

# Land Use Plan

Yankee Springs Township  
Barry County, Michigan



# LAND USE PLAN

## Yankee Springs Township Barry County, Michigan

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the previous Land Use Plan was adopted in the late 1990's, unprecedented growth has continued to occur in Yankee Springs Township. The population increased 43.2% between 1990 and 2000. Barry County is projecting that the 2000 Census population will more than double by 2020, and the 9,219 residents in the Township at that time will be more than triple the population in 1990. Growth of this scale illustrates the complexity of population projection, and the importance of updating the Land Use Plan in order to direct future growth and development within the Township.

The Township is also motivated by large-scale developments that have been proposed near its boundaries that could significantly impact what occurs within them. Both a casino and a Nascar-style racetrack have been proposed to the west of the Township since the last Land Use Plan was adopted. The expansion of Grand Rapids and its freeway system also brings employees and commuters within reasonable distance of most major employers of the metro area. This combined with the natural beauty of the Township and the access to recreation areas creates a tremendous market for future development.

As a result of these events, now is the ideal time to evaluate the Land Use Plan in order to be sure that it delivers the future and the results that are desired. As it has been used over the past four to six years along with the Zoning Ordinance, many have recognized weaknesses or flaws in the Plan that accompanies some of its strengths. This Update represents the effort to address those flaws before incompatible future development renders such efforts worthless.

In order to layout a Future Land Use Plan for the Township, resident and community input was encouraged through a series of focus meetings, Planning Commission meetings, and a public hearing. Existing features and conditions within the Township were also analyzed and considered. Based on all this information, as well as the information collected in the previous Land Use Plan, the Goals and Objectives were updated to reflect the current view of the community. These Goals and Objectives then became the guide for the creation of the Future Land Use Plan.

Just as the previous Land Use Plan needed to be updated due to changes in the marketplace and the existing conditions, more unanticipated changes may occur over time. As a result, the Plan may need to change as well. Amendments are an excellent tool for keeping the Plan up-to-date and current as changes occur within the Township. Keeping the Land Use Plan up-to-date will ensure that it stays relevant and useful and will keep it from simply collecting dust on a shelf.

## *PLAN CONTENT*

The remainder of the Land Use Plan update is divided into three parts. The first part is a Community Profile. It provides background information on the Township including history, regional context, and demographics. This profile is important for defining “what is Yankee Springs Township?” The second part is the Analysis. Here, the Plan analyzes the existing conditions within the Township including land uses, natural features, circulation, and community facilities. The analysis helps to define certain critical needs within the Township so that they can be addressed if necessary. Finally, the third part is the Future Land Use Plan. This is where the future vision for the Township is presented. The vision is presented first through public input, then goals and objectives, then a discussion of future land uses and the future land use map, and then an implementation strategy for how to achieve this plan.



## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The purpose of the Community Profile is to describe the community, as it exists in 2005. As Yankee Springs Township establishes a plan for the next 10, 20, 30 years, it is important to have a common understanding of who the Township has become and what the Plan is representing. This section presents that description.

### *HISTORY*

Originally an Indian hunting grounds and home to Chief Noonday, the first white settlement was established here in 1836 by William "Yankee Bill" Lewis. Many families followed his encouragement to establish farms in the lush, wooded area. The early development was supported by both the Indian trail between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids as well as the Battle Creek / Grand Rapids Stagecoach route.

In 1943, the State of Michigan took control of about 4,300 acres of land in the Township from the U.S. Park Service, establishing a recreation area that now covers over 5,000 acres of rugged terrain, bogs, marshes, nine lakes, and numerous creeks. Since that time, Yankee Springs Township has been a destination for Michigan residents seeking summer recreation. Vacation spots became summer cottages. Now, summer cottages are becoming year-around homes and retirement havens. Each phase has blended into the other resulting in constant development and construction on small lots near and around the six major lakes within the Township.

Today, new pressures add to the development pressure that has always existed. Road improvements and highway construction between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids have made it easier for commuters to get from Yankee Springs to either city. As this has occurred, the urban areas have grown out, particularly Grand Rapids, bringing residential as well as commercial development closer to the Township than ever.

Two major traffic generators have also been proposed not far from the Township's borders. A casino has been proposed for construction in Wayland Township at US 131 at the M-179 intersection. While the proposal may or may not be approved, the area is making preparations for the potential impacts of this development. The other project is a Nascar-sanctioned racetrack, also in Wayland Township, at M-179 and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The mere notion of another traffic generator of this magnitude has caused the adjacent jurisdictions to take a look at their planning documents to determine whether or not they are prepared for the potential impacts.

### *REGIONAL CONTEXT*

Yankee Springs Township is located in northwestern Barry County in west central Lower Michigan. The western border of the Township is adjacent to Allegan County.

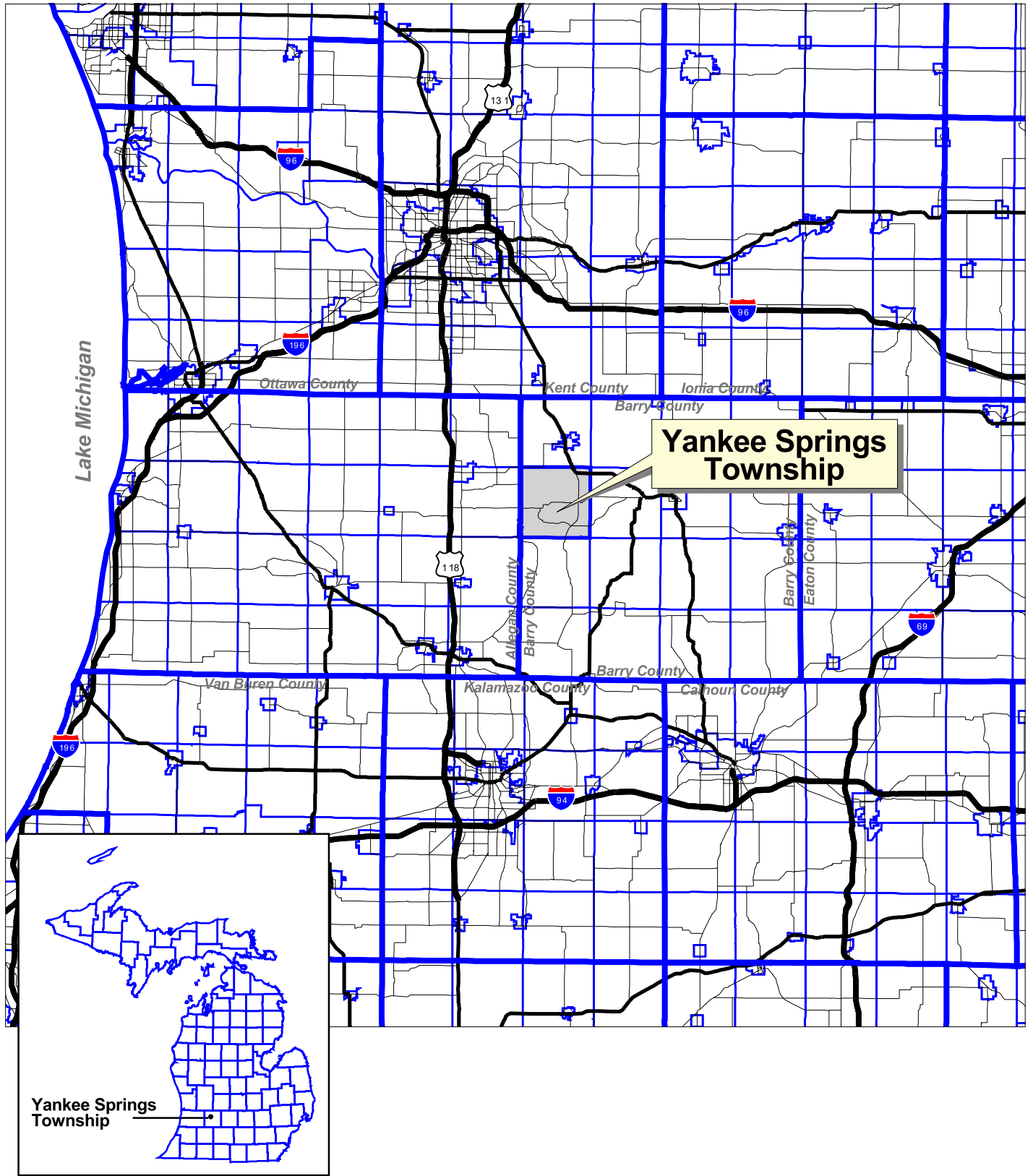
There are two state routes that go through the Township: M-37 and M-179. M-37 cuts through the northeast corner of the Township and provides access to Middleville, Grand Rapids, and Hastings. M-179 runs east-west through the center of the Township providing access to Hastings to the east and US 131 to the west. US 131 runs between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids and provides access to Interstates 96 and 94. Map 1 provides a regional context for the Township.

The County Seat of Barry County is Hastings. Barry County has a Planning Commission that handles the planning and zoning responsibilities for 11 of the 16 Townships within the County (not including Yankee Springs Township). Those Townships in the County experiencing the most growth do their own planning, with the exception of Irving Township, who is under County Zoning. The County recently adopted an updated Land Use Plan in October, 2005.

Approximately 70% of Yankee Springs Township is either water-covered or state-owned as a part of the Yankee Springs Recreation Area or the Barry State Game Area. This certainly restricts the amount of land available for development (less than 11 square miles total). However, it also protects over 25 square miles of open and natural space throughout the Township. This maintains the rural open space and maintains the recreational character of the Township.

A significant part of this area is Gun Lake, the largest of the many lakes in Yankee Springs Township. Gun Lake is 2,680 acres in size with 17.8 miles of shoreline, plus an additional 1.4 miles of island shoreline. The lake has eight inlets and outlets into the Gun River. A dam in the outlet near Patterson Road, constructed in 1905, controls the lake level. It is generally a fairly shallow lake. Although the shoreline is pretty well developed and recreational boat use dominates the summer months, water quality has not traditionally been a problem for the lake. The musky population has decreased to a fraction of its 1950's population, the walleye and northern pike populations have both increased, and an adequate fishery exists for both species. Yellow perch, bluegill, and smallmouth and largemouth bass are also present and are popular sport fish in Gun Lake. (Gun Lake information from MDNR Gun Lake Survey by Joan Duffy, 1989, updated 8/2002 by Tina Tincher.)

# Yankee Springs Township, Barry County, Michigan



Map 1  
Regional Context

Base Map Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources



12/02/2005

POPULATION ANALYSIS

Analysis of demographic information and statistics can yield insight and perspective on the Township’s past, present, and future. It also allows for a comparison between the jurisdiction and its neighbors.

POPULATION

The population in Yankee Springs Township has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. Since 1960, population growth has exceeded 30% with each decennial census. In the 1990’s, the population increased 43.2%. Similarly, all four of the townships in the northwest corner of Barry County - Thornapple (27.9%), Rutland Charter (30.2%), and Irving (40.9%) Townships along with Yankee Springs Township (43.2%) - have experienced significant population growth in the 1990’s. Yankee Springs’ other Barry County neighbors to the South – Orangeville (14.1%) and Hope (13.9%) Townships – experienced more modest growth during the same period similar to the rest of the County. The northwest corner is the portion of the County that is closest to Grand Rapids and US 131. The greatest factor influencing the growth in the population in this area is the growth of Grand Rapids and the spread of the population south from the metropolitan area.

Table 1  
POPULATION: 1990 & 2000

	1990	2000	Percent Change
Yankee Springs Township	2,947	4,219	43.2%
Barry County	50,057	56,755	13.4%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF1; Williams & Works, Barry County Land Use Plan Update, 2003.

Table 1 shows that population growth in the Township has far exceeded growth in the County. Through Barry County’s Master Plan Update process, the County has produced population estimates for all municipalities within the County. A simple growth rate method is used to calculate the future population estimate. In other words, the percentage growth rate for each municipality between 1990 and 2000 is projected over the next 20 years. Another simple projection method is the arithmetic method. This method projects the actual growth that occurred in the 10 years between 1990 and 2000 over the next 20 years. The results of both methods are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2  
POPULATION PROJECTIONS

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Yankee Springs Growth Rate Method (+43.2%)	2,947	4,219	6,237	9,219	13,198
Yankee Springs Arithmetic Method (+1,272)	2,947	4,219	5,491	6,763	8,035
Barry County Growth Rate Method	50,057	56,755	67,847	79,731	90,400

Source: McKenna Associates, 2004; Williams & Works, Barry County Land Use Plan Update, 2003.

There is a significant difference in the projected populations for Yankee Springs Township when comparing the two projection methods. The Growth Rate Method projects population growth exponentially, which is difficult if not impossible to sustain. The Arithmetic Method on the other hand projects population growth in a straight line resulting in a percent population growth that is constantly decreasing. This may not be reasonable to assume either. The reality is that it is difficult to predict the future and that the future population is likely somewhere between these two projections.

Why are population projections important? They help to establish the basis for the rest of the Land Use Plan. How can we plan if we do not know whom we are planning for? Will there be more people or less people? Do we need more land for dwellings or less land? What densities are required? Table 3 begins to address these questions. The Planning Commission completed an assessment of large, undeveloped parcels in the Township. It was determined that 2,967 acres were held in these parcels that could be developed. (That is just over 10% bigger than Gun Lake – 2,680 acres.) Table 3 assumes that the growth rate method projection will occur (the most aggressive estimate to ensure adequate land is provided for the future), that all new residents will live in single-family households, and that the average household size in 2000 (2.68) will remain constant until 2020. Considering those assumptions, Table 3 shows how much land would be required for development of housing at various lot sizes over the next 20 years based on the projection in Table 2.

Table 3  
 LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTION  
 Additional Undeveloped Acres Required for Residential Development

<b>Avg. Parcel Size</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
12,000 square feet	94	208	346	515	719
15,000 square feet	117	259	433	643	899
20,000 square feet	156	346	577	858	1,199
35,000 square feet	273	605	1,009	1,501	2,098
1 acre	340	754	1,256	1,868	2,611
3 acre	1,020	2,261	3,769	5,603	7,834

Source: McKenna Associates, 2004; Cathy Strickland, Yankee Springs Township Planning Commission, 2004; US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF1.

Certainly, not all of these assumptions will hold true and not all of the land will develop at the same density. For example, average household size will likely continue to decrease and some new residents will live in apartments or duplexes. Also, some of the land will remain in use for agriculture or for open space and some of it will be developed for commercial purposes. Considering that, the Township will be nearly built out sometime between 2020 and 2025 if current growth rates continue.

AGE

Age is an important demographic component to examine due to the service needs of the population at either end of the age spectrum. Table 4 presents pertinent age information comparing Yankee Springs Township to Barry County.

