

BELVIDERE

TOWNSHIP

MASTER

PLAN

April 8, 2008

**BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP
MONTCALM COUNTY
MICHIGAN**

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Prepared By The
**BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

With The Assistance Of
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**Adopted by the Belvidere Township Planning Commission
on
April 8, 2008**

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the Belvidere Township Master Plan and the Master Plan's role, importance, preparation process, and principal policies. It presents the framework for what follows by defining what the Master Plan is and what it is intended to accomplish. Understanding the fundamentals of the Master Plan will enable township residents and officials to appreciate the role it plays in ensuring the future welfare of the community, its residents and its resources. Embracing this Plan as a vital tool in preserving and enhancing the public health, safety, and welfare of the township is essential if this Plan is to be effective. This Plan is intended to serve all township residents, landowners, and visitors, including seasonal and year-round residents.

What is the Master Plan?

Purpose

Just as individuals and families plan for their future well being, so must municipalities. Just as individuals may open savings accounts to save for an addition to their house for a growing family, municipalities must look to the future and take specific actions to address current and future needs. Such actions may involve improvements to the roadway network, improvements to the level of emergency services, and the rehabilitation of deteriorating buildings.

This Master Plan is a policy document that identifies how growth and associated land development should be guided to enhance the future welfare of Belvidere Township. The following key words and phrases can generally describe the Master Plan:

FUTURE ORIENTED: The plan concerns itself with long-range planning to guide and manage future growth and development. The plan is a picture of the township today and a guide to how the community should evolve over the next ten to twenty years in response to growth and community aspirations.

GENERAL: The plan establishes broad principles and policies to address future land use and public services.

COMPREHENSIVE: The Plan is comprehensive in that it addresses all principal types of land use and the practical geographic boundaries of each.

A PLAN: The Plan is a specific tangible document that consists of both text and maps, a key portion of which presents and illustrates the township's policies regarding its planned future land use pattern and associated public services.

DYNAMIC: The Plan is intended to be continually evolving in light of the aspirations of local residents, changing conditions in the township, and new strategies to manage growth.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Belvidere Township Planning Commission, under the authority of the Michigan Township Planning Act, P.A. 168 of 1959 (as amended), prepared this Master Plan. The Act provides for the development of plans by a Planning Commission for the purposes of, in part:

"...to promote public health, safety, and general welfare; to encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability; to avoid the overcrowding of land by buildings or people; to lessen congestion on public roads and streets...and to consider the character of each Township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trend in land and population development."

This Master Plan is not a law or regulatory document, but a "policy plan" to be implemented through zoning and other regulatory and non-regulatory tools. Though the Master Plan is not a zoning ordinance, the Master Plan's recommendations and policies serve as a basis for updating the current Belvidere Township Zoning Ordinance. In fact, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, which provides Michigan townships with the statutory authority to adopt zoning regulations, stipulates that a municipality's land development regulations "...shall be based upon a plan..." This Master Plan addresses this statutory requirement and ensures a strong legal foundation for the township's zoning regulations.

Elements of the Master Plan

This Master Plan consists of the following key components:

- 1) Chapter One – Introduction presents an overview of the purpose and role of the Plan, the process followed in its preparation, key planning policies, and a summary of township conditions.
- 2) Chapter Two – Planning Issues, Goals and Objectives presents a discussion of important planning issues facing the township, and associated goals and objectives that address these issues.
- 3) Chapter Three – Future Land Use Strategy presents policies addressing the planned future land use pattern for the township.
- 4) Chapter Four – Coordinated Public Services presents policies addressing the coordination of public services with the planned future land use pattern and the township's overall welfare.
- 5) Chapter Five – Implementation presents implementation measures to effectuate the policies of the Plan.
- 6) The Appendices present an overview of existing conditions and trends in the township, addressing cultural features such as roads, land use, and public services (Appendix A); natural features such as soils, topography, and water resources (Appendix B); and demographic features such as population, housing, and income (Appendix C).

Importance and Application of the Master Plan

The importance and application of the Belvidere Township Master Plan are demonstrated in the long-term interests of the township and the day-to-day administration of the township's planning and zoning program.

Long Term Interests

There are a number of interests shared by residents and officials today that can be expected to continue for years to come and be similarly shared by future residents and new officials. Some of these important interests include:

- Protecting the township's rural atmosphere.
- Protecting the quality of life.
- Protecting the township's natural resources, including its lakes and other water resources, woodlands, wetlands, wildlife, and farmland.
- Minimizing tax burdens.
- Ensuring appropriate land use and adequate services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors.
- Ensuring compatibility with the use and development of neighboring properties.

The Master Plan presents a future-oriented growth strategy that seeks to further these interests.

Day-To-Day Administration

In addition to furthering the long-term interests of the township, the Master Plan also plays an important role in the day-to-day planning and zoning efforts of the township:

- Advisory Policies: The Plan is an official advisory policy statement that should be readily shared with existing and prospective landowners and developers. The Plan informs them of the long term intentions of the township regarding land use and public services and encourages development proposals more closely integrated with the policies of the Plan.
- Regulatory Programs: The Plan establishes a practical basis for the township to revise, update, or otherwise prepare regulatory programs, including zoning and land division regulations, intended to ensure that the policies of the Plan are implemented.
- Review of Land Development Proposals: Chapter Two includes a list of township goals and objectives which should be reviewed when consideration is given to future proposed rezoning requests, site plans, and related land use proposals, to further establish a record upon which the proposal can be evaluated. Equally important, Chapter Three provides policies regarding the planned future land use pattern in the township –valuable reference points upon which land use proposals should be evaluated.
- Public Services Improvements: The identification of a planned future land use pattern enables the township to pinpoint areas that may be in need of current or future public services improvements. The identification also enables the township to better determine areas of future need, rather than playing "catch-up" while the township's health, safety, and welfare may be at risk. Chapters Four and Five provide important guidance in this area.

- Intergovernmental Coordination: This Plan provides the basis for township officials to communicate effectively with nearby communities regarding both the impact of their planning and zoning actions and opportunities for mutual gain through coordinated efforts in the areas of land use and public services.
- Factual Reference: The Plan includes a factual overview of relevant trends and conditions in Belvidere Township. This factual profile can educate local officials and residents and aid in the review of development proposals, encourage constructive discussion of planning issues and policies, and serve as a base line for future studies.

How the Plan Was Prepared

Township officials began actively discussing the importance of long range planning for the township in 2005, and the need for the development of a sound plan to address growth and development. To facilitate its long range planning efforts, the Township Board established the Belvidere Township Planning Commission pursuant to the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 (as amended). Shortly thereafter, the Planning Commission initiated the preparation of this Master Plan pursuant to the Act.

The Planning Commission's initial efforts were directed at establishing a data base about the township for use during the planning process. This involved a review of physical and cultural conditions in the township including soils, topography, road network, existing land use patterns, public services, and demographic characteristics.

A mail survey was administered in the winter of 2007 to gain insight into local attitudes on land use, development, preservation and public services.

The Planning Commission then directed its efforts to identifying the important planning issues facing the community and established a set of goal and objective statements to address these issues and guide the policies of the Plan.

Several alternative future land use patterns and strategies were then developed based upon the data collected to date and the goal and objective statements. The Planning Commission studied these alternatives and selected the most preferable. Based on the selected alternative, the Planning Commission assembled a complete draft of the Plan suitable for presentation to the community. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft Plan on February 26, 2008 and the Plan was finalized and adopted by the Planning Commission on April 8, 2008.

Throughout the development of the Plan, the township followed the procedural requirements of the Township Planning Act including notification of neighboring communities of the township's intent to prepare a plan, and the township's subsequent solicitation for input from neighboring communities on the draft plan.

Overview of Planning Policies

This Plan presents a coordinated strategy that addresses growth, development and preservation. The Plan supports the continuation of Belvidere Township as a community that revolves around its centrally located “small town” village along with its abundant lake residential areas and farmland.

The Plan supports single family residences as the predominant character of future housing. The Plan supports the protection of the character and stability of the township’s existing residential areas, and provides opportunities for comparably higher density living arrangements (small lot subdivisions, apartments, and retirement centers) just outside of Six Lakes village provided adequate sewage disposal and potable water is available. The lowest development densities are proposed in the balance of the township including in areas characterized by farm operations.

The Plan supports the township’s existing commercial nodes and proposes commercial development be limited to the Six Lakes village area, including along M-46 and M-66 in close proximity to the village, and along M-46 and M-66 where Belvidere Township abuts Home Township to the east. All of these areas are intended to accommodate commercial development of a local character, catering to the day-to-day needs of the local population and the highway traveler, including vacationers.

Industrial uses are also proposed to be accommodated along M-46 and M-66 in close proximity to the village as part of planned mixed commercial-industrial corridors, in addition to the area generally characterized by the existing concrete mixing plant just west of the village.

The Plan recognizes Belvidere Township is characterized by abundant water and other natural resources and embodies a strong preservation theme.

Belvidere Township Overview

The following is a brief overview of Belvidere Township. A more detailed review of the township’s trends and conditions can be found in the Appendix.

Belvidere Township is located in Montcalm County along its north central border in the central region of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. The township includes the unincorporated village of Six Lakes and the nearest incorporated municipality is Edmore, six miles to the east, with a population of approximately 1,300 persons. The nearest urban center with a population approaching 10,000 persons is Alma (approximately 9,500 persons), 25 miles northeast. Aside from various small settlement areas, the regional landscape is dominated by agriculture, woodlands, wetlands and other open spaces, and scattered residential development. Regional access to Belvidere Township is provided by M-46 and M-66. M-46 travels east and west across the community. M-66 travels in a northerly direction adjacent to and through portions of the community, and intersects with M-46 in the center of the Township.

The township’s topography can be generally described as level to rolling. Drainage is facilitated through a network of lakes and associated wetlands, the Flat River, and the numerous smaller water courses that drain into the many lakes and the Flat River. The unincorporated village of Six Lakes is named after a chain of six small lakes that are located in an east-west orientation just northeast of the township’s center. The “six lakes” flow west, one into the other, and First Lake discharges into and is the headwaters for the Flat River.

Most of Belvidere Township is dominated by farm operations and scattered residences, along with abundant woodlands, wetlands, and lakes. There are two principal exceptions. Many of the township’s lakes include residential development of considerably greater density including subdivisions platted more than 40 years ago. In addition, the small unincorporated village of Six Lakes centrally located in the township reflects a mixed-use development pattern that typifies most village settlement areas including residences, commercial and industrial uses, and public facilities. The 2000 Census recorded 1,367 dwelling units, many of which are vacant through much of the year as part of the seasonal character of its lake areas.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Commercial development in Belvidere Township covers approximately 20 acres and is primarily limited to the village of Six Lakes including within one-half mile of the M-46/M-66 intersection. In 2007, approximately 25 retail and service-oriented businesses were present in the community and included such uses as a service station, video rental, hardware sales, banking, funeral home, tire sales and service, and bar and restaurants. Most of the uses focus on the needs of the local population, seasonal tourists, and the M-46/M-66 traveler. Industrial development in Belvidere Township is limited. Businesses include a welding shop, a small shingle manufacturing facility, and a concrete mixing plant. Michigan Consolidated Gas Company maintains an underground natural gas storage and pumping facility just north of the Six Lakes. The facility is part of an approximately two square mile land area owned by the company.

A five member Township Board governs Belvidere Township. Township offices are located in Six Lakes. The township provides fire protection to area residents through the Belvidere Township Fire Department, with its single fire station located in Six Lakes. Police protection services are provided by the Montcalm County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police provide service along M-46 and M-66. There is no public sewer or water service in the township.

Chapter Two

PLANNING ISSUES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

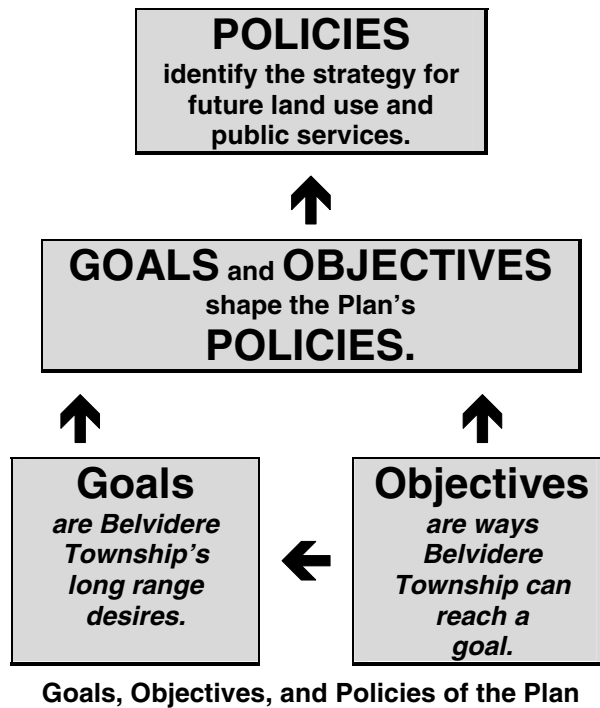
The purpose of this Plan is to establish a basis for future land use and public services. Through the development of this Plan, the township has chosen to be active in guiding and shaping future growth and development in the community and not allow the community to evolve merely by chance. To effectively plan for the township's well being with regard to future land use and public services, it is necessary to identify important planning issues facing the community and clarify its long term goals and objectives. Following is a presentation of these planning issues and related goals and objectives.

Planning Issues, Goals & Objectives

A number of key planning issues are apparent today. These issues vary in scope and are clearly inter-related. The future quality of life and character of the township will be largely shaped by the township's strategy in dealing with these issues. Each issue presented in this Chapter is followed by a set of goal and objective statements. The planning goals are statements that express the township's long range desires. Each goal has accompanying objectives that are general strategies that the township will pursue to attain the specified goal. For example, a goal of the Robinson family may be to open a restaurant in Belvidere Township, while two of the family's objectives may be to seek a loan and meet with a real estate agent to look at properties.

The goals and objectives are important for several reasons:

- The goals and objectives provide current and future residents with an overview of the intended future character of the community.
- The goals and objectives identify and outline the basic parameters which should be used in guiding land use and public services policies and decisions.
- The goals and objectives serve as references upon which future rezoning and land development decisions can be evaluated.



The planning issues, and associated goals and objectives, are divided into the following major categories:

- Growth Management, Economic Development and Public Services
- Community Character
- Farmland
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Housing
- Commercial Services
- Industrial Development
- Circulation
- Regional Coordination

The planning issues presented in the following pages are not intended to be all inclusive. Rather, they are presented as the primary issues that the community must address as it establishes a future for itself. These issues will evolve over time and should be reexamined periodically and the appropriate modifications made.

The objectives listed on the following pages should not be interpreted as limitations on the township's efforts to reach its goals. The township's commitment to the following objectives does not preclude it pursuing other objectives that it determines are beneficial. In addition, the objectives listed are not time specific. The township may choose to act on certain objectives within a shorter time frame than others.

Growth Management, Economic Development, and Public Services

Belvidere Township possesses characteristics that many find desirable for a place of residence including abundant natural resources and open spaces; water-based recreational opportunities; reasonable access to highways and employment centers; an overall rural character; and nearby retail and other urban services. The township's strong growth over the past 30 years may well continue for the next 10 years or more, with the addition of 900 persons and 350 dwellings (or more) by 2020 (see Appendix C). The character and quality of life will be impacted by the way the township chooses to manage future growth and development. Managed growth can minimize unnecessary loss or degradation of natural resources including farmland, woodlands and water resources, preserve the township's existing character and environmental integrity, encourage orderly land development, and assure adequate public services and wise expenditures of township funds.

The successful management of growth is not linked only to appropriate land use. It is also linked to adequate public services. Tax revenues dictate, in part, the extent and quality of public services. Based on the Master Plan survey respondents, public service levels in 2006 (police and fire protection, ambulance service, recreation facilities, and the road network) were reasonably meeting the needs of area residents. The rate of future growth and the resulting pattern of development will dictate the necessary expenditure of township funds to maintain the current quality of public services, and the pursuit of improvements. Although development will increase the township's tax base, the same development will place additional demands upon public services. Contrary to traditional planning wisdom, recent research has shown that development does not necessarily "pay its way." Farmland, high density residential development, and commercial and industrial development have been shown to typically have a more positive impact on the economic stability of a community than traditional single family residential development.

Managed growth, including compact development patterns and an appropriate balance of land uses, can minimize new public costs and maximize economic stability. However, economic development interests should not be at the cost of a healthy natural environment.

GOAL: *Guide future development in a manner that assures land use patterns compatible with public facilities and services and the cost-effective use of tax dollars, preserves the township's natural resources and rural character, minimizes conflicts between differing land uses, and encourages economic stability.*

Objectives

- 1) Identify locations in the township that are appropriate for residential and non-residential use, taking into account the constraints and opportunities presented by the township's natural features and the availability of public facilities and services, including road infrastructure.
- 2) Encourage forms of growth and development that minimize public service costs and adverse impacts to the community's natural resources, including compact forms of development that adhere to reasonable limitations on the intensity of development.
- 3) Encourage economic stability in a manner that balances economic development with the preservation of the township's natural resources and environmental integrity.
- 4) Preserve the township's natural resources through a coordinated future land use strategy and related implementation tools that permit reasonable use of land while discouraging unnecessary destruction or loss of natural resources, including farmland, woodlands, wetlands and water resources.
- 5) Separate incompatible land uses by distance, natural features, or man-made landscape buffers that adequately screen or mitigate adverse impacts.
- 6) Guide development into areas where public facilities and services have adequate capacity to accommodate the growth and increased development intensities, and where the provision or expansion of public facilities is most cost effective.

- 7) Discourage public services improvements that will have the effect of encouraging excessive growth and development, or development at a rate beyond the township's ability to ensure adequate public health, safety, and welfare, or development in areas of the township not designated for such growth.
- 8) Wherever legally permissible, local regulations should require new developments to pay to the township for the direct and indirect public services costs associated with that development. These costs should not be imposed on existing residents, except where public interests and benefits may be at stake.
- 9) Continually monitor local attitudes about public facilities and services, including police and fire protection, potable water and sewage disposal, and recreation, and provide regular opportunities for substantive public input on growth and development issues.
- 10) Evaluate rezoning petitions, site plans, and other development decisions according to the policies, goals and objectives of this Plan.
- 11) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the policies, goals and objectives of this Plan.

