

2023

Cato Township Master Plan

CATO TOWNSHIP, MONTCALM COUNTY, MICHIGAN

ADOPTED – February 2024

**Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan
2023 Master Plan
RESOLUTION of ADOPTION**

WHEREAS the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008), as amended, provides for a Township planning commission to prepare and adopt a Master Plan for physical development of the community; and

WHEREAS the Cato Township Planning Commission has prepared such a Master Plan for the Township's physical development in compliance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, including relevant charts, maps and text; and

WHEREAS the Cato Township Planning Commission has provided multiple opportunities for public participation in the planning process; and

WHEREAS the Cato Township Board approved the draft Plan for distribution, and subsequently the Master Plan was so distributed for review by surrounding communities and other public agencies as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act; and

WHEREAS the Cato Township Planning Commission held a formal public hearing on the draft Master Plan on December 13, 2023 in order to provide additional opportunity for public comment; and

WHEREAS all comments received during the planning process have been carefully considered and the Planning Commission is satisfied that the Master Plan is ready for adoption.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Cato Township Board hereby adopts the Cato Township 2023 Master Plan, as presented at the public meeting held on February 5, 2024 subject to incorporation of the following revisions (if applicable):

1. *To be added under Future Land Use map: "Adjacent areas may be considered*
2. *by the PC/Board for commercial or industrial expansion if certain circumstances are met.*


Motion by Behrenwald and seconded by Hubbard

AYES: 5

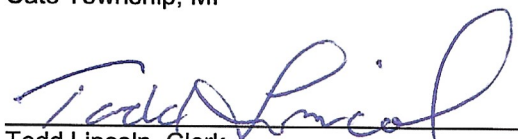
NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0

Resolution Declared Adopted.



Brandi Clark-Hubbard, Supervisor
Cato Township, MI



Todd Lincoln, Clerk
Cato Township, MI

Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan
2023 Master Plan
RESOLUTION of ADOPTION

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WHEREAS all comments received during the planning process have been carefully considered and the Planning Commission is satisfied that the Master Plan is ready for adoption.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Cato Township Planning Commission hereby adopts and forwards an adoption recommendation to the Cato Township Board, of the Cato Township 2023 Master Plan, as presented at the public meeting held on December 13, 2023 subject to incorporation of the following revisions (if applicable):

1. X
2. X


Motion by Jacob and seconded by Joe Moin

AYES: 4 Comments
Joe, David, Jacob, Phil
Moin, Behannah, Anna, Morrow

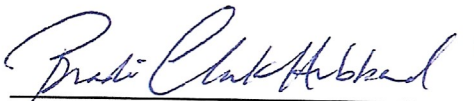
NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 Quannah STAIKON

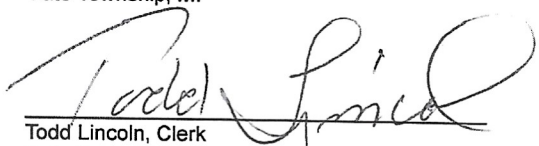
Resolution Declared Adopted.



Phil, Morrow, Chairperson
Cato Township, MI



Brandi Clark-Hubbard, Supervisor
Cato Township, MI



Todd Lincoln, Clerk
Cato Township, MI

Cato Township Master Plan

Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan

ADOPTED February 2024

Prepared with the assistance of:



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Acknowledgments

Township Board of Trustees

Brandi Clark-Hubbard, Supervisor
Todd Lincoln, Clerk
Joyce Grieser, Treasurer
David Behrenwald, Trustee
Marcy Myers, Trustee

Planning Commission

Phil Morrow, Chairperson
Quanah Striker, Vice Chairperson
David Behrenwald, Township Board Liaison
Joe Main, Commissioner
Jake Cumings, Commissioner

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Introduction

The Cato Township Master Plan is the culmination of efforts of the Township Planning Commission, Township Board of Trustees and residents of Cato Township. They joined together in order to update the previous Master Plan for the community's growth and development and make better use of the existing Zoning Ordinance.

The Cato Township Master Plan has been developed to serve as a set of general policies to guide decision makers within the community and direct the future growth and development of the Township over the next ten to fifteen years. The Master Plan is intended to provide a suitable development pattern for the Township that will promote future economic stability and quality of life to residents of Cato Township.

In accordance with this objective, the Master Plan defines issues that are most important to the community. Resident and community input was encouraged through a visioning meeting, Planning Commission meetings, and a public hearing. An analysis of the existing features of the Township was conducted to illustrate some of its defining characteristics. The analysis includes a survey of the existing land uses in the Township; population, economic and housing statistics; and a description of the physical constraints, natural resources, and circulation patterns within the community.

Based on all gathered information and with input from citizens, goals and objectives were developed which outline the growth and development patterns for the community over the next ten to fifteen years. This plan and the goals and objectives contained within it should be the guide for all significant land use decisions made by the Township for the next ten to fifteen years. As conditions change over time, the Township may find that the Master Plan needs to change as well. Amendments are likely as it is impossible to perfectly predict exactly what will happen in the near future. Keeping the Master Plan up to date will ensure that it stays relevant and useful and will keep it from simply collecting dust on a shelf.

BRIEF HISTORY

Cato Township is located on the northwest side of Montcalm County in West Michigan. The western shore of Tamarack Lake is believed to be the site of early Native American settlements. The first settler was Edmond Smith, who came to the area in 1855. Other settlers then soon followed, and the first Township election was held at the house of Samuel Youngman on July 6, 1857. Cato Township was named by Westbrook B. Devine after his native town of Cato, New York. The Village of Lakeview (within Cato Township) was settled in 1858 and platted in 1867 by Albert French. The Village of Lakeview was a station on the Chicago, Saginaw, and Canada Railroad. The Village of Lakeview was incorporated in 1881.



Purpose and Intent

This document is intended to fulfill the requirements and provide the functions of a Master Plan. The Township Master Plan is a crucial planning document for a community as it not only provides important information about the current conditions and trends in the community, but also presents a vision for the future of the Township with a plan for accomplishing that vision.

A Master Plan is used for a variety of purposes. At the most basic level, a Master Plan is the basis for a community's zoning ordinance. One of the legal tests of validity for a zoning ordinance is that the ordinance must be based on a comprehensive plan for the development of the jurisdiction. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended) requires that zoning ordinances are based on a plan.

A fundamental part of the master planning process is the public involvement that identifies the community's desires for its future and its long-term vision for growth and development. The goals and objectives are the heart of the Master Plan and present the vision and the manner in which it will be achieved.

Document Contents

The Cato Township Master Plan is organized into several chapters describing existing conditions, trends, projections, and their implications; the Township's vision, goals and objectives; master planned future land use, transportation, recreation, and community development; and proposed actions for making the Plans into reality.

- **Community Profile** is an analysis of Cato Township with regard to its population and other demographic characteristics. Based on numerical data, this section gives an overview of the trends in the Township and projections for the future.
- **Existing Conditions** presents the existing land uses, transportation, public facilities, wetlands, floodplain, prime farmland and soils, and other physical characteristics of Cato Township, including maps, pictures, and text. Its purpose is to present the Township as it exists today.
- **Goals and Objectives** outline the path that the Township intends to follow, including the vision for the economic, social, and physical future of the community.
- **The Future Land Use Plan** combines the information, analysis and input from the above chapters into a coherent plan for Cato Township's future. This chapter is related to the goals and objectives, Township enhancements, sustainability considerations, and future land use and transportation recommendations.
- **The Action Plan** answers the "how" of the Master Plan. With specific programs, ideas, and regulations, it provides guidance for Township officials to shape the Township's future. The chapter includes specific action-oriented implementation steps, as well as for economic development, land use and zoning regulations, and capital improvements.

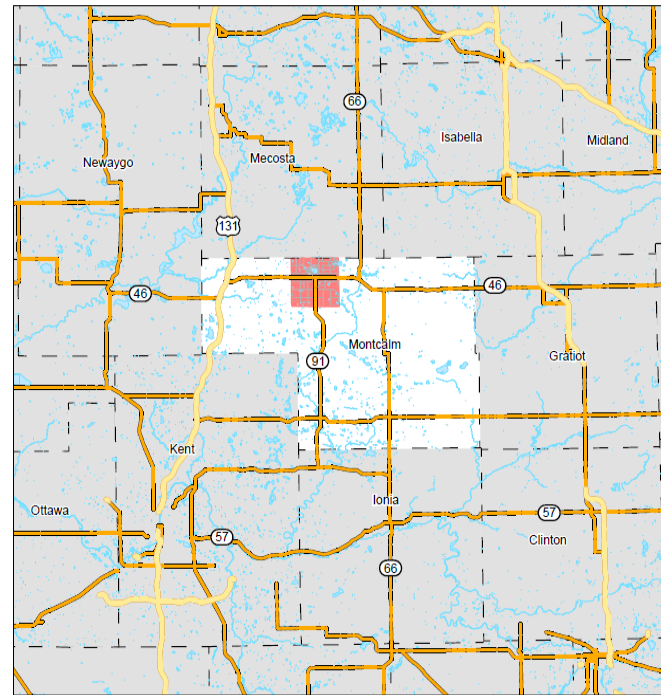
Cato Township Today

Regional Context

Cato Township is located in Montcalm County, Michigan approximately 30 miles northeast of Grand Rapids, Michigan and approximately 20 miles southwest of the Mt Pleasant, Michigan.