Table 4  
AGE CHARACTERISTICS: SPECIFIED AGE GROUPS

	Yankee Springs Township		Barry County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Median Age	36.6	37.3	33.8	36.9
Percent Under 5	7.7%	6.8%	7.4%	6.6%
Percent Under 18	24.4%	26.1%	28.1%	27.2%
Percent 65 & Over	13.6%	12.1%	11.9%	11.8%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000, SF1.

Table 4 shows that Yankee Springs Township is older on average than the County and got older during the 1990's, according to the median age. The fact that the Township is older than the County is likely attributable to the lakes and recreation area being an attractive retirement area. However, the County closed the gap considerably during the 1990's. The median age for the County increased by over 3 years. This is a trend that has been seen throughout the State and the Nation as the baby-boom generation begins to retire. Surprisingly, it is not reflected in an increased share of the population in the 65 & older cohort for either jurisdiction.

The bulk of the population in the Township is in the 35-55 age group, which is consistent with the County and National age structure. The percentage of children under 18 has increased as well pointing to an increase in families within the Township. As this plan is implemented and the future plays out, the Township will want to track these populations of budding families and retiring seniors to assess whether or not their needs are being served. If not, additional services may need to be added.

HOUSEHOLDS

Household characteristics can be used to describe the character of the community. Households are also important because households fill housing units. As households change, so does the landscape of the Township. Current national trends such as the aging of the population, families having fewer children, families having children later in life, and increased divorce rates, have led to changes in household composition in many communities. Table 5 describes the households in Yankee Springs Township and Barry County.

Table 5  
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

	Yankee Springs Township			Barry County
	1990	2000	Percent Change	2000
Avg Household Size	2.67	2.68	0.4%	2.59
Total Households	1,105	1,628	47.3%	21,035
Family Households	931 (84.3%)	1,254 (77.0%)	34.7%	15,994 (76.0%)
Married Couple Family Households	807 (73.0%)	1,069 (65.7%)	32.5%	13,481 (64.1%)
Female Headed Households	60 (5.4%)	113 (6.9%)	88.3%	1,612 (7.7%)
Nonfamily Households	174 (15.7%)	374 (23.0%)	114.9%	5,041 (24.0%)
Householder Living Alone	157 (14.2%)	295 (18.1%)	87.9%	4,104 (19.5%)
Living Alone 65 & Older	26 (2.4%)	96 (5.9%)	269.2%	1,613 (7.7%)

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000, SF3.

Most of the statistics show that Yankee Springs Township is following the trends that are being seen in most communities – the number of families is decreasing and nonfamily households are becoming more prevalent. Although in Yankee Springs, the numbers are not decreasing, they just are not increasing at the same extremely high rate as nonfamily households, therefore the share of total households that are families decreased between 1990 and 2000. There were significant increases in the number of female-headed households and seniors living alone. The numbers are somewhat deceiving due to the small sample size, but these are populations that sometimes require special assistance such as child care, health care, or recreation.



With the changes that occurred between 1990 and 2000, the household characteristics in Yankee Springs have become similar to Barry County. The exception is average household size. Even though the share of family households decreased in the 1990's, the average household size increased from 2.67 to 2.68, indicating that there are still a large number of families in the Township. The increase in household size is contrary to most communities. For example, the average household size in Barry County decreased from 2.77 to 2.59 in the 1990's.

*HOUSING ANALYSIS*

Other than the change in population, the change in the number of housing units is one of the ways to gauge the growth of a community. Not only are the characteristics of the people within the community of importance, but also where and how they live. As the population increases, providing available and affordable housing options becomes very important. The quality and character of the housing stock must be understood and considered when planning for the future of the Township.

**HOUSING OCCUPANCY & TENANCY**

There are two characteristics commonly associated with housing units: occupancy and tenancy. Housing occupancy describes whether the unit is occupied or vacant. Census results on occupancy can be somewhat misleading because seasonal homes are considered vacant because they are often unoccupied during census periods. Therefore, many of the lake cottages in the Township are considered vacant by the Census. Housing tenancy describes whether occupied units are occupied by owners or renters. A high rate of homeownership is a goal of many communities. It often points to a more stable economy, residents who care for their property and neighborhoods, and a less transient population. Table 6 presents occupancy and tenancy information for Yankee Springs and Barry County.

Table 6  
HOUSING OCCUPANCY AND TENANCY

	Yankee Springs Township		Barry County	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
Total Housing Units	2,182		23,876	
Occupied Units	1,628	74.6%	21,035	88.1%
<i>Owner Occupied</i>	1,481	91.0%	18,048	85.8%
<i>Renter Occupied</i>	147	9.0%	2,987	14.2%
Vacant Units	554	25.4%	2,841	11.9%
<i>Seasonal Use</i>	434	19.9%	1,886	7.9%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF3.

Table 6 shows that the Township has a higher vacancy rate than the County, but this is primarily due to seasonal use homes mostly located on the lakes. If these are left out of the equation, the occupancy rate is over 93%. Both the Township and the County have high rates of owner occupied housing, which is consistent with the primarily rural character of the area.

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

Table 7 provides information on the age of the housing stock in the Township and the County. The age of housing can tell us about both the affordability of housing and periods of growth. Older housing is typically more affordable, however it can also have maintenance problems and cause health concerns. Also, by seeing where primary periods of construction occurred, it is possible for growth trends to emerge.

Table 7  
AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

Year Built	Yankee Springs Township		Barry County	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
1990's	763	35.4%	5,185	21.7%
1980's	325	15.0%	2,821	11.8%
1970's	254	11.7%	3,373	14.1%
1960's	293	13.6%	2,703	11.3%
1940's – 1950's	360	16.7%	4,526	19.0%
1939 & earlier	167	7.7%	5,268	22.1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF3.

The results from Table 7 show that over one-third of the housing units in the Township were constructed in the 1990's. This is consistent with the tremendous population growth and in-migration that has occurred over the past 15 years. The growth in Yankee Springs and the other Townships in the northwest corner of the County also had an impact on the County. Although the largest percentage of housing units were built prior to 1940, nearly as many were built since 1990 primarily due to the growth that occurred in the Northwest part of the County at this time.

Most of the housing in the County was built prior to 1940. However, this most recent growth spurt in the corner of the County resulted in the 1990's nearly having the most housing units in the County as well.

MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE

Table 8 shows the median value of owner-occupied housing units in the Township and County for 1990 and 2000. Housing value can help to judge the affordability of housing in the community as well as act as a gauge for the economic health of the community.

Table 8  
MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE

	Yankee Springs Township	Barry County
1990	\$78,300	\$54,100
1990 (adjusted to 2000 dollars)	\$103,437	\$71,468
2000	\$185,300	\$107,100
Percent Increase (2000 dollars)	79.1%	65.9%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000, SF3.  
Note: Adjustment to 2000 dollars made using Midwest Consumer Price Index values: 1990=127.4, 2000=168.3

The housing values in the Township are significantly higher than in the County. This is likely due to the increased cost of waterfront housing and the number of houses that exist along lakes in the Township. Over 13% of the homes in the Township are valued over \$300,000 compared to just over 3% in the County. However, the rate of increase for housing value was fairly similar between the two.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

A Master Plan provides an opportunity to review the development potential for employment, shopping, and income producing ventures for individuals, residents, and the Township as a whole. It is also a chance to accommodate desired economic growth that will serve the needs of the residence of the community in appropriate locations. To achieve the above purposes, it is first necessary to become knowledgeable about the employment characteristics and income levels that exist in and around the Township.

EMPLOYMENT

It is difficult to track unemployment on a broad basis. Unemployment is a microeconomic detail, specific to a particular place and the particular market that is being evaluated. Barry County as a whole began 2000 with an unemployment rate around 3%, below the State average. It has remained below the State average since then, although some municipalities have been above. Since 2000, both the County and State unemployment rates have increased. The County rate went to 6% and then fell to about 5% in 2003. The increase was affected primarily by a national decrease in

consumer spending and consumer confidence in the wake of terrorist attacks and economic recession.

Table 9 shows the number of people in the Township and County who work in various industrial classifications. Residential occupation information such as this gives a clear indication of the type of jobs in which people of the community are currently engaged. It also shows the skill sets that are available to potential employers as they look to potentially locate into area. However, it should be noted that the mean travel time for these residents to get to work was 29 minutes in 2000, indicating that a majority of the labor force work in the Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, or Lansing metropolitan areas.

Table 9  
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

	Yankee Springs Township		Barry County	
	Residents	Percent	Residents	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	37	1.8%	679	2.5%
Construction	172	8.2%	2,185	7.9%
Manufacturing	534	25.6%	8,141	29.6%
Wholesale trade	96	4.6%	983	3.6%
Retail trade	241	11.6%	2,828	10.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	114	5.5%	997	3.6%
Information	33	1.6%	492	1.8%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	167	8.0%	1,650	6.0%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	177	8.5%	1,422	5.2%
Educational, health and social services	219	10.5%	4,587	16.7%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	93	4.5%	1,557	5.7%
Other services	127	6.1%	1,190	4.3%
Public administration	75	3.6%	827	3.0%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF3.

In general, the results for the County and Township in Table 9 are similar. Manufacturing is the leading industry for employment for both areas. However, for the County, Educational, health and social services is next with 6% more than the Township. Education had the third highest percentage behind retail trade, which had the third highest percentage for the County, 1.3% behind the Township. The other significant variances were that the Township had a higher share of employees in the professional and finance categories. These are typically higher paying jobs, which would allow them to afford the more expensive housing in the Township.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The level of education of the population will have great importance in the future economic development of Yankee Springs Township and the surrounding area. One of the primary factors in the location decisions of expanding and relocating firms is the quality and skill of the available work force. Table 10 presents information regarding educational attainment for the Township and the County.

Table 10  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	Yankee Springs Township		Barry County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 25 & Over	2,786		37,132	
High School Graduate or Higher	2,477	88.9%	32,217	86.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	440	15.8%	5,472	14.7%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF3.

Both the Township and County are fairly well educated. They both have a high rate of high school graduation, each higher than the State average (83.4%). The percent with a bachelor's degree or higher is not insignificant, however it is lower than the State average (21.8%).

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Median household income is another measure that can be used to gauge the state of the local economy. Table 11 shows how the median household income in the Township compares to the County and how each has changed since 1990.

Table 11  
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	Yankee Springs Township	Barry County
1989	\$36,099	\$30,516
1989 (adjusted to 1999 dollars)	\$48,373	\$40,891
1999	\$52,661	\$46,820
Percent change (1999 dollars)	8.9%	14.5%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000, SF3.

Note: Adjustment to 2000 dollars made using Midwest Consumer Price Index values: 1990=121.5, 2000=162.7)

The Township has a higher median household income than the County, however the County had a higher percentage increase during the 1990's and is closing the gap. In Table 8, housing values were shown to have increased by 79.1% during the 1990's. This increase is nearly nine times greater than the increase in household income over the same period. If the cost of housing continues to increase this much more than income, it will certainly impact housing affordability over the long term.

### *COMMUNITY PROFILE CONCLUSIONS*

1. Yankee Springs Township has been experiencing development pressures for the last 20 years as summer destination cottages have become year-around homes and retirement havens, but proposed developments in adjacent Townships have the potential to increase pressure within the Township for increased development.
2. Only a limited amount of land is available for future development as approximately 70% is covered by water or is state-owned.
3. Yankee Springs Township has experienced tremendous population growth in the past 15 years and could be completely built out in the next 20 years if current trends continue.
4. The Township is following national trends in terms of age and households: the population is getting older and there are a smaller percentage of families.
5. Over one-third of the housing units in the Township were built in the 1990's.
6. The Township population is fairly well educated and has a high household income.

## **ANALYSIS**

The analysis section of the Land Use Plan takes a closer look at some significant aspects and characteristics of the Township. By separating out each of these layers and studying them individually, the decision-makers in Yankee Springs can have a better sense of the various impacts that each of their decisions might have on the Township.

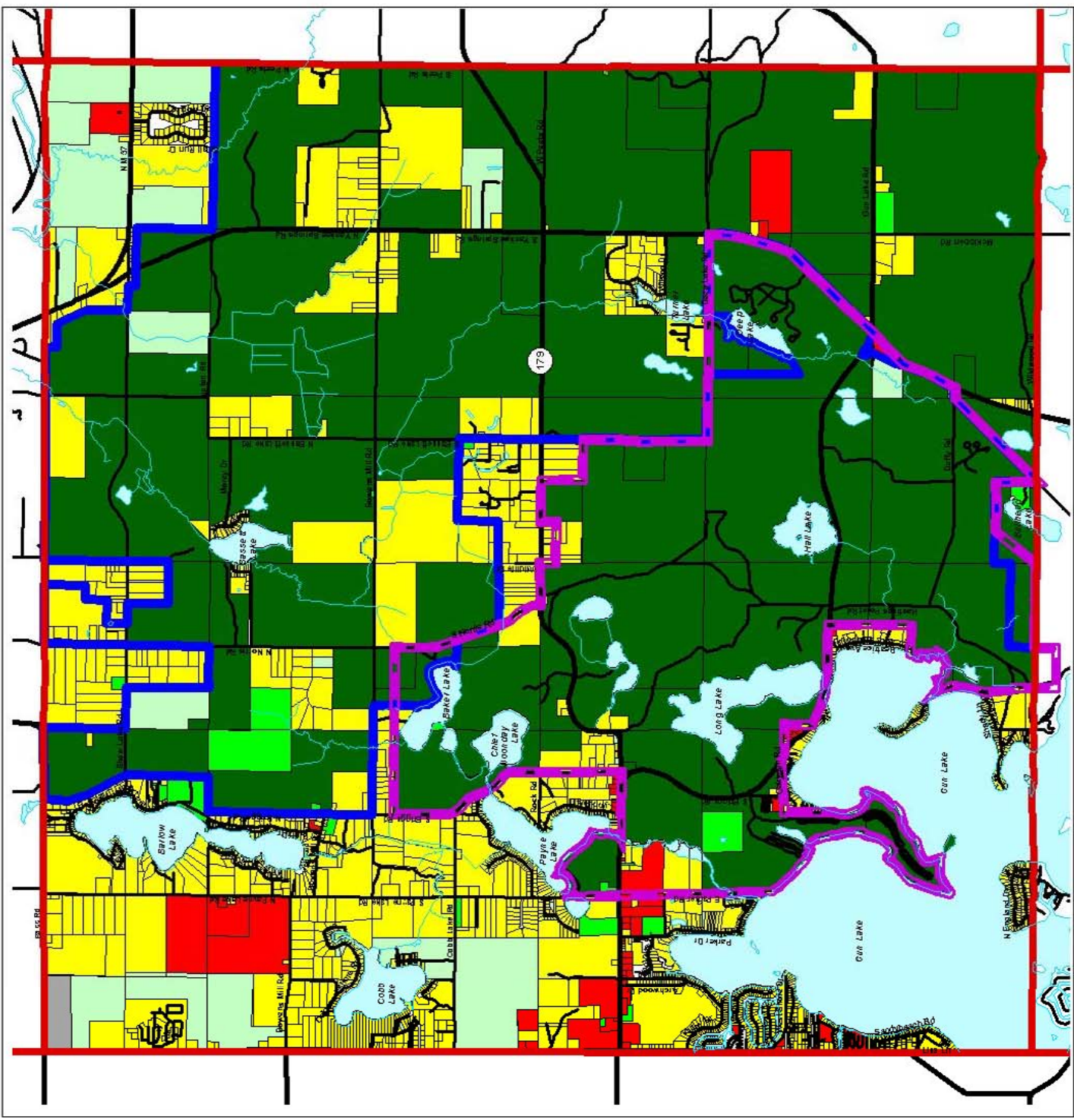
### *EXISTING LAND USE*

The primary land uses in Yankee Springs Township are recreation and open space. Approximately 70% of the Township is covered by water or owned by the State as a part of the Barry County State Game Area or Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Most of the housing development that has occurred is located along the shores of the lakes on small lots. Commercial development is primarily concentrated on M-179 in the western portion of the Township near Gun Lake and the majority of the Township's residents and visitors. Suburban and rural residential development is disbursed throughout the northern part of the Township wherever land is available.