Community Character

The character of Belvidere Township can be described on many levels. The visual character is defined, in part, by its abundant lakes and farmland, rural residential areas and more suburban lakeshore development, and the village of Six Lakes. The lakes and the recreational activities and tourism that evolve around them provide a resort atmosphere for many. The township is marked by its sense of peacefulness. It is a community that is defined by the wisdom of its many senior citizens while also serving as a place for young persons and families to grow. It is a community of year-long residents and residents and visitors who make the community their home for only weeks and months at a time.

Most of the township is very rural in character. "*Rural character*" is a subjective quality but is typically associated with an overall perception of limited development and extensive open spaces. Recognition of the more suburban/urban areas of the community, such as the subdivisions along many of the lakes and the village of Six Lakes, is equally important. Though these areas occupy a comparatively small portion of the community, they significantly contribute to the overall fabric of the township and its character. The village of Six Lakes includes a central business area bounded by village-residential development, and is enhanced by a church, the township hall, and nearby lakefront park. The protection of the village's small-town character is important to local residents.

Residents strongly support the existing character of the community including its visual features and natural resources, atmosphere, and way of life. The preservation of community character is, in part, dependent upon the efforts of individual landowners in how they maintain their properties and in the manner in which new growth and development is accommodated.

GOAL: *Maintain Belvidere Township as a beautiful and quiet rural community dominated by abundant natural resources and recreation opportunities, appealing to all age groups and family cycles.*

Objectives

- 1) Encourage land development designed in scale with existing developed areas and the dominant rural character of the community, through reasonable standards addressing density, building size, height, and other development features.
- 2) Encourage the maintenance of historically significant structures and a structurally sound housing stock, and the rehabilitation or removal of blighted structures and yard areas.
- 3) Encourage the preservation of woodlands, wetlands, and other open spaces in general, as dominant defining features of Belvidere Township, including their visual character, environmental integrity, and recreation value.

- 4). Encourage the preservation of the small-town character and feel of the village of Six Lakes, and its unifying role as the township's business and social activity center.
- 5) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the "Community Character" goal and objectives.

See also "Natural Resources and the Environment" below for additional objectives addressing community character.

Natural Resources and the Environment

One cannot speak of community character preservation in Belvidere Township without acknowledging the tremendous impact its natural resources play in defining the community's character. These resources include the Six Lakes chain and other lakes, both upland and lowland ecosystems, wetlands including lengthy wetland corridors, the Flat River and lesser streams, and abundant farmland and nonagricultural fields. These elements are important in shaping the character of the Belvidere Township but also provide vital environmental roles including wildlife habitats, flood control, water purification, groundwater recharge, and air quality enhancement. These same resources play a fundamental role in recreation in the community. Preservation of these resources can be very difficult because encroachment and degradation can occur slowly. Substantial damage to an entire ecosystem frequently occurs over a long period of time. Increased environmental knowledge, awareness, and education, when incorporated into a comprehensive planning strategy, can minimize the potential for environmental degradation.

Residents strongly support the preservation of the township's natural resources. The preservation of environmental resources is dependent on awareness and education of the public, complimentary planning policies and land use regulations, and the incorporation of the protection of open spaces, natural resources and environmental ecosystems in the development plan.

GOAL: *Preserve the integrity of the township's natural resources including its abundant lakes and its other water resources, wetlands, woodlands, other open spaces, and groundwater.*

Objectives

- 1) Document and periodically update resource inventory data such as water bodies and drainage courses, wetlands, woodlands, and sites of contamination, for use in land planning studies and land use and development decisions.
- 2) Encourage land development which actively strives to preserve natural open spaces (woodlands, wetlands, and fields) as part of the development plan.
- 3) Ensure that the development does not unreasonably create increases in air, noise, land, and water pollution, or the degradation of land and water resource environments including groundwater.
- 4) Discourage development that unnecessarily or unreasonably disrupts the natural character and environmental integrity of the township's lakes, wetlands, and other special resource areas.
- 5) Encourage development plans that recognize the importance of preserving environmental corridors across multiple parcels and the community as a whole.
- 6) Correlate permissible uses and development intensities with the comparative degree of constraints presented by environmentally sensitive areas and the presence of important natural features.
- 7) Ensure that all development is in compliance with applicable local, county, state, and federal environmental regulations.
- 8) Discourage the expansion of public utilities into areas dedicated to conservation and resource protection.
- 9) Review proposed development plans in light of their potential impact on lakes, wetlands, and other natural resource areas.

- 10) Educate the public about critical measures that help to protect the environmental integrity and recreation value of the township's surface waters including management of yard waste and fertilizer use, minimizing impervious surfaces, maintenance of shoreline vegetation, avoidance of erosion and sedimentation, and properly operating septic systems.
- 11) Educate the public about waste management and the township's fundamental reliance upon groundwater resources for potable water supplies and the potential detrimental effects of irresponsible land use and development practices including improperly functioning septic systems.
- 12) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the "Natural Resources and the Environment" goal and objectives.

Farming

Farming has historically been a dominant component of Belvidere Township and the township continues to be a strong agricultural community today. However it is important to note that the number of farms in the Township has declined over the years, as has the total acreage devoted to farming.

There exists a demonstrated and increasingly critical need in the state for land devoted to agricultural use. Farm operations produce the food and fiber that our society relies on as well as the society of other countries. Agriculture has long been recognized for contributing to the economic stability of local communities and is a leading industry in Michigan. Studies undertaken in 1995 by the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University (Dr. Robert Burchell, Fiscal Impacts of Alternative Land Development Patterns in Michigan) found that farmland and open space typically produce more revenue than the cost to provide such land with public services.

However, agricultural resources are being consumed at an alarming rate by residential sprawl. Competing land uses, particularly residential uses, frequently result in escalating land prices that undermine the economic viability of local farm operations. This is especially critical for the next generation of farmers who may not be able to afford to buy land to farm. In addition, land use conflicts between farm and non-farm residents frequently heighten as residential encroachment increases.

These conditions emphasize the importance and need for farmland preservation strategies. This importance is further illustrated by the considerable attention farmland preservation has received by the state legislature during the past ten years.

Effective farmland preservation is dependent upon the management of the number and size of new non-farm lots, to avoid excessive encroachment and the wasteful conversion of excess tillable land for each home site. In the last few years there have been efforts to establish a number of local and state programs and initiatives to provide other options to landowners. One such important program is the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), whereby a landowner can voluntarily sell the development rights to a governmental body in turn for placing an easement on the land prohibiting future non-farm development. Another program is the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). This program enables a landowner to transfer (through purchase) the farm parcel's development rights to another parcel in an area planned for growth and development. Both PDR and TDR provide landowners the opportunity to realize the development value of their land without having to actually develop it. Under both programs, all other private property rights remain in tact. The protected land remains in private ownership and can be sold to anyone at any price. However the land cannot be developed for residential, commercial or industrial purposes.

The township recognizes the economic and other challenges facing the local farming community. The township also recognizes the economic benefits of local farm operations not only for their productive capacity and contribution to the local economy, but also for their limited demand on public services, infrastructure, and township revenues. The challenge before the township is to encourage farmland

preservation while, at the same time, ensuring the farming community reasonable alternatives should interest in the pursuit of agricultural operations dwindle.

GOAL: Encourage the continuation of local farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources.

Objectives:

- 1) Identify areas that are supportive of long-term farming and designate such areas for agriculture as a primary use.
- 2) Minimize potential land use conflicts in designated agricultural areas by limiting the encroachment of non-farm land uses while similarly providing flexibility for the conversion of farmland to reasonable alternative uses.
- 3) Discourage the wasteful consumption of farmland resources due to unnecessarily large residential lot size requirements, while still exploring other options for managing the extent of new residences in agricultural areas.
- 4) Encourage buffer areas between new residential developments and abutting agricultural areas.
- 5) Support P.A. 116 farmland preservation agreements.
- 6) Support the establishment and funding of voluntary Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs administered at the county or regional level.
- 7) Discourage the extension of municipal utilities (such as sewer and water) into designated agricultural areas.
- 8) Update local zoning regulations that may be unnecessarily hindering local farm operations.

Housing

Residential development will likely be the major land use change in the coming ten to twenty years. Belvidere Township is a very attractive place to live for many prospective residents, as demonstrated by the extensive lake shoreline development and the increasing level of residential development elsewhere in the community.

Opportunities for rural and suburban residential lifestyles are plentiful and will continue to be so. Soil conditions do not typically preclude home sites of approximately one acre or more in size. The lack of municipal sewer and water limits opportunities for more varied and affordable housing of greater density. However, recent changes in the MDEQ's rules and regulations facilitate the development of community sewer systems that serve individual subdivision developments not otherwise served by municipal systems. It is important to recognize the feasibility of higher-density development options in the township. It is equally important to recognize that the township's current and future residents have varied housing needs based on life cycle, family structure, income, and personal preference.

Establishing suburban and urban development areas is important as part of the township's efforts to provide varied housing opportunities for current and future residents and limit the extent of residential encroachment into agricultural areas.

The accommodation of new residential development should be based on sound planning principles. Future residential development will likely have the greatest long-term impact on the township's natural resources, demand for public services, and overall community character. In addition, the proper placement and design of residential development of a more urban character is critical if such development is to have limited impact upon the character of existing residential areas, the community's dominant rural character, and the cost-effective delivery of public services.

Future residential development can be efficiently accommodated and need not consume unnecessary natural resources and open spaces. The actual land area needed for future residential development is comparatively small. If Belvidere Township's population grows by 1,000 persons by 2020, approximately 500 acres of undeveloped land would require conversion to residential use to accommodate the additional 400 dwellings (based on an average lot size of 1.0 acre and a household size of 2.5 persons). However, the same 400 dwellings can consume as much as 3,000 acres (more than 20% of the vacant upland acreage remaining in the township) or more if located on large lots of five to ten acres or more in size. This less efficient development pattern can dramatically accelerate the rate at which undeveloped lands are converted to residential use or otherwise disturbed.

It must also be recognized that unrestricted development as a result of small acreage zoning across the township, such as one acre zoning, provides for a build-out population (the population resulting land being developed at a density of 1 dwelling per acre, exclusive of wetlands and future road rights-of way) approaching 12,000 dwellings and 30,000 persons. Such a growth pattern will have dramatic effects on community character, natural resources, taxes, and public services demands.

GOAL: *Provide a healthy residential environment in which persons and families grow and flourish, which affords reasonable housing options while preserving the overall rural and single family character of the community, and which responds to the opportunities and constraints of the township's public services and natural features.*

Objectives:

- 1) Encourage the continued dominance of rural single family housing on lots of approximately one acre or greater as the principal housing option.
- 2) While maintaining single family housing on lots of approximately one acre or greater as the primary housing option, provide opportunities for alternative housing to meet the varying preferences of current and future residents, including small lot single family dwellings and multiple family housing.
- 3) Limit development densities in environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4) Identify limited areas in the township where higher density residential development, including multiple family development, can be adequately accommodated. Priority should be given to locations that have greater access to improved thoroughfares and public services, and support services, such as M-46, M-66, and Six Lakes.
- 5) Discourage strip residential development along the frontage of existing state and county roads such as M-46, M-66, Miles Rd., and Holland Rd., to minimize traffic safety hazards and congestion and preserve the existing rural character of the thoroughfares.
- 6) Encourage innovative residential development that incorporates the preservation of natural resource systems and open spaces, and the preservation of the township's rural character.
- 7) Provide opportunities for special housing for senior citizens to enable their continued stay in the township, including apartments, assisted living arrangements, retirement centers, and nursing homes.
- 8) Encourage a housing stock that ensures affordable housing to all, including starter homes, manufactured homes, and multiple family dwellings, while also ensuring all dwellings are of appropriate design and scale to complement nearby conditions and the community as a whole.
- 9) Discourage uses and structures in residential areas that undermine the residential character and peacefulness of such areas, or increases conflicts between landowners such as accessory buildings of excessive size or inappropriate location.
- 10) Discourage commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods.
- 11) Encourage the rehabilitation of blighted homes and yards.
- 12) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the "Housing" goal and objectives.

Commercial Services

Commercial development in Belvidere Township covers approximately 20 acres, consists of predominantly retail and service-based uses, and is primarily limited to the village of Six Lakes including within one-half mile of the M-46/M-66 intersection. Most of the uses focus on the needs of the local population, seasonal tourists, and the M-46/M-66 traveler.

Addressing commercial development includes considerations of need, location and character.

The approximately 20 acres of commercial land in the township in 2007 can be described as reasonable based on the township's population of approximately 2,500 persons. Studies have been undertaken to identify guidelines that may address appropriate land use ratios, although they do not specifically address rural communities such as Belvidere Township. Further, each community is unique, with its own set of circumstances including infrastructure, existing land use pattern, growth, and public perceptions. Still, their findings provide insight.

Studies of cities and villages in the 1980s by the American Planning Association found that an average of approximately 8% of the community's developed land was devoted to commercial use. Direct comparison to Belvidere Township is not realistic as the township is far from an urbanized community. Still, it must be noted that Belvidere Township's current 20 acres of commercial land comprises approximately 3% of its total developed land area, or nearly one-half of the proportion typically found among cities in the study. A 1989 study by David Van Horn, focusing on four counties in Florida, California, and Tennessee (including rural areas), found that the average number of commercial acres on a county-wide basis was 7.2 acres per 1,000 population (Urban Land, 1989). It is reasonable to expect that a significant lower ratio exists if all cities and villages are excluded. Belvidere Township's current 20 acres yields a ratio of approximately 8.0 acres of commercial land per 1,000 population. According to the 1985 Shopping Center Development Handbook, published by the Urban Land Institute, the township's population of approximately 2,500 is not considered generally adequate to support the smallest of the classifications of commercial centers – the *neighborhood* center. The neighborhood center is considered to require a base population of 3,000 – 4,000 persons.

These studies suggest that, based on land use and population, the level of commercial development in Belvidere Township is adequate today and will continue to be adequate for some time. The various vacant storefronts in Six Lakes support this premise and public sentiment also suggests that significant commercial expansion should not be a goal of the township at this time.

However, it must also be recognized that Belvidere Township has a seasonal tourism economy and has many highway travelers passing through. The seasonal visitors and highway travelers have consumer needs as well. In addition, if the township desires to more aggressively pursue the long-term economic stability of the community, commercial expansion may be advantageous.

The viability of future commercial development within a community is directly linked, in part, to access, visibility, activity areas, and improved levels of public services. Locating future commercial development with recognition of these factors will improve its long term viability, minimize additional public costs, have less negative impacts upon residential areas, and avoid inefficient development patterns. To this end, and to the extent additional commercial development is accommodated in the community, special attention should be directed toward M-46, M-66, and the Six Lakes area.

Commercial uses can vary significantly in character, ranging from retail to office, professional and other services, and ranging in size and scale from a small local hardware store to large facilities that rely on a more regional market for success such as multi-screen movie theaters and "big box" retail centers (Meijer, WalMart, etc.). As commercial uses are of varying character, so are their impacts upon abutting land uses, the community as a whole, and neighboring municipalities. While its state highways facilitate good access, Belvidere Township is characterized by numerous conditions that do not support large regionally based commercial developments including the township's rural character,

its limited public services and population base, limited public support for such uses, and proximity to urban centers that provide more appropriate locations for development of this character. Respondents expressed limited support for large retail centers in the Master Plan survey.

GOAL: *Provide for a range of commercial services that cater to the needs of local residents and visitors, in a manner that supports the predominant rural character of the community and small-town character of Six Lakes, minimizes new public service costs, and protects the viability and desirability of the Township's residential areas.*

Objectives

- 1) Recognize the significance of key thoroughfares such as M-46 and M-66 as potential opportunities for the location of new commercial development.
- 2) Ensure new commercial development is in character and scale with surrounding land uses, considering such features as building size and height, architectural design, setbacks, signage, landscaping and screening, and open spaces.
- 3) Future commercial development should be clustered in appropriately identified locations rather than be permitted to indiscriminately encroach into residential areas.
- 4) Direct new commercial development toward existing commercial areas and encourage consolidated commercial centers rather than strip development patterns.
- 5) Provide opportunities for a mix of commercial uses that predominantly target local day-to-day consumer needs, and discourage "big box" and other large scale retailers that cater to a more regional population.
- 6) Ensure that commercial uses are appropriately landscaped and screened to minimize adverse impacts on the normal use and enjoyment of adjoining land.
- 7) Prohibit the intensity of commercial development for which available public facilities and services do not exist, including road infrastructure.
- 8) Provide opportunities for home-based occupations within residences under conditions that will preserve the surrounding residential character, appearance, and quality of life.
- 9) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the "Commercial Development" goal and objectives.

Industrial Development

Industrial development in Belvidere Township in 2007 includes a welding shop, a small shingle manufacturing facility, and a concrete mixing plant. While Michigan Consolidated Gas Company maintains an underground natural gas storage and pumping facility that covers approximately two square miles, nearly the entire facility is of an open space character.

According to Planning Design Criteria (DeChiara and Koppleman, 1969), a general guideline for the ratio of industrial acreage to a community's population is 12 acres of industrial land for each 1,000 population. This ratio would yield approximately 30 industrial acres for Belvidere Township's current 2,500 residents, and approximately 45 acres in 2020 if the township grows by an additional 1,000 persons. These guidelines suggest the need for modest industrial expansion. However, the current absence of assembling, manufacturing, and related industrial activities is not surprising. The township lacks some of the key conditions that support such development including public sewer and water, immediate proximity to a highway interchange, and a strong year-round population base. In addition, other regional urban centers present more appealing opportunities, and public sentiment does not support significant industrial expansion (according to the Master Plan survey).

However, it must also be recognized that not all industry requires heightened levels of public services, infrastructure, and access. In addition, industrial development can improve the community's overall economic stability and provide additional local employment opportunities. Locating future industrial development in proximity to improved levels of public facilities and services will increase the viability

of industrial uses and minimize additional public costs. Existing conditions in the township suggest any future industrial development be of a comparatively “light” character.