The Township is approximately 34 square miles in size and is largely comprised of undeveloped agricultural land and rural residential homes on large lots. The Village of Lakeview, a separate municipality, sits entirely within Cato Township. Also noteworthy about Cato Township is the presence of the inland lakes. The major lakes include Towlne Lake and Tamarack Lake, as well as several minor lakes. The major lakes make Cato Township a popular destination for water sports, outdoor recreation, cottage and lake living, and other desirable features and activities.

Cato Township is located in the north of Montcalm County in the west-central region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Hinton Township is located just north of the Township, Winfield Township is located to the west, Belvidere Township is located to the east, and Pine Township is located to the south. Cato Township borders the Mecosta County Line on the north.



DEMOGRAPHICS

The purpose of a demographic profile is to understand the past, present, and future population and demographic characteristics of Cato Township and to analyze housing options and stock. It is also important to note that the US Census Bureau does not separate Cato Township data from the Village of Lakeview data. When possible and unless noted otherwise, the Cato Township demographic data has been adjusted to reflect only the Township population.

Population, demographics, education, income, and housing characteristics are detailed. In some cases, the demographic data is compared with Montcalm County, surrounding municipalities, and the State of Michigan, to gain a regional perspective. The following paragraphs and tables will give some insight as to what the future may hold for Cato Township.

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

The population of Cato Township was 1,874 persons, based on data obtained from the United States Census Bureau via the 2020 Census. Montcalm County had a total population of 66,614 persons based on the 2020 Census. Cato Township accounts for an estimated 2.8% of the entire County in terms of population.

Table 1 below shows the population changes from 2000 to 2020 for Cato Township and the surrounding communities, as well as Montcalm County and the State of Michigan. Cato Township has experienced significant growth in comparison to neighboring communities, the County, and the State. The Township has grown over 8%, while neighboring communities have seen decline or smaller growth rates.

Table 1: Population Changes, Cato Township and Surrounding Communities

Community	2000	2010	2020	Percent Change from 2010 to 2020
Cato Township	1,808	1,728	1,874	8.45%
Village of Lakeview	1,112	1,007	1,024	1.69%
Belvidere Township	2,438	2,209	2,135	-3.35%
Hinton Township	1,035	1,126	1,054	-6.39%
Pine Township	1,654	1,834	1,870	1.96%
Winfield Township	2,049	2,235	2,279	1.97%
Montcalm County	61,266	63,342	66,614	5.17%
Michigan	9,938,444	9,883,640	10,077,331	1.96%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, 2010, 2020

While Cato Township's population has been increasing, the number of households has decreased by 1.35% from 2010 to 2021 according to the American Community Survey. The average household size in 2010 was 2.53, while the 2021 average household size was 2.75 for Cato Township. This estimate includes the Village of Lakeview, which had an average household size of 2.42 in 2010 and 2.51 in 2021. This means that the actual average household size for the Township is being depressed by the Village numbers. Overall, the trend of growing household size can be observed. This may be indicative of increasing prices for housing, or residents having larger families than previously.

RACE & ETHNICITY

The population of Cato Township is largely homogenous in terms of race and ethnicity. In 2020, 94.02% of the total population reported being white/Caucasian. The next most occurring race was two or more races with 4.11%. No other individual racial group consists of more than 1% of the population. Table 2 below shows the racial breakdown within the Township. In terms of ethnicity, 3.15% of the Township population identify as Hispanic or Latino.

Table 2: Racial Composition, Cato Township

Race	Cato Township	Percent of Population (Cato)
White alone	1762	94.02%
Black or African American alone	16	0.85%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1	0.05%
Asian alone	0	x
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0	x
Some Other Race alone	18	0.96%
Population of two or more races:	77	4.11%
Total	1874	x

Source: US Census Bureau 2020

AGE STRUCTURE

Based on 2021 American Community Survey data, the median age of Township residents was 40.3 years, however this includes residents of the Village of

Lakeview, which has a median age of 36.8 years. This means that the Village is lowering the median age of the Township, and the actual median age of just the Township is slightly higher than 40.3 years. Montcalm County has a median age of 40.7 years, which is comparable to the Township. Table 3 shows the population percentage based on the census age range.

Table 3: Age Distribution, Cato Township

Age Range	Population	Percent of Population
Under 5 years	36	1.89%
5 to 9 years	124	6.50%
10 to 14 years	142	7.44%
15 to 19 years	220	11.53%
20 to 24 years	64	3.35%
25 to 29 years	82	4.30%
30 to 34 years	127	6.66%
35 to 39 years	102	5.35%
40 to 44 years	144	7.55%
45 to 49 years	153	8.02%

50 to 54 years	161	8.44%
55 to 59 years	142	7.44%
60 to 64 years	113	5.92%
65 to 69 years	66	3.46%
70 to 74 years	106	5.56%
75 to 79 years	38	1.99%
80 to 84 years	40	2.10%
85 years and over	48	2.52%
Total	1908	

Source: American Community Survey 2021

Understanding the age of residents is important when considering future priorities and goals for the community as different age groups have differing needs. This plan looks at five age categories to better understand the age range of the Township: pre-school age, school age, family forming, mature families, and retirement.

Table 4 below shows the age group distribution for Cato Township. Mature families are the highest share of the population, however family forming, and school aged populations are close behind. Understanding

there is a high adult population, but also high school aged population may indicate a need for recreation planning and programming. Further, the population appears to be aging, so infrastructure and services that cater to an older population should be prioritized.

Table 4: Age Groups, Cato Township

Age Group	Population	Percent of Population
Pre-School Age (Under 5)	36	1.89%
School Aged (5-19 years)	486	25.47%
Family Forming (20-44)	519	27.20%
Mature Families (45 to 64)	569	29.82%
Retirement (Over 65)	298	15.62%

Source: American Community Survey 2021

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment for persons 25 years and older within Cato Township, Montcalm County, and the Village of Lakeview is depicted in Table 5 below. Within the Township, an estimated 84.95% of residents have a high school degree or higher, while 20.58% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.

For comparison, Montcalm County has 88.48% of residents with a high school degree or higher and 13.93% of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher. While Cato Township has a lower percentage of residents with a high school degree or higher, they have a higher percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 5: Educational Attainment, Montcalm County, Cato Township, Village of Lakeview

Educational Attainment	Montcalm County	Cato Township	Village of Lakeview
Less than 9th grade	2.95%	6.35%	1.90%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	8.57%	8.70%	12.70%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	40.09%	37.37%	44.82%
Some college, no degree	24.91%	19.82%	19.56%
Associate's degree	9.55%	7.19%	9.34%
Bachelor's degree	9.64%	16.87%	10.07%
Graduate or professional degree	4.29%	3.71%	1.61%

Source: American Community Survey 2021

INCOME AND POVERTY

The median household income for Cato Township in 2021, according to the American Community Survey, was \$55,703. This number includes the Village of Lakeview, which has a significantly lower median household income. This means that the Village is depressing the actual median household income for Cato Township, and so the actual median income is likely higher than \$55,703.

Table 6 below shows Cato Township’s median household income, as well as the Village of Lakeview, Montcalm County, and the State of Michigan. In comparison to the County, Cato Township has a slightly higher median household income, however, it is below the median household income for the State.

Table 6: Median Household Income, Michigan, Montcalm County, Cato Township, Village of Lakeview

Community	2010*	2021	Percent Change from 2010 - 2021
Cato Township	\$44,347	\$55,703	25.61%
Village of Lakeview	\$36,845	\$32,417	-12.02%
Montcalm County	\$48,016	\$54,803	14.14%
Michigan	\$58,467	\$63,202	8.10%

Source: American Community Survey 2010, 2021

*All dollar values expressed as 2021 dollars

When looking at poverty rate, Cato Township has a significantly lower poverty rate, 6.7%, than Montcalm County and the State of Michigan. Further, it has a significantly lower rate than the Village of Lakeview. The poverty rates for the previously mentioned geographies are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Poverty Rate, Michigan, Montcalm County, Cato Township, Village of Lakeview

Community	Percent of Population Below Poverty Level 2021
Cato Township	6.7%
Village of Lakeview	25.0%
Montcalm County	12.7%
Michigan	13.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2021

Housing Review

The quality, affordability, and availability of a community’s housing stock has a significant impact on overall community vitality. The following review of Census Data relating to the number of housing units, age of housing units, amount of owner-occupied and rental units helps evaluate the health of the Township’s housing stock.