By looking at the existing land uses within the Township, one gains an understanding of the current state of the community and forms an important basis for the Future Land Use Plan. Map 2 presents a map of the existing land uses in the Township. The map was created based on data provided by the County Equalization Department based on assessment data for the Township. Each parcel is assigned a land use code for tax purposes, which we used to create this map. After reviewing the map and the land uses on it, we made a few adjustments to provide a better representation of the existing land uses. For example, we placed all of the State Recreation Area and State Game Area into the same category as opposed to having in several different categories. A few items are unique using this approach. For example, recreational uses such as the golf course and riding stables are shown as commercial since they are taxed as businesses. The following describes each of the major land use categories present in Yankee Springs Township in more detail.

### **STATE LAND**

Due to the amount of land owned by the state and occupied by the State Recreation Area and State Game Area, the predominant land use in Yankee Springs Township is recreation / open space. This land use helps to establish the culture and character of the community as well. The amenities are an attraction for many in all seasons – boaters in the summer, snowmobilers and hunters in the winter, and bikers and hikers in the spring and fall. By protecting the trees and open space, the State land also protects the rural atmosphere from the pressures of development.



- Existing Land Use**
- Agricultural
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Public/Semi-Public
  - State Land

- DNR Project Boundaries**
- Barry State Game Area
  - Yankee Springs Recreation Area

**Map 2**

**Existing Land Use (based on Tax Assessment Records)**

Draft

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08/28/2007

Base Map Source: Barry County GIS  
Data Source: Barry County Tax Assessor, 2006



## RESIDENTIAL

Besides being a recreational community, Yankee Springs Township is also a residential community. Conveniently located near Wayland, Hastings, and Middleville and within a short commute from Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Lansing, residents of the Township can enjoy the amenities of Yankee Springs and maintain employment in the surrounding area. Other residents are choosing to retire here, where they may have already had second homes or summer cottages. Finally, many still maintain summer cottages and second homes, primarily around the lakes for use in the summer months.

The residential land uses can be divided into three sub-categories. First, there are the lake residential properties. These are the most numerous, although they may not take up the most land area. The homes are located on small lots situated tightly along the waterfront of the lakes within the Township. Many of these lots were platted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the cottages were built shortly thereafter. In the past 10-15 years, a recent trend has emerged, as the lakefront lots have become a desirable retirement location. In many cases, the original cottages have been torn down to accommodate construction of a much larger, permanent home, or a large addition has been placed on the existing home. The improvements help to maintain the quality and value of the housing stock, but they are often made without sensitivity to the adjacent properties and the character of the neighborhood.

A problem with these small lots is that the current Zoning Ordinance is not written to address them appropriately. Many of these lots are 40 to 60 feet wide. However, the minimum width in the Lake Residential district is 75 feet wide with sewer, by current ordinance. This discrepancy results in a number of issues for the Township. One way to address this would be to designate existing lots of record satisfying new standards as conforming. This will help to eliminate many of the variance requests that flood the Zoning Board of Appeals' agendas and lead to the land use conflicts and concerns that exist along the lakefronts. However, some responsibility should also be shifted to the property owner or developer to purchase an appropriately sized lot for the structure he/she wishes to construct. Otherwise, the plans may have to be downsized to accommodate the size of the property.

The second category of residential uses in the Township is suburban or medium density residential uses. This is where the majority of the growth that has occurred in the past 10 years has been seen and will likely continue to occur. These are primarily subdivisions and site condominium developments consisting of ½ - 2 acre lots. It is anticipated that the majority of future growth in the Township will be in this category as there is little remaining land in the desirable waterfront areas. As such, the Township should review its land division tools – i.e. subdivision ordinance, PUD ordinance, condominium regulations, land division ordinance, etc. – to make sure they are up to date and accomplish the goals laid out in this Plan.

The third category of residential uses in the Township is low density, rural residential uses. These are larger lots – 3-10 acres – and result from land divisions primarily.

These parcels are often split in an unplanned, unorganized fashion leaving limited options in the future. Furthermore, each parcel is provided with an access point onto the main road, which creates traffic concerns in addition to the planning difficulties. There is evidence that this has occurred in the Township, particularly in the northwest quadrant and along M-179.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is not a predominant land use in Yankee Springs Township, primarily due to the quality of the soil. It is not expected that this will change either, as pressure for further residential development will encourage more agricultural property owners to sell their land to developers.

## COMMERCIAL

Commercial development is located primarily along M-179 in the western portion of the Township. The pattern of development is primarily strip commercial reflecting the modern pattern of automobile dependency and convenience. Each individual business or collection of a few businesses has its own large parking lot in front with its own access point or more onto the primary road.

Other commercial uses can be found in various locations throughout the Township. There are additional individual commercial properties off of M-179 in the Gun Lake vicinity that serve this community. There are others located on Patterson Road and on other lakes that also cater to the lake residents and visitors. Finally, there are a few commercial / recreational uses on Yankee Springs Road throughout the Township.

The commercial uses located in the Township are primarily retail and convenience oriented. These stores serve not only the residents of the Township, but also the many visitors that come to enjoy the lakes and the recreational areas. These uses include restaurants (both fast-food and sit-down), gas stations, car wash, convenience store, campgrounds, miniature golf, boat sales and repair and a market. Service uses are also available, which include dentists, salons, realtors, and auto and boat sales and service.

One of the goals of this Land Use Plan update is to ensure that future development in the Township is of the highest quality. The M-179 corridor is the gateway to the Township for visitors coming from US-131 and the west. The current appearance of the corridor does not convey the image that Township residents desire. Furthermore, due to all of the curb cuts onto M-179, traffic can become problematic at busy times. Enhanced landscaping, design, and site layout scrutiny shall be applied to these properties to ensure the highest quality development. The Zoning Ordinance will be reviewed to determine opportunities to implement these objectives. This may include special gateway districts, corridor overlay and access management standards, architecture and signage regulations, or grants and financial incentives.

## INDUSTRIAL

Industrial development has been limited to the very northwest corner of the Township. Middleville Tool & Die is currently the only facility located on this site, although there is room in this area for additional development – two to three equal sized companies. This space provides an opportunity for economic development within the Township and job creation. However, it is unlikely that the Township will require additional industrial lands until this space is no longer available.

## PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC

Various assorted parcels in the Township are categorized as public / semi-public. This title refers to the fact that these uses are either public facilities or they are private institutions that serve the public. Examples of public facilities include the fire station, Township Hall, and Township Park. Examples of private institutions that serve the public (or semi-public uses) include the YMCA campground, the wireless communication tower, and the churches in the community.

## NATURAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

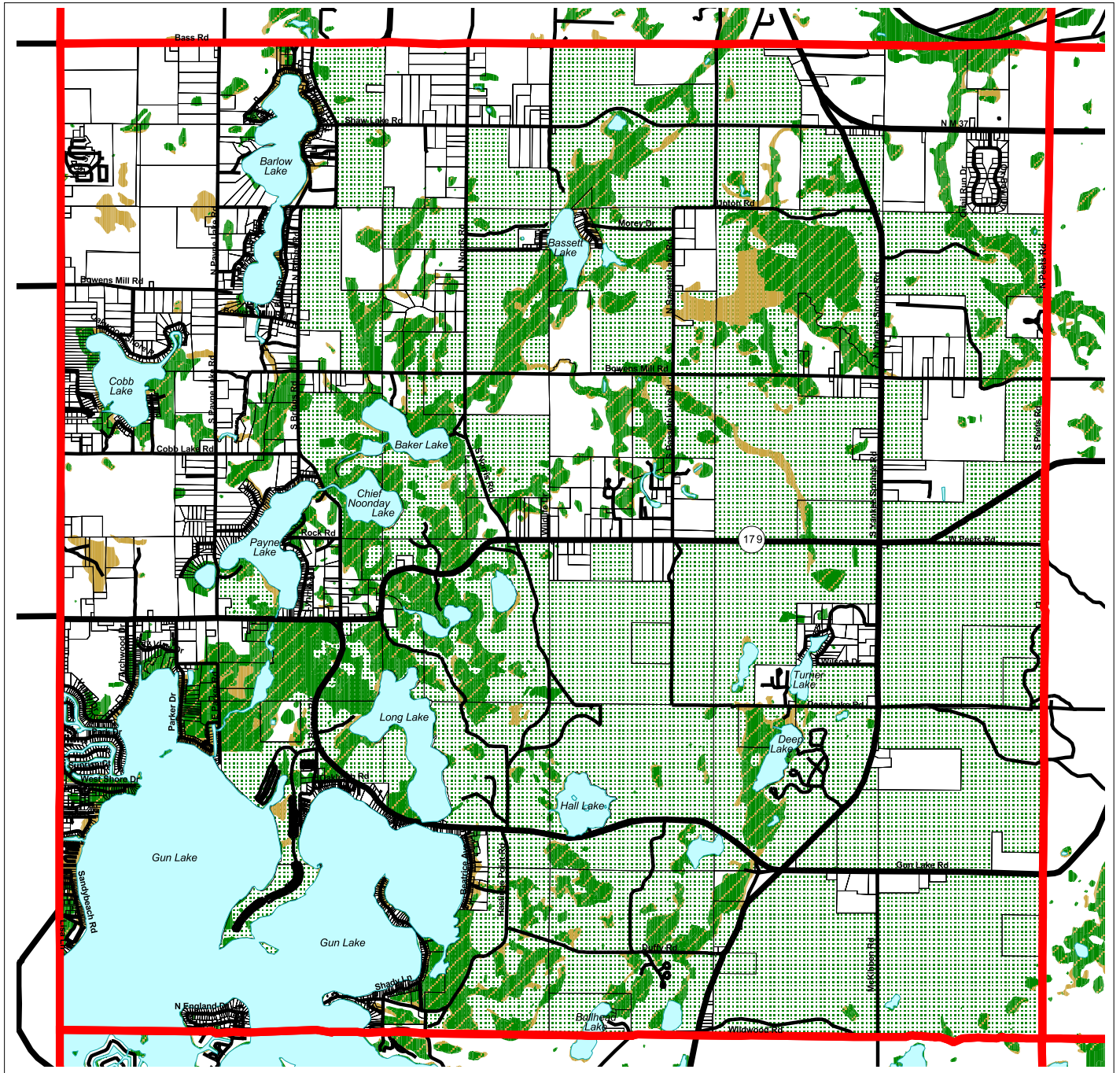
Yankee Springs Township is defined by its natural features – the lakes, the woodlots, the rolling hills, the open spaces, and the wetlands. Many of these spaces have been protected by the State as a part of Barry County State Game Area and the Yankee Springs Recreation Area. As a result, the Township is characterized by the open spaces and natural features that are contained within these areas. The terrain is gently sloping with a few rolling hills primarily associated with areas of surface water, except in the southeast corner of the Township, where the slopes are much greater.

As these resources define the character of Yankee Springs Township, it is important that they be acknowledged and protected for the future in order to maintain that character. These are the very reasons that so many people want to live in the Township, and the development necessary to accommodate those individuals cannot destroy the resources that helped to bring them here.





## SURFACE WATER

There are eight major lakes located in Yankee Springs Township, the largest of which is Gun Lake. These lakes can be clearly identified on the Natural Resources Map – Map 3. Gun Lake is one of the largest inland lakes in the Lower Peninsula and extends into three of the adjacent townships – Orangeville, Wayland, and Martin. It is 2,680 acres in size with about 17.8 miles of shoreline. It is predominately surrounded by dense residential development; although the Yankee Springs Recreational Area is situated on its northeast side, which provides visitors with picnic areas, boat launch, and beach frontage.



Other significant lakes with residential development in the Township include Barlow Lake, Cobb Lake, Payne Lake, and Bassett Lake. Baker Lake, Chief Noonday Lake, Long Lake, Hall Lake, McDonald Lake, Shaw Lake and Deep Lake are all located within the State land and are not surrounded by development. The lakes drain either into Gun Lake, which drains into the Kalamazoo River via the Gun River, or into the Thornapple River, which heads north to Grand Rapids and the Grand River.



**Natural Features**

-  Wetlands as identified on NWI and MIRIS maps
-  Soil areas which include wetland soils
-  Wetlands as identified on NWI and MIRIS maps and soil areas which include wetland soils
-  State Owned Land

**Key Legend**

-  Lake
-  Parcel

**Map 3**  
**Natural Features**

Base Map Source: Barry County GIS  
Data Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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Fish inventories and reports indicate that Township lakes and streams are fairly healthy and clean. Nonetheless, there is anecdotal evidence of algae blooms and water clarity issues at times throughout the summer, particularly in the more heavily developed areas during high traffic periods. It also seems concentrated in shallow, warmer waters. The primary concern at this time is exotic species being introduced to the lakes, specifically zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil.

The lakes are a tremendous resource to the Township, bestowing the community with a number of amenities: scenic views, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. In addition, the lakes are important economically. Many of the residences located around the lakes are used for weekend, seasonal, vacation, rental, and/or recreational purposes. Visitors come from all over because of these amenities. These people spend money at the stores, and their properties provide tax revenue to the Township. Nonetheless, the protection of these features cannot be ignored. Overuse and development along surface water shores can create significant environmental damage to the water quality and destruction of the habitat for the plants and animals that reside there. The Gun Lake Water Protection Association recently commissioned a Recreational Carrying Capacity study for Gun Lake in an effort to determine the limit to the recreational use of the lake. This study should be used for future development decisions and provide a guide for future studies or decisions on other lakes in the Township.

