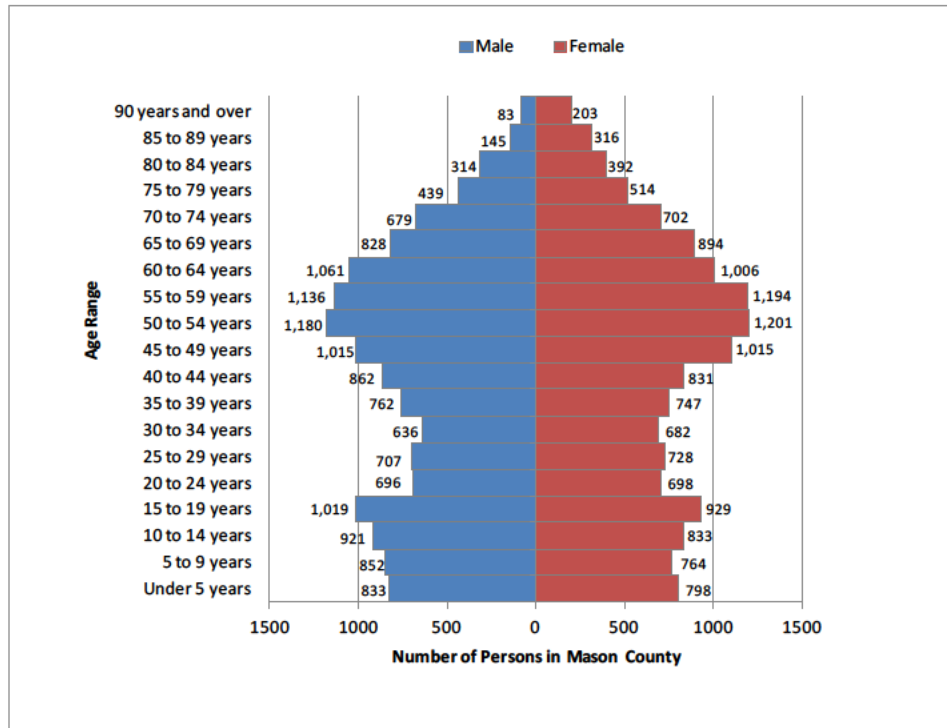
The population of Mason County is growing older, and a large number are entering retirement ages. The breakdown of age groups present in Mason County is displayed in **Table 2-13**. The largest growing age group in Mason County is people aged 55 to 64 years, whose age group increased from 11% of the total population in 2000 to comprise 15% of the total age group in 2010. The second largest growing age group is people ages 65 to 74 years, increasing by 750 persons between 2000 and 2010. The greatest decrease in an age group between 2000 and 2010 in Mason County was for those aged 35 to 44 years, whose numbers decreased a total of 1,149 from 2000. This age group was the largest in 2000, and now is the third largest age group behind 45 to 54 years (15.7% of total population), 55 to 64 years (15.4% of total population). Children under 5 years of age were the only age group of persons under the age of 20 to experience a population growth between 2000 and 2010. The other growing age group among people under 25 years of age was 20-24 years, whose population grew by 135. **Figure 2-3** depicts the distribution of population by age and sex, which is helpful for visualizing population trends in Mason County. **Figure 2-4** offers a comparison of Mason County's population distribution with the state of Michigan.

Table 2-13
Age Groups of Mason County, 2000-2010

Age	Total Population in 2000	% of Total Population in 2000	Total Population in 2010	% of Total Population in 2010	Change in Age Group 2000-2010
Under 5 years	1,537	5.4%	1,631	5.7%	94
5 to 9 years	1,885	6.7%	1,616	5.6%	-269
10 to 14 years	2,137	7.6%	1,754	6.1%	-383
15 to 19 years	2,031	7.2%	1,948	6.8%	-83
20 to 24 years	1,259	4.5%	1,394	4.9%	135
25 to 34 years	3,045	10.8%	2,753	9.6%	-292
35 to 44 years	4,351	15.4%	3,202	11.2%	-1149
45 to 54 years	4,156	14.7%	4,501	15.7%	345
55 to 64 years	3,125	11.0%	4,397	15.4%	1272
65 to 74 years	2,353	8.3%	3,103	10.8%	750
75 years and over	2,395	8.5%	2,406	8.4%	11
Mason County Total	28,274	100%	28,705	100%	431

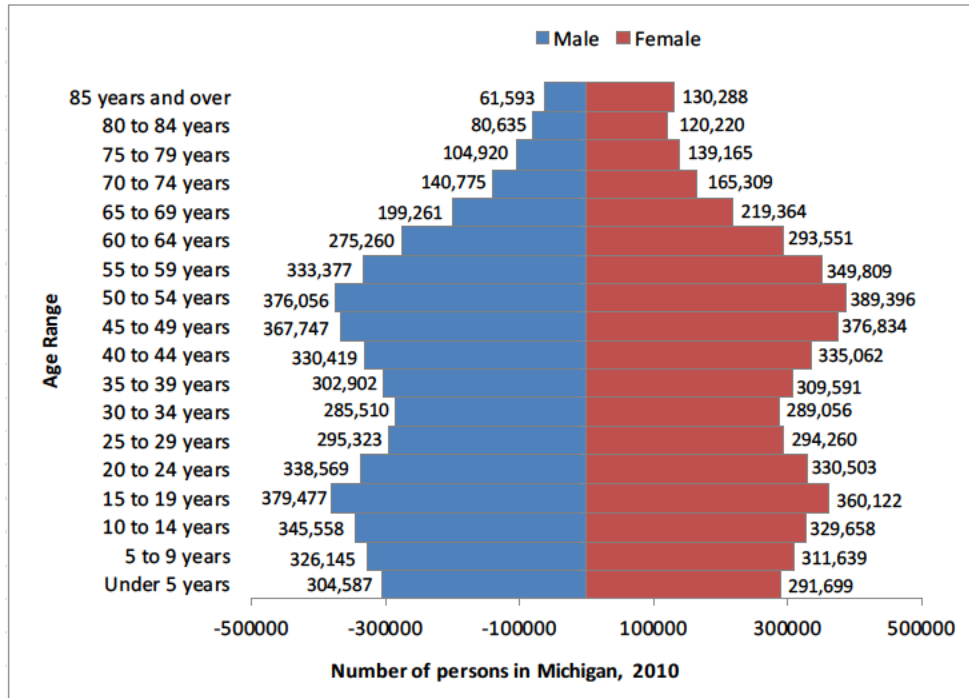
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-3
Mason County Population by Age and Gender, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

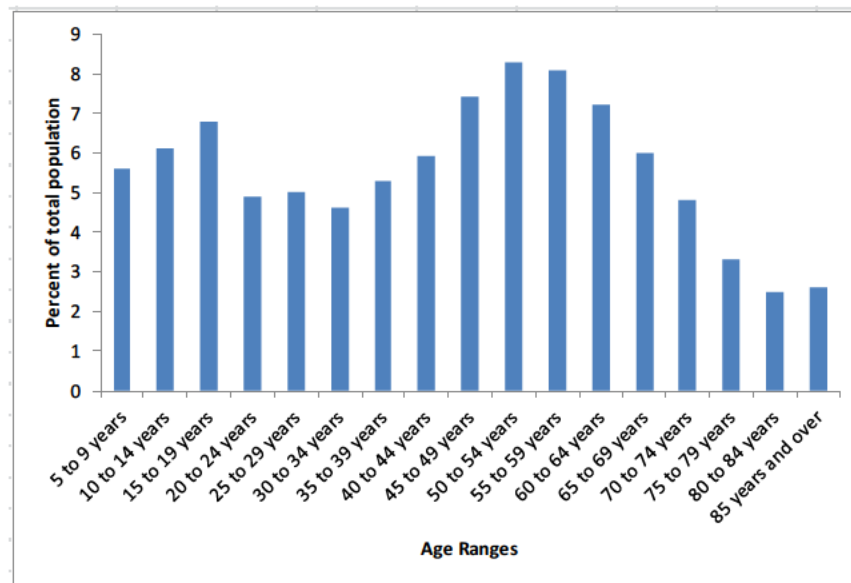
Figure 2-4
State of Michigan Population by Age and Gender, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-5