As of the 2020 Census, Cato Township had an approximate total of 813 housing units. Approximately 19% of these were vacant. In comparison, Montcalm County has a vacancy rate of 15.14% and the Village of Lakeview has a 9.78% vacancy rate. Cato Township’s high vacancy rate may be indicative of high housing prices or the fact that the many lakes in the Township may lead to higher numbers of cottage or part time housing. The high vacancy rate also means there is sufficient room for population growth or year-round housing opportunities within the Township. Table 8 shows the Township’s housing units and associated characteristics.

Table 8: 2021 Housing Units, Cato Township

Occupancy Status	Cato Township	Percent of Housing Units (Cato)
Occupied	658	80.93%
Owner-Occupied	582	
Renter-Occupied	76	
Vacant	155	19.07%
Total	813	

Source: American Community Survey 2021

AGE OF HOUSING

The age of the housing stock can provide important insights for a community, as the conditions of the housing stock may be related to its age. Older housing stock can also provide the community with a sense of character. Traditionally, major repairs or rehabilitation are needed when housing reaches 30 years of age.

Communities in which a substantial proportion of the housing stock is more than 30 years old typically initiate programs to encourage reinvestment in the homes and properties on which they sit. Furthermore, beginning in the 1980s, the desire and requirements from homeowners for more energy efficient houses and additional amenities have increased. Older homes tend to lack the desired features that support barrier free access and may be unsuitable for aging in place without enhanced retrofits or other significant reinvestments.

As shown in Table 9, 79.31% of the housing stock within Cato Township was constructed prior to the turn of the century (2000). Only 3.32% of the housing stock within the Township has been constructed within the past 13 years. Due to the significant number of older housing units, the Township should encourage reinvestment in the older housing stock to better serve residents and to preserve the historic character of the community.

Table 9: Housing Stock Age

Year Structure Built	Housing Stock	Percentage
Built 2010 to 2019	27	3.32%
Built 2000 to 2009	142	17.47%
Built 1990 to 1999	180	22.14%
Built 1980 to 1989	100	12.30%
Built 1970 to 1979	155	19.07%
Built 1960 to 1969	53	6.52%
Built 1950 to 1959	58	7.13%
Built 1940 to 1949	8	0.98%
Built 1939 or earlier	90	11.07%
Total housing units	813	

Community Facilities

A primary purpose of municipal government is the delivery of services for the health, safety, and welfare of the local population. The responsibility of providing public services to the residents of the Cato Township is shared by several public entities, including the Township itself, Montcalm County, and other agencies.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

Cato Township is served by the Lakeview Community Schools District. The District is comprised of several schools that include:

- Early Childhood Center (preschool)
- Lakeview Elementary School
- Lakeview Middle School
- Lakeview High School

The schools are located in central Montcalm County. The Lakeview Community District currently serves about 1,070 students.



OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES

Cato Township and the Village of Lakeview work closely with one another for parks and recreation support and facilities. In the Village of Lakeview, there are four public parks. These include:

- Ruby Wiseman Memorial Park
- Lakeview Dog Park
- Lakeside Park
- Lakeview Pocket Park

Within Cato Township, the Townline Lake Campground is located on the south side of Townline Lake along Cutler Road. Further, the Township includes one cemetery, Cato Cemetery, located on the north side of Gates Road, just east of M-91. The Village of Lakeview includes one cemetery, Lakeview Cemetery.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The Village of Lakeview has a public water and sewer system. Further, the Village also includes a Department of Public Works that maintains the Village water and sewer system, as well as over 12 miles of streets, 25000 feet of sidewalk, over 100 trees, 3 parks, cemetery, Griffith Field Airport, and brush/leaf pickup. Cato Township's roads are maintained by the Road Commission for Montcalm County.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Cato Township is serviced by the Lakeview District Fire Department, located at 117 Park Drive, Lakeview Michigan. This Department also services neighboring Townships of Maple Valley, Hinton, Pine, and Winfield. The Department's operations are overseen by the Fire Board, which is comprised of trustees from Cato, Maple Valley, Hinton, and Pine Townships. The Department also includes a Fire Chief that oversees the day-to-day operations and a staff of 29 volunteers.

Cato Township is served by the State of Michigan Police and the Montcalm County Police Department. The Michigan State Police branch serving Cato Township is located on M-46 within Cato Township.

TOWNSHIP BUILDINGS AND OTHER SERVICES

Cato Township Hall (Community Center) is located within the Village of Lakeview limits, in Downtown Lakeview. The office is located at the Community Center, where all Township meetings are held. The Community Center is located at the heart of Downtown Lakeview, at 309 S. Lincoln Avenue. The Community Center is available to the public for rental.

Further, the Village of Lakeview and Cato Township also includes the Tamarack District Library, located at 832 S. Lincoln Avenue, near Downtown Lakeview. The Tamarack District Library is a popular municipal hub that offers programming for the community and opportunities for rentals of books and other media such as movies and music.



AIRPORT

The Griffith Field Airport is located within the Village of Lakeview. The Airport provides services for airplanes traveling the region. The Griffith Field Airport provides space for commercial, private, and student air transportation. The airport also is an important regional asset for freight and transportation to and from local businesses. The airport also is a significant resource for agricultural activities and production in the region.

OTHER COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Given the Township's rural nature and rich agricultural history, among other characteristics, Cato Township is also home to an Amish population. The Amish population in the Township own sites of valued businesses in the community, such as a sawmill and other similar rural business activities. Cato Township supports and encourages Amish-owned and operated businesses to continue in the Township.



Natural Features and Resources

A thorough community plan requires that the condition of the environment be considered in decisions regarding future land uses as stewards of the land and water within the Township.

Federal environmental legislation enacted in the 1970's raised public awareness of the importance of environmental protection. Although many states, including Michigan, strengthened federal environmental laws with state laws and programs designed to correct environmental problems and prevent future contamination of air, land, and water, trends during the 1980's reduced enforcement of these laws, making them a low priority. During the 1990's and early 2000's, environmental protection resurfaced as a serious concern.

The natural features of Cato Township, such as the topography, floodplain, wetlands, groundwater, and soils are important features of the community. Although Cato Township is predominately rural in character, concern for the environment is as critical as in urban communities that must deal with brownfields and air pollution. Most Cato Township residents use water wells and septic systems which are reliant on clean and suitable environments for their continued use. In dense developments with many systems, this further adds to the stress on the natural environment and the concern for its protection.

Several natural features of Cato Township are examined below.

TOPOGRAPHY

As with much of the State of Michigan, Cato Township is characterized by relatively flat land, which is best suited for farming and agricultural activities. A majority of the flat land in the Township is at lower elevations in basins known geographically as "outwash plains" which were created as a result of glacial melt.

SURFACE WATERS

Cato Township contains several major surface water features such as Tamarack Lake, covering approximately 325 acres, and Townline Lake, covering approximately 330 acres. Tamarack Lake is located in the northern-center of the Township and the majority is surrounded by the Village of Lakeview. Townline Lake is situated on the eastern border with Belvidere Township and only half the lake is within Cato Township's borders. The Township also has several minor lakes scattered across the region:

- **Lake Forest** west of NW Lake Road and north of James Drive
- **Pickereel Lake** south of Almy Road and west of Johnson Road
- **Big Brimmer** Lake south of Edgar Road and east of N Vining Road
- **Little Brimmer** Lake north of Edgar Road and west of Fitzner Road
- **Basin Lake** north of M-46 and west of Fitzner Road
- **Buck Lake** west of Lake Road and south of Almy Road