## WETLANDS

Wetlands are a very valuable component of the ecosystem. Wetlands and the plant materials within them serve as filters, sifting pollutants and harmful nutrients from the stormwater before it reaches the surface or groundwater. Wetlands also store excess stormwater and precipitation during heavy rains thereby minimizing the potential for flooding. Wetlands, and the lands surrounding them, are also important habitat areas providing homes to a rich diversity of wildlife.

There are a large number of wetland areas in the Township. (The wetland areas are identified on the Natural Resources Map, Map 3.) They can be found primarily in the center of the Township extending northeast from Gun Lake along the chain of lakes towards Bassett Lake. Many of these are protected by virtue of being located in state owned portions of the Township. However, many are also larger than five acres and are therefore large enough to be regulated by federal law. Nonetheless, Township Ordinances should be reviewed in order to be concurrent with these regulations. Having regulations that protect wetlands is also a priority for the County, and it is expected that the County will be developing a wetland ordinance to address the concerns in the very near future.

## SOILS

Soils play an important role in the quality of the Township's natural environment. Some soils are particularly sensitive, either because of their association with an important landform, such as a lake or floodplain, or because they possess a particularly sensitive characteristic, such as erosion potential due to high slope.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has mapped the location of the various soil types found throughout the County and created the Soil Survey of Barry County, Michigan. This book is a valuable resource for identifying the general characteristics of the soils found throughout the County. Features of soil types, such as yields per acre of crops, development potential, and septic tank capabilities are identified. The survey, however, is a general overview and is intended for planning purposes. Site-specific analyses are required for most site-specific development purposes. The major soil associations in Yankee Springs Township are shown on Map 4.

There are four soil associations identified in Yankee Springs. Soil associations are groups of various soils with similar characteristics that are named based on the major soils in that association. Additional minor soils may also be included in the association. The majority of the Township is covered by the first two associations described below. The descriptions below are generalized based on all of the soils included in the association. Site-specific research will need to be conducted to determine the exact characteristics of the soil at a particular location.

The Coloma-Boyer Association is the predominant soil association in the Township. Over two-thirds of the Township is covered by these soils. These are nearly level to gently sloping sandy soils, which range from excessively to well drained. The major soils are found primarily on outwash plains. Most areas within the association can be used for crop cultivation, although erosion and drought are variables that determine crop success. The major soils are well suited to building site development and fairly well suited to septic tank absorption. However, a poor filtering capacity limit the availability of the land to development. The majority of land that is available for development or has been developed in the Township is on this soil.

The Coloma-Boyer-Spinks Association is located primarily in the southeast portion of the site. These soils also occupy a significant portion of the Township: approximately 20% of the total area. These moderately sloping to steep sandy soils are well drained and are located on outwash plains and moraines. Those that are more gently sloping are used for crop production in some parts, although erosion is a limitation. Also due to the slope, this association is poorly suited for septic tank absorption and building site development. Most of this area is located in the State Game Area primarily due to the fact that the steep slopes make this land undevelopable and quite scenic.





Near Gun Lake and some of the streams that connect the chain of lakes to the northeast of it, there are a few areas of the Houghton-Sloan Association. These are nearly level, very poorly drained, loamy, and mucky soils found in flood plains. The Houghton soils are in the lower portions; the Sloan soils are in the higher lands. These areas are almost always covered by vegetation and are used primarily for recreation or wildlife habitat. These soils are generally unsuitable for farming or development, primarily due to concerns for flooding. Nonetheless, that has not prevented houses from being built along the shores of many of the lakes in the Township.

The Kalamazoo-Oshtemo Association appears only in the very northwest corner of the Township. The soils vary from nearly level to moderately sloping and are well drained. The major soils are mostly found on broad flat areas with some small knolls and sharp ridges. The majority of these areas are used for croplands, as they are well suited for cultivation. As a result, they are also well suited for building development.

These soils descriptions are generalized and based on the Countywide Soil Survey. Site-specific conditions will dictate whether the soils at a particular location are well suited for crop production or building development. However, generally, these are the characteristics of the predominant soils in the Township. Understanding these characteristics and their location in the Township is critical to managing and planning future development.

## WILDLIFE HABITAT

Habitat capable of supporting wildlife can come in nearly any form: open water, rivers, wetlands, fields, and forests. Regardless, there are a number of factors that affect the relative quality of habitat that a particular area provides. Generally, larger areas can support larger populations and greater diversity of plants and animals, which tends to result in a healthier ecosystem overall. Habitat is also of a higher quality when it is contiguous and has not been infiltrated by development or human interaction. Areas on the fringe of a habitat tend to be of lower quality due to the impacts from humans. Therefore, as development limits the amount of habitat area around the region, more edges are created, thereby reducing the quality of the habitat as well as the quantity.

The wildlife of Yankee Springs Township is fortunate that a large portion of the Township is state owned. This land, which provides excellent habitat areas for many plants and animals, is protected and will not be developed. However, as pieces along the fringe are developed or privately owned pieces that separate areas of state land become developed, a priority will be placed on providing connections between habitat areas and natural spaces.

In 2007, it is expected that the DNR will be in Barry County as a part of their statewide Land Management review process. The state will assess the boundary of the State Game Area and the State Recreation Area and then evaluate lands that are available and not owned by the State inside those boundaries as well as land that they own that is located outside those boundaries. The purpose of the review is to make sure they

are most efficiently meeting their goals and to determine if there are opportunities to acquire additional land to further their objectives.

### *COMMUNITY FACILITIES*

A primary purpose of municipal government is delivery of services designed for the health, safety, and welfare of the local population. The responsibility for providing public services to the residents of Yankee Springs Township is shared by several public entities, including the Township itself, Barry County, the State of Michigan, three different school districts, and other agencies.

### *PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES*

Yankee Springs Township is served by three different school districts. The Thornapple Kellogg School District covers the majority of the Township. The district is based outside of Middleville and serves the central, northern, and northeastern portions of the Township. There are five buildings in the district: Thornapple-Kellogg High School, Thornapple-Kellogg Middle School, Page Elementary, Lee Elementary School, and McFall Elementary School. There are approximately 2,910 students in the Thornapple Kellogg School District. They plan to expand or build new school buildings as the district is experiencing high growth due to its proximity to Grand Rapids.

The Wayland Union School District serves the western portion of the Township including Gun Lake. It is based in Wayland out of Allegan County. There are more than 3,160 students in the 97 square mile Wayland Union School District. There are six schools in the district: Wayland Union High School, Wayland Union Middle School, Pine Street Elementary School, Steeby Elementary School, Dorr Elementary School, and Baker Elementary School.

Finally, the Delton Kellogg School District covers the southeast corner of the Township. The district is based in Delton and covers over 100 square miles in Allegan and Barry Counties. There are three buildings in the district: Delton Kellogg High School, Delton Kellogg Middle School, and Delton Kellogg Elementary School. There is also an Alternative High School. There are 2,020 students in the district, including special education and adult education. They have no plans to expand or contract buildings at this time.

### *PUBLIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES*

Yankee Springs Township derives its character from the recreational opportunities it offers its residents and visitors. From the open fields to the open waters, numerous options are available in Yankee Springs.

The State of Michigan operates two major recreational facilities: Yankee Springs State Recreation Area and the Barry County State Game Area. The State Recreation Area consists of 5,200 acres of rugged terrain, lakes, streams, and marshes open to multiple forms of recreation. The Recreation Area includes shoreline along both Gun Lake and Deep Lake. In total, there are nine lakes located within the boundaries of the Recreation Area. Activities include hunting, swimming, fishing, picnics, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobile riding, boating, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and camping. There is camping available on both Gun and Deep Lakes. Boat launches are available at both Deep Lake and Gun Lake. A permit is required to access the Recreation Area.

Immediately adjacent to the Recreation Area is the 13,000 acre Barry County State Game Area. The State Game Area is managed by the Wildlife Division of the Department of Natural Resources. The Area is protected and managed primarily to provide habitat area for the abundant wildlife that live in the area. There are some trails through this area and many bodies of water allowing for additional recreational opportunities. However, the extent of these activities are limited by DNR rules in State Game Areas regarding camping, motorized vehicles, and public access.

Including those mentioned above, there are six organized campgrounds in the Township. The rest of the campgrounds are privately operated.

There are no County Parks located in the Township.

The Township has developed its first organized park at the corner of Parker Road and East Parker Road. The park is located on a 9-acre site and includes a ballfield with a backstop, soccer field, tennis court, playground, restroom facility, and walking track. A paved parking lot and the backstop have been installed. The Township would operate and maintain the Park.

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

As with many rural Townships, the primary utilities of concern are sanitary sewer and water service. Yankee Springs Township participates in the Gun Lake Sewer and Water Authority (GLSWA), which is under contract to provide water and sewer service to portions of the Township.

The GLSWA provides public water service to the west and northwestern portions of Gun Lake only. All other properties in the Township are served by private wells. This is a relatively new service and there have been discussions about expansion, but those discussions have not moved forward.

The GLSWA was started to provide sanitary sewer service to homes surrounding Gun Lake and the other densely developed lakes in Yankee Springs Township. Septic tank failures on properties close to lakes can get into the lake water and create significant environmental problems. All of Gun Lake, including the properties in the adjacent three

Townships, and the majority of the property in the west half of the Township is served by the public sewer. Again this sewer system is operated by the GLSWA, which is under contract by the Township. The Wastewater Treatment Facility is located in Orangeville Township, Barry County to the south of the lake, and it is estimated that the center is running at approximately 60% capacity. The remaining portions of the Township provide their own sanitary service via septic systems.

Other utility providers in the Township include Great Lakes Energy (electric), Consumers Energy (electric), Verizon Communications (telephone), Charter Communications (cable television), and SBC (telephone).

## EMERGENCY SERVICE FACILITIES

Yankee Springs Township contracts for all of its emergency services from facilities located outside its boundaries. The Township uses the dispatch services of the Barry County 911 Central Dispatch for call in-take and the dispatch of police, fire, and medical services.

### **Hospital/Ambulance**

Ambulance service to the Township is provided by Thornapple Township Emergency Services. This is a Department of Thornapple Township, and Yankee Spring's contracts with Thornapple to cover its territory. Pennock Hospital, located in nearby Hastings, is the nearest acute care facility to the Township. It has 90 beds and provides outpatient services to Barry County and the surrounding region. The hospital recently expanded and improved key facilities. The hospital has recently purchased land in adjacent Rutland Charter Township to accommodate future expansion and/or relocation if necessary.

### **Police**

Law enforcement services are provided by the Barry County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police, both of which are located in the City of Hastings.

### **Fire**

Fire protection is provided by the Thornapple Township Emergency Services, the same department that operates the ambulance services. Under the same contract, Thornapple Township provides fire protection services to Yankee Springs. Yankee Springs recently built a fire station on Payne Lake Road and owns the equipment (3-4 trucks) housed inside of it. This enables the staff from Thornapple to provide better, more responsive service to Yankee Springs residents.

## TOWNSHIP HALL

Yankee Springs Township Hall is located on Briggs Road north of Bowens Mill Road. The Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Township Board all meet at this location. The Township Hall is used as a polling place and public meeting facility.

The Zoning Administrator, Supervisor, and Clerk all use the hall for office space and have regular office hours for Township business.

#### ZONING & BUILDING PERMITS

Zoning permits are approved by the Planning Commission. However, the Planning Commission may delegate this task for all or certain types of develop to the Township Zoning Administrator. Once the Yankee Springs Township Planning Commission, or its delegate, has issued a zoning permit, applicants can apply for a building permit, which is issued by PCI, a private company, on behalf of the Township.

#### CEMETERIES

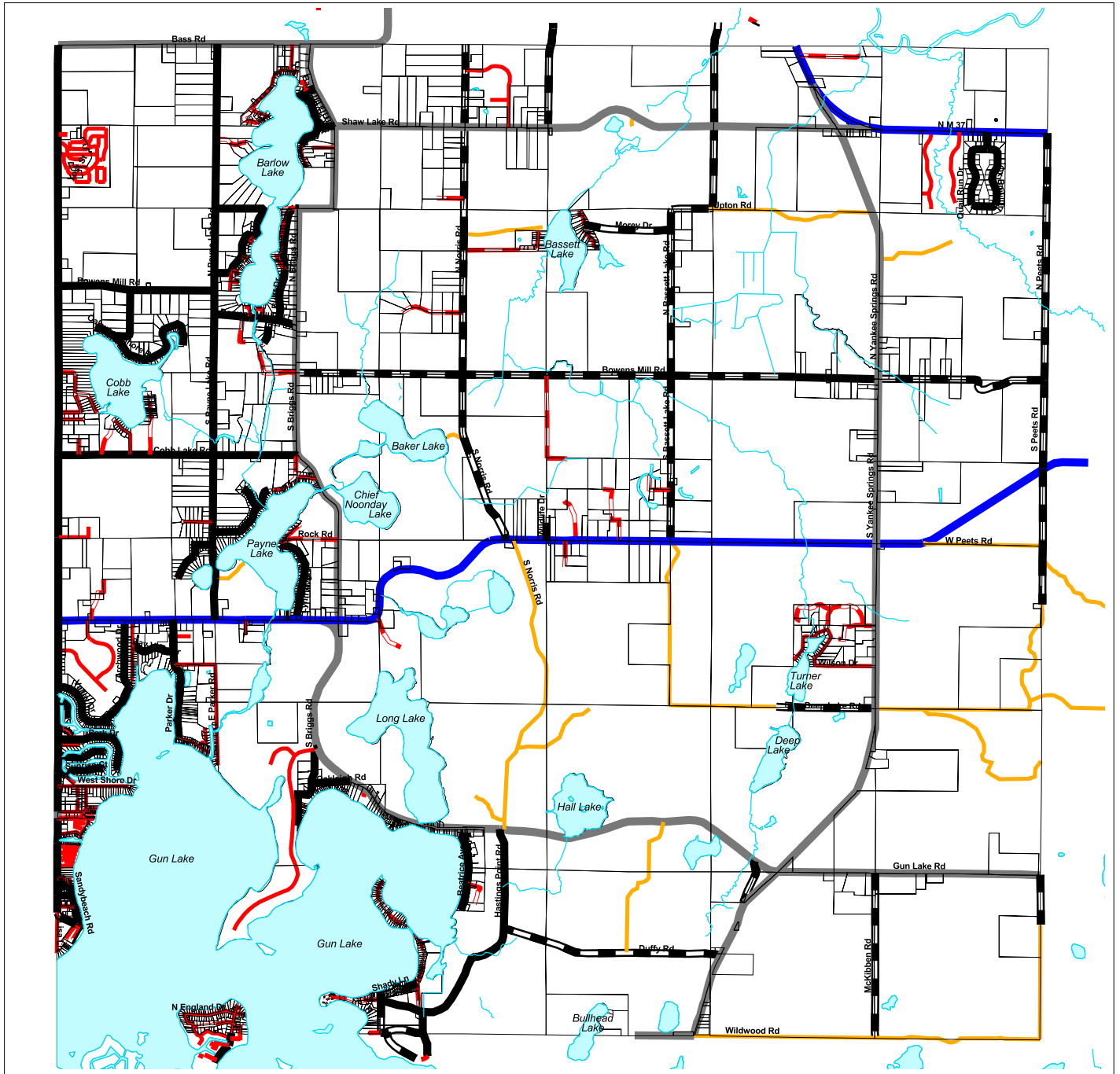
There are six cemeteries in Township. They range in size and are located throughout the Township. The six cemeteries are Yankee Springs Cemetery, Coman Cemetery, Robbins Cemetery, Bowerman Cemetery, Hill Cemetery, and the Roman Catholic Cemetery of the Archdiocese of Kalamazoo Cemetery.