GOAL: *Establish a limited industrial component in the township that is sensitive to predominant rural character of the community, characterized by light intensity operations of limited public services demands and impacts upon neighboring land uses.*

Objectives

- 1) Recognize the significance of key thoroughfares such as M-46 and M-66 as potential opportunities for the location of new industrial development.
- 2) Recognize the significance of existing industrial nodes as potential expansion areas where surrounding land uses allow.
- 3) Future industrial development should be clustered in appropriately identified locations rather than be permitted to indiscriminately encroach into residential areas.
- 4) Assure new industrial development is in character and scale with surrounding land uses, considering such features as building size and height, architectural design, setbacks, signage, landscaping and screening, and open spaces.
- 5) Limit industrial uses to those which are predominately characterized by assembly activities and similar “light” operations that do not require the processing of raw materials or added levels of public services, or negatively impact surrounding land uses and the community as a whole.
- 6) Encourage industrial uses to locate within industrial parks, characterized by ample open spaces, landscaping, and buffering.
- 7) Update zoning and other regulatory tools to implement the “Industrial Development” goal and objectives.

Circulation

As new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced into the township, demands on the roadway network will increase. Even low density residential development can significantly increase local traffic levels. This increased traffic may lessen the level of service along some of the township’s roads. Conversely, it must be recognized that road improvements may attract new development which, in turn, will place additional demands on the roadway network. Increased traffic demands can be minimized through adequate road maintenance and the coordination of road improvements with the planned future land use pattern and designated growth and development areas.

The extent to which higher density and intensity land uses, including commercial and industrial land uses, are in comparatively close proximity to improved thoroughfares will minimize future maintenance costs and traffic levels along the township’s other roads and better ensure public health, safety and welfare.

The future pattern of residential lot splits and subdivisions will have a significant impact upon the township. Land splits stripped along the township’s section-line roads can be debilitating because: 1) the increased number of driveways directly accessing the county roads increases the level of congestion and safety hazards; 2) travel times are increased; and 3) the township’s rural views of woodlands, fields, and other open spaces, as experienced from the roads, may be reduced to images of driveways, cars, and garages.

The busiest thoroughfares today are M-46 and M-66. These roads are used extensively by local residents, visitors, and commuters. They are particularly vulnerable to strip development by both residential and commercial uses. Improperly managed, these thoroughfares have the potential to evolve into corridors of strip malls and homes, signage, and expansive parking areas and parking lighting. This development pattern will undermine the function of these corridors, encourage congestion and traffic hazards, and alter the essential perception of the dominant rural character of the community.

Providing bicycle and pedestrian access within and between communities has long been identified as an important goal in improving quality of life. The past 20 years have witnessed an unprecedented surge in interest in trail systems on the local, state, and federal level as their value gains greater understanding. These trails can limit the reliance on the automobile, improve the health of local residents, and improve the quality of leisure time.

GOAL: *Maintain a transportation network throughout the township that encourages efficient and safe travel, consistent with the rural character of the community and coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.*

Objectives

- 1) Identify priority road segments for systematic maintenance and improvement, based on the planned future land use pattern and existing and projected traffic patterns.
- 2) Discourage high-traffic generating land uses and development patterns along the township's secondary roads.
- 3) Pursue access management measures to minimize the potential for traffic congestion and safety hazards along adjacent roadways, including limitations on the number, size, and shape of new land divisions; the discouragement of "strip" development; and limitations on the number and spacing of driveways.
- 4) Work with the Montcalm County Road Commission to discourage road improvements that will increase growth and development pressures in areas of the township not specified for such growth.
- 5) Encourage the inclusion of pedestrian/bicycle paths in association with new residential subdivisions and non-residential development to facilitate safe and convenient non-motorized movement.
- 6) Encourage the linking of residential and commercial centers through pedestrian/bike paths.
- 7) Maintain communication and cooperative efforts with the Montcalm County Road Commission to improve opportunities for safe non-motorized travel.

Regional Coordination

Belvidere Township exists within a regional network of communities, none of which are islands unto themselves. Belvidere Township abuts the townships of Milbrook, Home, Douglass, and Cato. Belvidere Township and nearby municipalities can greatly benefit by cooperatively pursuing common goals in the areas of land use and public services where mutually beneficial. Planned land uses, public services and preservation efforts should take into consideration conditions in these abutting communities. Land use planning efforts should seek to establish a land use pattern compatible with surrounding conditions provided the goals of the township are not undermined.

GOAL: *Guide future development and public services in a manner that recognizes the position of Belvidere Township within the larger region, and the mutual impacts of local planning efforts.*

Objectives

- 1) Where practical, identify a planned future land use pattern that seeks to ensure compatibility among land uses along municipal borders.
- 2) Maintain a meaningful communication program with area municipalities and county agencies to discuss local and area-wide public facilities and services needs, land use conditions and trends, preservation goals and objectives, contemporary planning issues, and mutually beneficial strategies to address short and long-term needs.

Chapter Three

FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

Introduction

Belvidere Township's principal planning components are contained in the Future Land Use Strategy, as discussed in this Chapter Three, and the Public Services Strategy discussed in Chapter Four. The Future Land Use Strategy identifies the desired pattern of land use, development and preservation throughout the Township. Chapter Four presents guidelines regarding public services to help ensure that future public services are coordinated with the planned land use pattern, and the achievement of the Plan's goals and objectives.

Implementation of the land use policies rests largely with the regulatory tools of the Township – most importantly the Belvidere Township Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance generally regulates the type, location, bulk, and intensity of land development. The Township may also adopt other supporting regulatory tools to further the implementation of the policies of this Plan. Chapter Five discusses implementation strategies in more detail.

The foundation on which the Future Land Use Strategy is rooted is the goals and objectives in Chapter Two, based in part on public input. The goals and objectives include the desire to guide future development in a manner that ensures land use patterns compatible with public facilities and services, the cost-effective use of tax dollars, the preservation of natural resources and the rural character of the community, and compact development where it is of a higher intensity. The Future Land Use Strategy is based on an analysis of the Township's natural and cultural features such as community attitudes, existing road network, existing and nearby public infrastructure, and environmentally sensitive areas. Also considered are conditions in neighboring municipalities. The opportunities and constraints presented by these characteristics were evaluated in the context of the goals and objectives in Chapter Two to arrive at a planned future land use pattern.

Land Use Areas

The Future Land Use Strategy divides the township into "Areas" and identifies the predominant land use pattern planned for each. These areas collectively formulate the planned land use pattern. These areas are as follows:

- Agricultural - Rural Residential Area
- Mixed Use Village Area
- Suburban Residential Areas
- Lakefront Residential Area
- Mixed Use M-46/M-66 Commercial – Industrial Corridor Area
- East M-46/M-66 Commercial Area
- Fleck Road Industrial Area
- Cottage Industries

It is not the intent of this Plan to identify the specific land uses that should be permitted in each of these Areas. This Plan presents broad-based policies regarding the dominant land use(s) to be accommodated in each. Specific permitted land uses will be determined by the zoning provisions of the township, based on considerations of compatibility. There may be certain existing land uses that do not “fit” with the planned future land use pattern. This should not be necessarily interpreted as a lack of township support for the continuation of such uses. Zoning regulations should clarify this matter.

The location and approximate borders of the Areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map at the end of this chapter. The boundaries are described as approximate. There is frequently room for discretion at the exact interface between the boundaries of two planning areas and appropriate uses at these points of interface. However, the boundaries presented in this Plan have been considered carefully. Significant departures are strongly discouraged except for unique circumstances and only when the public health, safety and welfare will not be undermined. It is also important to understand that neither the Future Land Use Map nor the explanatory text of this Chapter is intended to stand on its own. Both the policy discussions and map are inseparable and must be viewed as one.

Agricultural - Rural Residential Area

The Agricultural - Rural Residential Area includes the vast majority of land in the township and nearly all lands currently farmed. The intent of the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area is to provide opportunities for farming and encourage the preservation of farmland resources and the long-term viability of local farming, while also providing opportunities for low-density residential development that preserves the community’s overall rural character, natural resources, and open spaces. This Area is established in recognition of the importance of agriculture and the need to encourage the preservation of farmland resources and viable farming operations. Agriculture and low-density residential development are intended to be the primary uses of land in this Area.

Lands in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area are largely characterized by conditions that support their long term agricultural economic viability including: 1) minimum parcel sizes approaching 40 acres or more; 2) limited encroachment by non-agricultural land uses; 3) enrollment in the P.A. 116 Farmland and Open Space Protection Program; and 4) adjacency to other farmland parcels considered to offer similar opportunities for long term economically viable farming operations. The Area encourages the continuation of all current farming activities as well as the introduction of new farming activities. Still, in light of the Township’s interest in providing opportunities for new residences in the Area and maintaining the quality of life for existing households, reasonable care should be exercised in regard to accommodating specialized agricultural operations that may have heightened impacts on surrounding land uses (such as large concentrated livestock operations).

It is intended that development densities in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area be comparatively low. Low development densities are supported by a number of factors including: 1) the lack of public sewer and water; 2) interest in minimizing land use conflicts between farm operations and neighboring land uses; 3) the township’s commitment to managing growth, providing cost effective public services, and limiting urban development densities to specific and compact portions of the community; 4) the township’s commitment to protecting its natural resources and rural character; and 5) the presence of a market for low-density rural home sites. Maximum development densities of approximately one dwelling per two acres are recommended. No sanitary sewer that may be introduced into the Area by a private party should serve as a basis for higher development densities and the undermining of the purposes of the Area.

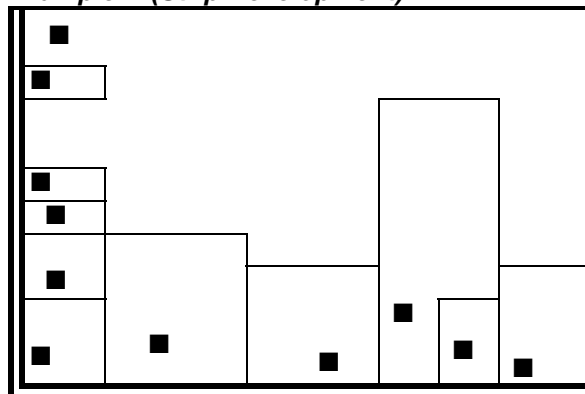
BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Potential new residents in this Area should recognize that the traditional noises and truck traffic associated with responsible farm operations are a significant component of the Agricultural - Rural Residential Area and will continue on a long term basis. Belvidere Township does not consider such activities and operations as nuisances. Rather, the township supports the long term continuation and protection of responsible farm operations. Local developers and real estate agents should disclose this information to prospective buyers of land.

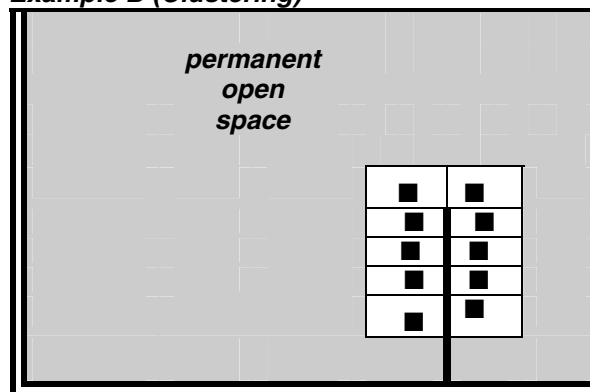
Open Space Developments: Development that incorporates the preservation of natural resources, open spaces, rural character, and traffic safety are strongly encouraged. To this end, the Area supports opportunities for what is frequently referred to as “clustering” or “open space developments.” This form of development provides for the clustering of smaller lots than what is normally required, on only a portion of the development parcel, so that the balance of the parcel can be retained for farming or otherwise reserved for open space and/or the preservation of important environmental resources. These open space areas can be reserved by the use of conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar tools. A critical component of clustering should be the inclusion of new interior roads to serve the new lots, rather than stripping the dwellings along existing road frontages such as Cutler, Hillman, Mussen, Edgar, Almy, and the many other section line and similar public roads.

Traditional strip residential development along the township’s major roads is illustrated in Example A. This is the easiest form of development but it impacts public safety due to the many driveways directly accessing the road and it can significantly undermine the rural character of the township. Example B, illustrating the use of clustering, improves public safety along the road, and more effectively preserves the existing character of the community, its open spaces, and environmental resources and habitats.

Example A (Strip Development)



Example B (Clustering)



It should be noted that the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company's underground gas storage and pumping facility is included in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area. The facility is of a predominantly open space character and more in keeping with the overall intended character of the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area versus the type of development that may be envisioned by an industrial designation. The Plan supports the continuation of the facility as it currently exists and operates.

In addition to the above, key policies of the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area are:

1. The primary use of land should generally be limited to single family residences and agriculture.
2. Secondary uses should be limited to those that directly support and enhance agricultural and residential areas such as schools, religious institutions, and recreation facilities, or uses that are uniquely compatible with the environmental and/or rural character of the Area such as kennels, stables, golf courses, and bed and breakfasts. However, all secondary uses should be subject to a comprehensive review to determine if the proposed use is appropriate on the subject site (based on, in part, compatibility with surrounding land uses, road infrastructure, and public services).
3. Maximum development densities should generally not exceed approximately one dwelling per two acres. However, this policy should not preclude all opportunities for lot sizes of less than two acres, particularly as part of an open space development (see "Open Space Developments" on page 3-3). Further, this policy should not preclude lots currently in existence, but which are less than two acres in size, from being used for residential purposes provided all water and sewage disposal permits can be acquired.
4. The reliance on private "community sewer systems", established as part of and to only serve a new subdivision (or similar development), should not serve as a basis for development patterns and densities contrary to the density policies presented in (3) above.

Mixed-Use Village Area

The unincorporated village of Six Lakes currently exhibits a mixed-use character including commercial and industrial uses, residences, and public facilities. The village is the township's activity center and the Plan supports the continuation of this historic role. The village is afforded excellent access and it is served by convenient fire protection services. The majority of the township's population is within one mile of the village and nearly all of its commercial services are based in the village as is the township hall and fire station. The Plan recommends that the village area continue to provide opportunities for a mixture of village uses with an emphasis on residential development and the preservation of the village's small-town character.

Residential Development: Existing development densities in the village generally range from approximately two to four dwellings per acre. Future development of similar or greater density is considered reasonable provided sanitary sewer is available. New living arrangements could include a variety of housing options such as single and two-family dwellings, apartments, and retirement centers. However, in light of the desire to preserve the village's existing small-town character, large high-density residential development projects in the village are discouraged. Such developments may be better accommodated in the surrounding Suburban Residential Area.

In the absence of public sewer, new residential development should be limited to densities no greater than one dwelling per one-half acre. In all cases, development projects should be reviewed very closely to determine whether the proposed development density is appropriate on the particular development parcel in regard to on-site and surrounding conditions, including existing land use patterns, access, and traffic flow.

Commercial Development: The Plan recommends that the village continue to serve as the commercial center of the township. Commercial development should continue to comprise the core of the village area although dwellings above first floor businesses need not interfere with local commerce and may well add to the security and economic viability of local businesses. The Plan supports the redevelopment of commercial properties in the village and limited incremental expansion of commercial services through conversion or redevelopment of residential lots.

Special care should be exercised to assure commercial expansion does not undermine the essential character and quality of life of nearby residences and neighborhoods and the small-town character of the village. To this end, commercial development should be oriented toward the local population base and be of such design and scale to support the village's small-town character. Commercial uses that draw from a regional market and generate comparatively high traffic levels are not considered appropriate.

Industrial Development: There is a single industrial use in the Mixed-Use Village Area, consisting of the grain elevator between North and South Railroad. The Plan supports the continuation of this use in its current character but discourages redevelopment for industrial purposes. The surrounding residential character makes the long term use of this land less desirable for industry. The Plan supports the conversion of this area for residential and/or commercial purposes provided the redevelopment is in keeping with the desired small-town character of the village.

Due to the existing and proposed mixed-use character of the village, all new proposed development should be examined very carefully to determine its appropriateness in light of abutting land uses, traffic patterns, on-site conditions, and related issues. Special attention should be directed at employing measures to minimize conflicts between differing land uses. New commercial uses that are adjacent to residentially used property should be permitted only where adequate buffer yards and screening are provided to minimize negative impacts.

Suburban/Urban Residential Area

The Suburban/Urban Residential Area provides for residential development of a more suburban and urban character than planned elsewhere in the township. This Area includes existing residential development of a suburban/urban character as well as vacant land where new residential development of a similar character is considered most appropriate.

The Suburban/Urban Residential Area comprises the land area just outside of the Mixed Use Village Area previously described, and extends approximately three-quarter miles from the village. This region of the township is designated as the primary location for the accommodation of new suburban/urban residential development. This area is characterized by numerous conditions that support its appropriateness for such development including:

1. This area is afforded excellent access by both M-66 and M-46.
2. Existing suburban/urban residential development is already apparent in portions of this area.
3. This location is the single area of the Township to which public sewer is most apt to be established due to the concentrated development in the village and surrounding lake areas.
4. This location is removed from the more actively farmed areas of the township.
5. This location is in close proximity to the township's fire protection services.
6. Directing development to this area may enhance the economic stability and viability of village businesses.

The Suburban Residential Area is intended to provide opportunities for comparatively higher density living arrangements than available in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area. These higher density living arrangements may take the form of small-lot single family dwelling subdivisions, duplex subdivisions, apartments, retirement centers, and similar living arrangements. Such higher density development opportunities should ensure healthy living environments including sufficient open space and safe pedestrian and vehicle circulation.