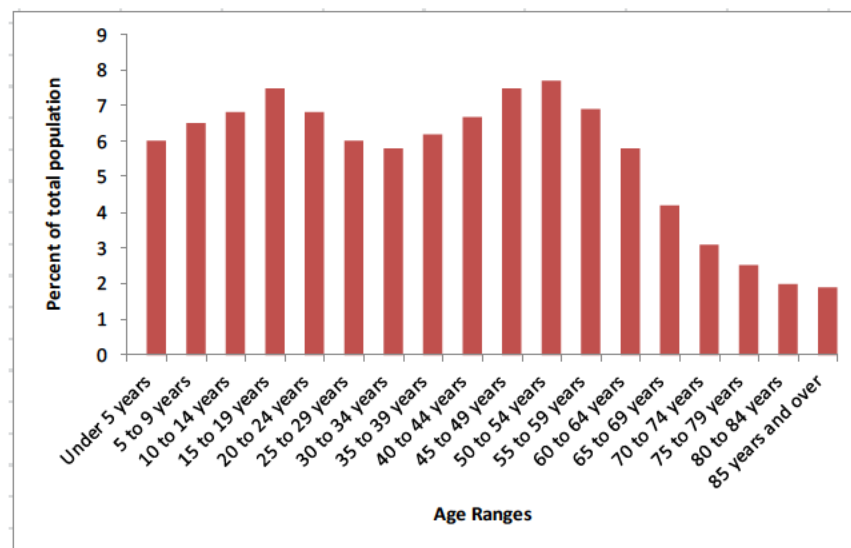
Age Ranges as Percent of Total Population, Mason County 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

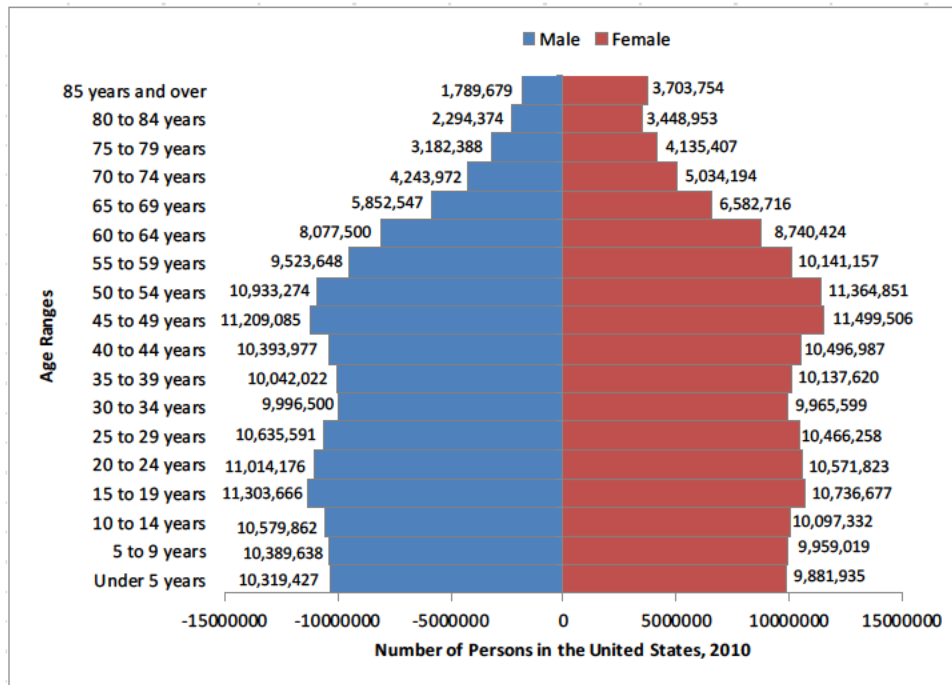
Figure 2-6

Age Ranges as Percent of Total Population, Michigan 2010



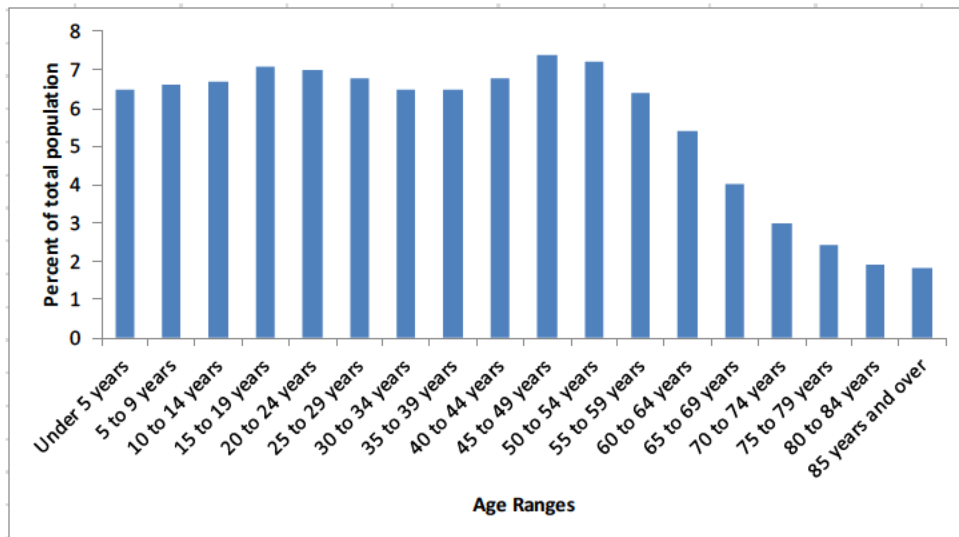
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-7
U.S. Population by Age and Gender, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2-8
Age Ranges as Percent of Total Population, U.S. 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

MINORITY POPULATION

The total minority population in Mason County in 2010 was 3,229 persons and includes Hispanic and Latino populations. The minority population comprises 11% of the total population of Mason County, which is well below the statewide average of 19.8%.

The largest minority population in Mason County in 2010 is persons of two or more races (547 or 17% of total minority population), followed by persons of American Indian and Alaskan Native decent (530 or 16%), some other race (451 or 14%), Black or African American (353 or 11%), Asian (193 or 6%), and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (5 or .15%). See **Table 2-14** for details.

Table 2-14
Minority Population in Mason County, 2010

Group	Number of Persons	Percentage of Minority Population	Percentage of Total Population in Mason County
Hispanic/ Latino	1,150	35%	4%
Black or African American	353	11%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	530	16%	1.8%
Asian	193	6%	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	5	.15%	0.01%
Some Other Race	451	14%	1.6%
Two or More Races	547	17%	2%
Total	3,229		11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

INCOME CHANGES IN MASON COUNTY 1999-2010

The median household income in 2010 in Mason County was \$38,776 according to the 2010 Census. This is an increase in \$4,072 from \$34,704 in 1999. Mason County experienced the greatest percent increase (12%) in median household income between 1999 and 2010 compared to adjoining counties. **Table 2-15** details this growth. The highest median income in adjoining counties in 2010 was Newaygo (\$38,846) followed by Mason County (\$38,776). Lake County has the lowest median household income at \$28,526. All 2010 median household incomes for the five adjoining counties fell below the statewide median household income of \$45,354 in 2010, yet saw greater increases than the statewide change of 2% from 2000 to 2010.

Table 2-15
Median Household Income in Mason County, 1999-2010

County	1999 Median Household Income	2010 Median Household Income	Change in Median Household Income 1999-2010	% Change in Median Household Income 1999-2010
Mason	\$34,704	\$38,776	\$4,072	12%
Manistee	\$34,208	\$37,479	\$3,271	10%
Lake	\$26,622	\$28,526	\$1,904	7%
Newaygo	\$37,130	\$38,846	\$1,716	5%
Oceana	\$35,307	\$37,629	\$2,322	7%
Michigan	\$44,667	\$45,354	\$687	2%
Five County Total - Average	\$33,594	\$36,251	\$2657	8%

Source: County Health, Population Health Institute

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Five County Total - Average	\$33,594	\$36,251	\$2657	8%

Source: County Health, Population Health Institute

Chapter 3

ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses unemployment, the labor force, and other economic characteristics of Mason County. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG), and other sources were used in this study. This information also includes brief discussions of planning implications supporting their inclusion.

EMPLOYMENT

The available labor force in a community can be a crucial determinant in the decision-making process for business attraction and retention. The labor force is defined as “all persons employed or unemployed who are able to work”. Mason County experienced a 1.5% decrease in labor force between 2000 and 2010, in contrast to a 23% increase between 1990 and 2000 (**see Table 3-1**). The number of those employed fell by 9% (1,238 persons) from 2000 to 2010, while the number of unemployed people rose from 711 in 2000 to 1,796 in 2010, a 153% increase. The jobless rate for Mason County in 2010 was 12.3%. This rate was less than the statewide unemployment rate of 14% as of August 2010, according to the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth.

Table 3-1
Annual Average Employment Trends in Mason County 1990-2010

Status	1990	2000	2010	% Change	
				1990-2000	2000-2010
Labor Force	12,199	14,792	14,576	21%	-1.5%
Employed	11,185	14,018	12,780	25%	-9%
Unemployed	1,014	711	1,796	-30%	153%
Jobless Rate	8.3%	4.8%	12.3%	-42%	156%

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

*The data source used for this table was the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), which produces monthly estimates of labor force, total employment, and unemployment for Michigan, metropolitan areas, counties, and major cities.