#### *CIRCULATION*








The transportation network of Yankee Springs Township is vital to the daily function, safety, and vitality of residents, visitors, and commerce. This network consists of streets, roads, and trails. There are no railroad tracks, airports, or mass transit stops in the Township. In order to most efficiently plan for future land uses, it is necessary to categorize and analyze the transportation characteristics that currently exist within the Township.

The Barry County Road Commission is the entity primarily responsible for road maintenance within Yankee Springs Township. The Township shares the cost of maintenance for the local and residential roads. However, a number of residential roads within developments are private and are maintained by the homeowner's association within the development. There are also a number of trails on the state land within the Township that are maintained by the State Department of Natural Resources.

Map 5 displays the road network in Yankee Springs Township and the classification of each road.



**Road Classification**

-  County Local (Paved)
-  County Local (Gravel)
-  County Primary (Paved)
-  Highway
-  Residential (Gravel)
-  Residential (Paved)
-  TR

**Key Legend**

-  Lake
-  Parcel

**Map 5  
Road Classification**

Base Map Source: Barry County GIS  
Data Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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## EXISTING CIRCULATION NETWORK

Whether or not the existing transportation network in Yankee Springs Township adequately supports the growing population and demand that is placed on it depends on the person being asked and the time of year they are asked. The majority of the population lives in the western portion of the Township, where traffic concerns and backups are an issue. Most of the eastern portion of the Township is State owned land with few roads cutting across it. With limited development to participate in creation and improvement of a road network and the financial limitations of the Township's road budget, these roads are often unpaved, which is an issue for some of these residents in the Eastern portion of the Township. With a number of lakes interrupting circulation patterns as well, the road network does have its issues.

There are three roads that provide primary east-west access across the Township: (M-179, Gun Lake Road, and Shaw Lake Road. Bowens Mill Road does as well but is unpaved. However, only M-179 actually spans the entire Township. There are also three roads used for primary north-south travel: Yankee Springs Road, Briggs Road, and Patterson Road. However, once again, only Yankee Springs Road spans the entire Township, and it is located away from the highest density of development; it serves as much through traffic as internal traffic. Patterson Road also runs for the entire length of the Township, but the southern portion follows the Gun Lake shoreline into Wayland Township. M-37, the only other highway in the Township cuts through the very northeast corner of the Township.

The road network not only connects residents within the Township, but it also connects them to communities outside the Township. M-179 runs east to Hastings and west to US-131, which provides freeway access to Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. M-37 also provides access to Hastings as well as to Middleville, Caledonia, and Grand Rapids. Yankee Springs Road, Gun Lake Road, and Patterson Road are all significant roads that can be used to travel between adjacent communities.

As stated previously, there is no railroad in Yankee Springs Township. The Hastings City / Barry County Airport is the only airport facility in the County. It is in neighboring Rutland Charter Township, and provides corporate and recreational services to the County. It has one paved runway and two grass runways, but there are plans being made for expansion of the facility and an additional paved runway. Commercial jet service is available through the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (Grand Rapids) and the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek International Airport.

## ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Of the nearly 119 miles of roads in the Township, only the 8.45 miles of M-179 and M-37 are classified as highways. These roads are under the jurisdiction of M-DOT. Almost 22 miles of roads are considered County Primary Roads and are under the jurisdiction of the Barry County Road Commission. These roads are paved and maintained by the County. They serve as arterials to move traffic from point to point in

and out of the Township. There are nearly 45 miles of County local roads, which serve to deliver vehicles from residential roads and neighborhoods to the Primary Roads and Highways. Local Roads are under the jurisdiction of the Barry County Road Commission and are maintained by the Township.

There are also a significant number of private roads in the Township, particularly around the lakes and in the residential developments. In some cases, the County maintains these roads under a special assessment district agreement. The County does the maintenance, the Township is billed for the work, and the Township passes the costs on to the individuals that live along the private street via assessments. In other cases where these agreements have not been established, it is up to the owners to maintain the private drive on their own according to their homeowner's agreements. Private roads can be problematic. New homeowners often do not understand that they are now responsible for the maintenance of the road, not the Township. This can be particularly confusing when assessments are charged for maintenance costs. Private roads also tend to be built below Road Commission standards, which can create maintenance problems as well as problems for emergency providers. The Township may want to consider requiring all future developers to dedicate their roads to the County in order to avoid these problems in the future.

There are two types of private roads in the Township. There are 27.75 miles of private roads that are located in subdivisions and around the lakes that are developed. About half of these are paved and half are non-paved. There are also 15.6 miles of unpaved trails located on the State property. The trails are used to access various portions of the property and are maintained by the State.

#### NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Non-motorized transportation refers to bicycles, pedestrians, and other forms of transportation other than motorized vehicles. Due to the large amount of land available for recreation in the Township, there is a significant amount of non-motorized transportation in the Township. Although most of the roads in the Township do not have sidewalks, including the new subdivisions and developments, this does not deter pedestrians from getting out of their houses and walking around the Township. Typically these walks are for pleasure and recreation more so than for transportation purposes, and pedestrians are more often found in the neighborhoods surrounding the lakes than in the less densely populated portions of the Township.

Bicycle riding is another popular form of recreation in the Township. Again, most people will ride bicycles for enjoyment and exercise on nice days. However, the State Recreation Area is well known for its system of mountain bike trails and hosts annual races in the summer. This brings bikers from throughout the state to the Township for biking. Besides these unpaved paths on the State land, there are no dedicated pathways for bicycling. However, some of the roads have recently been widened slightly during repairing projects to accommodate space for bicycling, including Patterson Road and M-179.



## OTHER TRANSPORTATION

As a large recreation area, there are other forms of transportation that are a factor in Yankee Springs Township that sometimes are not considered in other areas. In the winter, snowmobiling is a significant activity in the Township. The State Recreation Area and State Game Area are popular areas for people from throughout the region to drive their snowmobiles.

The twin brothers of snowmobiles are boats. Boats are a very popular form of summer recreation on the many lakes in Yankee Springs Township. Most of the residents that live on the lakes have their own boats, and most lakes have a public access site for others to drop-in boats. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Gun Lake is the busiest lake and has become almost dangerous on warm summer weekends.

Both of these forms of recreational transportation can have positive and negative impacts on the Township. Having the ability to utilize these “toys” and take advantage of these natural resources is wonderful for the Township residents to enjoy. Plus, as visitors come to enjoy it, they spend money at Township businesses. But, both snowmobiles and boats can be dangerous and can impact the beauty and serenity that attract many to the Township to begin with. If there are ways to limit these impacts, those should be explored.

## CIRCULATION PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

### **Access Management**

It is very important to manage points of access (driveways, curbcuts) to any highway or primary road to ensure traffic safety and efficiency. As new development and redevelopment occurs within the Township, attention must be given to driveway spacing, design, potential for shared access, number of driveways per site, sight lines, and the need for acceleration and deceleration lanes. These items must be addressed during the site plan review process.

Access Management is of particular concern along M-179 and M-37. These are the areas of the Township most likely to see commercial growth and expansion. Whether the Access Management solution is as simple as a shared driveway or as much as a secondary access road, the focus is maintaining traffic flows on the major arteries within the Township. The M-37 Access Management Plan, created by MDOT and some Barry County communities, may be of some assistance.

**Circulation Pattern**

The road system in Yankee Springs Township is fairly well established. Due to the bodies of water and the State protected lands, it is unlikely that any collector or arterial roads could be constructed that would significantly improve the circulation pattern in the Township.

However, on a more local level, circulation patterns could be improved. The road networks in most developments and subdivisions that have been approved and constructed over the past ten years are all self-contained and exit to the primary road out of one or two places. There are no opportunities to connect adjacent developments or neighborhoods with an internal street network. So, in order for neighbors in adjacent developments to drive from one house to the other, they would have to go out to the primary road. Allowing for the establishment of an internal street network begins to create a larger neighborhood and community fabric, alleviates traffic and congestion on the main roads, and reduces time spent driving.

**Recreation Heritage Route**

M-179 is designated as a Recreation Heritage Route by MDOT. It gets special signage, recognition in official state maps, and a write-up on the MDOT website. The Township should seek other opportunities to leverage this designation. For example, the Township could apply for an MDOT Enhancement grant to improve the signage at the corner of M-179 and Patterson Road. The Heritage Route designation as well as the fact that this corner was designated by the State in its inventory of Aesthetic Project Opportunities in 2001 could help the application.

Regardless of grant potential, the Recreation Heritage Route is also a marketing possibility that is not being fully utilized. Without identifying specific businesses, lakes, or parks, simply identifying this route indicates that there are a wealth of recreational possibilities in the Township.

**Natural Beauty Roads**

MCL 247.381 gives County Road Commissions the authority to designate stretches of roads as Natural Beauty Roads. By doing this, the landscape and scenery along the roads is protected during road improvements and other periods of development. The Planning Commission and Township should engage in a process to designate potential Natural Beauty Roads and then work with the Barry County Road Commission to have these roads designated. Potential Natural Beauty Roads in the Township include Yankee Springs Road, Shaw Lake Road, Bowens Mill Road, Peets Road, Norris Road, Briggs Road, and Bassett Lake Road.

**Nonmotorized Traffic**

As the Township continues to grow, an increased demand for non-motorized traffic will be created. Demand will be further increased as commercial uses grow and expand and residents walk and bike to these uses as well. The Township should encourage the installation of sidewalks, bikepaths, pathways, and crosswalks in appropriate areas of the Township. New residential and non-residential development should be required to

provide accommodations for nonmotorized traffic along internal and external roadways or other pedestrian amenities.

**Future Right of Way**

There is a possibility in the future, maybe distant future that one or more roads in the Township will need to be expanded to accommodate additional traffic demands. The most likely is M-179 as well as possibly M-37 and Patterson Road. When roads need to be expanded, a significant part of the cost is the acquisition of right of way. The right of way is very valuable to property owners when the road expansion will cause them to have to move from their home or relocate their business. However, if the right of way that is being acquired is “unusable” setback land that is far away from their structure, the value is diminished.

As properties and corridors redevelop, this is a tool to consider when establishing setbacks in order to preserve land for future right of way use and limit the costs of future road expansion projects.

*ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS*

1. Although the majority of the land in the Township is dedicated to recreation and open space by virtue of it being owned by the State, the amount of residential land has expanded in the last 7 years as development within the Township has accelerated.
2. Natural features define the Township, particularly the many bodies of surface water. These provide recreational, economical, and residential benefits for all to enjoy.
3. Soil descriptions from the Soil Survey accurately describe existing use conditions; soils should be used to further influence land use decisions.
4. Recreation is the predominant Community Facility with many visitors drawn each year to the Yankee Springs Recreation Area and the Barry County State Game Area.
5. The existing circulation network is generally acceptable, although improvements could be made on a local level as sites are improved or developed.
6. Further efforts should be made to provide transportation alternatives for pedestrians, bicycles, and other forms of nonmotorized transportation.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

The input of Township residents is fundamental in crafting land use goals, objectives and policies that reflect their desires for their community. The following chapter outlines the processes and community input received from Township residents and stakeholders throughout the process of creating the Land Use Plan Update including the Public Input Survey, the Focus Groups, and the Visual Preference Survey. The results of this input were then utilized to formulate the goals and objectives that will be presented later in the Plan.

### *PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY*

In February 2005, a Public Input Survey was sent to all property tax payers within Yankee Springs Township to gather further public input regarding the future needs of the Township. A total of 534 surveys were tabulated for the study. This response rate is approximately 20%, which is good for this type of research, particularly considering the number of second homes and out-of-town property owners in this community. The survey was sent along with the annual property tax assessment mailing in order to reduce costs. While some believe partnering the survey with tax collection may have produced a negative bias, it did ensure that more people opened the envelope and saw the survey without simply throwing it away. A complete copy of the survey is included in the Appendix as well as a full summary of the results.

The survey questions covered several topics including the growth of the Township, Township priorities, and community perceptions of life in the Township. Respondents were also asked to indicate the types of housing and commercial services they would like to see in the Township. The survey inquired about respondents' opinions regarding services provided by the Township as well as a range of other community planning issues such as economic development and rural character. Finally, respondents were given a chance to speak their mind and write their own comments regarding the Land Use Plan.

Of course, there were also demographic questions, such as age and gender. These are asked in order to confirm our sample as well as to separate responses into categories. The 45-64 year old group was the most heavily represented with 46.9% of the respondents, followed by the 65-84 year old age group with 30.1%. For the Township overall, only 12.1% of the population is over 65 years old. Also, only 2 people (0.4%) under the age of 25 filled out the survey although well over 25% of the population is in this category. Over 55% of respondents were male. Over 80% live in the Township for an average of over 18 years. Just over 98% of respondents are homeowners. The 2000 Census reported homeownership at 91%.

The majority of respondents owned single-family homes; only four respondents (< 1%) indicated that they lived in a multi-unit condominium, apartment, duplex, or manufactured housing park. Most single-family homeowners indicated that they lived

on less than ½ acre of land (43.6%) followed closely by ½-2 acres (31.1%). Behind “my own home” (60.1%), the second most often owned type of property is a “recreational, seasonal, or second home” (16.8%).

Two critical questions in the survey asked about respondents’ perceptions of growth in the Township. Question #7 gauged whether they felt the Township was growing too fast or too slow, and question #8 gauged how they felt the Township was doing at directing the growth. In #7, the average score was 3.87. Specifically, 2.3% indicated “1 – Too Slowly,” 2.5% indicated “2,” 37.7% indicated “3 – About Right,” 20.8% indicated “4,” and 36.6% indicated “5 – Too Quickly”. The majority of respondents fall in the About Right to Too Quickly range. For #8, the average score was 2.58. Specifically, 11.9% indicated “1 – Poor,” 35.2% indicated “2 – Fair”, 37.6% indicated “3 – Satisfactory,” 14.1% indicated “4 – Good”, and 1.2% indicated “5 – Excellent”. The majority of respondents are in the Fair to Satisfactory range.