In addition to the above, key policies of the Suburban/Urban Residential Area are:

1. The primary use of land should generally be limited to single family residences.
2. Secondary uses should be limited to non-single family living arrangements and to uses that directly support and enhance desirable residential areas such as schools, religious institutions, and recreation facilities such as parks. All secondary uses should be subject to a comprehensive review to determine if the proposed use is appropriate on the subject site (based on, in part, compatibility with surrounding land uses, road infrastructure, and public services).
3. Maximum development densities should generally not exceed approximately one dwelling per acre, and in no case should residential development be authorized on a site on which the site's area, soils, or other characteristics do not support the issuance of public health permits for potable water and sewage disposal.
4. Development densities of two or more dwellings per acre may be reasonable but only after special review proceedings to determine if the project is appropriate on the proposed property. Minimum guidelines that should be considered are:
 - a. Infrastructure and services should be capable of meeting the public services needs of the new development, including sewage disposal and potable water.
 - b. Environmental impacts should be limited.
 - c. Negative impacts upon existing residential development and/or neighborhoods should be minimized by appropriate design measures.
 - d. Developments involving densities of three or more dwellings per acre should be of such size, or developed in phases, to ensure that the desired character of the community is preserved and public health, safety and welfare will be maintained.
5. As development densities increase, so too should the emphasis on the effective preservation of a site's special natural resources such as woodlands and wetlands, and the provision of conveniently located open space for outdoor leisure and/or recreation. To this end, the accommodation of higher density living arrangements through "open space developments" should be encouraged (see page 3-3).
6. All new development should incorporate measures that encourage compatibility with surrounding properties and development patterns.
7. All development along M-46 and M-66 should be appropriately designed and evaluated to ensure safe and efficient traffic movement.

Lakefront Residential Area

The Lakefront Residential Area extends approximately 500 feet from the numerous lakes in the township not otherwise characterized by wetlands, in addition to encompassing the many historical platted subdivisions whose boundaries include substantial frontage along a lake. The Lakefront Residential Area is established in recognition of the existing lake-based residential development that has occurred along and near the township's lakes and the township's interest in protecting the character and stability of these residential areas and their property values. The township's lakes are a defining feature of the community and the majority of residential development in the community is centered around these lakes.

However, the Plan recognizes the extremely fragile environment of these water resources; the environmental, recreational, and aesthetic role the lakes play; and the particular challenges the lakes present for land use management. Past and future development along the lake will continue to place pressure on the lakes. It is widely recognized that development along the shores of a lake increase the potential for degradation of its character and water quality due to shoreline erosion, septic field leaching (where sanitary sewer is not available), sediment discharge, and excess use of surface waters by water craft. While the Lakefront Residential Area is largely built-out, the lakes are still vulnerable to redevelopment efforts and continued disturbances to their environmental character and integrity.

In addition to the above, key policies of the Lakefront Residential Area are:

1. The primary use of land should generally be limited to seasonal and year-round single family residences.
2. Secondary uses should be limited to those that directly support and enhance desirable residential areas such as schools, religious institutions, and recreation facilities such as parks and marinas. However, all secondary uses should be subject to a comprehensive review to determine if the proposed use is appropriate on the subject site (based on, in part, compatibility with surrounding land uses, road infrastructure, and public services).
3. Maximum development densities should not exceed approximately one dwelling per acre in the absence of sanitary sewer, and in no case should residential development be authorized on a site on which the site's area, soils, or other characteristics do not support the issuance of public health permits for potable water and sewage disposal.
4. The development of vacant land for subdivision or similar development forms should be based upon a plan that encourages compatibility with surrounding properties and development patterns.
5. All new development and redevelopment should incorporate measures that protect the environmental integrity of nearby lakes including, but not limited to, appropriate lake setbacks and lot widths, preservation of native shoreline vegetation, proper yard waste disposal (leaves, grass cuttings, etc.), effective and well maintained septic drain fields, and effective management of storm water to minimize pollutants and debris entering the lake.
6. The use of a waterfront lot as common open space for waterfront access for dwelling units located away from the waterfront, and commonly referred to as keyhole or funnel development, should be discouraged. Such development should be subject to comprehensive review procedures and standards to minimize disturbances to neighboring land uses and the overuse of any lakes.
7. Land and water activities at the end of local roads which terminate at a lake should be managed so as not to undermine public health, including water safety, or unreasonably impact property values and the quality of life experienced by abutting and nearby property owners.

Mixed-Use M-46/M-66 Commercial – Industrial Corridors Area

The Future Land Use Strategy establishes mixed-use corridors along segments of M-46 and M-66, originating at the intersection of these two thoroughfares and extending approximately three-quarter miles east and west along M-46 and north along M-66. The Future Land Use Strategy designates these corridors for predominantly commercial and industrial use. There are several factors that support such a designation:

1. Commercial development is already present along the specified segments of M-46 and M-66.
2. This location is in close proximity to the township's fire protection services, benefiting both commercial and industrial uses.
3. Existing residential development is limited along these highway segments, minimizing land use conflicts.
4. Excellent access is provided by the highways for both commercial and industrial uses.
5. The landowner is provided additional flexibility to respond to market conditions.
6. The increased flexibility in accommodating future industrial development can improve economic stability and employment opportunities.

This mixed use designation is based on the premise that, through proper site plan review, commercial and industrial development along these highway segments can function side by side in a compatible manner. Further, it is a basic tenet of the Plan that the mixed use corridors not evolve into incremental encroachments along the thoroughfares beyond their intended geographic limits as described above. The mixed use corridors are intended to accommodate locally-based uses as well as those that cater to the needs of the highway traveler.

East M-46/M-66 Commercial Area

The Future Land Use Strategy establishes a commercial corridor along its eastern border with Home Township, extending from the M-46/M-66 intersection for a distance of approximately one-half mile along both thoroughfares. This area is provided excellent access and visibility. There are existing commercial businesses along this segment of M-46 in Belvidere Township and additional commercial establishments directly east in Home Township. This Area is intended to provide expanded opportunities for commercial development including opportunities for more highway based uses and those that draw from a more regional market, as compared to the more local character intended for Six Lakes village. Commercial development in this Area is intended to be restricted to the geographic limits described above, and not result in the incremental strip commercial development further east along M-46 or south along M-66.

Fleck Road Industrial Area

The Fleck Road Industrial Area is proposed as the township's principal industrial center. The Area extends along both sides of Fleck Road west of M-66. This location presents a number of features that make it a preferred location for industrial use:

1. This area includes the existing concrete mixing plant.
2. Excellent access is provided by M-46 and M-66.
3. There are only limited residences in the immediate area.
4. The location is in close proximity to fire protection services.

Cottage Industries

The Future Land Use Strategy recognizes that there are some activities that can be generally described as industrial in character yet be somewhat inconspicuous in rural areas. Pole barns and similar accessory buildings are quite common in the Belvidere Township landscape. Small-scale and appropriately managed light industrial operations can exist with minimal impact on neighboring farm and low density residential development. The Future Land Use strategy supports this type of industrial entrepreneurship provided measures are in place that ensure such activities do not become a nuisance nor undermine the intended character of the surrounding area. Such activities can function, in part, as reasonable home occupations.

The allowance of cottage industries should be based upon regulations to ensure their compatibility with surrounding conditions and the intended character of the area. An example of such standards include:

1. Large minimum lot sizes, such as 10 acres or greater and a minimum parcel width of 660'.
2. Minimum separation distance of 750' or more from an existing dwelling.
3. Minimum separation distance of 1,000' or more from another cottage industry.
4. Maximum building size limits, such as 10,000 square feet and a height of 30 feet.
5. Construction materials and design based on a residential or agricultural theme.
6. Substantial screening and landscaping of buildings.

Development Compatibility

A key premise of the Future Land Use Strategy is that the character of future development is supportive of the desired character of the Six Lakes village and the township as a whole, and that development minimizes negative impacts on surrounding properties. Commercial, industrial, and institutional uses should be of such design and scale to minimize impacts upon the desired character of the community and the stability of nearby residences and neighborhoods. Standards for signage, building heights and sizes, and related site development features, should be established to better assure compatibility of new development and site plan review proceedings should further this goal.

Conservation of Natural Resources

Belvidere Township is characterized by large areas that require a strong conservation effort. These include abundant woodlands, wetlands, lakes, and water courses. These resources can present severe limitations to development and provide important environmental benefits including habitats for wildlife, flood control, groundwater recharge and discharge, and surface water purification. In addition, they provide special opportunities for recreation and contribute to the township's overall rural character.

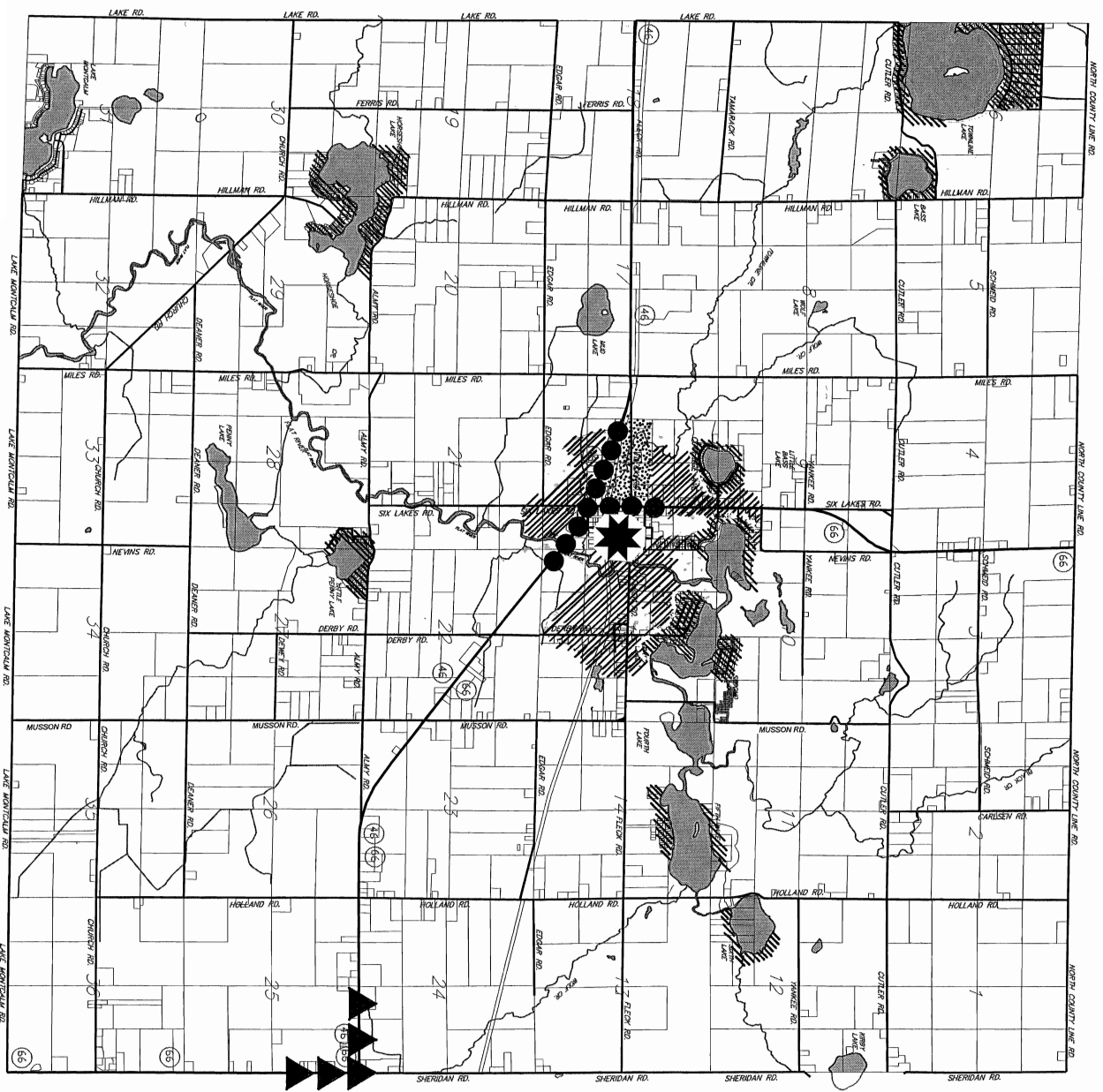
In light of the significance of these resources, the Plan strongly supports their protection. Preservation should take precedence over their unnecessary disturbance and/or destruction by residential, commercial, or industrial development. The presence of such resources in areas designated for development should be recognized in the deliberation of rezoning, site plan, and similar zoning requests. Land uses requiring state and/or federal permits (especially for wetland or floodplain alterations) should not receive final township approval until satisfactory evidence has been submitted verifying the acquisition of all necessary permits. Where a portion of a parcel contains environmentally

sensitive areas, development should be directed elsewhere on the site. Public input received during the preparation of this Plan identified the Township's natural resources as a feature of the community that should be preserved.

Phased Zoning

This Plan recommends that the rezoning of land to a more intensive zoning district occur only in a phased or incremental manner. For example, while the Plan may identify locations that are appropriate to accommodate commercial development, the Plan does not recommend “across the board” or immediate rezonings of such land. The Plan recommends that rezonings to more intensive districts occur incrementally over time to ensure the township is capable of: 1) meeting the increased public service demands; 2) managing township-wide growth and development; 3) adequately reviewing rezoning requests as they apply to the specific subject property; 4) ensuring rezonings are in response to a demonstrated need; and 5) minimizing unnecessary hardships that may inadvertently occur as property changes zoning classification (tax assessments, creation of nonconforming uses and structures, etc.).








BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN FUTURE LAND USE



North 

Approx. Scale in Feet:  3,200

LEGEND

-  Agricultural / Rural Residential Area
-  Mixed Use Village Area
-  Suburban Residential Area
-  Lakefront Residential Area
-  Mixed Use M-46/M-66 Commercial - Industrial Corridor Area
-  East M-46/M-66 Commercial Area
-  Fleck Road Industrial Area

See Chapter 3 for detailed description of each Area
Base Map Prepared By Montcalm County Land Information Office

April 8, 2008

Chapter Four

PUBLIC SERVICES STRATEGY

Introduction

Chapter Three describes the planned pattern of land use throughout the township. This chapter discusses the public services strategy to coordinate with the planned pattern of land use. The character and feasibility of land use and development is influenced by the extent to which public services are available. For example, opportunities for affordable housing increase with the presence of sanitary sewer. The extent of public services also impacts the perceived quality of life within a community. For example, response times by a local fire department and the availability of recreation opportunities can affect the quality of life experienced by local residents. Accordingly, attention should be directed to the manner in which public services are provided and improved.

An important principle of the Future Land Use Strategy is that no new development should occur in the township unless public services are adequate to meet the needs of that new development. On the other hand, public service improvements and the increased development that may result from such improvements should not jeopardize the township's interest in managing growth and development. Thus, it is very important that future public service improvements be coordinated with the planned pattern of future land use.

Circulation

As new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced in the township, demands upon the road network will increase. The additional residential development anticipated in this Plan, despite its overall low density, will result in higher traffic levels. This increased traffic may lessen the level of service along some of the township's roads. Conversely, it must be recognized that road improvements may well attract new development which, in turn, will place additional demands on the road network. In regard to vehicular circulation, the township's roadway infrastructure currently fulfills its function fairly well. This is due, in large part, to the existing low development density throughout most of the township, the paved status of important thoroughfares and the presence of M-46 and M-66. However, there are comparatively limited opportunities for safe pedestrian and non-motorized trails and linkages to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. This is not uncommon in a township of a low and dispersed population such as Belvidere Township.

Policies:

- 1) Functional classification of roads should dictate the priority of improvements when all other conditions are generally equal. The functional importance of the roads in the township, from highest to lowest, is as follows: 1) county primary roads, particularly those segments servicing the Future Land Use Strategy's Lakefront Residential and Suburban Residential Areas; 2) county local roads, particularly those segments servicing the Lakefront Residential and Suburban Residential Areas, but excluding roads in a platted subdivision or similar neighborhood developments; and 3) minor roads, such as local neighborhood roads in platted subdivisions.

- 2) The paving of public gravel roads will generally be discouraged except where: a) the cost to maintain such roads does not justify their long-term gravel status; or b) such roads are located in planned Lakefront Residential or Suburban Residential Areas.
- 3) All future roads will be designed and constructed to Montcalm County Road Commission standards except upon a finding that, in specific instances, such standards do not justify the impact on the natural environment and rural character of the community or are otherwise unnecessary, and lesser standards will not undermine public safety and welfare.
- 4) All proposed future road construction will be evaluated carefully for local and regional impacts on traffic flow, congestion, and public safety. New road construction should be coordinated with other local and regional road improvements to address traffic movement in a unified and comprehensive manner.
- 5) No new roads or road extensions should be undertaken at this time, nor should any be taken in the future, except upon a finding of need to ensure public safety and welfare or to provide access to lots in new neighborhoods and similar new land development.
- 6) The township will monitor development patterns and periodically explore the development of a non-motorized circulation plan to facilitate the provision of trails and linkages throughout the township, with particular focus on linkages within and between neighborhoods and commercial and other activity centers such as the Township Hall.

Sewage Disposal and Potable Water

There is no public sewer or water service in Belvidere Township. Residents rely upon private wells for potable water and septic systems for sewage disposal. Improperly operating septic systems can contaminate potable groundwater resources, lakes and streams. This poses a public health threat and has been a source of concern for area lakes. As development intensities increase, so does the need for sanitary sewer and water. Intensive industrial, commercial, and residential development generally have greater sewage disposal and potable water needs than can often be met by traditional on-site facilities. Failure to provide adequate sewer and water facilities to these land uses can lead to health and environmental problems, while the premature provision of these services can lead to accelerated and unmanaged growth and development. Many of the township soils present severe limitations to on-site sewage disposal. This condition highlights the critical relationship between land use, development intensities, and sewage disposal and potable water.

Policies:

- 1) All on-site sewage disposal and potable water facilities shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Montcalm County Health Department and other applicable local, county, state and federal agencies.
- 2) The township will periodically monitor local attitudes on the introduction of public sewer and water service, with particular focus on the Six Lakes village area including nearby lakes.
- 3) No public sewer or water will be introduced by the township except upon a finding that it is necessary to maintain the public health, safety and welfare in response to a demonstrated existing or anticipated large scale contamination threat, or that it will address a demonstrated demand for residential densities in excess of those available relying on safe on-site sewage disposal and potable water measures. Such services should be limited to the Lakefront Residential and Suburban Residential Areas, and funding should be borne by those who benefit from such services.

- 4) Any future decision by the township to provide sewer and/or water services is to be based on an in-depth analysis of all available options, by professionals of appropriate credentials and expertise, and including services through cooperative agreements with neighboring municipalities.
- 5) Any future introduction or expansion of a public sewer and/or water service will be in a phased and incremental manner so that an overly large geographic area will not be intensely developed at a rate beyond the township's ability to effectively manage the rate of growth and development and ensure the public health, safety and welfare.