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

MASON AND ADJOINING COUNTIES EMPLOYMENT

Table 3-2 illustrates the total employed persons between 2000 and 2010 for Mason and its four surrounding counties. According to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget, Mason County had the second greatest (14,018) number of persons employed in 2000 and in 2010 (12,780) within the five county area. Newaygo County had the greatest number of persons employed in 2000 and 2010 (21,988 and 18,692 respectively).

The number of employed persons decreased in the ten year period from 2000 to 2010. Lake County experienced the greatest decrease in employment at -21% (869 persons). Newaygo County had the greatest net loss in employment with 3,296 persons. Overall, the five-county region experienced an 11% decrease in employment between 2000 and 2010, equivalent to a total of 7,500 employed individuals.

Table 3-2
Mason and Adjoining Counties, Annual Average Employment 2000-2010

Region	2000 Employed*	2010 Employed*	Change 2000-2010	
			Total	%
State				
Michigan	4,953,000	4,147,000	-806,000	-16%
County				
Mason	14,018	12,780	-1,238	-9%
Lake	4,205	3,336	-869	-21%
Manistee	11,200	9,756	-1,444	-13%
Newaygo	21,988	18,692	-3,296	-15%
Oceana	12,443	11,781	-662	-5%
Five County Total	63,845	56,345	-7,500	-11%

* Not seasonally adjusted

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

*The data source used for this table was the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), which produces monthly estimates of labor force, total employment, and unemployment for Michigan, metropolitan areas, counties, and major cities.

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

MASON COUNTY ECONOMIC BASE

Mason County's economic base is very diversified, with a major contributing sector being the manufacturing industry, which employs 1,813 persons and 14% of the labor force as of 2010 (**See Table 3-3**). The county's retail trade industry follows with 1,400 persons making up 11% of the total. The third largest contributor to the economic base in Mason County is the health care and social assistance field which employs 1,250 persons and makes up 9.8% of the total in 2010.

The major changes in employment distribution between 2000 and 2010 for Mason County are highlighted by the dramatic increases in the administrative and waste services sector with a 77% increase and the real estate and rental leasing sector with a 49% increase. Other sectors that saw increases between 2000 and 2010 were professional and technical services (40%), health care and social assistance (29%), finance and insurance (18%), and wholesale trade (14.5%). Sectors that experienced decreases during the 10 year period were arts, entertainment, and recreation (-44%), construction (-36%), manufacturing (-36%), accommodation and food service (-31%), retail trade (-30%), and agriculture and forestry (-13%). Sectors that remained fairly consistent over a 10 year period were information (3.3%), utilities (3%), transportation and warehousing (1.8%), and the category of other services (-0.9%). Overall there was a -17.8% change between 2000 and 2010 in total private sector employment. It should be noted that there was a net amount increase of 15 in the sector of educational services, though this increase is not quantifiable by a percent. The distribution of private employment sectors can be viewed in **Figure 3-1**.

Table 3-3
Private Sector Employment Distribution in Mason County, 2000-2010

Industry (Private Sector)	Total Employed 2000	Percent	Total Employed 2010	Percent	Percent change
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	163	1.7%	141	1.8%	-13%
Utilities	89	.9%	92	1.2%	3%
Construction	490	5%	312	4.1%	-36%
Manufacturing	2,863	31%	1,823	24%	-36%
Wholesale Trade	131	1.4%	150	1.9%	14.5%
Retail Trade	1,859	20%	1,297	17%	-30%
Transportation and Warehousing	265	2.8%	270	3.5%	1.8%
Information	120	1.3%	124	.16%	3.3%
Finance and Insurance	268	2.9%	219	2.8%	-18%
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	75	.8%	112	1.4%	49%
Professional and Technical Services	243	2.6%	145	1.9%	-40%
Administrative Support/Waste Management	182	1.9%	323	4.2%	77%
Private Education Services	0	0	20	.26%	
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,008	10.9%	1,302	17%	29%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	128	1.3%	71	.9%	-44.5%
Accommodation and Food Service	1,017	11%	701	9.2%	-31%
Other services	315	3.4%	312	4.1%	-0.9%
Total private sector employment	9,224	100%	7,582	100%	-17.8%

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

*The data source used for this table was the Industry Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW-ES202).

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

Changes in agricultural industries include a significant decline in persons employed in crop production between 2000 and 2012, from 128 persons in 2000 to 60 in 2012. According to Table 3-4, the animal production employment sector grew from 0 in 2000 to 61 in 2012. Average weekly wages for both crop production and animal production had slight increases between 2000 and 2012, totaling \$372.00 per week for crop production and \$303.00 per week for animal production in 2012. The number of crop production facilities has remained steady between 2000 and 2012, and the number of animal production facilities has grown from 0 in 2000 to 8 in 2012.

Table 3-4
Farming and Agriculture Employment in Mason County, 2012

Type of Agricultural Industry	Total Employed			Average Weekly Wages			Number of Establishments		
	2000	2005	2012	2000	2005	2012	2000	2005	2012
Crop Production	128	124	60	\$284.00	\$318.00	\$372.00	16	16	15
Animal Production	0	26	61	\$0.00	\$175.00	\$303.00	0	3	8

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

*The data source used for this table was the Industry Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW-ES202).

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

Of public sector employment (**Table 3-5**), the local branch accounted for more than 92% of total public sector employment. The federal branch (4.4%) and state branch (2.7%) followed. As of 2010, there were 1,827 persons employed in the public sector in Mason County. The data source (Industry Census of Employment Wages) prepared by the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget did not specify which employment branches were included in the public employment sector.

Table 3-5
Public Sector Employment, Mason County, 2010

Public Sector	Total Employed 2010	Percent
Federal	82	4.4%
State	50	2.7%
Local	1,695	92.7%
Total public sector employment	1,827	100%

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

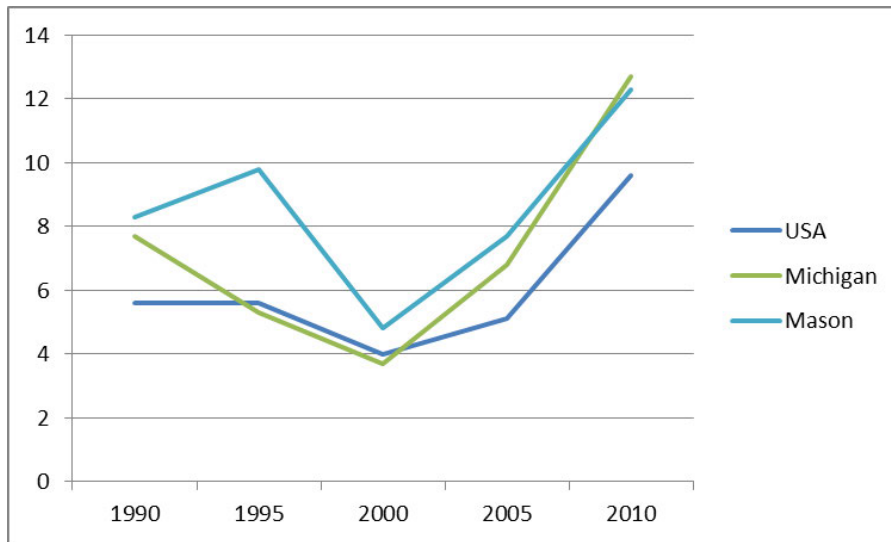
*The data source used for this table was the Industry Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW-ES202).

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

UNEMPLOYMENT

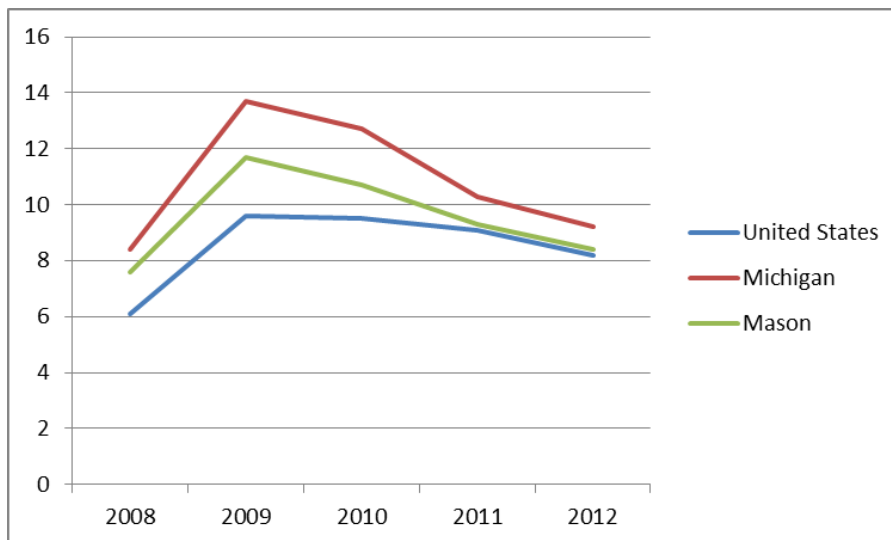
Unemployment fluctuated considerably between 1990 and 2010 in Mason County (**see Figure 3-2**) at a rate comparable to national and statewide averages, though Mason County did have slightly higher unemployment rates than statewide and national averages. More recent regional unemployment numbers from August 2008 to August 2012 (**See Figure 3-3**) reflect the nationwide recession and economic crisis which peaked in 2009. The unemployment rate in Mason County jumped from 4.8% in 2000 to 12.3% in 2010, and has since dropped to 8.4% as of August 2012.