Question #9 asked respondents to indicate, in their opinion, how important various priorities were for the Township. Sixteen options were provided, and respondents marked the level of importance on a 1-5 scale ranging from not important to important. The three items at the top of the list were “preservation of the natural environment” (4.47), “enforcing zoning and home maintenance rules” (4.10), and “preserving farmland” (4.04). The three items with the lowest average scores were “expanding industrial development” (2.05), “expanding commercial development” (2.32), and “providing housing opportunities for young families” (2.68).

Question #10 addressed some concerns that have consistently been identified in the community. Eight were listed, and respondents were asked to indicate how concerned they were about each of the following on a 1-3 scale ranging from not concerned to very concerned. The top four concerns identified were “over-development of the lakes area” (2.82), “ground water quality” (2.70), “development in open lands and natural areas” (2.58), and “consistent enforcement of Zoning Ordinance” (2.49).

Questions #11 and #12 asked respondents to identify three of the most positive and negative aspects of life in Yankee Springs Township. Lists of characteristics were provided, and respondents selected from the options provided: 21 for positive, 15 for negative. The three positive aspects with the highest percentage of responses were “lake living” (19.8%), “close to nature” (15.3%), and “rural character” (12.6%). The three negative aspects with the highest percentage of responses were “overcrowding around lakes” (27.7%), “unregulated growth” (14.8%), and “unattractive development” (11.1%).

Questions #13 and #14 asked respondents about the type of development they would like to see in the Township. Eight options were given for each question, and respondents could circle up to two. Question #13 was about residential development. The largest percentage of people (almost 30%) indicated they would like to see single-family homes between ½ and two acres in size. Not far behind however, 20.9%, indicated that they wanted to see “no new housing.” Question #14 regarded commercial development. The most popular response (24.9%) was “sit down

restaurants”, although again, the desire to have “no new development” was a close second (24.5%).

Question #15 inquired as to the quality of Township services. They were ranked on a 1-5 scale ranging from poor to excellent. Elections (3.67), parks and recreation (3.66), and fire protection (3.60) all ranked near “good”. Police protection (3.16), road maintenance (3.18), and office hours (3.11) were near “satisfactory”. Building code enforcement (2.84) and zoning enforcement (2.63) were the lowest two and were below “satisfactory”.

Question #16 provided a series of statements related to community planning issues of importance in the Township. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements based on a 1-5 scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These results reiterated much of what was shown throughout the survey: the respondents were interested in controlling growth, protecting the rural character, and preserving the natural and open environment in the Township. However, they did not seem to agree that economic development was important or that additional commercial development was appropriate for Yankee Springs, and they were not convinced that it was easy to get things done in the Township.

Respondents were given an opportunity to write additional comments at the end of the survey. Those comments are also provided in the Appendix.

## *PUBLIC FORUMS*

### COMMUNITY MEETINGS: THE CONCEPT

The participation of residents, stakeholders, property owners, business owners, and community officials is essential to ensure the success of the Land Use Plan. A Land Use Plan that has the support of as wide a community base as possible will more likely be utilized and referenced in day-to-day planning activities. A Land Use Plan with little support will not have as much an influence on the day-to-day planning activities that affect the community. An effective way of building a comprehensive community base is by building consensus through community meetings.

The focus group sessions for the Yankee Springs Land Use Plan Update included two activities during which community residents and stakeholders provided the Planning Commission and the Township with valuable information and feedback. The idea is that by involving these parties in the process, they will understand that they truly are a part of the planning process. This helps with the implementation of the Plan’s ideas and prevents it from simply collecting dust on a shelf. More importantly, this process allows for the collection of information about the Township from people who live throughout the Township each and every day. This is information that cannot be provided by a consultant or a Planning Commission. Finally, these meetings are an opportunity for

education. Some community members have never had experience with Land Use Plans or community planning, and this process allows for them to learn as well.

#### FOUR PUBLIC FORUMS

In order to draw a broad base of public participation and be able to address each of their specific issues, it was determined that four public forums would be held over the span of four months: March through June. The meetings were held at the Township Hall on the first Thursday of each month.

The Township was divided into four sections, and each section was assigned to a separate public forum: commercial/industrial property owners; rural and residential, non-waterfront property owners; waterfront property owners (not Gun Lake); and Gun Lake property owners. A similar format was followed for each meeting in order to maintain some consistency between the meetings and their results.

Each meeting started with a brief introduction and an explanation regarding the purpose of a Land Use Plan and what we had learned to date. Then, we moved into a Visual Preference Survey, which will be described below. Finally, each group engaged in a group discussion regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present and upcoming for the Township. Since each forum was based on a particular area within the Township, the conversation was geared towards that area when possible. However, more often the groups discussed community wide issues and concerns. Comparing the interests of the various groups to one another is therefore a valid exercise.

#### PUBLIC FORUM DISCUSSIONS: THE RESULTS

The second half of each meeting was reserved for a group discussion. Each group was asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present and expected in the near future for Yankee Springs Township.

- Strengths are positive attributes and assets in the Township.
- Weaknesses are liabilities or negative attributes within the Township.
- Opportunities are trends, developments, or events occurring outside the Township that could have a positive impact on Yankee Springs.
- Threats, on the other hand, are similar entities that could have a negative impact on Yankee Springs.

Each group spent about ten minutes discussing each topic. Every idea that was identified was written down and displayed on large sheets on the wall. A full list of all of the ideas provided at each of the meetings is provided in the Appendix.

Overall, there were many similarities between the various groups. However, there were some important differences between the individual group responses that were helpful in preparing the various land use districts. Each group was focused on the importance of

protecting the natural beauty and quality of the Township. This included lakes, open spaces, nature, clean air, and wildlife. Growth, development, and change that impacts these elements were viewed as weaknesses and threats to the future of the Township. Differences between the groups were based primarily on where the residents live and what their primary focus was. For example, those at the non-waterfront session focused more on road maintenance and rural land development issues while those on the water focused on water pollution and overuse issues. These similarities and differences can be seen in the summary presented in the Appendix.

### *VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY*

At each Public Forum, everyone present participated in a Visual Preference Survey. Visual Preference Surveys include a series of images, 43 in this case, can participants are asked to score the image on a score sheet based on the following: "Do you like this picture? Would you like to see this in Yankee Springs Township? Or, if it already exists in Yankee Springs Township, would you like to see more of it?" Scores ranged from -5 to +5, least preferred to most preferred. The images were divided into categories: residential, commercial, and other land uses. A full summary of results of the survey including thumbnail images of all 43 of the pictures is included in the Appendix.

The purpose of doing this survey is to determine, visually, what is most important to the community. What types of development do they like and do they not like? What types of buildings and land uses within their community would they prefer to see? As growth occurs, what form should it take and how should it be encouraged to progress? What types of standards should be created? These are the types of questions that can begin to be addressed based on these results.

The most preferred images were those displaying low densities of development and depicting more rural settings. The specific images with the highest ratings were in the other land uses category and included pictures of trails, unpaved roads, and open space. The least preferred images were of manufactured housing parks, dense housing, and urban commercial development.

Specifically, in the residential category, the highest rated pictures were of rural housing or of new housing on larger lots, such as in a more suburban setting. Lower rated images included dense housing situations like apartments, manufactured housing, and urban neighborhoods. This makes sense based on the responses received in the small group discussions and residents' resistance to higher densities.

In the commercial category, the results were quite similar. In fact, these images received the lowest scored of them all, indicating a generally low desire for future commercial development in the Township. Only one picture had an average score over a 1.00, and that picture depicted a Village-scale structure in a pedestrian-friendly form that would blend in nicely with the Township. Larger more dense developments, like big box stores and mixed use development, received very low scores.



The final category was for other land uses. This category included recreation spaces, open spaces, streetscapes, and similar images of the Township. These were the most preferred of all the categories, presumably because they captured the rural character of the Township. The pictures of recreation were most preferred. These included trails, picnic tables, playgrounds, a pond, and a golf course. The least preferred of the other land uses images were of signage and cluttered farm fields.

While this is an important tool for the creation of the Land Use Plan, it should be remembered that it is just one of the many tools that were used in the development of this plan. Many people took the time to fill out the visual preference survey and provide their input. However, this is just a segment of the population, and these results must be balanced with the results from the public input survey and the rest of the research that was conducted as a part of this planning process.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the existing characteristics of the Township, the results of the Township survey, and the input received from the public input focus sessions, Goals and Objectives were established for the Land Use Plan. Goals are general in nature and, as related to planning, are a statement of ideals toward which the Township will strive. Objectives are more specific and are intended to present a means to attain the stated goal.

Before a community can actively plan for its future growth and development, it must first set certain goals and objectives that emulate its needs and aspirations, thus establishing a basis for the formulation of a Future Land Use Plan. These goals and objectives must reflect the type of community desired and the kind of lifestyle its citizens wish to follow, given realistic economic and social constraints. Otherwise, the Land Use Plan will not accurately reflect the desires of the community.

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND COORDINATION

1. Coordination of Township activities on all levels - planning, transportation, utilities, parks and recreation, etc. - with adjacent jurisdictions, such as Orangeville, Martin, and Wayland Townships, the other communities surrounding Gun Lake, as well as with Barry County. The County oversees planning and zoning for Orangeville Township and has identified Gun Lake as a priority area in their updated Plan.
2. As conditions and trends evolve, monitor, maintain, and update as necessary the Township Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance consistent with the overall desire and vision of the community.
3. Educate and inform Township residents about planning successes in the community and important planning and zoning regulations in an effort to increase the level of planning awareness.
  - a. Utilize Township mailings such as tax notices, utility bills, or a newsletter to spread planning information.
  - b. Respond to questions often asked by community members through this process.
4. Encourage racial, ethnic, and income diversity within the community.

*ENVIRONMENT / NATURAL FEATURES / OPEN SPACE*

1. Recognize the importance of surface water to the Township and protect the quality of the surface water so that residents and visitors may continue to enjoy its use.
  - a. Require impact studies for significant development near surface water to gauge impact on lake capacity, water quality, and general health of the habitat and ecosystem.
  - b. Utilize the existing recreational carrying capacity study for Gun Lake when reviewing applications for development on the lake to assess impacts, and explore use of study on other lakes as well.
  - c. Work with local and State agencies to establish rules and guidelines to control the spread of invasive species, such as Eurasian milfoil, zebra mussels, and purple loosestrife.
  - d. Establish limits and/or controls on the use of certain pesticides or fertilizers in waterfront areas that could harm surface waters.
  - e. Control runoff into the water through guidelines for plant removal, slope stabilization, unmowed/undisturbed buffers along shorelines, and/or reduced pavement and impervious surfaces.
2. Preserve the wetlands in Yankee Springs Township.
  - a. Encourage the protection of wetland areas through the use of clustered or open space developments.
  - b. Establish setback standards and buffers from critical natural features, including unregulated wetlands less than 5 acres, in order to protect them from the impacts of development.
3. Protect the fragile soils of the Township.
  - a. Restrict residential development to areas where the soil will provide proper filtering for septic tanks.
  - b. Consider soil conditions and properties when reviewing development applications for approval in the Township.
  - c. Monitor sources of soil based pollution, including those that exist or are proposed beyond the Township boundaries, such as development along the Cuddy Drain in Allegan County.

4. Work with the Department of Natural Resources to maintain quality open space in the nearly 70% of the Township that is either surface water or owned by the State of Michigan.
  - a. Establish a Rural Preserve district for land currently owned by the State in order to maintain quality open space should that land be transferred to private ownership in the future.
  - b. Maintain a good relationship and open communication with the State regarding their plans for and use of their land.
5. Protect the Township and its resources from the damaging impacts of storm water.
  - a. Control silt and chemicals from developed and developing properties on site or in proper retention facilities before running into lakes.
  - b. Control the erosion occurring as a result of construction and driveway installation around lakes and the draining of runoff materials into the lakes.
6. Encourage brownfield cleanup and reuse of contaminated and infill sites.
  - a. Direct development and/or investment toward infill and re-use of previously developed sites.
  - b. Work with Barry County and/or surrounding communities to develop a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan to encourage redevelopment of contaminated properties.
  - c. Utilize a Brownfield Plan to provide incentives for the clean up of contaminated sites in the Township.
7. Consider creative approaches to protection of natural features and farmland as development and economic pressures place demands on these important areas.
  - a. Consider purchase or transfer of development rights programs for designated areas in the Township.
  - b. Utilize cluster development regulations in rural districts to protect these features.

## RESIDENTIAL

1. Achieve a variety of well-planned, quality residential neighborhoods in the Township.
  - a. Maintain and improve the quality of existing neighborhoods.
  - b. Develop housing for all age groups, including young families and senior citizens, to provide a diverse housing stock that will permit residents to remain within the Township throughout their lifetime.
  - c. Limit higher density residential development to areas planned for those uses, which are provided with adequate services for the expected densities, and provide reasonable standards in the Zoning Ordinance for those uses to ensure quality development.
2. Accommodate growth in housing and population without sacrificing the rural/recreational character of the Township or the quality of the natural resources.
  - a. Concentrate the areas planned for the highest densities of residential growth nearest the existing infrastructure necessary to support it: public sewer, paved roads, emergency services, commercial uses, etc.
  - b. Limit future rezoning in the Residential-Single Family category in order to limit the impacts of high density growth.
  - c. Maintain the integrity and intent of the future land use plan through consistent application of the plan and the community's vision.

## COMMERCIAL

1. Limit the spread of conventional strip development and encourage the use of "quaint" design.
  - a. Establish basic design guidelines that encourage consistent development along a similar theme without considerable expense.
  - b. Create access management standards to limit the number of curb cuts for commercial uses, particularly along M-179 and M-37. This will reduce the traffic impacts of the commercial uses and encourage the use of shared driveways, shared parking lots, and access roads.
2. Create a Gateway Mixed Use area at the northeast corner of Patterson Road and M-179 to be the focus of commercial development in the Township.

- a. Encourage coordinated, planned development of the entire area in order to result in an integrated, well-designed community commercial center.
  - b. Establish design guidelines within the development consistent with the rural / recreational character of the Township.
  - c. Create a development that is pedestrian friendly and walkable.
  - d. Provide non-motorized connections to this area from the other commercial areas along M-179 as well as the major neighborhoods surrounding Gun Lake and in the Township.
  - e. Allow for a mix of residential uses here in order to provide a place for residents to live, work, and play, and to create an exciting and vibrant environment.
  - f. In this particular area, allow for residential uses on upper floors above commercial uses.
3. Clean up existing commercial signage in the Township.
    - a. Develop proper Ordinance standards to maintain and regulate existing signage in the form and style desired by the Township.
    - b. Work with property and business owners whose signs do not conform with the new regulations to bring them into conformance.
  4. Create a gateway to the Township at the west entry point at Patterson Road and M-179.
    - a. Work with the existing owners to remove the signage at the northeast corner of Patterson and M-179.
    - b. Seek grant money to assist with gateway, signage, and streetscape enhancements identified here.
    - c. Create a significant feature or sign that notifies residents and visitors that they are entering Yankee Springs Township.
    - d. Work with MDOT to enhance the M-179 corridor recognizing its status as a Recreational Heritage Route.
  5. Encourage the development of a synergy of commercial uses that reflect the character of the Township and serve the full-year residents as well as the seasonal visitors.