Storm Water Management

As buildings, parking lots and other impermeable surfaces associated with new development cover more of the township's land surface, the quantity of storm water runoff increases. The vegetated landscape that previously absorbed and slowed much of the water associated with rainfall is replaced by impervious surfaces. Unless specific preventive measures are taken, this condition encourages flooding, soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution of area water resources. The township's water resources, including its many lakes and their respective wetlands, are vulnerable to degradation. Though flooding, soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution may originate from site-specific circumstances, their impact can extend to adjacent properties and more regional areas including other communities in the same watershed. Storm water management aims to minimize flood conditions, and control the quality and quantity of runoff that is discharged into the watershed system (streams, rivers, wetlands, lakes, etc.).

Policies:

- 1) Increased quantities of runoff that occur as a result of property development will be detained on site, if necessary, to avoid placing excess demand on the capacity of the storm water system into which the runoff would otherwise be discharged.
- 2) Proposed land uses will not be permitted if the level of service currently provided by existing storm water management infrastructure and/or existing drainage patterns will be decreased, unless necessary improvements to the infrastructure or natural drainage courses are first made.
- 3) New and existing land uses will comply with all county, state, and federal regulations regarding storm water management and soil erosion, including the regulations of the Montcalm County Drain Commissioner, except where local officials determine less stringent standards in site-specific instances are appropriate and will not undermine the public health, safety and welfare.
- 4) Land development proposals that directly or indirectly discharge runoff into area lakes, and the township's network of streams and wetlands, will be reviewed to ensure such discharge practices do not undermine the environmental integrity of these resources.

Police and Fire Protection Services

As community growth and land development increases, so does the demand for emergency services. The survey undertaken as part of the preparation of this Plan revealed general satisfaction with emergency services among many respondents, but many were not able to effectively evaluate such services (likely due to the lack of a need to place an emergency call). Commonly referenced standards regarding fire protection suggest a maximum service radius from a fire station in low density residential areas of approximately 3 miles, and approximately 3/4 to 2 mile service radius in commercial, industrial, and high density residential areas. There are some portions of the township that are not within these recommended ranges, particularly in the northeast and northwest corners of the community, and along most of its southern third. Commonly accepted standards for police protection levels do not exist and are frequently measured as a function of public satisfaction.

Policies:

- 1) The township will require the provision of fire protection infrastructure (wells, water lines, etc.) for all new developments which are of such size and density that on-site infrastructure is considered critical. On-site fire protection infrastructure will generally be considered necessary for residential developments that concentrate building sites on lots less than approximately one-half acre.
- 2) The township will continually monitor police and fire protection needs and service to prevent emergency services deficiencies, and explore improving service levels. Considerations for improvement of services will include the expansion of joint services with neighboring municipalities.

Recreation

Belvidere Township operates one local park. The park is approximately seven acres and is located on the south side of First Lake where Park Road terminates at the lake. The majority of the park is devoted to camping, including approximately 30 campsites that are available to the public for a fee for vehicle and tent camping. Other support facilities include a playground, pavilion, boat launch, picnic tables and grills, restroom/shower buildings, and a dump station. In addition to this park, there are significant recreation facilities in the regional area including county and state-operated recreation sites and public school facilities.

Belvidere Township officials recognize that the well being of its residents is affected by the availability of recreation opportunities. The township further recognizes that the type and availability of nearby recreation facilities are important. Demands for recreation opportunities increase with population growth. Available land for recreational purposes decreases as housing and other land uses consume more of what was open space and potential outdoor recreation land.

The extent to which residents are satisfied with the current recreation opportunities in and around the Township is not clearly understood at this time. A comprehensive survey of resident attitudes specifically addressing recreation issues in the Township has not been undertaken.

Policies:

- 1) The township will periodically monitor the extent to which area residents are satisfied with recreation opportunities in the general area by the use of surveys, public meetings, and/or interviews.
- 2) Should sufficient public sentiment warrant, the Township will pursue the development of a MDNR-approved five year action plan which will provide a specific action plan aimed at providing needed Township facilities and enable the Township to compete for state and federal recreation grants.
- 3) The township will strive to provide recreation facilities in a manner that recognizes the particular recreation needs expressed by its residents, including in regard to population distribution and safe and convenient access to and within park sites.
- 4) The township will consider incentives to encourage the provision of open space and recreation areas within future development projects.

Chapter Five

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Introduction

This Master Plan establishes a strategy for growth, development and preservation in Belvidere Township. The Plan is comprised of graphic and narrative policies intended to provide basic guidelines for making reasonable, realistic community decisions. It establishes policies and recommendations for the proper use of land and the provision of public services and facilities. The Plan is intended to be used by local officials, by those considering private sector developments, and by all residents interested in the future of the township. The Plan is a policy document. As a policy document, the Plan's effectiveness is directly tied to the implementation of its policies through specific tools and actions.

The completion of the Plan is one part of the planning process. Realization or implementation of the goals, objectives and policies of the Plan can only be achieved by specific actions, over an extended period of time, and through the cooperative efforts of both the public and private sectors.

Implementation of the Plan may be realized by actively:

- 1) Ensuring township-wide knowledge, understanding, and support of the Plan, and the continued communication with and involvement of the citizenry.
- 2) Regulating the use and manner of development through up-to-date reasonable zoning controls, subdivision regulations, and building and housing codes, and other regulatory tools.
- 3) Providing a program of capital improvements and adequate, economical public services to accommodate desirable land development and redevelopment.

The purpose of this Chapter is to identify implementation tools and where applicable, specific actions to be pursued.

Public Support, Communication and Community Involvement

Citizen participation and understanding of the general planning process and the specific goals, objectives and policies of the Plan are critical to the success of the township's planning program. Understanding and support of the Plan by local citizens can greatly enhance its implementation. This enhancement may be found in citizen support for bond proposals, special assessments, zoning decisions, and development proposals.

In order to organize public support most effectively, the township must emphasize the necessity of, and reasons for long-range planning and the development of the Master Plan. The Township must encourage citizen participation in on-going community planning efforts.

Specific actions to be undertaken to encourage public understanding and support of the township's planning program, and the continued communication with and involvement of the citizenry, are as follows.

- 1) Ensure that copies of the Master Plan are readily available for viewing at the Township Hall.
- 2) Post the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan in the Township Hall where it is clearly visible.
- 3) Post a copy of the Master Plan on the township's web site.
- 4) Post a regularly updated listing of current events pertaining to planning and zoning matters in the township.
- 5) Make copies of the Plan readily available to the general public.
- 6) Through public notices, periodic newsletters, Township Hall postings, and other means, apprise residents of meetings that will address development proposals as the projects move through each stage of review and deliberation.
- 7) Periodically hold special meetings for the specific purpose of discussing the township's planning efforts and providing residents with the opportunity to share concerns and suggestions.
- 8) Distribute periodic newsletters that discuss the Township's planning efforts and land use decisions currently under deliberation. Post the newsletter at the Township Hall, other public sites, and on the township's web site.
- 9) Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs in each neighborhood to promote cooperation and communication.

Land Development Codes

Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is the primary tool for implementing a Master Plan. A zoning ordinance regulates the use of land. A zoning ordinance generally divides a community into districts and identifies those land uses permitted in each District. Each district prescribes minimum standards that must be met such as minimum lot area, lot width, and building setbacks.

Zoning regulations for Michigan communities are adopted under the authority of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006. The purpose of zoning, according to the Act, is to (in part): *"...regulate the use of land and structures; to meet the needs of the state's citizens for food, fiber, energy, and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land; to insure that use of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships; to limit the overcrowding of land and congestion of population, transportation systems, and other public facilities..."*

An important zoning tool regarding authorized uses in each district is the differentiation between *"uses permitted by right"* and *"special land uses"*:

Uses Permitted by Right: Uses permitted by right are the primary uses and structures specified for which a particular district has been established. An example may be a dwelling in a residential district.

Special Land Uses: Special land uses are uses and structures that have been generally accepted as reasonably compatible with the primary uses and structures within a district. However, because of their character, they may present potential injurious effects upon the primary uses and structures within the district or are otherwise unique in character. As a result, these uses require special

consideration in relation to the welfare of adjacent properties and to the township as a whole. An example may be a kennel in a residential or agricultural district.

Special land uses require a heightened level of scrutiny in their review and officials are afforded greater discretion in determining whether a particular special land use is appropriate on a particular site.

Another important tool is the requirement for the submittal of a site plan illustrating proposed alterations and improvements to a parcel. Such a plan assists local officials to determine if the development complies with all standards of the Zoning Ordinance and if it is designed to encourage compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Adoption of zoning regulations by the Township Board provides the legal basis for enforcement of zoning provisions. The ultimate effectiveness of the various ordinance requirements, however, is dependent upon the overall quality of ordinance administration and enforcement. If administrative procedures are lax, or if enforcement is handled in an inconsistent, sporadic manner, the result will be unsatisfactory. The Planning Commission, Township Board, and staff are responsible for carrying out zoning/development related functions including the review of development plans and site inspections, community/developer liaison, and other functions. Each of these functions can require a substantial investment of time. Adequate staff levels and/or consulting assistance are necessary to ensure that these essential day-to-day functions are met and appropriate development is facilitated.

Belvidere Township first adopted zoning regulations more than 30 years ago, and has periodically updated its zoning provisions to address changing conditions and policies. With the adoption of this Master Plan, the township's zoning ordinance should again be carefully reviewed to identify amendments that may be beneficial to implement the policies of the Plan and facilitate efficient day-to-day zoning administration. The following minimum considerations should be undertaken:

- 1) Incorporate provisions that encourage and provide for a cluster development option (see page 3-3).
- 2) Review and update district regulations to ensure coordination with the Master Plan as they pertain to, at a minimum, land uses permitted in each district by right and by special use, minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and related site development standards.
- 3) Review districts to determine which may no longer be relevant or applicable in light of the Master Plan, and whether new districts may need to be created. For example, it may be beneficial to establish a "local" and "highway" commercial district rather than addressing commercial development through a single commercial district.
- 4) Review district boundaries and make appropriate adjustments. For example, significantly reducing the strip commercial zoning along M-46 and M-66 would greatly heighten coordination between the Zoning Map and the Master Plan.
- 5) Review entire Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of improving user friendliness including page format, overall organization, and clarity of text/provisions.
- 6) Review entire Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of resolving conflicts that have arisen over the years due to problematic regulations, difficulties in interpretation, and difficulties in administration and enforcement.
- 7) Review entire Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of identifying and implementing more effective ways to address specific land use issues, based on past experiences of Belvidere Township, other communities, and new regulatory tools that have evolved since the adoption of the current zoning ordinance.

Subdivision Ordinance

When a developer proposes to subdivide land, the developer is, in effect, planning a portion of the township. To ensure that such a development is in harmony with the Master Plan, the subdivision or resubdivision of residential and nonresidential land must be adequately reviewed. A subdivision ordinance establishes requirements and design standards for the development of plats including streets, blocks, lots, curbs, sidewalks, open spaces, easements, public utilities, and other associated subdivision improvements. The Land Division Act, P.A. 288 of 1967, as amended, provides the authority for municipalities to adopt local ordinances to administer the provisions of the Land Division Act including the platting of subdivisions.

With the implementation of a subdivision ordinance, there is added insurance that development will occur in an orderly manner and the public health, safety and welfare will be maintained. For example, subdivision regulations can help ensure developments are provided with adequate utilities and streets, and appropriately sized and shaped lots. Adopting a local ordinance addressing the creation of subdivisions can encourage a more orderly and comprehensive manner for the review and approval of subdivision plats.

Of equal importance is the adoption of a “land division ordinance.” While a subdivision ordinance addresses unified residential developments of multiple units (plats), much of the new residential development in Belvidere Township is by way of incremental land divisions for the purpose of establishing single home sites. The Land Division Act provides municipalities with the authority to adopt a land division ordinance. A land division ordinance assures that these incremental divisions meet certain minimum zoning ordinance standards such as lot area and width and comply with the requirements of the Act. Such an ordinance can also ensure consistency in review and approval practices.

Township officials should evaluate its current review procedures for plats and land divisions and consider the adoption of ordinances to address these matters and/or amendments to such ordinances where deficiencies are identified.

Other Special Purpose Ordinances

While zoning and subdivision regulations are the most frequently used tools for the regulation of land use and development, the control of land use activities can extend beyond their respective scopes. Special purpose rules and regulations can complement zoning and subdivision regulations and further the implementation of the Master Plan. Such ordinances may address matters pertaining to noise, public nuisances, outdoor assemblies, junk, and many other activities. Township officials should evaluate its current special purpose ordinances and determine what new ordinances, and/or amendments to current ordinances, may be beneficial to further implement the Master Plan.

Capital Improvements Programming

The orderly programming of public improvements is to be accomplished in conjunction with the Master Plan. The use of capital improvements programming can be an effective tool for implementing the Master Plan. In its basic form, a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a complete list of all proposed public improvements planned for a six year period (the time span may vary), including costs, sources of funding, location, and priority. It is a schedule for implementing public capital improvements that acknowledges current and anticipated demands, and recognizes present and potential financial resources available to the community. The CIP is not intended to encourage the spending of additional public monies, but is simply a means by which an impartial evaluation of needs may be made.

The CIP outlines the projects that will replace or improve existing facilities, or that will be necessary to serve current and projected land use development within a community. Advanced planning for public works through the use of a CIP ensures more effective and economical capital expenditures, as well as the provision of public works in a timely manner. Few communities are fortunate enough to have available at any given time sufficient revenues to satisfy all demands for new or improved public facilities and services. Consequently, most are faced with the necessity of determining the relative priority of specific projects and establishing a program schedule for their initiation and completion.

This Master Plan does not recommend significant increases in public services or infrastructure at this time, and includes no recommendations for the introduction of public sewer or water. However, as the township grows and increased demands for public services and infrastructure improvements surface, the benefit of capital improvement programming may be particularly applicable in Belvidere Township.

Maintaining a Current Master Plan

Successful implementation of desired policies requires the maintenance of a current Master Plan. The Master Plan should be updated periodically. The Plan must be responsive to community changes if it is to be an effective community tool and relied upon for guidance. Periodic review of the Plan should be undertaken by the Planning Commission, Township Board, and other officials to determine whether the Plan continues to be sensitive to the needs of the community and continues to chart a realistic and desirable future. Community changes that may suggest amendments to the Plan include, but need not be limited to, changing conditions involving available infrastructure and public services, growth trends, unanticipated and large-scale development, and changing community aspirations. The importance of maintaining a current Plan is reflected in the Township Planning Act's, requirement that a Planning Commission review its Master Plan at intervals not greater than five years to determine whether amendments or a wholly new Plan is necessary. Important questions that should be asked during a review of the Plan should include, at a minimum:

- 1) Does the Plan present valid and current inventory data (Appendices)?
- 2) Does the discussion of planning issues and goals/objectives (Chapter Two) continue to be appropriate for the township today and, if not, what additions, deletions or other revisions should be considered.
- 3) Does the Future Land Use and Public Services Strategies (Chapters Three and Four) continue to reflect preferred strategies to address development, preservation and public services and, if not, what revisions should be considered.

Amendments to the Plan, or the preparation of a wholly new Plan, should follow the minimum procedures delineated in the Township Planning Act in addition to measures the township believes will enhance the planning process. The township should seek substantive community input on possible revisions during the early stages of deliberations as it has done in the past.

Appendix A

CULTURAL FEATURES

Regional Context

Belvidere Township is located in Montcalm County along its north central border in the central region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The township includes the unincorporated village of Six Lakes and the nearest city or village is Edmore, six miles to the east. Edmore has a population of approximately 1,300 persons. The nearest urban center with a population approaching 10,000 persons is Alma (approximately 9,500 persons), 25 miles northeast. Principal surrounding townships are Milbrook to the north (Mecosta County), Home to the east, Douglass to the south, and Cato to the west. Approximate distances between Belvidere Township and some other major regional urban centers are: 1) Grand Rapids, 40 miles/55 road miles southwest; 2) Muskegon/Grand Haven, 60 miles/80 road miles southwest; 3) Lansing, 55 miles/80 road miles southeast; 4) Midland/Saginaw/Bay City, 55 miles/65 road miles east; and 5) Mount Pleasant, 25 miles/30 road miles northeast. Grand Rapids, with a population of approximately 185,000, is the largest of these centers. Aside from various small settlement areas, the regional landscape is dominated by agriculture, woodlands, wetlands and other open spaces, and scattered residential development.

Access and Circulation

Regional Access

Regional access to Belvidere Township is provided by M-46 and M-66. M-46 travels east and west across the community and the state, connecting the Lake Huron shoreline with U.S. 131, 15 miles west of the township. M-66 travels in a northerly direction across most of the state and shares the M-46 designation across the east half of Belvidere Township before turning north. M-46 provides direct access to U.S. 27, 25 miles to the east, which provides north-south movement through most of the state. M-66 provides direct access to I-96, 40 miles to the south, which provides east-west movement across the state.

Local Roadway Network

Belvidere Township's local road network exhibits the somewhat characteristic square-mile grid pattern found in the majority of townships in southern Michigan (see "Public Roads" map). The township's many lakes and streams and abundant wetlands break up this grid in numerous instances. Aside from some private roads (recorded as private easements) and M-46 and M-66, all roads are under the jurisdiction of the Montcalm County Road Commission (MCRC).

In compliance with the requirements of Michigan Act 51 of 1951, the MCRC classifies all roads under its jurisdiction as either "*primary*" or "*local*" roads. Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing regional circulation throughout the County. The classification of roads by the MCRC has important financial implications with regard to maintenance and improvements. Under Michigan law, townships have no responsibility for funding road improvements and maintenance. On the other hand, while the MCRC must maintain and improve primary roads at its own expense, state law limits the participation of Road Commissions to no more than 50% of the cost for improvements to local roads.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Requests by local townships for local road maintenance levels beyond those considered adequate by the MCRC frequently require local funding. The MCRC is responsible for local road maintenance. In reality, there are very few counties in Michigan where local townships are not actively involved in funding road maintenance and improvements.