Figure 3-2
Regional, State, and National Unemployment Rates 1990-2010



Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

Figure 3-3
Regional, State, and National Unemployment Rates 2008-2012



Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT

It is important to note that regions with seasonal economic activities such as Mason and adjoining counties are uniquely challenged to maintain a healthy local market throughout the year. Mason's economy is largely tied to its natural features and attractions, and tourism plays a major role in its economy with features such as lodging and restaurants playing a role in both the local and regional economy. Economies based on tourism are highly susceptible to fluctuations in the broader national market.

The unemployment rates for Mason County and four adjoining counties from 1990 to 2010 can be viewed in **Table 3-6** and more recently from 2008 to 2012 in **Table 3-7**. Unemployment rates dropped significantly from 1990 to 2000 within the five county area including Mason County, with an average decrease of 47%. Rates peaked in August of 2009 with an average unemployment rate 12.5%. Since then, unemployment rates have somewhat stabilized at an average of 9% as of August 2012 for Mason and adjoining counties. As of 2012, Mason has the second lowest unemployment rate at (8.4%) compared to adjoining counties. Newaygo County has the lowest unemployment rate at 7.7%, and it was the only county where the unemployment rate decreased (-13.5%) from August 2008 to August 2012. Lake County has had the highest unemployment rate since 2008, yet the least change (5%) in the four year period from August 2008 to August 2012, indicating that recovery has been slow. The average unemployment rate for Mason and adjoining counties is 9%, with an 8.4% increase since 2008. The average falls just short of the statewide 9.2% unemployment rate and just above the national 8.2% rate as of August 2012.

The drop in the unemployment in Mason and adjoining counties illustrates a positive overall growth in the economy of the region as a whole since recession figures. Job retention and creation will be crucial issues over the next several years.

Table 3-6
Unemployment for Mason and Adjoining Counties, 1990-2010

Region	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2010
Nation							
USA	5.6	5.6	4.0	5.1	9.6	-29%	140%
State							
Michigan	7.7	5.3	3.7	6.8	12.7	-52%	243%
County							
Mason	8.3	9.8	4.8	7.7	12.3	-42%	156%
Lake	12.0	13.0	5.7	10.2	16.0	-53%	181%
Manistee	10.7	11.6	5.3	7.8	12.8	-51%	142%
Newaygo	9.6	9.9	4.6	7.4	12.7	-52%	176%
Oceana	10.9	11.3	5.9	8.0	15.0	-46%	154%
Average	9.3	9.5	4.9	7.6	13.0	-47%	165%

Unemployment rate not seasonally adjusted

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

The data source used for this table was the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), which produces monthly estimates of labor force, total employment, and unemployment for Michigan, metropolitan areas, counties, and major cities.

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

Table 3-7
Unemployment Rate for Mason and Surrounding Counties, August 2008- August 2012

Region	August 2008	August 2009	August 2010	August 2011	August 2012	% Change 2008-2012
Nation						
USA	6.1	9.6	9.5	9.1	8.2	34%
State						
Michigan	8.4	13.7	12.7	10.3	9.2	9.5%
County						
Mason	7.6	11.7	10.7	9.3	8.4	10.5%
Lake	10.8	15.1	14.9	11.9	11.3	5%
Manistee	8.0	11.3	11.3	10.0	9.1	14%
Newaygo	8.9	13.3	12.1	9.2	7.7	-13.5%
Oceana	8.6	13.1	12.5	10.3	9.4	12%
Average	8.3	12.5	12.0	10.0	9.0	8.4%

Unemployment rate not seasonally adjusted

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

The data source used for this table was the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), which produces monthly estimates of labor force, total employment, and unemployment for Michigan, metropolitan areas, counties, and major cities.

Source: <http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis>

MAJOR EMPLOYERS AND TOP EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Major employers within Mason County are detailed in **Table 3-8**. The majority of major companies with over 50 employers are within the City of Ludington. Memorial Medical Center of Ludington is the largest employer with a range of 500-999 employees. West Shore Community College (100-249 employees) is the largest employer outside of the City of Ludington. Based on **Figure 3-4**, the largest employment sector for Mason County is manufacturing, comprising roughly 16% of total employment, with education (9%) and accommodation/food service (6%) following.

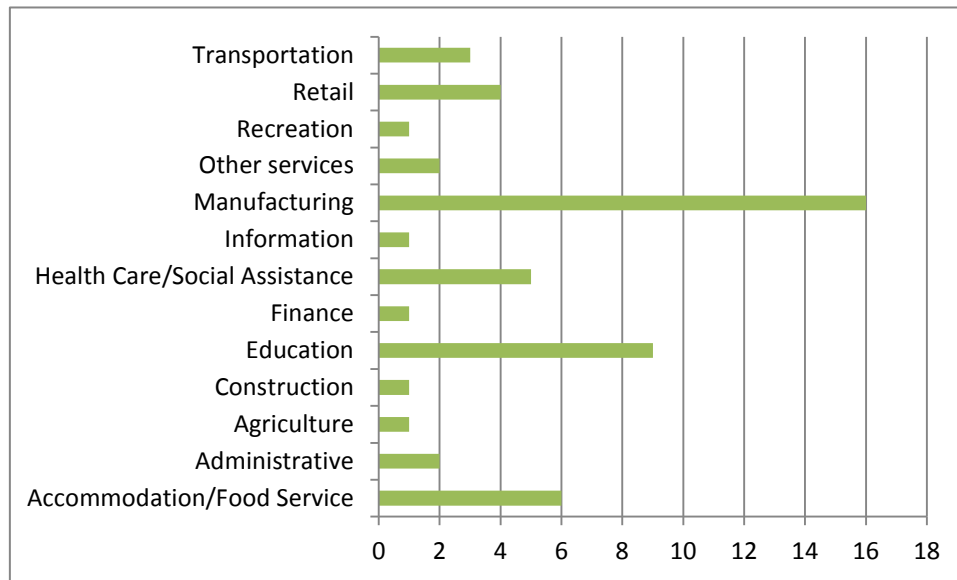
Table 3-8
Major Employers in Mason County, 2012

TOP EMPLOYERS IN MASON COUNTY		
50-99 Employees	100-249 Employees	250-499 Employees
Hardman Construction, Ludington	Floracraft Corp, Ludington	Dow Chemical Co., Ludington
Kaines West Michigan, Ludington	Great Lakes Casting Co., Ludington	Metalworks Inc., Ludington
Brill Manufacturing Co., Ludington	Indian Summer Co-Op, Ludington	Harsco Rail, Ludington
Shop N' Save, Ludington	Home Depot, Ludington	Meijer, Ludington
Manistee National Golf and Resort, Manistee	Lowe's Home Improvement, Ludington	Ludington Area School District, Ludington
S.S. Badger, Lake Michigan Car Ferry, Ludington	Walmart, Ludington	500-999 Employees
Applebee's Neighborhood Grill, Ludington	Needlefast Evergreens, Ludington	Spectrum Health Ludington Hospital
Big Boy, Ludington	Mason/ Lake Intermediate School District, Ludington	
P M Steamers Restaurant, Ludington	West Shore Community College, Scottville	
Scotty's Restaurant, Ludington	West Michigan Community Mental Health, Ludington	
McDonald's, Ludington	Oakview Medical Care Facility, Ludington,	
Ludington City Hall, Ludington	Tendercare, Ludington	
Mason County Jail/Sheriff, Ludington		
Mason County, Ludington		

Source: Michigan Department of Management, Technology, and Budget

Source: <http://milmi.org/aspdotnet/databrowsing>

Figure 3-4
Major Employment Sectors in Mason County, 2008



Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Source: <http://ref.michigan.org/medc/miinfo/places/MasonCounty/?section=economy>

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCIAL BUSINESS

Of the 826 industrial and commercial businesses within Mason County, the retail trade sector had the greatest number of establishments in 2004 (151). **Table 3-9** lists other sectors with the greatest number of establishments including health care and health assistance (101), construction trades (97), accommodation and food service (88), and other services (except public administration) (88).

Table 3-9
Types of Businesses within Mason County, 2004

Industry	2004 Total
<i>Total</i>	826
Retail trade	151
Health Care and Social Assistance	101
Construction	97
Accommodation and Food Services	88
Other services (except public administration)	88
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	51
Finance & Insurance	44
Manufacturing	42
Waste Management and Remediation Services	32
Real estate and Rental Leasing	30
Transportation and Warehousing	23
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	18
Information	17
Wholesale trade	16

Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Source: <http://ref.michigan.org/medc/miinfo/places/MasonCounty>

TRAVEL TIME AND COMMUTING PATTERNS

The length of time it takes for one to travel to work can be used as an indicator of traffic congestion and can be used to gauge the degree to which a community is a “bedroom” community where most citizens commute a significant distance to work, or an employment center.