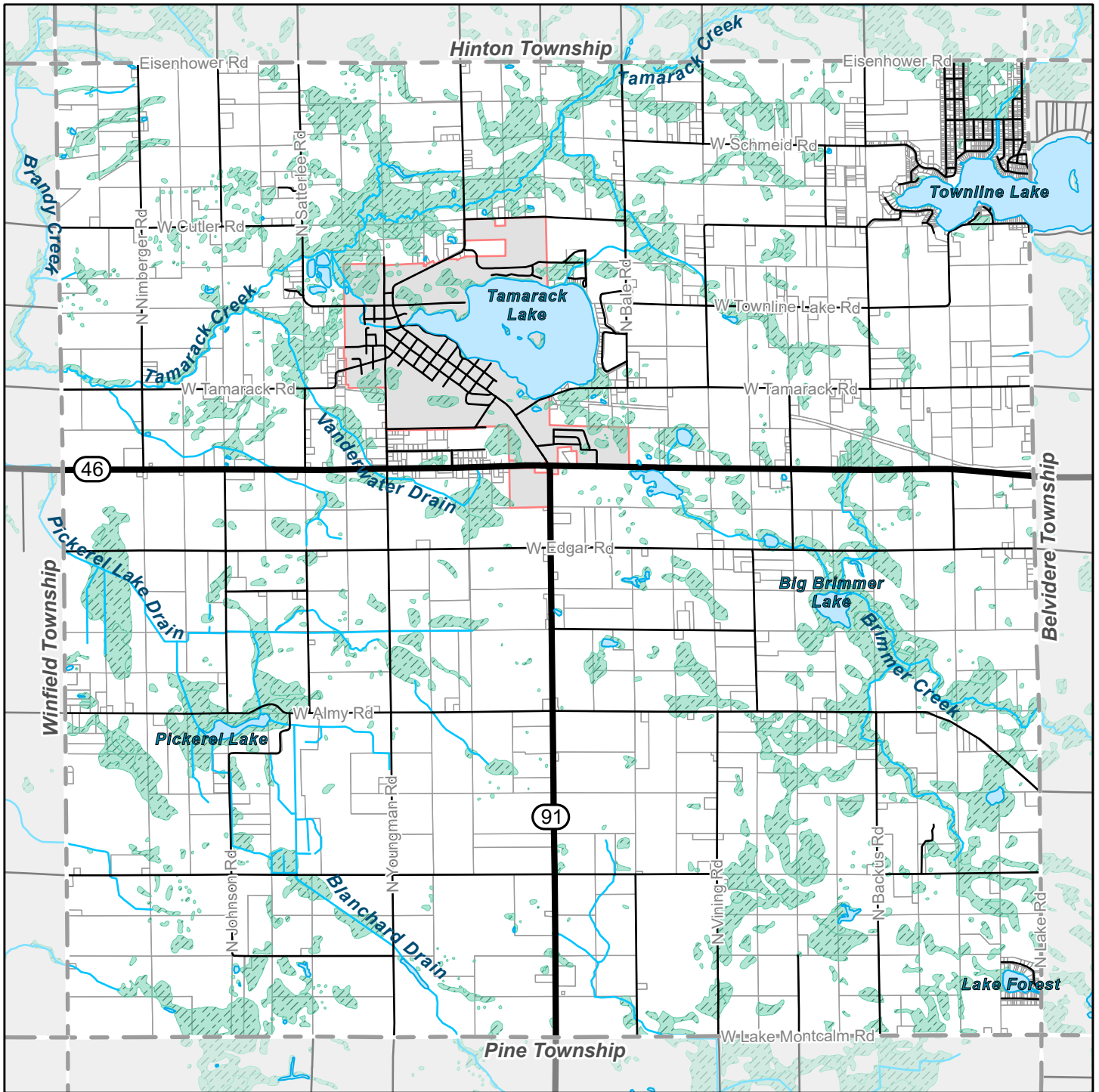
In addition to the lakes, many streams, creeks, and rivers are located within the Township. Tamarack Lake and the Northern and Western portions of the Township drain into Tamarack Creek which flows into the Little Muskegon River, Muskegon River and Lake Michigan. Townline lake flows into Townline Creek and the Flat River. The Southwestern portions of the township drain into Brimmer Creek and the Flat River, which eventually flows into the Grand River and Lake Michigan.

WETLANDS AND WOODLANDS

Cato Township has a multitude of wetland areas within its boundaries. The wetland areas are located in all areas throughout the Township, mostly around the various bodies of water. Many wetland areas are located on the northern portion of the Township, surrounding the Village limits and along Tamarack Creek, as well as on the southeastern portion of the Township surrounding Big Brimmer Lake, Brimmer Creek, and Lake Forest.

According to the National Wetlands Inventory, most of the existing wetlands in the Township are classified as “Palustrine,” which include all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergent, emergent mosses or lichens. Some of the most common names for the Palustrine System include marsh, swamp, pond, bog, and fen. Within Cato Township, the most occurring palustrine wetlands are “Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland” and “Freshwater Emergent Wetland.” Wetlands are important environmental resources that support groundwater recharge.










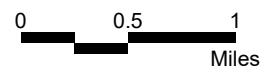
Wetlands and Water Features

Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan

September 20, 2023

LEGEND

-  State Highways
-  Roads
-  Lakes and Rivers
-  Streams and Drains
-  Wetlands



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Cato Township, 2023. McKenna, 2023.

GROUNDWATER

Cato Township depends heavily on groundwater as a source of water for residential and agricultural use. It is thus vital to plan appropriately for development in order to protect this key natural resource. In general, with the use of groundwater resources as the main source for water, the following contamination can occur if appropriate steps are not taken:

- Non-point sources of pollution from chemicals and effluence associated with commerce, industry and farming;
- Chemicals filtering into groundwater from septic fields, oil tanks and waste disposal sites;
- Everyday residential activities. In many instances, these pollutants reach lakes and streams through groundwater supplies. Pollutants may also affect well water located near septic fields.

Groundwater protection must also address the operational features of land uses. Groundwater contamination is most frequently the result of leaking septic systems, improper floor drains, improper storage of hazardous substances, leaking underground storage tanks, above ground spills, overfilling of gasoline tanks, condensation from air emissions, and improper waste disposal. For future proposed developments, many of these avenues of contamination can be addressed as part of the site plan review process.

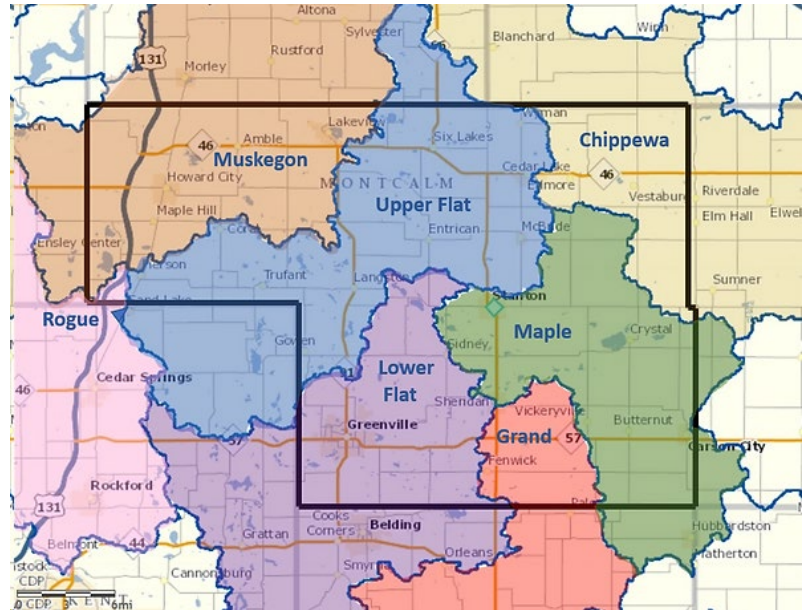
Several prominent drains, as established and maintained by Montcalm County, are located within Cato Township. These drains include:

- Blanchard Drain
- Pickerel Lake Drain
- Vanderwater Drain

Further, the Township is located within the Upper Flat River Watershed and the Muskegon River Watershed, which is maintained and protected by the Montcalm Conservation District and the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, respectively. The Flat River watershed drains approximately 564 square miles of land, spanning over several Counties. Over half of the land within the watershed is used for agricultural or production purposes. Other portions of the land are comprised of forests, wetlands, and open surface water.

The Muskegon River Watershed covers 9 Counties in West-Central Michigan and feeds over 1,200 lakes and ponds. The watershed drains 2,350 square miles.

Through the duration of this Plan, the Township can explore opportunities to identify areas for potential future municipal infrastructure expansions, especially around the lake areas to protect the region's natural resources and water assets.