Roads in the township which the MCRC classifies as “*primary*” are limited to:

- North County Line Road, east of M-66 (designated Route 550).
- Fleck Road, east of M-66 (designated Route 544).
- Church Rd (designated Route 540).
- Miles Road, south of M-46 (designated Route 585).

All other roads in the Township under the jurisdiction of the MCRC are classified as “local.” The township’s “primary” roads are paved except for Church Road. Approximately half of the “local” road miles are of a gravel surface.

Also of importance is the functional classification of township roads as established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA). The FHA classifies road segments according to their function – the extent to which the road is intended to facilitate traffic movement over long and short distances versus access to abutting property. This classification is referred to as the National Functional Classification (NFC). The relative hierarchy of the classification and its applicability to Belvidere Township follows.

Principal arterials are at the top of the NFC hierarchical system and frequently include freeways and state highways between major cities. Principal arterials function to primarily facilitate long distance travel including access to important traffic generators such as major airports and regional shopping centers. Principal arterials in Belvidere Township are limited to:

M-46

Minor arterials function similarly to principal arterials except that they facilitate shorter travel distances and access to lesser traffic generators. Minor arterials frequently include state highways between smaller cities. Minor arterials in Belvidere Township are limited to:

M-66

Collectors function principally to provide access to property rather than long distance travel, and frequently funnel traffic from residential or rural areas to arterials. Major collectors in Belvidere Township are limited to:

North County Line Road
Miles Road, south of M-46
West Church Road

Minor collectors in Belvidere Township are limited to:

Sheridan Road, north of M-46 (designated as Route 577)
West Fleck Road, east of M-46
North Lake Road

Local Streets serve primarily to provide access to adjacent properties and minor collectors. Local streets in Belvidere Township include all other roads not listed above.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Federal aid for road projects is limited to roads classified as major collectors or higher. Roads classified as minor collectors have only limited eligibility. Roads classified as local streets are not eligible for federal funding.

The MCRC records 24-hour traffic counts throughout the County along primary roads, and the Michigan Department of Transportation records annual counts along state highways. Following are the 2004 state highway counts, and counts of the MCRC recorded since 2001.

M-46,
East of M-66 7,100(2004)

M-66,
North of M-46 4,500 (2004)

Miles Road, at:
1/8 mile south of Church Rd. 958 (2004)
1/8 mile south of M-46 952 (2004)

Hillman Road, at:
1/8 mile south of N. Co. Line Rd. 829 (2004)

Lake Road, at:
1/8 mile north of M-46 348 (2001)

Cutler Road, at:
100' mile east of Lake Road 84 (2004)

Sheridan Road, at:
1/8 mile north of M-46 . 210 (2004)
1/8 mile south of Fleck Rd. 205 (2004)
1/8 mile south of Cutler Rd. 118 (2004)
1/8 mile south of N. Co. Line Rd. 115 (2004)

Church Road, at:
Flat River Bridge . 48 (2005)
1/8 mile east of Miles Rd. 26 (2005)
1/8 west of M-66 160 (2005)

North County Line Road, at:
1/8 mile west of Sheridan Rd. 1,084 (2005)
1/8 mile east of M-66 . 644 (2005)

Fleck Road, at:
1/8 mile west of M-66 . 210 (2005)
1/8 mile east of M-66 205 (2005)
1/8 mile west of Holland Rd. 118 (2005)
1/8 mile west of Sheridan Rd. 115 (2005)

As would be expected, the township's state highways are the most traveled roads in the community. A review of the counts show North County Line Road to be the most locally traveled road in the township (aside from M-46 and M-66), followed by segments of Miles and Hillman Roads.

There are a multitude of factors that impact the capacity of roads and their ability to assure efficient and safe travel. These factors include, but are not limited to, road alignment, frequency of driveways, road side development, driveway turning patterns, and traffic controls (lights, signs, etc.). It is not uncommon for a two-lane paved rural road to be capable of accommodating between 9,000 – 15,000 trips per day without the need for additional lanes. A major factor contributing to the need for additional lanes is the extent to which road side development encourages left-turn vehicle movements. Recorded traffic counts suggest that there is ample capacity along the township's paved roads for which counts have been recorded.

Land Use and Development

Belvidere Township has a varied landscape. Most is dominated by farm operations and scattered residences, along with abundant woodlands, wetlands, and small lakes. There are two principal exceptions. Many of the township's lakes include residential development of considerably greater density including subdivisions platted more than 40 years ago. In addition, the small unincorporated village of Six Lakes centrally located in the township reflects a mixed-use development pattern that typifies most village settlement areas including residences, commercial and industrial uses, and public uses. Approximately 3.2% of the township area has been developed for residential, commercial, industrial, and/or related urban uses (see "General Existing Land Use" map). A review of some of the more significant characteristics of land use and development in the township follows.

Agriculture

Farming operations occupy approximately 52% (12,000 acres) of the township acreage. Farming is evident throughout nearly all areas of the community not otherwise characterized by woodlands, wetlands, or development. Nearly all of the farm acreage is used for crop production with only limited and small-scale livestock operations. Some of the more commonly harvested crops are potatoes, beans, corn, and hay.

In an effort to better protect Michigan's farming interests, Public Act 116 of 1974 was adopted by the state, and has since been amended. The Act establishes a program whereby farmers can enroll their properties to gain property tax relief, provided the farmland is maintained in agricultural/open space use. There were approximately 2,400 acres, or 10.5% of the township's area, enrolled in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program in 2006. 63% of the PA 116 land in 2006 was located in Sections 1 and 2 in the township's northeast corner and in Sections 25, 35, and 36, in the southeast corner. The balance of the PA 116 acreage was scattered among ten Sections, each of which had less than 100 acres in the program except Sections 18 (225 acres), 21 (172 acres), and 30 (120 acres).

Residential Development and Land Division

Residential development comprises approximately 6% (1,400 acres) of the acreage in Belvidere Township, based on an average lot size of one acre. The 2000 Census recorded 1,367 dwelling units, 117 more than the 1,250 dwellings recorded in 1990. Of the 1,367 dwellings in 2000, 79.7% were single family dwellings constructed on-site and nearly the entire balance was comprised of mobile homes (17.5%). The balance of the dwellings (2.8%) was multifamily dwelling units limited to buildings containing four or less dwellings. While the 2000 Census recorded 1,367 dwelling units, only 952 were classified as occupied. This comparatively low occupancy rate (79.6%) is reflective of, in part, the seasonal population drop during the cooler months when the census is administered. The vast majority of the vacancies (83.1%) were due to recreational, seasonal or occasional use, versus for sale, rent or other reason. The 309 vacant dwellings classified as for recreational, seasonal or occasional use in 2000 reflected a decrease of 34 dwellings as compared to 1990, which may suggest that a greater number of seasonal residents are making Belvidere Township their year-round residence. Of the 949 occupied dwellings, 86.1% were owner-occupied and 13.9% were renter-occupied.

The 2000 Census reported that 62.0% of the dwelling units were constructed between 1940 and 1979, and 16.0% were constructed prior to 1940 (see Table A-1). Thus 22.0% of the dwelling units were constructed during the previous twenty years. These figures suggest a significantly older township housing stock as compared to the county as a whole. The 2000 median value of the owner-occupied housing stock in the Township was \$71,800. This value is far below that of the county as a whole (\$84,900), and the county is further below that of the state (\$115,600).

TABLE A-1
Selected Housing Characteristics, 2000

DWELLINGS	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Year Built (%)			
Since 1980	22.0 %	31.2%	25.2%
1940 to 1979	62.0%	47.0%	57.8%
Before 1940	16.0%	21.8%	16.9%
Median Value	\$71,800	\$84,900	\$115,600
Median Monthly Mortgage	\$618	\$778	\$972
Median Monthly Rent	\$488	\$455	\$546

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Residential development in Belvidere Township can be divided into three principal forms. The first and original form is that of farm homesteads. During the early half of the 1900s, primarily large farm parcels of 40 to 80 acres or more characterized the land division pattern in the community. Farm houses were erected to house the farm families. These farm houses are still very evident and this large tract land division pattern (parcels of 40 acres and greater) continues to contain the vast majority of the township’s acreage.

A second form of residential development is that of platted subdivisions and similar higher-density residential settlement areas, and account for the majority of dwellings in the community. Platted subdivisions consist of multiple land divisions established as a unified development project, pursuant to the platting requirements (platted subdivisions) of the Land Division Act (formerly Subdivision Control Act). Six Lakes was platted in 1879, and the majority of the balance of subdivision development occurred prior by 1950. All of the township’s subdivisions and similar higher-density settlement areas are located in the village of Six Lakes and around its numerous lakes. The originally platted lots in most of the subdivisions were approximately 5,000 square feet in area, far below permissible lot sizes under current health department regulations for on-site sewage disposal and potable water. Approximately half of the individual dwellings in the subdivisions occupy multiple abutting lots, frequently resulting in development sites of 10,000 – 20,000 square feet (1/4 – 1/2 acre).

The third principal form of residential development that has evolved is residences located on approximately one to ten-acre parcels fronting on the township’s principal road network (Section-line and similar roads). This land division pattern was not evident well into the 1970s. By the late 1980s, one to ten-acre splits off of farm tracts had clearly become a feature of the community. These parcels have continued to become more evident. Today, while the vast majority of the township’s acreage continues to be contained in parcels of 40 to 80 acres or more, smaller parcels stripped along the township’s section-line roads have become quite common. Still, the proliferation of such parcels has not occurred in Belvidere Township to the extent it has in so many rural Michigan communities.

This trend of parcel splitting along the township’s section-line roads is commonly referred to as *strip development*, and need not be limited to large parcels. Many of the platted subdivisions include lots that front directly on principal roads. This development pattern has been the source of increasing concern in the transportation and land use planning arena due to its negative impacts upon traffic safety, congestion, farmland preservation, and rural character preservation.

Commercial Development

Commercial development in Belvidere Township covers approximately 20 acres and is primarily limited to the village of Six Lakes including within one-half mile of the M-46/M-66 intersection. In 2007, approximately 25 retail and service-oriented businesses were present in the community. They include such uses as, but are not limited to, septic pumping service, video rental, hardware sales, banking, funeral home, tire sales and service, bar and restaurants, convenience stores, service station, self-storage, beauty salon and chiropractic services. Most of the uses focus on the needs of the local population, seasonal tourists, and the M-46/M-66 traveler.

Industrial Development

Industrial development in Belvidere Township is limited. Businesses include a welding shop near the northeast corner of the Miles/Lake Montcalm Road intersection, a shingle manufacturing facility at the southwest corner of the Edgar /Six Lakes Road intersection, and a concrete mixing plant on the west side of M-66 in Six Lakes. In addition, Michigan Consolidated Gas Company maintains an underground natural gas storage and pumping facility just north of the "Six Lakes." The facility is part of an approximately two square mile land area owned by the company.

Community Facilities and Services

Government Administration

A five member Township Board governs Belvidere Township. Township offices are located in the Township Hall at the northwest corner of Clark and Vesta Streets. The Hall includes a small and large meeting room. The small meeting room is used primarily for meetings of township bodies such as the Township Board and Planning Commission. The large meeting hall is used primarily by civic groups and is available for special private functions.

Cemeteries

Belvidere Township operates two cemeteries. Hillcrest Cemetery is located on M-66 in Section 9 and Evergreen Cemetery is located at the intersection of Dewey and Derby Roads in Section 27.

Education

Belvidere Township is served by two school districts. Montabella Community Schools serves the eastern third of the community (generally east of Miles Road) and portions of the township's east central area. Montabella Community Schools operates a single elementary school, middle school and high school, in addition to an early childhood facility. All facilities are located in Blanchard except for the childhood center in Edmore. Total enrollment in 2006 was approximately 1,060. The balance of the township is served by Lakeview Community Schools. Lakeview Community Schools operates two elementary schools and a single middle school and high school. All facilities are located in Lakeview. Total enrollment in 2006 was approximately 1,720. Neither of the school systems have active school facilities in Belvidere Township. Montabella Community Schools owns a building at the corner of Clark and Vesta Streets that had served as an elementary school prior to the Belvidere Unit School District merging with the Edmore and Blanchard School Districts to form the Montabella Community Schools. The school system has used the building for alternative programs over the years, but it has been vacant since 2004.

Public Sewer and Water

There is no public sewer or water in Belvidere Township.

Emergency Services

Belvidere Township provides fire protection to area residents through the Belvidere Township Fire Department. Its single fire station is located on Fleck Road in Six Lakes. Police protection services are provided by the Montcalm County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department provides emergency service to all area townships on an as-needed basis. In addition, the Michigan State Police provide service along M-46 and M-66.

Belvidere Township residents rely on the Montcalm County Emergency Medical Service for their ambulance needs. This public service is funded by the County through a county-wide millage and user fees.

Public Recreation

Belvidere Township operates a single park. The park is approximately seven acres and is located on the south side of First Lake where Park Road terminates at the lake. The majority of the park is devoted to camping, including approximately 30 campsites that are available to the public for a fee for vehicle and tent camping. Other support facilities include a playground, pavilion, boat launch, picnic tables and grills, restroom/shower buildings, and a dump station.

The one county-operated park in the township is the four-acre Schmied Park on the north side of Townline Lake (Robin and Caroline Streets). The park includes a boat launch, picnic tables and grills, playground equipment, and pit toilets. The only other public recreational facility in the township is the Edmore State Game Area, approximately 400 acres of which is located along Sheridan and Fleck Roads and the balance (approximately 800 acres) extends east into Home Township.

In addition to these local recreation facilities, there are numerous other recreation sites in the Montcalm County and greater regional area. Some of these facilities include:

- The more than 20 township and city parks of nearby communities.
- Four other parks operated by the county.
- The recreation facilities of public school properties.
- Eight public golf courses throughout the county.
- Numerous state-operated recreation areas and game areas including boat launches.

Appendix B

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Geology & Topography

During the Paleozoic era of geological history, Montcalm County and the state as a whole was inundated by successive warm, shallow seas during which large amounts of sediment were deposited. These deposits subsequently lithified to form bedrock. The bedrock of Belvidere Township is composed of both the Saginaw Formation and the Red Beds. The Saginaw Formation consists of sandstone with interbedded shale, limestone, coal and gypsum. The Red Beds bedrock consists primarily of sandstone, shale, and clay. The Ice Age brought four successive continental glaciers across the Great Lakes area. As these ice sheets moved southward from Canada, they scoured and abraded the surface of the land leaving behind deeper valleys and more rounded hilltops. The advancing glaciers carried large quantities of rock materials scraped and gouged from the land's surface. These materials were then deposited during the melting of the ice to form drift materials covering the bedrock below. While the depth to bedrock exceeds 800 feet in some parts of Michigan, the depth of the drift layer in Belvidere Township ranges from approximately 450 to 550 feet.

The township's topography varies and can be generally described as level to gently rolling. The vast majority of the township reflects grades of less than 5% but instances of grades ranging from 10% - 15% are evident in isolated locations. The township's southeast quarter reflects significantly less topographic relief than the balance of the township. Elevations range from approximately 895' – 1,030' above sea level. Its highest elevations are generally found in its northern third including along the south side of Schmeid Road and at the intersection of Tamarack and Lake Roads. The township's lowest elevations are along the Flat River where the river shoreline elevation drops from 910' above sea level, just south of M-46, to approximately 898' above sea level near Lake Montcalm Road where it exits the township.

The character of an area's geology and topography has bearing on development and land use planning. Land use planning guidelines recommend that development be generally discouraged in areas dominated by 12% – 18% slopes, and severely limited in steeper areas. Geology can also impact the availability of potable water, and this issue is further discussed below under "Groundwater."

Drainage & Water Courses

Belvidere Township is blessed with abundant water resources. The unincorporated village of Six Lakes is named after a chain of six small lakes that are located in an east-west orientation just northeast of the township's center, and extend to within approximately one-half mile of its eastern border. All six lakes are located in the township's northeast quarter and range in area from approximately 20 – 70 acres. The lakes are named "First Lake" through "Sixth Lake", moving in a west to east direction. Fifth Lake is the largest of the six lakes, covering approximately 70 acres, and Third Lake is the smallest (approximately 20 acres). There are seven other small lakes approaching 20 acres or more in area spread throughout the township. The largest of all of the township's lakes is Townline Lake located in the township's northwest corner. The portion that lies within the township

covers approximately 170 acres and represents somewhat less than one-half of the entire lake area. It is only the southeast quarter of the township that is nearly void of any lakes.

The “six lakes” flow west, one into the other, and First Lake (the farthest west) discharges into and is the headwaters for the Flat River. The Flat River flows south through Montcalm County and Ionia County, and into Kent County where it empties into the Grand River. The Grand River flows west to Lake Michigan.

Drainage in Belvidere Township is facilitated through its network of lakes and associated wetlands, the Flat River, and the numerous smaller water courses that drain into the many lakes and the Flat River. For instance, Townline Lake in the township’s northwest corner drains into Townline Creek which, in turn, drains into the Flat River just south of Six Lakes. Black Creek, another important drain, flows south through Mecosta County into the northwest quarter of Belvidere Township where it empties into Fourth Lake. Stony Creek flows north from the township’s southeast corner and drains into Fifth Lake. The most dominant water course is the Flat River.

Lands abutting or in close proximity to drainage courses, such as streams, ponds, and lakes, are subject to flood conditions where the drainage courses do not have the capacity to accommodate the rate of runoff from a single heavy rainfall or numerous lighter rainfalls over a relatively short period of time. Serious flooding has not been a common occurrence in Belvidere Township. This is due in large part to the comparatively limited development (impervious surfaces) in the township, the network of drainage courses and wetlands that carry and store runoff, and the fact that the township is the headwaters for the Flat River.

Although Belvidere Township may be relatively free of any regular threat of flooding, improperly managed land development practices can impact flood conditions both in the township and in communities downstream.

Groundwater

As runoff flows across land surfaces and travels through drainage courses, a portion of the runoff seeps into the ground and collects in great quantities in the underlying soils and deeper bedrock. These reservoirs of water are referred to as aquifers. Aquifers consisting of water held in the underlying soils, versus the bedrock, are called glacial aquifers and serve as the primary source of potable water for Belvidere Township residents. The water drawn from this glacial aquifer is generally considered to be of good quality, although there are instances of high nitrate and sulfide levels.