TOURISM

In addition to manufacturing, education, and government service, tourism is an important economic sector in Mason County. Tourism is loosely related to the employment sectors of entertainment, recreation, and food services. Mason County’s location along Lake Michigan, in addition to inland lakes, rivers, streams, campgrounds, forests, and other attractions provide ideal natural tourism attractions.

Chapter 5

TAX BASE, LAND TYPES, LAND DIVISION AND BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses what has been built on the land and how much it is worth. The discussion includes land use and land cover in the County, the value of different land uses, and how these have changed in recent years.

STATE EQUALIZED VALUES (SEV) OF PROPERTY

There are two main measures of property value, state equalized value (SEV) and taxable value. State Equalized Value (SEV) is determined by assessing 50% of the property's market value. The basis for SEV is supported in Article IX, Section 3 of the Michigan Constitution, which states that the proportion of true cash value at which property shall be assessed shall not exceed 50%. Property tax values are important indicators of the relative strength of different sectors of the local tax base. The most significant change in Mason County between 2000 and 2010 is an increase in value of residential land. This is evident by comparing the value of property by tax class over time, as illustrated in **Table 5-1** which compares SEV of different tax classes from 2000 to 2010 in Mason County. **Figure 5-1** illustrates the shift in tax class from 2000 to 2010.

The greatest percentage change in the distribution of total SEV for Mason County between 2000 and 2010 was seen in the increase in residential land from 59.5% in 2000 to 67% in 2010. Agriculture (5.5% to 5%) and commercial (9.5% and 9.5%) classes remained largely unchanged during this period. Though industrial property gained value between 2000 and 2010, the industrial tax class makes up less of the total (from 25.5% to 18%) in 2010, likely due to the increase in residential property.

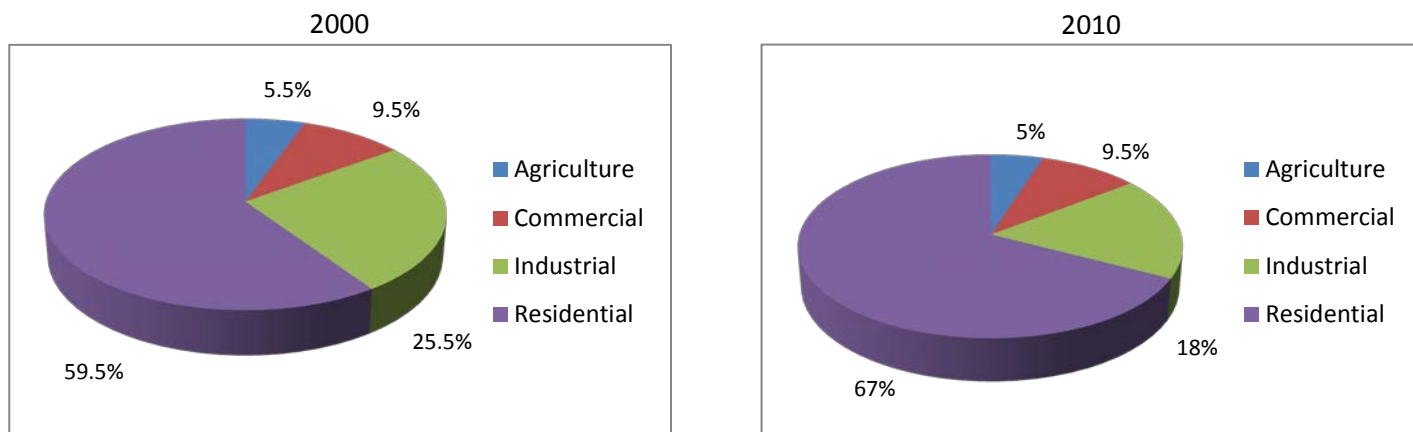
Table 5-1
Tax Classes as Percentages of Total SEV, Mason County

Class	2000 (\$)	% of total	2010 (\$)	% of total	Total Change	% change
Agriculture	56,454,600	5.5%	92,487,600	5%	36,033,000	64%
Commercial	97,404,100	9.5%	178,939,900	9.5%	81,535,800	84%
Industrial	263,737,240	25.5%	338,111,800	18%	74,374,560	28%
Residential	614,366,300	59.5%	1,259,828,885	67%	645,462,585	105%
Total	1,031,962,240	100%	1,869,368,185	100%	837,405,945	81%

Source: Michigan Department of Treasury, 2010

http://michigan.gov/documents/treasury/2010_SEV_and_TV_Report_338174_7.pdf

Figure 5-1
Percentage of Tax Class



Source: Michigan Department of Treasury, 2000 and 2010

INDIVIDUAL JURISDICTIONS

Among individual jurisdictions in Mason County, the greatest increase in tax class values between 2000 and 2010 was seen in Amber Township for agriculture (61%), Grant Township for residential (48%), Summit Township for commercial (120%) and the village of Scottville for industrial (306%). **Table 5-2** lists these changes.

Among individual jurisdictions in Mason County the greatest amount of agricultural land value in 2011 was in Riverton Township. Valued at over \$23 million, Riverton's agricultural land value makes up 16% of the total agricultural land value in Mason County. Three jurisdictions saw a decrease in their agricultural land values, Branch Township (-39%), Hamlin Township (-98%), and Pere Marquette (-59%). County-wide, agricultural land values decreased -27% between 2004 and 2010.

The City of Ludington has the greatest residential tax class land value at \$187 million, making up 15% of the total. All jurisdictions saw an increase in residential land value from 2000 to 2011, the greatest being Grant Township, whose residential land value grew 48% from \$46.7 million to \$69.2 million. The county total of residential land values increased 23% from 2004 to 2010.

Summit Township saw the greatest commercial land value growth from 2000 to 2010, a 120% increase from \$1.2 million to \$2.7 million. Most jurisdictions saw minimal growth in commercial land values during this period. Custer (-21%), Free Soil (-1%), Hamlin (-8%), and Logan (-4%) townships all experienced a decrease in commercial land values from 2004 to 2010. Overall the county experienced a 14% increase in commercial land values during this period.

There were several missing figures for individual jurisdiction's industrial property values; however the City of Scottville was recorded as having the greatest increase in industrial land values from \$900,000 to \$3.7 million, a 306% increase from 2004 to 2010. The township of Amber (-14%) had a drop in value during this time. For all of Mason County, industrial property values rose 25% from 2004 to 2010.

Village totals are included in township totals.

Table 5-2
SEV by Tax Class by Jurisdiction in Mason County, 2004 and 2011

Area	Agriculture			Residential			Commercial			Industrial		
	2004 (\$)	2011 (\$)	% Change	2004 (\$)	2011 (\$)	% Change	2004 (\$)	2011 (\$)	% Change	2004 (\$)	2011 (\$)	% Change
City												
Ludington	2,359,500		-100%	167,561,000	187,187,300	12%	48,321,900	54,745,500	13%	12,555,700	13,107,200	4%
Scottville			0%	16,096,500	14,467,100	-10%	3,599,000	3,648,000	1%	930,000	3,778,500	306%
Amber	2,537,500	4,082,400	61%	56,875,300	61,454,900	8%	34,137,500	40,321,900	18%	1,999,600	1,717,600	-14%
Branch	3,378,700	2,056,400	-39%	48,632,700	55,717,600	15%	2,288,222	2,294,600	0%			0%
Custer	8,475,900	10,442,200	23%	29,468,100	31,794,700	8%	1,607,300	1,268,700	-21%			0%
Eden	7,540,700	9,117,500	21%	20,552,100	29,129,000	42%			0%			0%
Free Soil	3,871,300	4,459,500	15%	35,018,900	35,097,550	0%	534,400	528,700	-1%			0%
Grant	2,104,900	2,388,500	13%	46,751,000	69,213,800	48%	733,700	873,500	19%	834,000	1,279,300	53%
Hamlin	37,759,300	901,300	-98%	186,921,400	214,297,600	15%	14,488,900	13,365,100	-8%	447,500	495,500	11%
Logan	2,057,100	2,663,100	29%	24,227,100	32,584,500	34%	539,900	517,000	-4%			0%
Meade	870,600		-100%	18,025,000	20,798,500	15%			0%			0%
Pere Marquette	8,946,800	3,625,000	-59%	98,908,700	142,305,200	44%	46,229,900	42,229,900	-21%	190,791,900	244,773,600	28%
Riverton	20,046,400	23,303,200	16%	20,792,000	30,491,200	47%			0%	1,372,100	1,599,300	17%
Sheridan	3,123,800	3,486,100	12%	47,645,500	63,188,700	33%			0%			0%
Sherman	4,945,100	5,912,100	20%	33,697,300	36,271,600	8%	1,585,400	1,585,400	9%	310,600	323,900	4%
Summit	5,359,800	6,861,000	28%	83,808,200	121,442,400	45%	2,707,600	2,707,600	0%	56,953,700	65,480,800	15%
Victory	9,644,100	10,374,100	8%	35,892,600	47,963,600	34%	1,525,100	1,525,700	0%			0%
County Total	123,021,500	89,672,400	-27%	970,873,600	1,193,405,250	23%	148,143,222	169,611,000	14%	266,195,100	332,555,700	25%