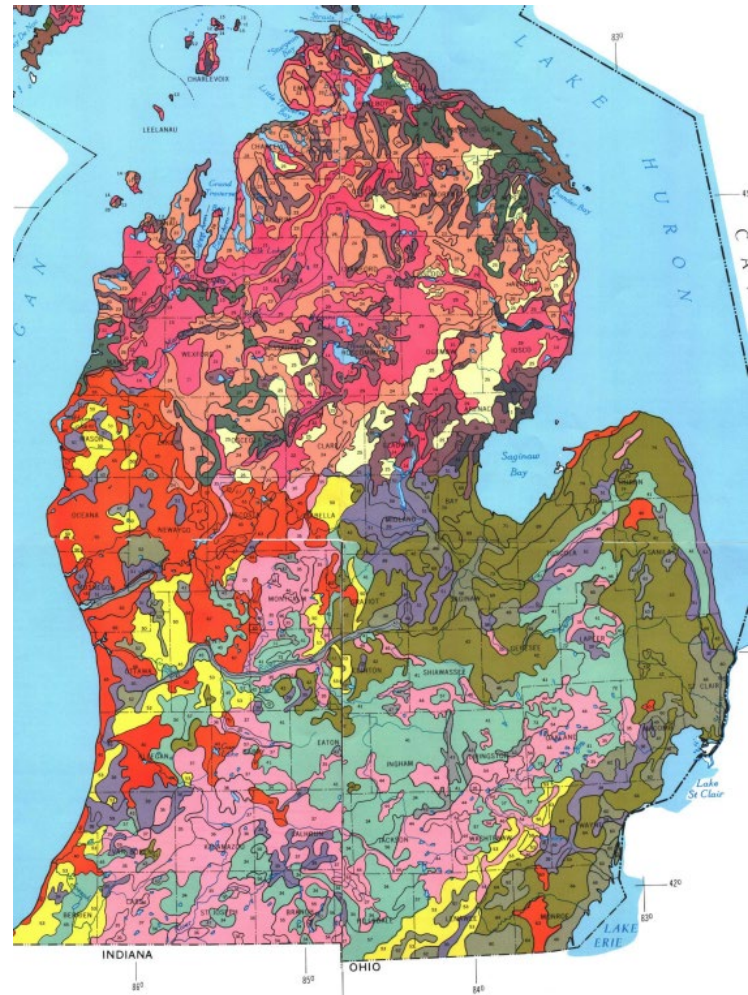
SOILS

Due to the importance of farming and agriculture in Cato Township, soil composition is an important natural feature to consider when planning for future development and growth. According to the Michigan State University (MSU) Soil Association Map, most of the soils in Montcalm County are comprised of loamy underlain by sand and gravel. However, there are few areas that include sandy soils, clay soils, and wet organic loamy soils.

If there are areas with better soil for farming than others, the Township should work to protect those areas from the pressures of development. Soils are generally well grained sandy loams suitable for farming. Areas around Townline lake are comprised of steep slopes, which are not conducive to farming. Similarly, some soils are not well suited for septic systems. In that light, development should be steered away from those areas as well.

The following soil associations are found in Cato Township:

- McBride-Isabella-Newaygo Association
- Montcalm-Mcbride Association
- Montcalm-Mancelona Association
- Grayling Association
- Coral and McBride Association
- Mancelona-Gladwin-Epoufette Association



COMMON SPECIES

Cato Township is home to many plant and animal species common to the State of Michigan. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University, MSU Extension, house and maintain extensive information and resources on the various types of mammal, bird, plant, reptile, fish, insect, and amphibian species commonly found in Michigan and Montcalm County.

Given that much of Cato Township is undeveloped, wooded, water, or open land, the Township has plenty of area and space for animals and plants to grow and thrive in their natural habitats.

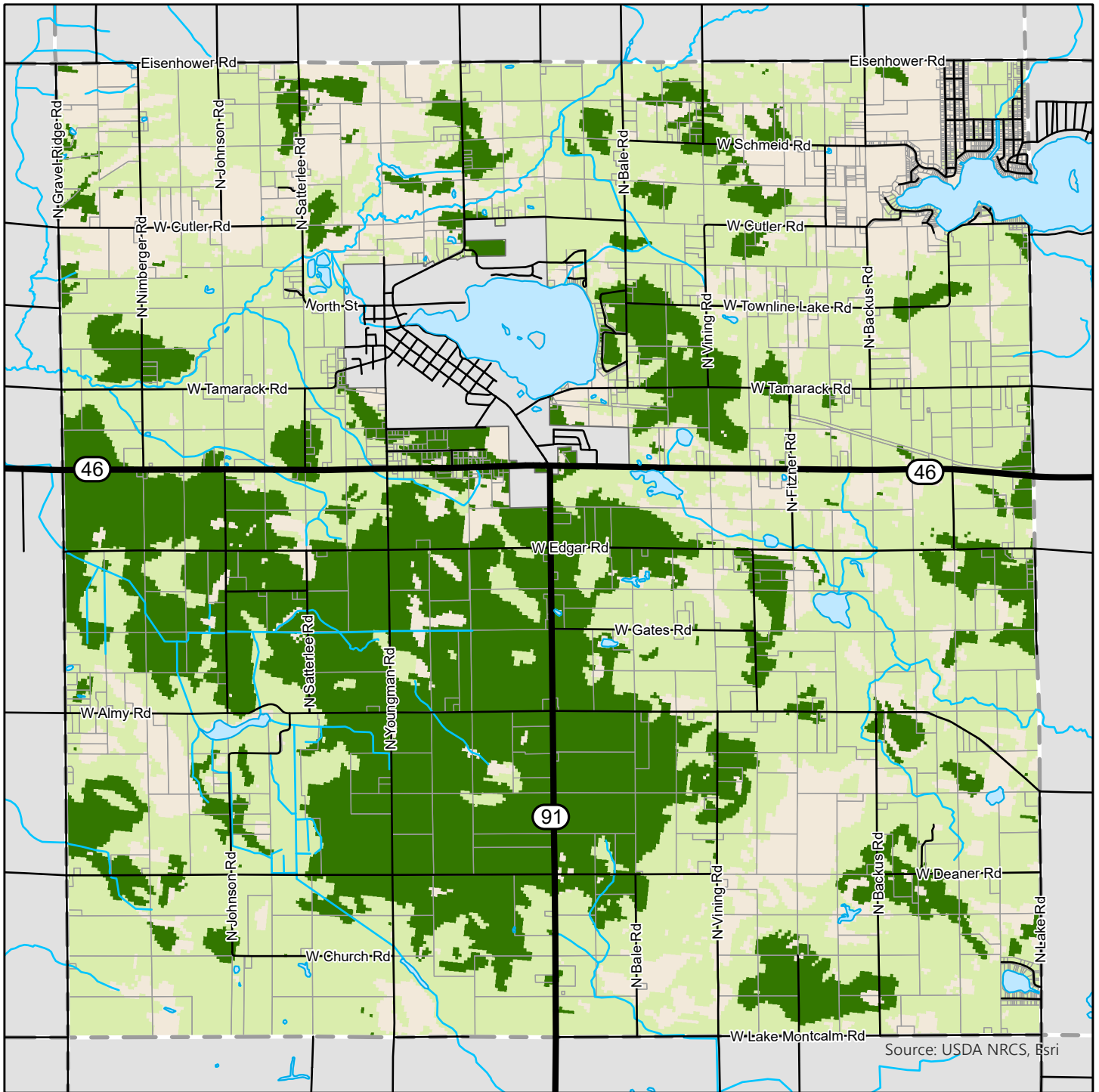
PRIME FARMLAND

Agricultural production plays a key role in the landscape of Cato Township and contributes to the economy, character, and identity of the community. The preservation of agricultural land can provide environmental, aesthetic, recreational and historic benefits to the community. Open farmland also assists in the replenishment and maintenance of groundwater supplies.

Soils are the most important element in determining the suitability of land for farming. In order to produce crops, soils must be well drained, without steep slopes, and able to support vegetation. Based upon the U.S. Soil Conservation Service ratings, the Township is overwhelmingly suitable for farming and agriculture, with very few areas considered less than prime for farming. This natural resource is crucial to the food systems of the state and region, as well as the economy of Cato Township. Preserving farmland should be the Township's highest land use priority. The following map provides a visual representation of where suitable farmland is located within the Township.

Prime farmland areas in the Township are largely focused on the southwest portion of the Township, just south of the Village of Lakeview, west of M-91 and south of M-46. Most other areas in the Township that are not classified as prime farmland are classified as farmland of local importance. Farmland of local importance generally refers to local farms producing crops, has the capability for production, or is used for the production of confined livestock. Preserving this resource in Cato Township is a major priority and key theme of this Plan.

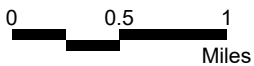








Prime Farmland






Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan

June 1, 2023



LEGEND

-  Lakes and Rivers
-  Streams and Drains
-  State Highways
-  Roads

-  Prime Farmland
-  Farmland of Local Importance
-  Farmland of Statewide Importance
-  Farmland of Unique Importance
-  Not Prime Farmland



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.

Data Source: Cato Township, 2023. McKenna, 2023. Soil Survey Geographic Database, USDA, 2023.