Aquifers can be “*confined*” or “*unconfined*” systems. Confined systems have an impermeable soil layer (typically clay) above them which acts to confine the aquifer and protect the aquifer from contaminants seeping into the subsurface above the confining soil layer, such as petroleum products, fertilizers, and improperly disposed household liquids. Unconfined systems do not have this protective layer of clay soil and are much more prone to contamination. Well logs from the Mid-Michigan Health District suggest that a clay layer is frequently present above the glacial aquifer from where potable water is drawn.

Vegetation

Vegetative cover in Belvidere Township is comprised largely of cropland, accounting for approximately one-half of the township area. The principal exceptions are those areas characterized by wetlands, woodlands, or residential development and its associated lawn areas.

There are approximately 4,400 acres of wetlands in the township, comprising 19% of its landscape (See “Water Courses and Wetlands” Map). The wetlands are located throughout the township but are most prominent in association with the “Six Lakes” and the Flat River and their tributaries. Many of the wetland areas are part of extensive elongated systems stretching one to two miles in total length. Approximately one-half of the wetlands are comprised of lowland hardwoods such as ash, elm, soft maples, and cottonwoods. The balance is comprised of primarily shrubby wetlands but also includes emergent and lowland conifer wetlands.

In addition to the lowland woodlands that comprise portions of the wetlands, there are approximately 2,000 acres of upland woodlands in the township (See “Woodlands” Map). These woodlands are predominantly characterized by such species as sugar and red maple, elm, beech, cherry, basswood, and white ash. The upland woodlands are dispersed throughout the township but are most prominent in association with the “Six Lakes” and the Flat River, and their tributaries.

The network of upland and lowland wooded and non-wooded wetlands is important because of the vital role these resources play in flood control, runoff purification, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitats, recreational opportunities, and supporting the rural character of the township. Wetlands are environmentally sensitive resources and can experience degradation and destruction due to changes in water levels, erosion and sedimentation, filling, dredging, and draining. The degradation or pollution of a wetland area can have a destructive impact upon wetlands and related woodland resources distances away due to the frequent physical linkages between these resource areas. In addition to the environmental constraints wetlands pose for development, they present severe physical constraints for land development due to wetlands, flooding and instability of soils.

Because of the important environmental role of wetlands, they are protected by the Michigan Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Act, Part 303. Wetlands are regulated by the state if they meet any of the established criteria including, but not limited to, wetlands connected to one of the Great Lakes or located within 1,000 feet of one of the Great Lakes, wetlands located within 500 feet of an inland lake, pond, river or stream, and other wetlands of five acres or more in area. The law requires a permit be obtained from the state for depositing fill in a wetland, dredging or removing soil from a wetland, constructing or operating a use in a wetland, or draining surface water from a wetland. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will not issue a permit unless it finds, in part, that there would be no unacceptable disruption to aquatic resources, and that the proposed activity is wetland dependent or no feasible and prudent alternatives exists.

Soils

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, has prepared a soil survey for Montcalm County. The survey reveals that the majority of the Township is characterized by sand, sandy loam, and loamy sand soils. Soils along and in close proximity to most of the township’s surface waters are characterized extensively by peat and muck soils including the “Six Lakes”, Wolf, Black and Stony Creeks, and the Flat River. While peat consists of primarily undecayed or slightly decomposed organic material in poorly drained areas, muck consists of well decomposed organic material to the point that plant structures can not be readily identified. Muck and peat soils are frequently evident in wetland areas.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The character of soils can have a profound impact upon the suitability of future land uses with regard to groundwater contamination, buckling and shifting of foundations and roads, erosion, on-site sewage disposal, and agricultural productivity. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has identified specific individual soil units throughout the County based upon the characteristics of the upper soil layers (approximately five feet in depth) which provides a reliable basis for township planning purposes.

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the vast majority of the township presents minimal limitations to septic systems aside from those areas characterized by peat and muck soils including along and in close proximity to many of the township's lakes and water courses. A primary concern is the soil's ability to absorb and break down the leachate from the septic drain fields before it reaches underground water supplies. Those areas that do present moderate to severe limitations are characterized by soils that exhibit seasonally high water tables, ponding, and poor soil filtration characteristics. Aside from peat and muck soils, the poorer soils for septic systems exist in a marbled pattern and largely interdispersed among the predominantly satisfactory soils. Limitations on septic systems by soils can often be overcome with increased lot sizes and/or specially engineered septic systems at additional costs.

The Montcalm County Health Department is responsible for issuing permits for on-site sewage disposal. A permit will not be issued unless all county requirements have been met. Under typical conditions, sites of approximately one-half acre are frequently adequate to meet the Health Department's requirements for effective septic systems, including a back-up area should the initial drain field fail. Development on smaller building sites may require hook-up to a sewer system.

It should be noted that while a site may be classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as presenting a limitation to septic systems and building construction, on-site investigation may show the classification to be less than fully accurate and/or show that the deeper soils (more than five feet deep) present different characteristics than the upper layer soils and thus, varying limitations. On-site investigations should be carried out before specific land development projects are initiated.

Approximately 7% of the township is classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as *prime farmland*. The prime farmland soils are not consolidated but are most prominent in the western third of the township. The Natural Resources Conservation Service generally defines *prime farmland* as land that is, under proper management, particularly well suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is capable of producing sustained high yields.

Appendix C DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS

Belvidere Township’s population growth over the past 60 years has been strong but certainly erratic (See Table C-1). The population grew from 1,076 persons in 1940 to 2,438 in 2000. The Township’s ten-year growth rates during this period have ranged from 1.6% and -4.7% in the 1940’s and 1960’s respectively, to 29.1% and 45.4% in the 1950’s and 1970’s. It was only during the 1990’s that the township’s growth rate was somewhat similar to that of Montcalm County as a whole, when the township and county’s growth rates were 14.2% and 15.5% respectively. The greatest example of the township’s and county’s disproportional growth occurred in the 1980s when the Township lost 4.7% of its population while the county grew by 10.8%. The township’s share of the county population has fluctuated as well, ranging from 3.5% in 1950 to 4.1% in 1980. The township’s share of the county population in 2000 was 4.0%.

Belvidere Township’s growth is likely a reflection of the trend across Michigan – persons exiting urban areas for a more suburban and rural life style. However, the township’s 14.2% growth during the 1990s was more than three times the average 4% growth experienced by all townships across the state and twice the growth rate for the state as a whole. Still, this rate is considered moderate when compared to Montcalm County townships as a whole where growth rates ranged from 6% (Home Township) to 61% (Reynolds Township). Belvidere Township’s 2000 population of 2,438 places it as the seventh largest township in the County, with Montcalm (3,178) and Eureka (3,271) Townships being the largest.

TABLE C-1
Population Trends & Growth Rates
(previous ten-year growth rate indicated by “%”)

YEAR	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP		MONTCALM COUNTY		STATE of MICHIGAN	
1940	1,076		28,581		5,256,106	
1950	1,093	1.6%	31,013	8.5%	6,371,766	17.6%
1960	1,411	29.1%	35,795	15.4%	7,823,194	18.6%
1970	1,345	-4.7%	39,660	10.8%	8,881,826	11.9%
1980	1,955	45.4%	47,555	19.9%	9,262,078	4.1%
1990	2,134	9.1%	53,059	11.6%	9,295,297	0.4%
2000	2,438	14.2%	61,266	15.5%	9,938,444	6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The township’s rising population has increased population density. Its population density was approximately 30 persons per square mile in 1940 and increased to approximately 68 persons per square mile in 2000. By comparison, the City of Greenville, the County’s most densely populated community, had a 2000 population density of approximately 1706 persons per square mile.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Estimating future population growth can provide important insights into identifying future land use and public services needs. Projecting the growth of a community's population over a prescribed period of time is not an exact science. The many unpredictable factors which affect growth make population projections somewhat speculative. By using several projection techniques, a range of growth estimates can be generated. These shed light on potential growth if planning policies and land development regulations are generally held constant and market conditions do not fluctuate.

The current trend approach assumes that the township will continue to grow at a rate similar to that which occurred between 1990 and 2000 (14.2% every ten years). The historical trend approach assumes the township will grow at a rate that reflects the township's average growth rate between the years 1940 and 2000 (15.8% every ten years). The ratio trend approach assumes the township will continue to comprise 4.0% of the county population as it has done in 1990 and 2000, and relies on county population projections prepared by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC). Finally, the WMRPC trend relies on the Regional Planning Commission’s projections for Belvidere Township specifically. The average of the resulting projections yields a population of 2,886 in year 2010 and 3,272 in year 2020. (See Table C-2)

**TABLE C-2
Belvidere Township Population Projections**

Projection Method	Year 2010	Year 2020
Current Trend	2,784	3,180
Historical Trend	2,823	3,252
Ratio Trend	3,119	3,407
WMRPC Trend	2,819	3,249
Average of Trends	2,886	3,272

SOCIAL and ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The 2000 Census showed Belvidere Township has a more homogeneous racial population than the state as a whole (See Table C-3). 95.9% of the township population was white, compared to 80.2% for the state. This homogeneity is typical of rural Michigan communities, as compared to more urban areas such as Greenville and Grand Rapids. Given the predominant rural character of Montcalm County, the county as a whole also reflects a more homogeneous racial population. Interestingly, though the percentage of Belvidere Township residents that were American Indian or Alaskan Native was only 2.0%, this percentage was more than three times that of the county and state as a whole.

Belvidere Township has a more mature population than that of the county and state as a whole. While the 33.4% of the township’s population that was 24 years of age or lower was nearly that of the county and state (approximately 35.4%), the 39.1% of the township’s population that was 25 – 54 years of age was more noticeably less than the county and state (approximately 43.4%). Perhaps most

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

revealing is that 27.5% of the township's population was 55 years of age or more, as compared to the county's 21.6% and the state's 21.0%.

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

TABLE C-3
Race, 2000
(By Percent)

RACE	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE of MICHIGAN
White Only	95.9	94.8	80.2
Black/African American Only	0.4	2.2	14.2
American Indian, Alaska Native Only	2.0	0.6	0.6
Asian Only	0.1	0.3	1.8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Only	0.0	0.0	0.0
Some Other Single Race Only	0.2	0.6	1.3
Two or More Races	1.4	1.5	1.9

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The township's median age of 38.1 years in 2000 was approximately 2.5 years higher than for the county and state. Like the balance of the state and nation, Belvidere Township residents are continuing to mature. Its 2000 median age of 38.1 years reflects a 2.7% increase over its 1990 median age of 37.1 years, and a 12.1% increase over its 1980 median age of 34.0 years. (See Table C-4)

TABLE C-4
Age, 2000
(By Percent, except where otherwise noted)

AGE	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE of MICHIGAN
Under 5 yrs.	7.1	6.5	6.8
5 – 14 yrs.	14.5	15.6	15.0
15 - 24 yrs.	11.8	13.2	13.7
25 - 34 yrs.	12.6	13.7	13.7
35 – 44 yrs.	13.3	16.5	16.1
45 - 54 yrs.	13.2	13.0	13.8
55 - 64 yrs.	11.4	9.4	8.7
65 - 74	9.3	6.7	6.5
75 - 84	5.6	4.1	4.4
85 yrs. or more	1.2	1.4	1.4
24 yrs and under	33.4	35.3	35.5
25 - 54	39.1	43.2	43.6
55 yrs and over	27.5	21.6	21.0
Median Age	38.1 yrs.	35.6 yrs.	35.5 yrs.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The 2000 Census recorded 952 households and 700 families in the Belvidere Township. The average household size was 2.55 persons and the average family size was 2.9 persons. Of all the households in the township, 58.9% included a married-couple. This percentage is nearly identical to that for the county (58.8%) and significantly higher than that for the State (51.4%). Of the 14.6% of families not consisting of a married couple, 58.2% were headed by a female householder. 26.5% of all households were comprised of non-family households, and nearly all (82.1%) of the non-family households consisted of the householder only.

TABLE C-5
Household Type, 2000
 (By Percent)

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Married-couple family	58.9	58.8	51.4
Other family:	14.6	14.5	16.6
Male householder	6.1	4.8	4.1
Female householder	8.5	9.7	12.5
Non-family household	26.5	26.7	31.9

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The township's labor force in 2000 was comprised of 1,825 persons. The three principal employment industries for Belvidere Township workers, as well as for the county and state, were 1) manufacturing; 2) education, health, and social services; and 3) retail trade (see Table C-6). While there is considerable similarity in the distribution of employed persons by industry type for the township and county, they vary considerably from the state profile. For example, while approximately 30% of the township and county's labor force was employed in the manufacturing industry, manufacturing accounted for only 22% of the state's employment as a whole. Though only 3% of the township's labor force was employed in either agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting or mining, this rate was three times that of the state as a whole.

In 2000, 3.2% of township workers worked at home. For those who commuted to work, the average travel time was 26.1 minutes. This is indicative of the limited employment opportunities in the township and immediate vicinity.

TABLE C-6
Employment by Industry, 2000
 (employed persons 16 years and older, by percent)

OCCUPATION	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE of MICHIGAN
Manufacturing	30.7	29.7	22.5
Education, health, and social services	19.3	17.6	19.9
Retail trade	11.5	12.4	11.9
Art, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services	8.2	5.9	7.6
Construction	7.1	7.5	6.0
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management, and other services	6.9	8.2	12.6
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	5.7	3.4	4.1
Finance, insurance, and real estate	4.3	3.5	5.3
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	3.0	3.3	1.1
Public administration	1.9	3.8	3.6
Wholesale trade	1.0	2.5	3.3
Information	0.3	1.6	2.1

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The township's 1999 median household income (\$33,477), median family income (\$37,717), and per capita income (\$15,920) placed the township in a position of lesser prosperity than the county and state as a whole. However, the township's 7.4% of families in 2000 that were below the poverty level was equal to that of the county and state. (See Table C-7)

**TABLE C-7
Income, 1999**

INCOME CHARACTERISTIC	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Median household income	\$33,477	\$37,218	\$44,667
Median family income	\$37,717	\$42,823	\$53,457
Per capita income	\$15,920	\$16,183	\$22,168
Families below poverty level	7.4%	7.4%	7.4%
Persons below poverty level	10.6%	10.9%	10.5%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The 82.4% of township residents that had a high school or higher education was similar to that of the county and state. However, beyond high school education, both Belvidere Township and Montcalm county exhibited a significantly lower level of formal education than the State. For example, 10.0% of township residents 25 years or older had received a bachelor's degree, as compared to 21.8% for the state. Similarly, 2.8% of township residents 25 years or older had received a graduate or professional degree as compared to 8.1% for the state. (see Table C-8)

**TABLE C-8
Highest Level of Education Attainment, 2000**
(for persons 25 years of age, by percent)

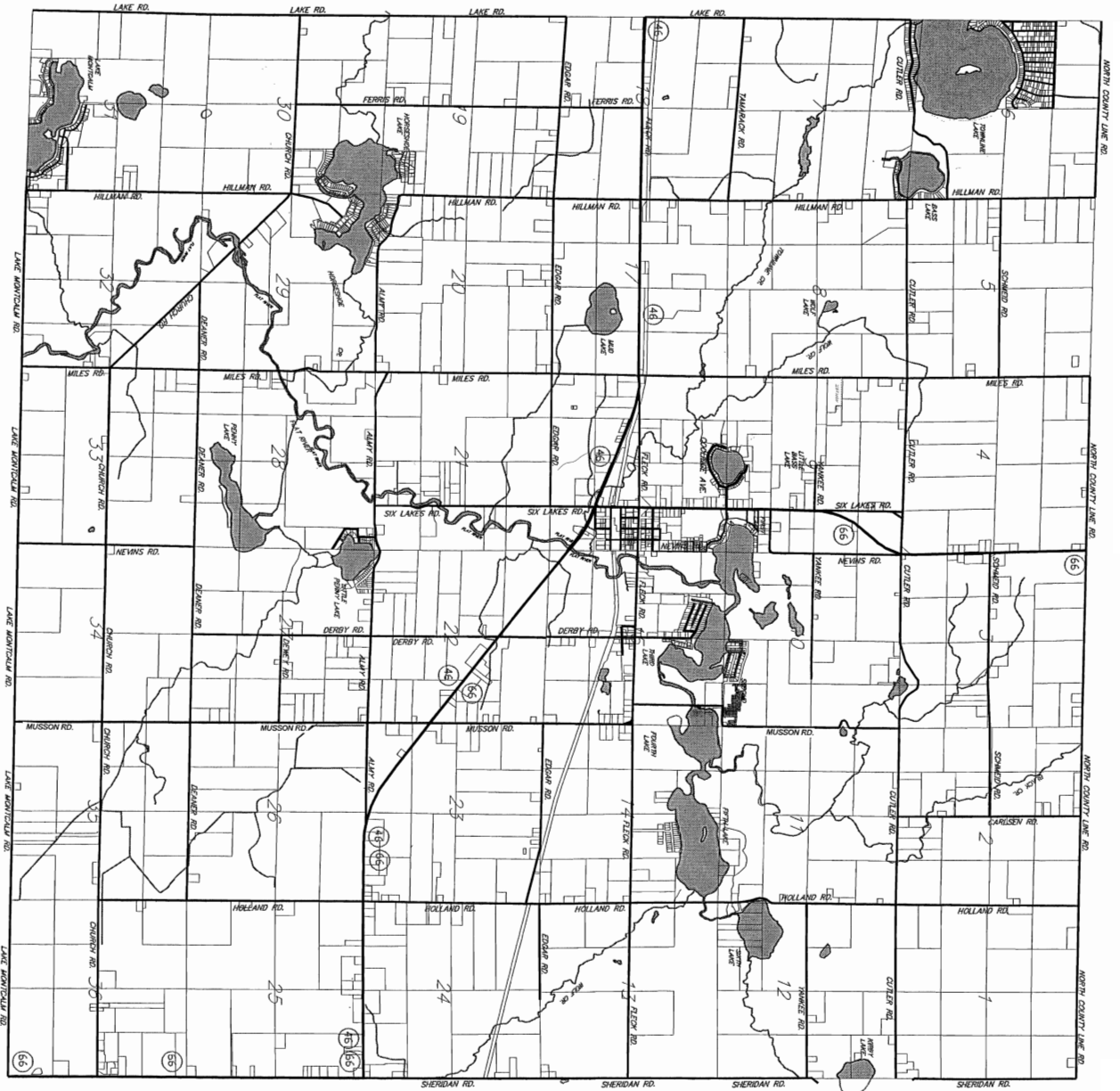
HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT	BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP	MONTCALM COUNTY	STATE of MICHIGAN
Less Than 9th Grade	4.8	5.3	4.7
9th to 12th, no diploma	12.8	13.5	11.9
High School Diploma	42.1	39.9	31.3
Some college, no degree	24.9	23.6	23.3
Associates Degree	5.4	6.8	7.0
Bachelor's Degree	7.2	7.2	13.7
Graduate/Professional Degree	2.8	3.6	8.1
High school graduate or higher	82.4	81.1	83.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	10.0	10.8	21.8