Source: Michigan Department of Treasury
http://www.michigan.gov/treasury/0,4679,7-121-1751_2228_21957_45818-257634--,00.htm

Introduction and Overview

The Mason County is in the process of preparing an update to the County Master Plan to guide growth and development within the community. The County is committed to meaningful citizen input and, as a result, sponsored a community visioning workshop on October 11, 2012. This was a general community meeting intended to give those in attendance an opportunity to learn more about the demographic, land use, infrastructure and traffic impacts and trends facing the County. In addition, the meeting included a nominal group process intended to aid participants in identifying and prioritizing the factors that may impact the quality of life in the County in the next twenty to twenty-five years.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the process of that meeting and its results. In addition, this report places the output from the futuring meeting in the broader context of the Master Plan process.

The Futuring Activity

The futuring activity was conducted in a 2½-hour session. The objective of the activity was to develop a general consensus among the participants as to the likely result of a continuation of the current trends in growth and development in Mason County. In addition, the process will assist the Planning Commission and County Commission in articulating the values of the residents of the community. Both of these activities will be critically important to the later phases of the plan preparation process.

The session was structured to give each participant an opportunity to assist in the effort to build a community consensus regarding growth and development. To encourage residents to take part, the session was scheduled for a weeknight (Thursday) evening, and it was held at the Ramada Inn. The meeting was conducted in an informal manner to foster participation.

The Futuring Process. Invitations to participate in the sessions were provided to numerous members of the community. In addition, news stories were provided to the media and flyers were distributed throughout the community inviting participation.

The meeting was directed by Williams & Works and community representatives. The atmosphere of the meeting was open and informal although the meeting followed an established format to assure a useful outcome. Planning professionals from Williams & Works helped to guide the discussion. Participants received their hand-out materials as they entered the room indicating the following agenda and activities.

1. Welcome and overview

The Zoning Director welcomed the more than seventy participants and introduced the consulting team. The consultants from Williams & Works provided a brief introduction to the process and an overview explanation of how the results of the activity will be incorporated into the Master Plan process.

2. Land Use Images

In this activity, a series of slides were shown depicting land use conditions common in communities like Mason County. Each participant used a sheet of paper to note their impressions

of the scenes. When all of the slides were shown, Williams & Works led a general discussion of the images and the land use issues they illustrate.

3. **Futuring Exercise**

In this activity, the group was divided into seven smaller groups of 10 persons to identify the County's assets and the big ideas for the County to pursue.

Members of each group first individually listed the assets that may impact their "vision" of the future of the community and then the big ideas they hoped could be realized. Each person then shared his/her list with other group members and a group list that included everybody's ideas was developed. The group members then ranked the list in order to identify the most important assets and the most important big ideas. Each participant was given two colored stickers and told to use them to rank the listing of opportunities and results:

Blue = Top Priority

Red = Second Priority

Green = Third Priority

Using this system, it was possible to identify through a simple sum of the responses those assets and big ideas of highest priority.

4. **Vision Statement**

Each group was asked to prepare a vision statement for the County using the top ranking priorities.

5. **Report to Larger Group**

Once the top rankings were established, each group selected one member to present the results of the group's activities to the larger group.

Futuring Output

The futuring workshop on October 11, 2012 included over 70 participants. The quality of the discussion and the energy contributed by all participants was exceptional.

The tables on the following pages include the “Assets and Big Ideas” input from the futuring session. Each item has been categorized into broad planning issues. These categories are:

- ☐ Trails/Recreation
- ☐ Economy/Economic Development/Technology/Agriculture
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Quality of Life

It is appropriate to group the opportunities and results statements into similar categories since the three identified over 100 such statements in the exercise. The above grouping is intentionally general in scope. In addition, in some instances, the placement of statements in one category as opposed another is a matter of judgment and other groupings are possible. However, by combining the statements into similar groupings, it is possible to begin to make some generalizations about the opinions of the participants.

The list and tables on the following pages indicate the output of the entire process by these categories. In each case, the “assets” or “big ideas” are listed essentially as the group developed it. The statements are presented in rank order by group. The raw scores given to each statement are provided only to give a sense of the priority assigned by that group. Raw scores were generated by assigning a numerical score of 5 for each blue sticker, 3 for each red sticker and 1 for each green sticker. Of course, this is entirely arbitrary and is useful only to generate an overall group ranking, it does has no meaning in terms of the how individuals might perceive the relative importance of one statement over another.

KEY THEMES

Trails/Recreation

Assets

North Country Trail
State Parks
Non-motorized Trails
Lighthouses
ORV
Lake Michigan
Dog park
PM river

Big Ideas

Expand recreation opportunities, cross market community recreation assets
County-wide recreation department
Canoe race

Economy/Economic Development/Technology/Agriculture

Assets

Vineyards
Cider mill
Local foods
U-pick
Deep sea port
Badger

Big Ideas

Enhanced promotion including at community gateways
Provide business incubator
Expansion of food processing, work with regional economic development corporation
Wi-fi, broadband
Enhanced tourism/agri-tourism, including tourism surrounding green energy
Research, develop, and prioritize green energy plan for the future
Limit turbines, modify standards for height/setback/number

Transportation

Assets

Regional transportation

Local transportation

Badger

Rail

Confluence of US-10/US-31

Ideas

Create port authority

Provide regional/local transportation

Bike lanes

Increase connectivity of recreation areas, housing, retail/commercial anchors and schools

Education

Assets

WSCC

Schools

Youth

WSCC collaboration, regional development center

Expand vocational training

Quality of Life

Assets

Hospital

Cooperative and considerate community

Big Ideas

Affordable housing

Retirement housing

Land Bank authority

Housing at WSCC

VISION STATEMENTS

Mason County will have developed an energy plan that will enhance and compliment the county and its citizens.

Mason County will be known as the area where involved citizenry has thorough, conscientious research, and allowed the best in energy development to the betterment of its citizens with full consciousness of its neighbors.

Mason County will be defined by the county's commitment to agriculture, building upon existing and future commercial and value added retail products.

Mason County will be known for its extensive non-motorized trails, access to public transportation and their protection of water resources, leading to increased population growth and visitors to the area.

Mason County will be a pro-business community centered around technology, agriculture, health care and education that will promote a strong and vibrant family oriented community.

Mason County will be known for its extensive non-motorized trails and access to public transportation. These amenities have attracted growth and visitors.

Mason County will not loose sight of protecting its water resources for future generations.

Mason County will be a destination for connected scenic recreational opportunities promoting health, safety, and economic benefits.

Mason County will be known as a place that has a broad economic base and high quality of life while preserving its natural resources.



Compiled Input from Visioning Meeting (Raw Data)

Group	Subject	# of Points	Comment
#1	Assets		Lk. Michigan Lakeshore/Beaches Inland Lakes Rivers Federal & State Land Ludington State Park Trails Ludington School Forest Schools (LAS/MCC/MCE) WSCC Small Towns Art Center Fairgrounds Restaurants Hospital US-31/US-10 Railroad Water & Sewer Chamber of Commerce County Government Twp. ORV Ordinances Industry/Manufacturing Youth Sports & Programs Safe Communities Deep Water Harbor/Marinas Small Home-Based Businesses Young Business Owners Appealing Downtowns Agriculture Tourism S.S. Badger
	Big Ideas		
		27	Countywide Public Transportation
		24	Increased Trail (Recreational) - Non-Motorized
		23	Protection of Water Resources
		18	Agri - Tourism, i.e., Cider Mills
		16	Collaboration on Land Use to be More Business Friendly
		13	Participate in/adopt Complete Streets
		12	Indoor Soccer & Horse Show Arena
		12	Moratorium on Windmills to ID Safe Setbacks
		10	Gov't Service Consolidation
		9	Broadband - Countywide
		8	Save the Badger
		2	ORV Trails (Motorized) Snowmobile
			School Consolidation
			Housing @ WSCC