Existing Land Use

Knowledge of current land use furnishes a basis by which compatibility of new land development can be considered. It is a valuable reference tool for considering the day-to-day issues associated with land management and the provision of public services. Further, understanding the current land use fabric of an area is the first step to considering the future land uses. Existing land uses identify areas of preservation/protection, growth potential, and other important factors.

LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

The following section outlines, in more detail, the location of particular land uses and their characteristics within Cato Township. Existing land uses are divided into several different categories in order to analyze the current patterns of development. This analysis will help to define which geographic characteristics the Township would like to preserve, enhance, and grow throughout the duration of this Plan. The following table shows the breakdown of land uses by acre not including water or right-of-way. Please note that these are approximations and actual acres or percentages may vary slightly than what is shown.

Land Use	Acres	% of Township
Agriculture	21461	93.3%
Medium Lot Residential	923	4.0%
Small Lot Residential	455	2.0%
Commercial	39	0.2%
Industrial	36	0.2%
Public and Institutional	28	0.1%
Vacant	56	0.2%
Total	22,997	

AGRICULTURE

For the purposes of this land use analysis, agricultural land is defined as any land that is predominately or wholly used for the raising of field or tree crops, as a principal resource in animal husbandry, or maintained as rural open space.

This category represents the overwhelming majority of land in the Township. Further, the Agriculture land use designation may include residential hobby farms, or simply large parcels with rural residential character.



MEDIUM LOT RESIDENTIAL

Medium lot residential land uses are found throughout the Township and are associated with the agricultural uses that surround them. These areas are used for residential uses and separate from other residential uses. Medium Lot Residential land uses are typically smaller parcel sizes and contain a residential home and perhaps detached accessory structures, such as pole barns or sheds.

SMALL LOT RESIDENTIAL

Small lot residential uses are concentrated around the Tamarack and Townline Lake. These uses have a smaller lot size than the medium lot residential and are clustered together with other small lot residential properties. Small lot residential land uses include single family residential neighborhoods or lakefront properties that are smaller in size.

COMMERCIAL

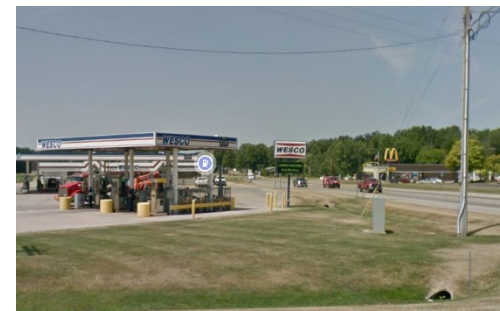
Commercial uses include offices, retail, and other similar land uses where goods and services are consumed or provided. While there is not a high percentage of these uses in the Township, they are concentrated around the M-46 corridor.

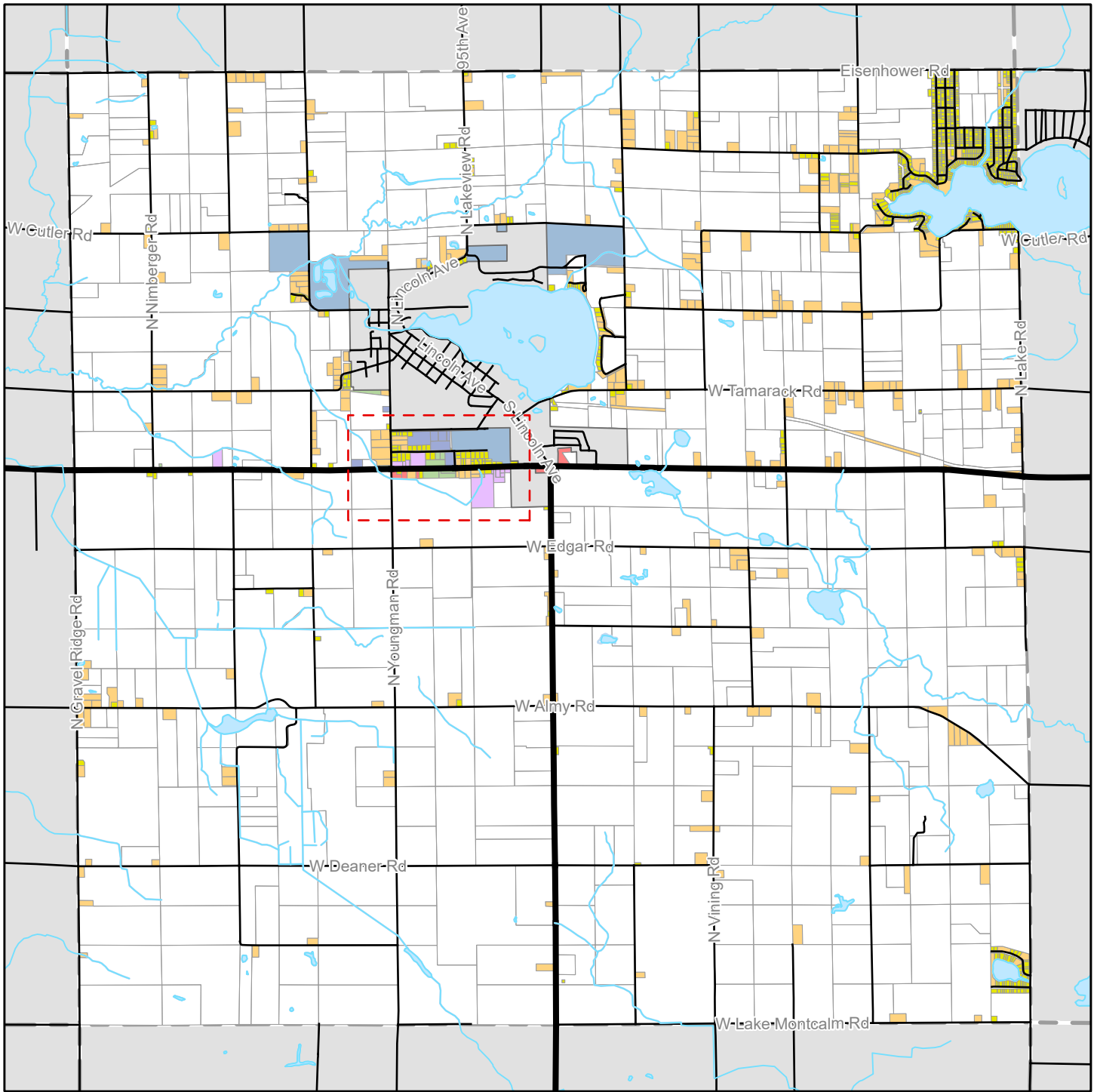
INDUSTRIAL

Industrial land uses are areas where the fabrications, storage, or distribution of materials occurs. There is a small percentage of land being used as industrial, and these areas are located along the M-46 corridor.

PUBLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL

These land uses include public land, such as parks and recreations areas, and institutions, such as churches and schools. Again, this land use is very small within Cato Township and public and institutional uses are concentrated near the Village of Lakeview.

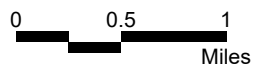




Existing Land Use

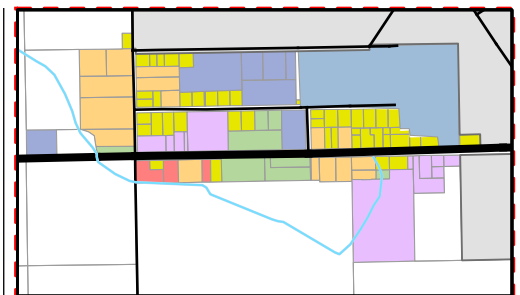
Cato Township, Montcalm County, Michigan

September 20, 2023



LEGEND

- Agriculture & Large Lot Residential
- Small Lot Residential
- Medium Lot Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public or Institutional
- Other Vacant