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Appendix D

MAPS

Base Map
Road Network
General Existing Land Use
General Existing Land Use, Six Lakes Enlargement
Principal Wetland Areas



**BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN
BASE MAP**


April 8, 2008




SCALE 1"=3200'
NORTH

Montcalm County Land Information Office
DRAWN BY D.W.SWAIN

BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN ROAD NETWORK

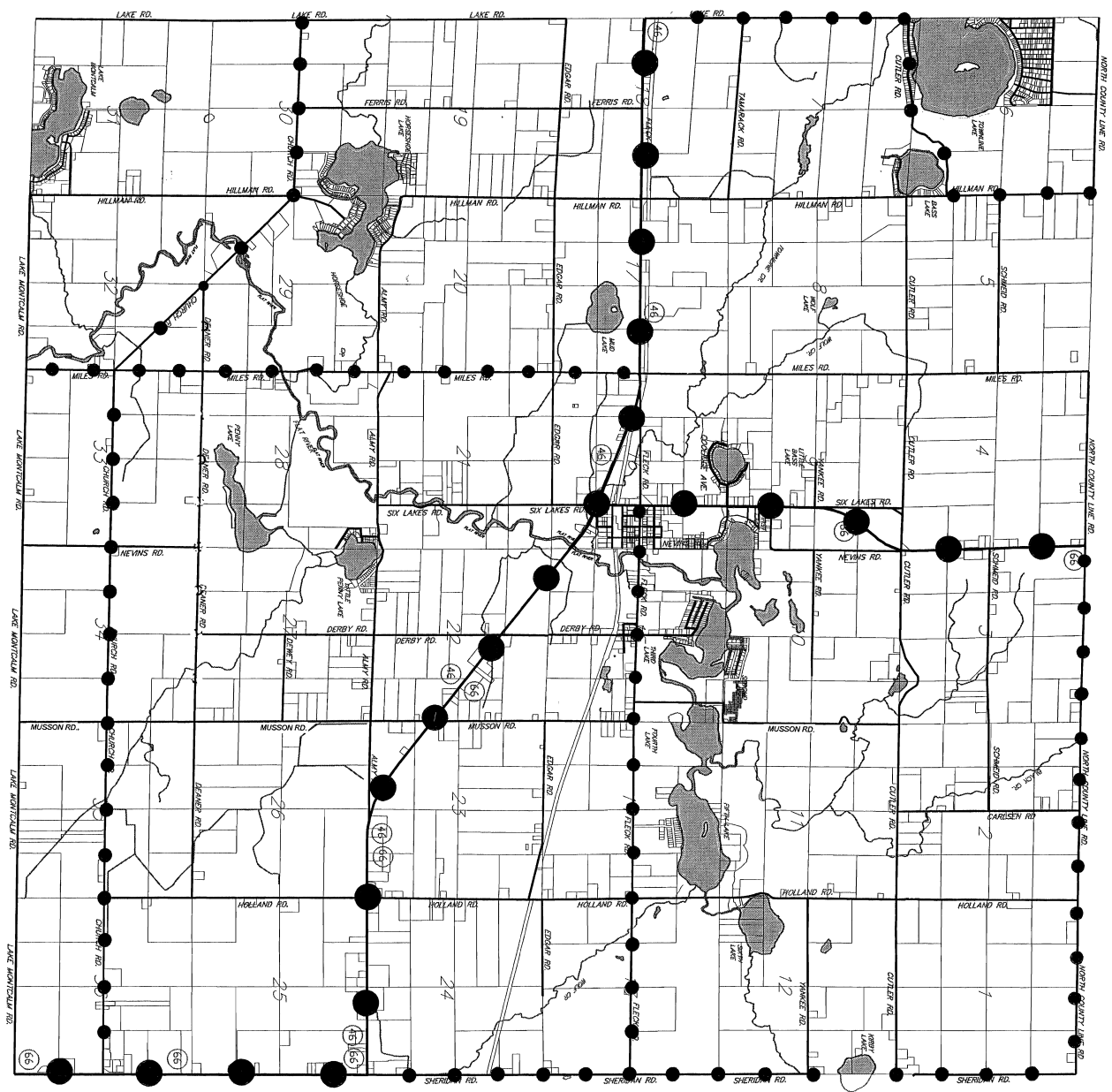
North 

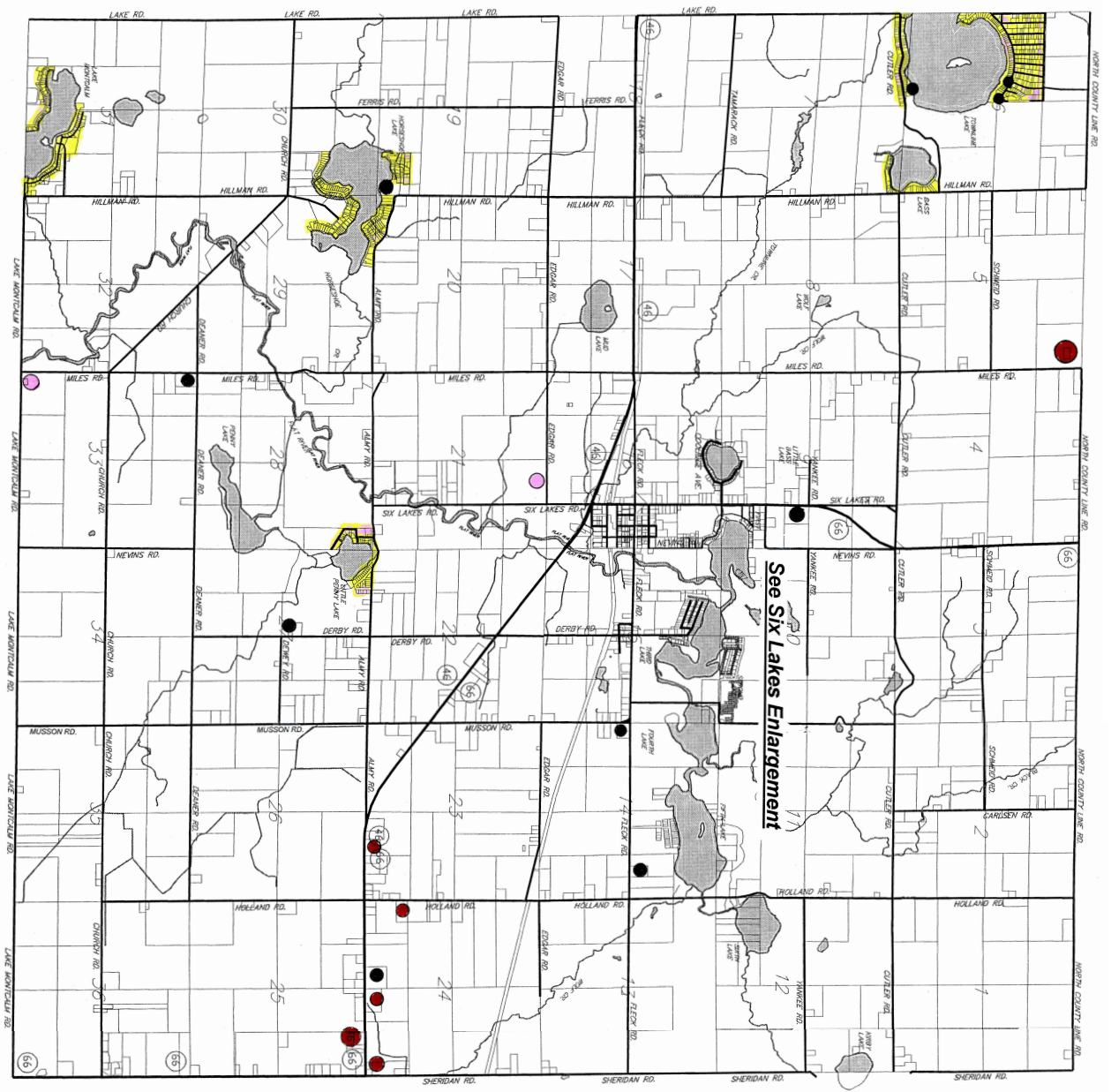
Approx. Scale in Feet:  3,200

- LEGEND**
-  State Highway
 -  County Primary
 -  County Local

Base Map Prepared By Montcalm County Land Information Office

April 8, 2008





**BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN
GENERAL EXISTING LAND USE**

North ↑
Approx. Scale in Feet: 3,200

LEGEND

- Farmland and Scattered Residential**
Including woodlands and other open space areas, and scattered residences (typical parcels of 5 acres or more)
- Urban and Suburban Residential**
Including subdivisions, manufactured housing parks, and clustered parcels typically 1 acre or less in size
- Commercial**
- Industrial**
- Public and Semi-Public**
Including township hall, fire hall, post office, parks, religious facilities, DNR sites, and cemeteries

Base Map Prepared By Montcalm County Land Information Office

April 8, 2008

**BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN
GENERAL EXISTING LAND USE
SIX LAKES ENLARGEMENT**

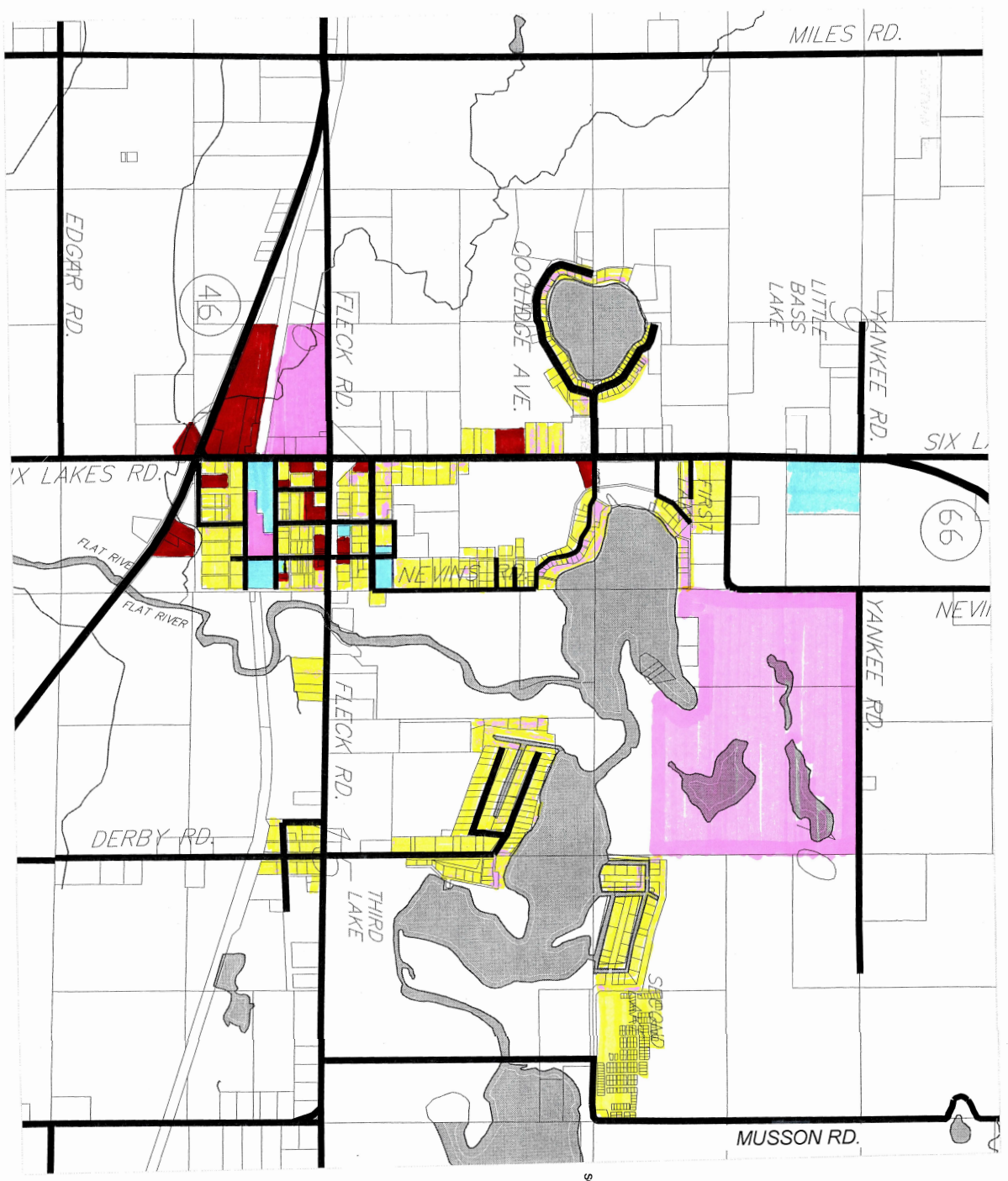
North ↑
Approx. Scale in Feet: 1,000

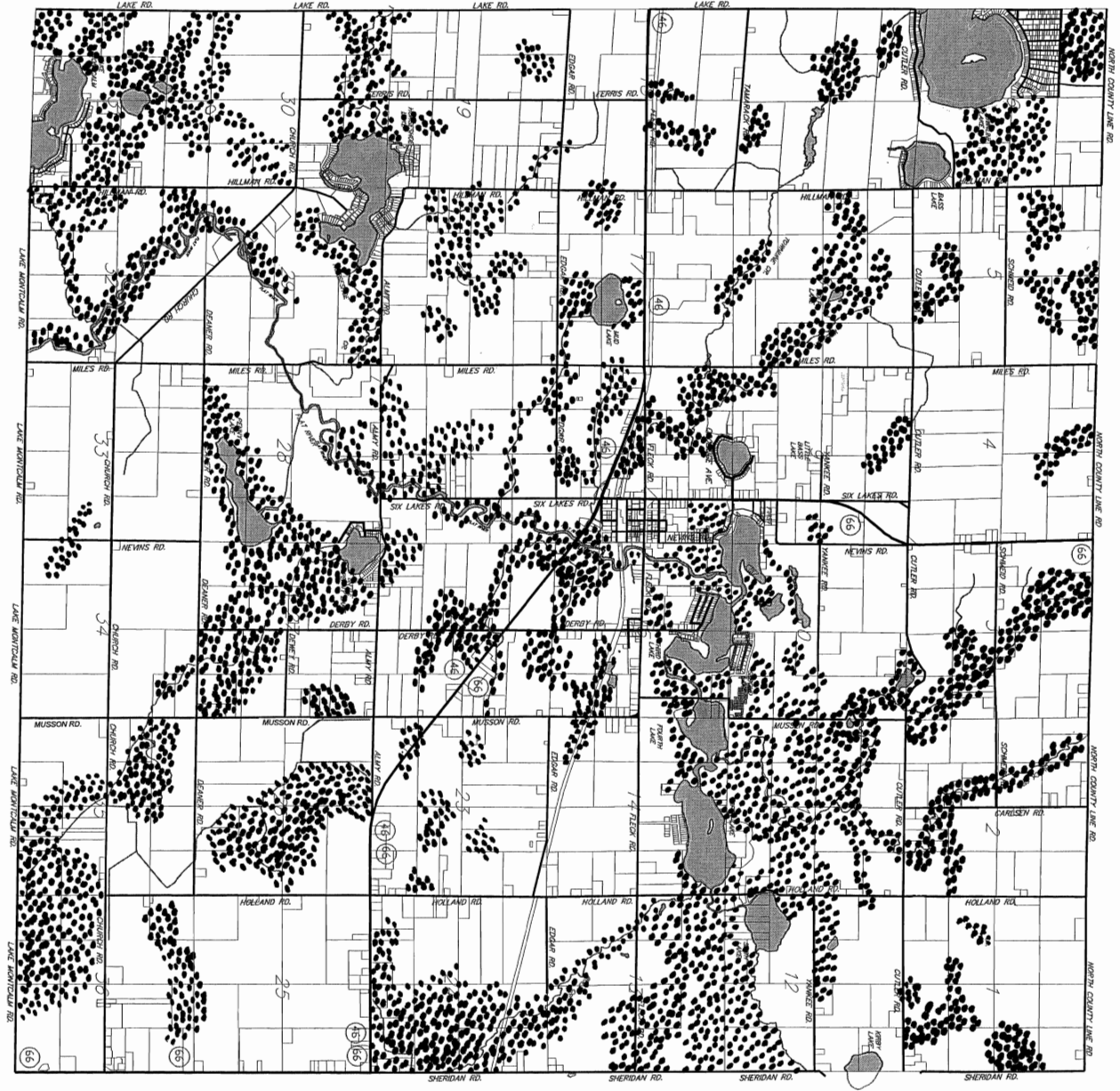
LEGEND

-  **Farmland and Scattered Residential**
Including woodlands and other open space areas, and scattered residences (typical parcels of 5 acres or more)
-  **Urban and Suburban Residential**
Including subdivisions, manufactured housing parks, and clustered parcels (typically 1 acre or less in size)
-  **Commercial**
-  **Industrial**
-  **Public and Semi-Public**
Including township hall, fire hall, post office, parks, religious facilities, DNR sites, and cemeteries


Base Map Prepared By Montcalm County Land Information Office

April 8, 2008





BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN
Principal Wetland Areas

North 
 Approx. Scale in Feet:  3,200

LEGEND

Principal Wetland Areas
 according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources and National Wetland Inventory.

Base Map Prepared By Monticain County Land Information Office

April 8, 2008