#2	Assets	28	Agriculture
		18	Deep Water Harbor
		14	Lakeshore
		12	Mixed Industry
		9	Rivers
		8	Car Ferry
		8	Arts Community
		6	Year Round Entertainment
		5	Disc Golf (6)
		4	Autumn Olive
		3	Diverse Agricultural
		3	Inland Lakes
		3	Freeway Terminates - LUD
		2	Medic a Campus
		2	State Parks
		2	Power Plant
		1	Fair Grounds
		1	Temperate Climate
			Utility Row
			Snow Most Winters
			Cold Lake Michigan H2O
			Airport
	Big Ideas	10	Regional Health Provider
		6	Tourist, Commercial Shipping
		1	Vineyards
		1	Destination Shopping
			Snow Mobiling
			x-country Skiing Agricultural Areas
			Community Involvement in Tournaments
			Agri-tourism
			Aqua-farming
			Commodity
			Diverse Manufacturing
			Access
			Green House, District Heating
			Fruit Crop, Wood Pellet
Agriculture			Agritourism
			Commodities
			Vineyards
			Local Food Fairs
			Aquaculture
			Processing - Fruit, Dairy

#3	Assets	6	Trails - Quiet Sports, North Country National Scenic Trail
		5	Natural Beauty
		5	State Parks
		4	Lighthouses
		4	Arts - Growing (LACA)
		1	Inland Lakes
		1	Stearns Beach - Access
		1	Senior Center
			Lake Michigan - Fishing, Rec Opps
			Car Ferry
			Agriculture
			Wind & Water Power (Hydro)
			9(?) Miles Protected Beach
			Waterfront Park
			WSCC
			Industry
			Small Business
			Hospital - Medical Services
			White Pine Village
			Downtown Activities
	Big Ideas	31	Connect Trails - Bikes, Walkers, Motorized
		14	Better Co-Wide Communication
		10	"Starting Block" - Shared Assets for Small Businesses
		9	Agri - Tourism
		9	Better Publicity for our Assets
		9	More Attractive Entrances to Town
		8	Senior Housing - Affordable, Access to Services
		8	Business Center - Remote Business Facility
		6	Adult Day Care
		6	Brochures: Walking Tours (History, Nat Features), Nearby Trails
		3	More Transportation Services - Air, Public, Pedestrian
		3	Museums/Historical Resources (Maritime Museum)
		1	More Legal Dog Access to Beach
			Barn Tour
			Corn Mazes
			You - Pick

#4	Assets		Ag Base LPS LWEF Hospital/Health Care Education - INSCC Stable Manf. Base Highways Volunteerism Philanthropic Attitude Steams Park / State Park Natural Resources Recreation Ops Advanced Tech Infra Youth Focus Environment Decreased Poverty
	Big Ideas	27 20 17 10 10 6 4 3 2 2 1	Pro Business Expand Food Processing Health Care Mergers (Hospitals) Tech Savvy Focus WSCC-> Programs to Erode Poverty Better Roads State's "Greenest" County WS University->More Services Transit System Educational Enhancement / Centralization Reform Tax Structure Airport - Business Park / Community Keep/Enhance Badger

#5	Assets	17	Seaport / Badger, Rail Service, US-31/US-10
		10	Recreation -
		9	Activates for Kids
		8	Good Farmland / Good Farmers
		5	Beach!
		4	WSCC
		1	Schools
			Lakes, Woods
			State Parks
			PM River
			Bike Lane to State Park
			<u>Youth</u>
			Scottville Riverside Park
			Farmers Markets (Scot & Lud)
			Co-op in Scottville
			West Shore Bank
			Collaboration w/ Local Farmers
			Youth, Like to See? Here!
			Expressway - Badger
			Nice Libraries
			Center for the Arts
			Unique Restaurants
			Township / Active Govt.
			Hospital
			Sports Complex
			Michigan Great Outdoors
	Big Ideas	16	Broaden Economic Base ->
		13	Value added Agricultural Produces
		10	Port Authority
		7	Expand Recreation Opportunities (Hiking, Biking, Trails, Boating, etc.)
		6	Leave Green Space/Pocket Parks
		5	Solving Homelessness
		4	Walkway/Bikeway Between
		4	Providing Training/Skill Education for Jobs Here (WSCC)
		3	More Inclusion of Youth
		3	County-Wide Recreation Dept.
		1	Accessible Public Transportation - County-Wide/Aging Population
			Airport
			Expressway
			Rail
			Deep-Sea Port
			Pro-Active Economic dev. ->
			Focus on Small Business Support
			-Scottville & Ludington
			-Signage/Safe Routes

#6	Assets	15	Schools/College
		13	Agriculture
		11	Lake Shore
		11	Mem. Med. Center
		10	(Rivers/Lakes/Forests)
		8	Communities Collaboration
		5	Natural Assets
		5	Badger
		3	Hwy's - 10/31
		3	Vacant Land
		2	Tourism
			Diverse Population
			Water/Sewer Infra.
	Big Ideas	19	Protect /Promote
		16	Grow Mem. Med. Center
		12	At End of Xway - Make us a Destination
		12	WSCC - Regional Development Center
		9	Promote Agri/Tourism
			Make Available

#7	Assets	23	Active & Involved Citizens
		11	Camp Ground Study - Do We Have Enough?
		10	Lake Michigan/Beaches
		10	Farming
		7	PM River
		5	Views
		3	Fishing
		2	Beaches
		2	Community Co Operating
		1	Golf Courses
		1	Night Sky
		1	Wildlife
			V. Good Schools
			Hospitals/Medical Care
	Big Ideas	58	Limit Wind Turbines / Limit Height / Set Back
		29	Research & Prioritize Energy Plan for Future:
		10	Agri - Tourism
		3	Big Canoe Race
		1	Retirement Housing
		1	Co-operating & Considerate Community
			Fremont Digester
			What Does it Look Like
			Planned Enforcement
			Equitable Solutions

MASON COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Combined on-line and mail-in results

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

The following questions will help the Planning Commission better understand how the opinions of County residents vary across the community.

1. In which community do you live?

1.9% Grant Township	8.2% Amber Township
0.4% Freesoil Township	2.6% Scottville, City
0.2% Freesoil, Village	2.2% Custer Township
0.7% Meade Township	0.2% Custer, Village
16.5% Hamlin Township	5.5% Branch Township
4.2% Victory Township	4.7% Summit Township
0.0% Fountain, Village	6.4% Riverton Township
5.0% Sheridan Township	0.9% Eden Township
20.5% Ludington, City	0.4% Logan Township
9.6% Pere Marq. Township	2.5% Sherman Township
2.1% Unsure or Don't know	4.0% Outside of Mason Cnty

2. How many persons are in your household?

a avg 2.07 Adults (18+ yrs) b avg 1.2 Children (0-17 yrs)

3. What is your approximate age and that of the other principal adult (if any) in the household?

	a Your age	b Other adult
18-25 years	1.1%	2.6%
26-35 years	6.9%	6.6%
36-45 years	12.9%	12.0%
46-55 years	22.1%	17.0%
56-65 years	32.2%	24.7%
66 years and over	23.1%	16.7%

4. Do you own or rent your home?

1 92% Own 2 4.8% Rent

5. About how long have you lived in your current home?

Avg 19 Years

6. In the next five years, do you expect to move out of Mason County?

1 5.4% Yes 2 74.5% No 3 16.5% Don't know

7. How do you get news pertaining to Mason County planning and zoning issues?

5 72.6% Newspaper	4 10.4% TV	3 26.8% Internet	2 13.2% Radio	1 7.2% County newsletter	0 34.2% Neighbors/friends
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8. Which of the following best describes where you currently live?

1 28.5% Rural Homesite of 5 acres, or more	2 20.0% Rural homesite of less than 5 acres
3 14.5% Lakefront lot	4 32.1% Subdivision or development in a township, city or village

9. What is your employment status and that of any other adult in the household?

	a You	b Other Adult
Employed	62.4%	51.7%
Not currently employed	3.9%	4.7%
Retired	31.3%	24.5%
Stay-at home parent	1.4%	2.9%

10. Where do you work?

	a You	b Other Adult
At Home	8.5%	5.7%
Ludington area	39.0%	30.6%
Scottville area	9.5%	7.4%
Manistee area	2.2%	3.4%
Pentwater area	1.5%	1.1%
Amber Township	1.7%	1.2%
Not employed	19.2%	16.6%
Other (specify)		

11. About how far do you and any other adult in the household travel one-way to work?

a. You 8.9 Miles b. Other adult 10.7 Miles

12. Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?

	a Groceries	b Entertainment	c Medical
Ludington area	90.4%	72.5%	75.7%
Scottville area	3.1%	4.4%	3.4%
Manistee area	4.1%	12.1%	5.7%
Pentwater area	0.7%	5.0%	3.2%
Amber Township	7.1%	4.7%	0.5%
Other (specify)			

13. Do you think Mason County is growing...

1 7.0% too quickly	2 36.1% about right	3 35.1% too slowly	4 18.2% no opinion
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PLANNING AND LAND USE QUESTIONS

The next group of questions ask for your opinions about population growth, land use and planning in Mason County.