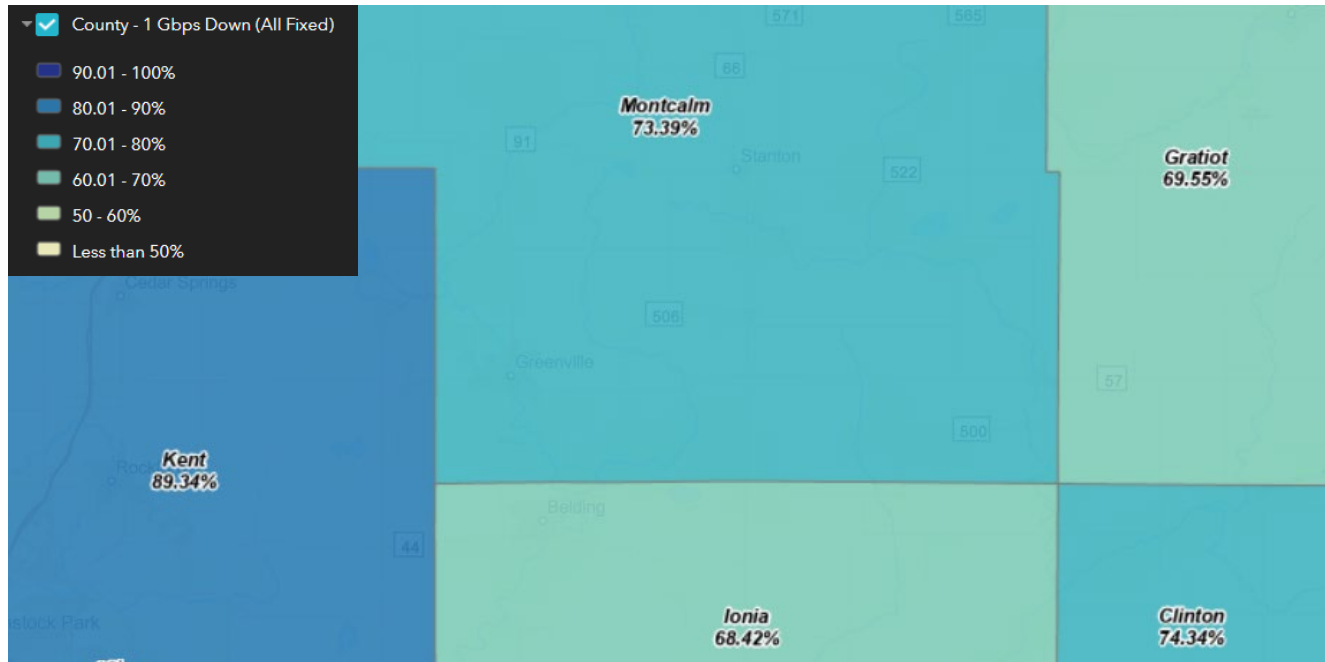


Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a
 Data Source: Cato Township, 2023. McKenna, 2023.

Township Utilities

BROADBAND/DSL CONNECTIVITY

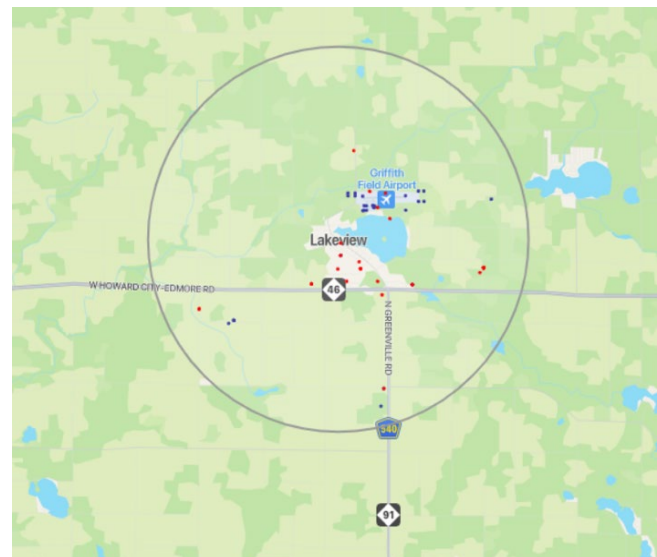
Broadband and DSL internet, with their fast download speeds and consistent connectivity, help connect residents and businesses to the online world. As more and more economic and social activity moves online (especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic), communities without connectivity risk being left behind. Cato Township has made it a priority to ensure that residents and businesses have access to internet and broadband infrastructure. According to Connected Nation's Michigan Broadband Map, Cato Township (and Montcalm County) has an average of 73.4% availability. This is, unsurprisingly lower than Kent County, but higher than Newaygo, Gratiot, and Ionia Counties.



WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY

Wireless voice and data service is also an important part of the modern economy and lifestyle. Cato Township has a number of towers and single antennas. Given that the airport is located within the Village of Lakeview, there are several registered towers located in the Village limits. The Township also includes several towers located on the southwest portion of the Township, as well as the northeast portion of the Township.

The map to the right, from antennasearch.com, shows the wireless facilities in and near the Township. They are shown as small blue dots. The single antennas are shown as small red dots.



Transportation System

Roads provide a means for people to get from one place to another, primarily by automobile, but also by bike, foot, and other means. Roads connect people and places to one another. These stretches of public ground serve other purposes as well. Roads and road rights-of-way provide locations for public utilities such as gas, electric, and telephone lines. Roads provide the means by which emergency and public services are delivered to residents. Finally, roads provide access to parcels of land, thereby increasing the utilization potential of both vacant and agricultural lands.

Because of the many functions of the road system, transportation has a significant impact on the economy, environmental quality, energy consumption, land development, and the general character of the Township. Therefore, it is important that land use planning and the transportation system be coordinated in order to manage the Township's existing and future growth.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Cato Township is located along two regional thoroughfares, M-46 and M-91. Both of these roads are owned and maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The remainder of the Township's roads are maintained by the Montcalm County Road Commission. Roads within the Village of Lakeview are owned and maintained by the Village Department of Public Works.

In Cato Township, M-46 provides direct access to US-131, which is used to travel north or south. Directly south on US-131 is the City of Grand Rapids. By traveling north of US-131, motorists can access the City of Big Rapids, Cadillac, and other popular destinations.

TOWNSHIP ROAD NETWORK

Roads in Cato Township are under the jurisdiction of two agencies: the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Montcalm County Road Commission. MDOT has jurisdiction over M-46 and M-91 and the Montcalm County Road Commission has jurisdiction over all other public roads in the Township.

In Cato Township, public roads can all be categorized into several classifications. These classifications are known as the National Functional Classification (NFC) determined by state road agencies. The NFC classifications in Cato Township include the following:

- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road

Cato Township also has a number of private roads.



STATE TRUNKLINE

Cato Township has two State Trunkline roads within its boundaries. These include M-46, or Howard City Edmore Road, and M-91, or Greenville Road. These major thoroughfares are owned and maintained by MDOT. In general, MDOT State Trunkline roads experience higher traffic volumes, high numbers of truck traffic, and faster speeds with little stop lights and intersections. Both M-46 and M-91 are the Township's main roads that provide access to, through, and from the Township.

COUNTY PRIMARY ROADS

Similar to the State Trunkline roads, County Primary roads also typically experience higher traffic volumes (compared to other roads in the Township) and faster speeds. Cato Township has three County Primary roads within its limits. These include Deaner Road (M-540), Lakeview Road (M-597), and Almy Road (M-540). These roads are owned and maintained by the Montcalm County Road Commission.

COUNTY LOCAL ROADS

County Local Roads are roads that provide important connections and access to homes and residential areas to major thoroughfares, such as M-46 and M-91. A majority of Cato Township's roads are classified as County Local roads. Examples of County Local roads include Edgar Road, Townline Lake Road, Youngman Road, Tamarack Road, and other similar roads. These roads are owned and maintained by the Montcalm County Road Commission.

Cato Township Tomorrow

The Cato Township Master Plan envisions the future of the community, as articulated by its residents and officials. In general, Cato strives to preserve its rural character while providing a good quality of life for all its residents.

Goals and Objectives

Before a community can actively plan for its future growth and development, it must first set certain goals and objectives that reflect its needs and aspirations. 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.

The following pages contain the goals (the ultimate purpose or intent of the Plan), objectives (the means of attaining those community goals), and policy statements (specific statements which guide action) which should be used to guide the local government in making future land use decisions. They were developed out of meetings held with Township officials, including the public hearing, and supplemented by the experience of the Planning Commissioners and consultants.

GOALS

The Cato Township Planning Commission, in recognition of its role, adopts the following general community goals to guide future land development activities:

1. **Land Use:** To preserve the agricultural nature of the Township's land use and economy.
2. **Housing:** To provide a wide range of housing opportunities within the Township.
3. **Economic Development:** To increase the tax base of the Township, thereby improving the ability of the Township to provide services to its residents and businesses.
4. **Streets:** To encourage development in areas where the road network supports it.
5. **Parks and Recreation:** To support the establishment of a Township parks and recreation network works in harmony with the Township's rural nature while providing high quality of life for residents.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

With these primary goals in mind, the following specific objectives and policy statements have been formulated to guide actions, programs, and land use decisions in the Township. These are the steps and measures that can be taken to help achieve these goals.

1. Land Use

To preserve the agricultural nature of the township's land use and economy.