- a. Provide incentives for Mom and Pop stores and local businesses to establish in the community as opposed to chain stores and large franchises.
- b. Develop a mix of uses that encourage people to stop and visit the other uses while in the area thus creating a synergistic relationship (i.e. ice cream, restaurant, bank, store).

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES / INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Maintain the quality of existing recreational opportunities in the Township and preserve those opportunities for future generations.
  - a. Limit noise and light pollution that disrupts the quality of the rural experience.
  - b. When development occurs in the eastern portion of the Township, plan for that development to occur in proximity to other similar developments so that the open land can remain connected and habitat areas and wildlife corridors can be maintained.
  - c. Work with the DNR, DEQ, and surrounding communities (such as Orangeville, Wayland, and Martin Townships) to understand the impacts of development and increasing volumes of use on Gun Lake and possibilities to control high volumes of use in the future.
  - d. Work with DNR to maintain or improve the quality of the recreational experiences had by residents or visitors at the State Game Area or the State Recreation Area.
2. Provide neighborhood-based recreational opportunities for residents of the Township.
  - a. Require playgrounds and neighborhood parks be installed in developments with over a certain number of dwelling units.
  - b. Provide pedestrian or non-motorized pathways around the major residential lakes in the Township – Gun Lake, Barlow Lake, Cobb Lake, Payne Lake – and to and from major activity centers in the Township – State Park, M-179 commercial center, Gun Lake Road commercial center, YWCA camp, etc.
3. Limit the expansion of public sewer and water in order to limit the expansion of higher density development.

- a. Establish an urban services boundary based on the future land use map, existing service extensions, and required bond payments.
  - b. Work with the County Health Department to determine guidelines for on-site wastewater treatment systems for large developments located outside the boundary.
4. Maintain the natural beauty and rural character of Township roads – narrow corridor, tight hills, overhead tree canopy, low speed limits, etc. – as they are improved.
- a. Work with the County Road Commission to establish Natural Beauty Roads on designated County roads within the Township.
  - b. Establish deep setback and natural buffer standards along County roads for developments in the Rural Preserve, Rural Residential, and Estate Residential districts.



## FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map (Map 6) is the culmination of months of effort by the Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Administration, and the citizens of Yankee Springs Township. Based on a comprehensive planning process, the plan serves as a guide for the community's vision of the next 20 to 30 years. It is based on an analysis of land use issues facing Yankee Springs Township, existing uses and conditions, demographic and housing statistics, physical constraints and resources, circulation patterns, the community visioning session, and the goals and objectives set forth by the community.

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

### *PLANNING PRINCIPLES*

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

1. **Consistency with the Plan**  
Development should be reviewed for general consistency with the intent of the Land Use Plan, as well as sub-area or regional plans. In addition, other governing bodies, such as the State or County, should be encouraged to use the Land Use Plan in considering programming or decisions for Yankee Springs Township.
2. **Concurrence and Compactness**  
Growth should generally be compact and in most cases directed to areas that maximize the use of the existing public investment in capital improvements. Development should occur concurrently with the provisions for infrastructure, like roads and utilities.
3. **Sustainability of Natural Systems**  
Special consideration should be given when development is proposed in environmentally sensitive areas and open space, particularly around the many valuable lakes and surface water resources of the Township.

**4. Human Scale**

The community should be designed on a human scale with a land use pattern balanced around activity centers such as commercial uses, existing neighborhoods, community facilities, or some similar amenities. Pedestrian access should be considered in all new development projects.

**5. Compatibility of Uses**

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

**FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES**

The land use categories are graphically displayed on the Future Land Use Map (Map 6) and are described in this section of the Land Use Plan. The amount of land dedicated to each use on the Future Land Use Map is shown below in Table 12. The elected and appointed officials of Yankee Springs Township will be responsible for the interpretation of the intent of the Future Land Use Map and the land use categories. At their discretion, they shall revise the Map and the categories to facilitate the needs of the Township and its residents.

**STATE LAND / RURAL PRESERVE**

The State Land / Rural Preserve designation covers the most land area of any of the designations on the Future Land Use Map. It consists of all of the land currently owned by the State DNR including the Barry State Game Area and the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area. As such, this land is currently beyond the Township's control.

The Plan calls for this area to remain in its current state throughout the Planning period. Although this represents a large portion of the Township and limits the area available for the Township to collect tax revenue, the rural nature of this land and the recreational opportunities provided by it define the character of the community. The benefits of living adjacent to these areas are what attracted many to here in the first place. It is the Township's desire that the State continue to operate these two park facilities long into the future in order to preserve these lands from the growing demands of residential development.



In the event that the State does sell land within this area some time within this planning period, it will remain in this planning designation until the plan is properly amended. This designation will allow for limited single family detached home development as well as agricultural use, as if this were open space. But, the density of residential development will be maintained at low levels and clustered to provide for large continuous areas of open space. Recreational use will be permitted on these lands in an effort to promote a similar use of the land even if it is no longer owned by the State.

## RURAL ESTATE

The Rural Estate designation is reserved for some of the more rural and open portions of the Township not included in the State Land. Some of this land is agricultural and is actively farmed today. Many of these parcels are large and are on some of the best soils in the Township. Other portions of this designated area have been split into individual lots for development. Lot sizes range from three acres to very large parcels.

The Rural Estate lands are primarily interspersed between and among the large areas of State owned land in all but the southwestern corner of the Township. This area is characterized by rolling hills, heavily wooded lots, small ponds and wetlands, streams, and many wild animals. Residents of the area cherish the open spaces and the proximity to nature. Through the public input process, they identified these items along with the dark skies, peace and quiet, and rural atmosphere as key reasons why they located in this area.

This area is also characterized by a lack of urban services. The majority of the area is not served by public water or sewer. Some of the parcels require travel on gravel or dirt roads. Nonetheless, development activity in this area has increased in recent years as the western portion of the Township becomes more densely built. In order to retain some of the rural character in the western portion of the Township and protect the larger, undeveloped parcels from dense development pressures, these areas have been placed in the Rural Estate category.

It is envisioned that the Rural Estate areas will maintain its rural character and appeal regardless of future development activity. Whether development occurs in the form of individual lot splits or multi-unit developments, care should be taken in the planning and design of the development to ensure that the resulting site layout will have minimal impact on the surrounding properties, natural features, and character of the area. This shall be done through protection of natural features, preservation of setbacks and buffers along primary roadways, minimal disturbance to the existing site, and use of flexible zoning tools such as Open Space Zoning and Planned Unit Development.

Flexible zoning tools such as Open Space Zoning and Planned Unit Development allow for more creative development of land and make it easier to protect important natural features. While these tools are available and encouraged for use throughout the Township, they are particularly valuable in the Rural Estate areas because of the amount of land within the site and the ability to creatively develop the property and maintain the rural character and natural features. Density incentives and bonuses may be used as a means to encourage the use of these tools.

It is envisioned that the density in the Rural Estate area will be approximately three acres per unit.

## RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Much of the Rural Residential area is undeveloped or could be redeveloped. These lands are characterized by the natural features that surround them: open space, rolling hills, heavy woods, lakes, etc. They are also characterized by desirable surrounding conditions. The M-37 corridor provides easy, quick access to Hastings and Middleville, as well as Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Battle Creek. The other area is near the M-179 commercial corridor as well as various lakes, and is served by public water and sewer. Therefore, either area is a prime development location. However, it is clear from the public input and meetings that maintaining the rural character is a critical objective of this plan. These areas have that rural character due to the natural features on the site and their location. While there is an opportunity in these areas to accommodate a greater density of population due to the services and infrastructure provided, it still should not be done at the expense of the rural character and nature of the area.

It is envisioned that the density in the Rural Residential area will be approximately one unit to the acre. This will allow for rural development in these areas while still protecting the character of the area and the surrounding natural features. Again, creative development styles such as Open Space Development and Planned Unit Development should be encouraged to permit flexible planning and design. This will allow for more creative design and layout than is permitted under conventional zoning standards. Creativity should be utilized to protect the rural atmosphere.

## SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Suburban Residential areas are located in areas provided with urban services and provide opportunities for single family residential development at neighborhood densities (1-2 units per acre). Some of this land is already developed with single family homes on small lots consistent with the intent of this area. Other portions are vacant or have single family homes on large lots, which could be redeveloped in the future.

These areas are located in the western portion of the Township near the densely developed lake areas and the M-179 corridor. It is not the intent of the Township to encourage any further development at densities similar to what exists along the

lakeshores. The Suburban Residential category therefore represents the highest density single family residential category intended for new development.

It is envisioned that development in these areas will be neighborhood-oriented. Streets will be interconnected and pedestrian friendly. Homes and homesites will be oriented to encourage a sense of community and place among neighbors and residents. This includes front porches; decreased front yard setback requirements; and recessed, detached, or side or rear loading garages. Densities in this area will be about one to two units per acre.

## LAKEFRONT RESIDENTIAL

The Lakefront Residential category includes all waterfront property in the Township. Yankee Springs Township is proud of the many lakes in the Township and understands how precious a resource they are. Many regulations and ordinances have been adopted to regulate the use of waterfront property in an effort to limit or control the impact of the dense development that has occurred along the shores of the Township's lakes. Therefore a separate category has been created to apply to those properties alone.

The Lakefront Residential category includes predominately single family residential uses, although there are some attached single family uses and resort uses as well. Average lot sizes in this area are less than 12,000 square feet because most of the lots were platted or divided prior to zoning standards being created for the Township. It is not intended that there be land rezoned to this category or any new development at this density in the Township. However, many property owners in this area are tearing down homes and building new homes that are bigger than the old cottages that existed previously. This has led to numerous variance requests and challenges to the Zoning Ordinance requirements for this area, primarily relating to setbacks and accessory structures.

The Township should review the standards in this area to ensure that they continue to represent the vision and intent of the Land Use Plan and to determine if any adjustments need to be made to the dimensional standards for this area.

## SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (LAKE AREA)

Behind and around many of the Lakefront Residential areas are the Single Family Residential (Lake Area) designated areas. These areas are similarly characterized by dense lakeside development, although they do not have any water frontage. The average parcel size in this area is less than 12,000 square feet because most of the lots were platted or divided prior to zoning standards being created for the Township. However, many larger parcels are mostly undevelopable due to wetlands or swampy soils.

This area is having similar experiences as the Lakefront Residential District related to cottage teardowns. The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to be certain that the standards are still applicable to this area.

It is not intended that additional land be rezoned to this category within the Township.

#### MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The Multiple Family Residential category is provided as a location for medium to high density residential housing including apartments, multi-unit condominiums, and senior housing. Some of these uses may also be approvable as a part of a PUD under certain conditions in other parts of the Township, but are permitted by right in these areas.

Two areas are designated Multiple Family Residential and are currently zoned appropriately to accommodate such development due to a court order. Those parcels are located on the west side of the Township north and south of M-179. Another area is provided for potential future development. That area is located off of Yankee Springs Road near the intersection with M-37.

#### MANUFACTURED HOUSING DISTRICT

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

The Manufactured Housing District provides locations for Manufactured Home Parks, built to the specifications of the Yankee Springs Township Zoning Ordinance and the Michigan Manufactured Housing Commission. There are two existing Manufactured Home Parks within the Township.

#### GATEWAY MIXED USE

The Gateway Mixed Use designation is envisioned as a mixed-use, commercial / residential category, encouraging higher quality development than is provided under conventional development standards. Higher quality is desired due to the location of the sites. The sites planned for this use are located at major gateways of the community and provide a first impression of the community. The higher quality is in exchange for flexibility with the conventional zoning standards. This designation allows for a mix of commercial and residential uses and encourages the use of Planned Unit Development (PUD), which allows for flexible application of zoning standards.

Two areas are set aside on the Future Land Use map for Gateway Mixed Use designation. Each area has a slightly different character. Along M-37 in the northeast corner of the Township, is the first Gateway Mixed Use area. This area is currently defined by rural and rural residential uses. The Gateway Mixed Use designation

intends to maintain this character through quality design and development; increased buffers, screening, and setbacks from roadways; and clustered development of non-residential uses. In this area, these uses will include primarily office and neighborhood commercial services. Architecture, signage, and design will be coordinated. Access will also be coordinated, including shared parking to limit impervious surfaces, pathways to adjacent residential areas, and access points to M-37 limited to one every 1,320 feet.

Along with the office and neighborhood commercial services, there may be a residential component to development in this area. This may include single family homes, senior housing, or some other type of low impact residential use. It is intended that these be integrated into the development through design, access, and circulation. The intent is the creation of a neighborhood within the development.

This Plan and the Township understands the importance of preserving the capacity of M-37 and protecting the rural character along this corridor. It is not intended for this to become a high density area of development. While there may be pockets or clusters of dense development within this area, it will be required to be offset by sufficient undeveloped areas and open space to maintain an overall density for the area commensurate with adjacent development. This will not only protect the rural character of the area, but it will also prevent the existing services, or lack thereof, from being overloaded. Without public water and sewer in this area, there is a limit to the amount of non-residential development that can be accommodated before the services and/or resources are negatively impacted.

The other Gateway Mixed Use area is located at the western entry to the Township along M-179. This key gateway is envisioned as the future commercial center in the Township. It is desired that the majority of future retail development in the Township will occur in this area. The residential uses planned for this area shall be integrated into the overall development to create a cohesive design scheme. Overall, the development shall create a grand, welcoming gateway into the Township, representative of the character and vision of its people.

Commercial uses for this area are primarily retail and service related uses, geared towards both full-time and seasonal residents and visitors of the Township. There will likely not be room for much outdoor storage in this area. Offices may be located here, although it would be better for this to be primarily a destination for those seeking retail and entertainment options than for employees leaving everyday at 5:00. Residential uses might include apartments above stores, townhouses, condominiums, and senior housing as well as single family homes. These would be located behind the commercial uses, which would occupy the road frontage of the site, primarily near the intersection of Patterson and M-179.

Within the development, as with the development on M-37, the architecture, design, and signage would all be coordinated. Access and circulation would be coordinated as well with limited access points onto the primary roads.



Currently, this area is dominated by large, uncoordinated signs made of single sheets of plywood, common in recreational areas. These signs dominate this gateway and detract from the appearance of the area. Overall, the effect is not very welcoming or positive for visitors to the Township.