14. In the area where you live, how serious do you think the following problems or concerns are:

	Very Serious 3	Somewhat Serious 2	Not Serious 1	No Opinion 0
a Pollution of lakes and streams	25.0%	36.8%	28.2%	2.7%
b Development in open lands and natural areas	18.2%	32.2%	36.1%	5.7%
c Lack of public water/sewer	6.5%	15.1%	60.5%	8.9%
d Loss of scenic views	24.3%	23.6%	41.1%	3.5%
e Over-development of lakefront areas	21.7%	31.7%	32.6%	6.1%
f Conversion of farms into house lots	14.0%	23.3%	45.6%	9.4%
g Lack of public transit	14.6%	26.6%	45.1%	5.9%
h Loss of private property rights	28.1%	23.2%	30.8%	9.7%
i Traffic congestion	7.2%	26.5%	55.2%	3.2%
j Lack of good jobs nearby	45.2%	30.3%	13.0%	3.7%
k Availability of affordable housing	12.0%	32.3%	41.3%	6.6%
l Lack of nearby* shopping	10.4%	22.3%	56.3%	3.4%
m Lack of entertainment and social activities	9.4%	28.2%	50.4%	3.9%
n Poor upkeep of private homes and yards	15.6%	32.6%	40.1%	4.2%
o Lack of trails/bike lanes	16.4%	29.8%	40.4%	5.6%
p Lack of broadband/wi-fi	21.6%	30.1%	34.6%	6.0%
q Wind turbines too close to homes	25.0%	11.1%	44.3%	11.9%
r Other concerns _____				

* "Nearby" is defined as within a 5-mile radius of your home

15. How would you rate efforts to guide and direct growth in your community?

1.2%	25.3%	38.3%	20.8%	7.9%
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion

16. What comes to mind when you hear the word "open space"? (select only one)

20.2%	3.4%	8.1%	0.6%	1.2%
Farmland	Prairies	Woodlands	Wetlands	Open Water
5.5%	54.1%			
Parks	Any undeveloped land			

17. In terms of community priorities, in your opinion, how important are the following?

	Very Important 4	Somewhat Important 3	Not Important 2	Not Important 1	Not Important 0
a Preserving farmlands	35.5%	22.7%	21.3%	5.5%	2.2%
b Supporting working farms	39.3%	24.7%	19.2%	3.5%	2.1%
c Purchasing open space/views	16.9%	15.2%	31.8%	14.0%	9.5%
d Protecting surface water and groundwater	60.9%	16.7%	10.1%	1.0%	0.7%
e Protecting natural areas	53.4%	20.1%	13.1%	1.5%	1.2%
f Establishing and/or expanding pedestrian and bike trails	22.3%	23.0%	22.7%	10.9%	10.7%
g Increasing public access to lakes, rivers and streams	16.7%	24.8%	27.7%	12.6%	8.0%
h Increasing housing opportunity for young families	16.1%	25.1%	34.6%	8.2%	4.9%
i Increasing housing opportunity for seniors	17.0%	26.6%	32.3%	7.9%	5.4%
j Expanding public transit	18.2%	19.7%	26.1%	14.6%	9.2%
k Encouraging development in Ludington, Scottville and the Villages	29.8%	24.0%	22.7%	6.7%	5.2%
l Creating local job opportunities	57.7%	19.6%	8.9%	1.5%	1.9%
m Reducing sprawling patterns of growth	17.1%	17.9%	31.0%	14.4%	7.2%
n Expanding nearby shopping opportunities	15.1%	22.3%	30.1%	14.4%	7.2%
o Fostering the arts and cultural opportunities	19.7%	26.7%	23.0%	11.4%	7.7%
p Encouraging a recycling program	41.8%	20.2%	17.2%	6.6%	3.0%
q Protecting private property rights	50.8%	19.1%	13.1%	3.2%	2.2%
r Other priorities (write in) _____					

18. Of the items listed in question 17 above, please indicate the top three priorities you are willing to pay for through taxes or fees:

8.7% a	26.0% e	8.5% i	4.2% m	25.1% q
5.6% b	15.7% f	18.1% j	6.0% n	
6.0% c	7.4% g	14.0% k	8.6% o	
35.6% d	5.0% h	35.1% l	23.3% p	

19. Please indicate your opinions regarding wind energy:

49.1% I support wind energy in Mason County

20.7% I do not support wind energy in Mason County

16.5% I am concerned that in Mason County...

0.6% the turbines are too close together

1.5% the turbines are too close to homes

8.9% I don't want them in my backyard

10.7% the turbines are too tall

20. What types of commercial/service development should be encouraged in Mason County? (check no more than 2)

26.2% Regional Shopping center	23.6% Restaurants	28.6% Agri-tourism/ tourism
19.1% Specialty Shops	11.0% Neighborhood Convenience stores	14.6% Home-based businesses
30.8% Health Care	7.7% Other _____	5.2% None

21. In the community where you live, what types of commercial development should be encouraged? (check no more than 2)

14.0% Regional Shopping center	19.6% Restaurants	23.3% Agri-tourism/ tourism
16.4% Specialty Shops	17.0% Neighborhood Convenience stores	17.9% Home-based businesses
16.2% Health Care	3.6% Other _____	16.6% None

22. What types of emerging economic development should be encouraged in Mason County? (check no more than 2)

4.9%	28.1%	44.7%	35.2%	
Warehousing	Clean energy	Manufacturing	High-tech	
6.0%	22.5%	27.6%	3.7%	2.2%
Shipping / Logistics	Agribusiness	Medical / health care	Other	None

23. What types of new housing should be encouraged in Mason County? (check no more than 2)

16.6% Single Family (3+ acre lot)	25.1% Single Family (1-3 acre lot)	32.5% Single Family (1/4 – 1 acre lot)
15.0% Single Family (< 1/4 acre lot)	17.0% Apartment/duplex/ or attached condo	24.3% Mixed (housing & commercial)
3.5% Mobile/modular	8.9% None	

24. In the community where you live, what types of new housing should be encouraged? (check no more than 2)

17.2% Single Family (3+ acre lot)	23.6% Single Family (1-3 acre lot)	32.0% Single Family (1/4 - 1 acre lot)
15.6% Single Family (less than 1/4 acre lot)	15.6% Apartment/Duplex or Attached Condo	2.7% Mixed (Housing & Commercial)
3.6% Mobile/Modular	11.1% None	

25. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- a. Keeping new housing spread out on large lots helps to preserve the rural feel of the County.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 18.9%
Strongly Agree | 43.8%
Agree | 14.5%
Disagree | 4.6%
Strongly Disagree | 5.2%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- b. New development should occur only when the needed municipal sewer and water services are available.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 12.9%
Strongly Agree | 28.0%
Agree | 27.2%
Disagree | 12.1%
Strongly Disagree | 6.6%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
- c. This area needs industry to provide higher paying jobs.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 44.2%
Strongly Agree | 30.8%
Agree | 8.1%
Disagree | 1.6%
Strongly Disagree | 3.0%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- d. Strong enforcement is needed to get some messy properties cleaned up.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 28.1%
Strongly Agree | 36.0%
Agree | 14.6%
Disagree | 3.0%
Strongly Disagree | 5.9%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- e. Retaining and attracting talent is important for attracting industry and jobs.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 41.2%
Strongly Agree | 35.5%
Agree | 5.5%
Disagree | 1.5%
Strongly Disagree | 3.7%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- f. Zoning rules are intended to help me make the best use of my property.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 11.5%
Strongly Agree | 34.5%
Agree | 21.8%
Disagree | 13.7%
Strongly Disagree | 6.4%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
- g. I support increased controls on development to protect groundwater and water quality in the rivers, lakes and streams.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 33.1%
Strongly Agree | 43.7%
Agree | 4.0%
Disagree | 1.9%
Strongly Disagree | 3.9%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- h. A land owner (including my neighbor) should be able to do pretty much what he/she wants with his land.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 10.7%
Strongly Agree | 21.8%
Agree | 32.6%
Disagree | 19.5%
Strongly Disagree | 2.9%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
- i. Ensuring the County is "business -friendly."
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 33.1%
Strongly Agree | 43.7%
Agree | 4.0%
Disagree | 1.9%
Strongly Disagree | 3.9%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- j. The County needs programs to prevent the conversion of large tracts of farmland into residential or commercial developments.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 18.5%
Strongly Agree | 28.2%
Agree | 24.0%
Disagree | 9.1%
Strongly Disagree | 7.6%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
- k. I am willing to pay a little higher taxes for government to purchase and protect areas threatened by development.
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 11.4%
Strongly Agree | 28.1%
Agree | 23.0%
Disagree | 15.9%
Strongly Disagree | 9.5%
Don't know |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|

28. Please use the remaining space to write down your ideas and opinions concerning the development of the Mason County area.

18.4% I don't know

12.5%	21.1%	12.4%
Wind	Wind	Other _____
(small scale)	(large scale)	

28. Please use the remaining space to write down your ideas and opinions concerning the development of the Mason County area.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Thanks again for your help!