The desire for both of these Gateway Mixed Use areas is to create a place that residents and visitors alike will recognize as distinct to Yankee Springs Township – a unique development allowing residents to live, work, and play. Planned unit development (PUD) is the desired tool to be used for development of these areas. This would allow for the appropriate amount of flexibility and creativity necessarily to fully deliver what is intended for these areas. Form-based zoning standards may also be used to implement the intent of this district, particularly at the M-179 site.

The overall design plan for these areas is to create development that is of a rural, small-town scale and pedestrian friendly. This is particularly true of the non-residential uses. Although adequate parking must be provided, it should not dominate the development or the view from the road. The majority of the parking shall be relegated to the side and rear of the main buildings. The buildings shall be oriented towards the public roads, internal roads, and pedestrian paths. This shall create the desired community atmosphere and allow for the inclusion of several opportunities for public spaces, gathering spots, and other places for social interaction and exchange. If the Township recognizes that an adequate amount of land has been developed at either site to satisfy the intent of the district and the rural character is being threatened, it will immediately review the Plan and strongly consider amendments at that time.

Developments in the Gateway Mixed Use area should address the following:

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

## C-1 OFFICE

The C-1 Office designation includes those uses currently in the C-1 Zoning Classification and areas intended to be used for similar purposes. Uses intended for this area include professional services, medical/dental offices, and other small office uses.

The area designated for this use is located along the south side of M-179. Much of this area is currently vacant or underutilized and could be redeveloped. Signage, building character, and site design should be reflective of the character, goals, and objectives of the Township.

Also, access management standards should be included along this corridor to improve traffic flow and safety. Uses along M-179 each have their own driveway or multiple driveways. Opportunities to share parking, share driveways, create alternate access roads, and eliminate conflict points and reduce left turns should be sought.

## C-2 GENERAL RETAIL

The C-2 General Retail designation includes those uses currently in the C-2 Zoning Classification and areas intended to be used for similar purposes. C-2 General Retail includes office uses as well as restaurants, entertainment, clothing stores, hardware stores, other commodities, and general retail and service uses limited by their impact on surrounding uses. General Retail uses have limited impacts because they are of a smaller size, are not as dependent on the automobile, and do not result in the same light, traffic, noise, or fumes as other commercial uses.

Most of the C-2 General Retail area is located along M-179. Many of the parcels in this area have developed over time with uses servicing the recreational/tourist market. These include miniature golf, marinas, boat repair, convenience stores, and restaurants. Other uses serving full-time residents have also developed including markets, a hardware store, and a health club. Some of these uses could be redeveloped for a higher and better use, while others represent the best use of the property.

As these have developed, so have the zoning standards that guide them. Therefore, many of these uses have one or more non-conforming elements. Due to their location along a prominent corridor, bringing the properties, or at least the signage, into compliance should be a priority for the Township.

Once again, access management should also be a priority for the Township in this area. For the same reasons mentioned above in the office category, similar standards should be provided for the C-2 General Retail section to accomplish similar objectives and for consistency.

### C-3 HEAVY COMMERCIAL

The last of the three commercial categories is C-3 Heavy Commercial. This category corresponds to the C-3 Zoning Classification and areas intended to be used in a similar manner. C-3 Heavy Commercial not only includes both of the previous commercial categories, but also those commercial uses with a greater impact on surrounding areas. These include uses that are automobile oriented, involve drive-thrus, have significant amounts of outdoor storage, or exceed certain size limits.

Areas designated C-3 Heavy Commercial are scattered throughout the Township. This reflects the location of existing uses, some of which were developed prior to existing zoning standards and may contain nonconforming elements. Efforts should be made to bring these sites into conformity as they redevelop or expand.

### INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial designation is provided in the northwest corner of the Township. A portion of this area is already zoned and developed for industrial use. Additional land is provided for expansion of the present industry or development of an additional industry. Industrial uses include warehousing, manufacturing, assembly, research and development, and similar uses. Heavier uses can be approved with a special land use permit. In order to limit the potential impact of industrial uses on surrounding neighbors, standards will be provided to require screening, buffering, additional setbacks, etc. as necessary.

### RECREATION

A key element of the character of Yankee Springs Township is the focus on recreation. Due to the presence of Yankee Springs State Recreation Area and the Barry State Game Area, many people visit the Township every year to partake in recreational activities. In addition, other recreational uses have been created to take advantage of that market that has been identified. These include a golf course, campgrounds, and stables. These are identified on the future land use map as "recreation" because of their unique identity and purpose in Yankee Springs Township.

**FUTURE LAND USE TABLE**

Table 12 below summarizes the amount of land designated on Map 6, Future Land Use Map, for each of the Future Land Use designations.

**Table 12  
Future Land Use Designations  
Yankee Springs Township, 2005**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
State Land / Rural Preserve	12,336.8	61.8%
Rural Estate	4,249.6	21.3%
Rural Residential	1,017.1	5.1%
Suburban Residential	266.4	1.3%
Lakefront Residential	575.1	2.9%
Single Family Residential (Lake Area)	319.7	1.6%
Multiple Family Residential	39.5	0.2%
Manufactured Housing	86.9	0.4%
Gateway Mixed Use	319.7	1.6%
C-1 Office	9.7	0.0%
C-2 General Retail	67.6	0.3%
C-3 Heavy Commercial	57.0	0.3%
Industrial	144.2	0.7%
Recreation	488.7	2.4%

## IMPLEMENTATION

The following section presents tools and techniques community leaders, Boards and Commissions, Township Administration, and the general public can use to implement the Land Use Plan. The techniques can be used individually or in tandem to achieve the objectives and eventually the overall goals of the Land Use Plan. While the direct impact of some techniques cannot be immediately assessed, over time these procedures can effectively guide land use and development in Yankee Springs Township.

### *CONTINUOUS PLANNING*

The first implementation strategy is the adoption of the Land Use Plan by the Yankee Springs Township Board of Trustees (after recommendation by the Planning Commission). However, planning is a continuous process, which does not terminate with the completion of the Land Use Plan. The various districts in the Township will continue to undergo change over time. Planning is an on-going process of identification, adjustment, and response to problems or opportunities that arise. In order to sustain the planning process and generate positive results, maintain momentum, and respond to change; the Plan should be reviewed and updated every five years, at a minimum.

Periodic adjustment to the Land Use Plan may be required as population, economic trends, and local and regional development patterns fluctuate and change. In addition, the Planning Commission or other designated committees, under the direction of the Township Board, can prepare organizational plans for specific issues or areas of concern as amendments to the Land Use Plan. Such supplemental plans may include corridor plans, housing maintenance programs, or a recreation plan.

As discussed throughout this planning process, the Planning Commission's work really *begins* with the completion of the Land Use Plan. Every year the Planning Commission should establish/update its annual work plan based in part on this implementation section. These elements are intended to be suggestions for items to be included on the Planning Commission's work plan. Other items will surface throughout the planning process.

### *PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION*

A successful Land Use Plan must educate the citizens of the community on both the overall goals desired for the Township and the individual regulatory measures that are needed to implement the desired goals. An informed public can then offer its support to establishing regulations designed to retain the rural character of the Township despite the development pressures it faces. It became clear through the public input process

that there are a number of misconceptions in the community regarding the planning process and the goals of the Township. Nonetheless, their interest in planning is high, and they have valuable and creative insight that should be shared with the Township. In order for these ideas to be communicated to the right people in the proper manner, the Township must educate its citizens on general planning procedures as well as its overall vision for the future.

For example, the public input results demonstrated that residents do not want any more housing in the Township, but the Township recognizes the reality that growth is going to occur. The goal is to control it and allow it only in conformance with the Township's vision. In order to prevent long delays at public hearings and an unfriendly atmosphere for developers, the Township should work with the public so that they can understand the Township's position and perspective, and all parties can work together.

### *TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE*

The Zoning Ordinance is the primary regulatory tool used by the Township to implement the Land Use Plan. Districts are established through zoning for the purpose of regulating the use of land and buildings, their height and bulk, the proportion of the lot that may be covered by them, and the density of development. This classification through regulation assists in the orderly development and growth of the community. In addition, zoning is used to protect property values and investments. Because of the real and/ or perceived impact zoning has on the use of land and related services, a direct relationship must exist between the Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

Land use classifications on the Future Land Use Map and the corresponding land use category descriptions in the text of the Land Use Plan provide the basis for evaluating future zoning amendments, decisions initiated by the Planning Commission, or rezoning requests presented by petitioners.

Based on the recommendations in the Plan for the residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and based on the ever-evolving zoning tools that are available, the Township should consider a technical review of the Zoning Ordinance. A technical review will determine which provisions of the Ordinance are no longer consistent with the policies of the Land Use Plan, provisions that should be included to implement the policies of the Land Use Plan, and which provisions can be more clearly written to withstand legal scrutiny.

The technical review will be a methodical process that results in a list of suggested text amendments necessary to update the Zoning Ordinance in accordance with the Plan.

Beyond this initial review, there should also be continuous review of the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that it continues to satisfy the goals and objectives of this Plan and meet the Community's vision. In particular, site plan review and special land use approval standards should be maintained to ensure they stay current with the

Community's objectives. Similarly, the Township Zoning Map should also be consistently reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in the Community consistent with the future land use plan. This is typically done on an annual basis.

### *REZONING*

A review of the Zoning Map should be conducted to determine consistency with the Future Land Use Map. While the two should not be the same, it should be evident that the Zoning Map will move the Township closer to the vision presented in the Future Land Use Map. Therefore, property at a higher intensity or density than designated on the Future Land Use Map, are of particular interest. Rezoning these properties prevents a vacant lot from being developed in a manner that is no longer consistent with the Township's vision.

Other parcels that are zoned at a lower intensity or density, for instance a parcel zoned Rural Residential in the Gateway Mixed Use area, do not necessarily need to be rezoned at this time. A developer would likely seek such a rezoning when they submitted an application to develop the property.

### *SUBDIVISION AND PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS*

Land division regulations are an important tool for the implementation of this Plan. The Township has regulations to cover all of the various forms of land division – land divisions, subdivisions, site condominiums, and planned unit developments – but these regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they continue to represent the vision and intent of the Township.

For example, the subdivision regulations contain design standards that regulate the design and layout of lots, streets, and developments. It is critical that these standards require the necessary amenities and stipulations on development to protect the rural character that residents here treasure. While subdivision plats have become much less popular in the advent of site condominiums and planned unit developments, the design guidelines are universal and apply to all forms of development.

A more specialized form of development has evolved recently that will be critical to future development in the Township. Planned Unit Development (PUD) is cited frequently in this Plan as a tool that can be used to realize the goals of various land use categories and achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible. This tool allows for flexible application of the zoning standards in exchange for higher quality development and preservation of valuable open space areas. This section of the current regulations should be carefully reviewed and updated. This will allow for PUD's to most effectively implement the goals and objectives of the Plan and will provide incentives so they are more likely to be used to create such development in the future.

## *OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT*

Rural open space development is an alternative to conventional site development that is intended to promote the preservation of rural character. Conventional site development often results in residential sprawl that consumes large amounts of land and divides open spaces into fragments that do not contribute to a rural appearance and are not conducive to agriculture, wildlife habitat, or other rural open space uses.

Conventional site development places lots on every available acre of the site. Open space development (also known as cluster zoning) allows for the grouping of dwellings onto part of the site so that the remainder can be preserved as open space. The clustering of dwellings can be placed either within woodlands, to preserve agricultural land and open space, or on the open space, preserving the woodlands and other existing natural features.

The development also typically has a large setback from the road allowing rural viewsheds along the corridor to be preserved. The goal is to devise better use of undeveloped property resulting in higher quality development as opposed to destroying natural features to create conventional development.

Zoning Ordinance requirements must be revised to be no more difficult for rural open space developments than for conventional residential development. This development alternative is most effective when the Township offers a small incentive for open space development to the developer in the form of a small density bonus. A density bonus is contingent upon the developer preserving a sufficient amount of natural features and open space and appropriate infrastructure for the dwellings.

## *FINANCING TOOLS*

Successful implementation of the Land Use Plan will depend on the ability of the Township to secure necessary financing for proposed improvements. Besides the general fund, the following sources of revenue are available to the Township:

### *DEDICATED MILLAGE*

Special millage rates can be approved to generate revenues for a specific purpose.

### *SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS*

Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefited by specific public improvements (paving, drainage improvements, etc.) to defray the costs of such improvements. Special assessments are apportioned according to the assumed benefits to the property affected. Special assessment funding would prove useful to implement utility and road improvements in those areas with substandard and unimproved roads.



## MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

This fund replaced the Michigan Land Trust Fund in October 1985. All proposals for local grants must include a local match of at least 25 percent of total project costs. Projects eligible for funding include: acquisition of land or rights in land for recreational uses or for protection of the land for environmental importance or scenic beauty; and development proposals for public outdoor recreation or resource protection purposes (i.e., picnic areas, beaches, boating access, fishing and hunting facilities, winter sports areas, playgrounds, ball fields, tennis courts, and trails, etc.). Indoor facilities are considered only if their primary purpose is to support outdoor recreation. Proposed local government fund recipients must have a recreation plan no more than five years old and approved by the Department of Natural Resources.

## LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

These grants are 50/50 matching grants for land acquisition or outdoor recreation development funding. Eligible projects could receive a reimbursement from the Federal government equal to half the total project cost. The other half would have to be in the form of cash outlay, donation of land, or by credit for certain locally assumed costs. To be eligible, the Township must have an approved, up-to-date recreation plan that has been formally adopted by the Township Board.

Facilities which may be developed with these funds include, but are not limited to, picnic areas, beaches, boating facilities, fishing and hunting facilities, winter sports areas, playgrounds, ball fields, and tennis courts.

## BOND PROGRAMS

Bonds are one of the principal sources of financing used by communities to pay for capital improvements. General obligation bonds are issued for specific community project and are paid off by the general public with property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for construction of projects that generate revenues. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project (for example, water and sewer service charges).

## TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

The Downtown Development Authority Act, Local Development Finance Authority Act, and Brownfield Redevelopment Act authorize tax increment financing. When a tax increment finance district is established, the state equalized value of all properties in the district is recorded. Every year thereafter, the property tax revenue generated by any increase in the total state equalized value is "captured" by the DDA, LDFA, or BRA to finance the improvements set forth in a Land Use Plan. Often, revenue bonds are issued to finance the improvements, and the tax increment revenues are used to repay the bonds. A brownfield area may be the most likely to be effective in the future for Yankee Springs Township. The County already has a Brownfield Redevelopment

Authority with a plan in place. That plan would simply need to be adopted to include potential brownfield sites in the Township. Then, if approved, brownfield funds may be made available to applicants at this site for purposes of redevelopment, environmental cleanup, and other high costs that prohibit development because of the status of the site. There are a few potential sites that may be included in such an effort including an old gas station and a previously used dump.