- Support and promote the Public Act 116 Program.
- Encourage the continuation of value-added agriculture related uses to enhance the incomes of farming families.
- Attempt to preserve agriculture through continued planning and targeted growth and development.
- Preserve agriculture and rural residential as the predominant land uses in the Township.
- Discourage non-agricultural uses on prime agricultural land.
- To provide for growth in light industrial and commercial uses near the village and along M-46.
- To provide for commercial uses along M-46, and along the fringes of the Village of Lakeview, but not to allow for strip development along the entire corridor.
- Promote high quality commercial development through site plan review.
- To preserve and protect the scenic and natural qualities of the Township.
- Protect all of the Township's lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from degradation.
- To preserve the quality of Tamarack Lake and Townline Lake.
- To monitor land use trends within the community.
- Periodically review and update the land use plan and monitor changing land use trends as they impact the community.

2. Housing

To provide a wide range of housing opportunities within the township.

- Support the preservation of the Township's existing neighborhoods and housing stock.
- Permit construction of single-family homes and construction of multiple types of housing at acceptable densities.
- Continue to monitor local and regional housing trends to ensure Township policies are meeting the housing needs of the community.
- Target areas within the Township that are primed for housing growth and development, such as near the Village of Lakeview limits and within proximity to M-46.
- Actively support farmland preservation by targeting density to appropriate areas.

3. Economic Development

To increase the tax base of the township, thereby improving the ability of the township to provide services to its residents and businesses.

- Promote the economic development of the community by emphasizing the quality of its workforce and availability of local products.
- To increase the number and availability of jobs within the community, thereby improving the quality of life and generally improving the economy of the area.

4. Streets

To encourage development along local streets rather than arterial roads.

- Encourage residential subdivisions.
- Continue to monitor road surface quality along all paved and unpaved streets in the Township.
- Foster partnerships with County and State road agencies to ensure high quality road infrastructure.

5. Parks and Recreation

To support the establishment of a Township parks and recreation network in harmony with the Township's rural nature while providing high quality of life for residents.

- Continue to promote and seek opportunities for the construction and maintenance of bike infrastructure in the Township, such as expanded road shoulders or bike paths.
- Continue partnerships with the Village of Lakeview for the connection and implementation of various recreation facilities in the Township.

Public Engagement Summary

Many of the future land use goals and objectives decisions are derived from the public engagement process. Throughout the course of this Plan, the Township sought input from the public in a variety of ways that included a public open house held in the Spring 2023, and an online survey that was open and advertised to the public from April 2023 to May 2023. The Township received 85 responses to the online survey. The results included the following:

SURVEY RESULTS

The following information is a summary of the survey results received between April 2023 to May 2023, when the survey link was closed to the public:

Executive Summary

- A total of **85 people responded to the survey** between April 2023 and May 2023.
- Preserving the rural character and quiet community feel of the Township is a common theme throughout the survey results.
- Respondents indicated a desire to restrict solar and wind energy facilities within the Township.
- Housing growth, including both single-family, missing middle, and accessory dwelling units was received positively.
- Respondents indicated a desire to limit commercial and business growth to select areas within the Township, such as along the M-46 corridor.
- Increasing parks and recreation offerings is important for respondents.

Question 1: Respondent Identification

The first question asked residents how they relate to Cato Township. Respondents were prompted to select all the options that were applicable. Of the **85** responses,

- **80.0%** of respondents were **residents** of Cato Township.
- **71.8%** of respondents were **property owners** in Cato Township.
- **27.1%** of respondents were **residents** of the Village of Lakeview.
- **15.3%** of respondents were **business owners** in Cato Township.
- **2.4%** of respondents selected **other**, which includes family members in Cato Township and business owner in the Village of Lakeview.

The responses captured in this survey reflect the opinions of individuals who have strong connections to Cato Township.

Question 2 & 3: Visioning

The second and third questions asked respondents their opinions on Cato Township. Question 2 asked what they liked the most about Cato Township. This question was open ended, and **66** responses were captured. Common responses include **hometown feel, friendly neighbors, rural beauty, and quiet atmosphere.**

Question 3 asked respondents what they would change about Cato Township. This question was open ended, and **52** responses were captured. Common responses include **preservation of lakes and natural water features, improving road conditions, code enforcement, increasing transparency in local government, and increasing business opportunities without compromising the rural character.**

Questions 4: Township Growth

The fourth question asked respondents about their general attitude towards growth in the Township. Of the **84** responses,

- **44.1%** of respondents stated they wanted to **chart a middle course between these two options.**
- **40.5%** of respondents stated they wanted to **strictly regulate land divisions and property development in order to preserve rural character, agriculture, and natural beauty.**
- **14.3%** of respondents stated they wanted to **allow landowners broad freedom to develop and profit from their land as market dictates.**
- **1.2%** of respondents indicated **other**, which included that opinion that the Township's current zoning and land division laws are adequate.

Overall, respondents want to find a balance between regulating and allowing freedom, but preserving rural character, agriculture, and natural beauty is also important.

Questions 5 & 6: Business Growth

The fifth and sixth questions relate to business and commercial growth in the Township. Question 5 asks respondents their opinions on how the Township should address business/commercial growth. Of the **71** responses,

- **57.8%** of respondents want the Township to target new businesses only to develop **along M-46 and the edges of the Village of Lakeview.**
- **19.7%** of respondents want the Township to target businesses **elsewhere in the Township** (other than along M-46 and Village edges).
- **12.7%** of respondents want the Township to target businesses **only to develop along M-46.**
- **5.6%** of respondents want the Township to **restrict all business growth** to prevent commercial land uses in the Township from expanding.
- **4.2%** of respondents want the Township to target new businesses only to develop **along the edges of the Village of Lakeview.**

Question 6 asks respondents where they would like to see more business/commercial growth in the Township. **55** responses were captured. Common responses included **M-46, M-91, downtown Lakeview, and anywhere a business can be successful.**

In general, respondents favor the M-46 corridor and the Village of Lakeview for business and commercial growth.

Questions 7 & 8: Housing Growth

The seventh and eighth question both relate to housing growth in the Township. Question 7 asks respondents their opinions on how the Township should address housing growth. Of the **74** responses,

- **36.5%** of respondents want the Township to target new housing development **near the Village of Lakeview limits.**
- **24.3%** of respondents want the Township to **allow most landowners to subdivide their land and build additional houses.**
- **16.2%** of respondents want the Township to target new housing development **along M-46.**
- **8.1%** of respondents want the Township to target new housing development **adjacent to Township lakes.**
- **8.1%** of respondents want the Township to target new housing development **elsewhere in the Township.**

- **6.8%** of respondents want the Township to **restrict all new** neighborhood **housing developments** from expanding into the Township.

Question 8 asks respondents where they would like to see more business/commercial growth in the Township. **52** responses were captured. Common responses included **Tamarack Meadows, in and around the Village of Lakeview, and anywhere where housing makes sense.**

In general, the respondents favor housing growth around the Village of Lakeview and allowing land owners to subdivide their land.

Questions 9-11 & 16: Housing

The ninth, tenth, eleventh, and sixteenth questions all relate to housing within the Township. Question 9 asked respondents if the current housing options in Cato Township meet their needs. Of the **82** responses,

- **43.9%** of respondents answered **yes**.
- **39.0%** of respondents answered **unsure or no opinion**.
- **7.3%** of respondents answered **no, housing in the Township is generally too expensive**.
- **3.6%** of respondents answered **no, I feel that my house is not well-fitted for aging in place**.
- **2.4%** of respondents answered **no, I would like to downsize to accommodate my current stage of life**.
- **1.2%** of respondents answered **no, my house is too small**.
- **2.4%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes needing more retirement living and foreseeing potential housing issues with the aging population.

Question 10 asks respondents if they would be supportive of Cato Township exploring opportunities to encourage new single-family homes and neighborhoods within the Township Limits. Of the **83** responses,

- **55.4%** of respondents answered **yes**.
- **19.3%** of respondents answered **unsure or no opinion**.
- **18.1%** of respondents answered **no**.
- **7.2%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes more variety in housing and developing around the Village of Lakeview.

Question 11 asked respondents if they would be supportive of Cato Township exploring opportunities to implement "missing middle" housing types within the Township limits. Of the **82** responses,

- **48.8%** of respondents answered **yes**.
- **30.5%** of respondents answered **no**.
- **17.1%** of respondents answered **unsure or no opinion**.
- **3.7%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes wanting well designed housing and affordable housing.

Question 16 asked respondents what they think the Township should do with regard to accessory dwelling units. Of the **84** responses,

- **38.1%** of respondents want the Township to **develop regulations to allow these only to be constructed if certain criteria are met**.
- **36.9%** of respondents want the Township to **allow these types of property improvements with minimum regulation or rules**.

- **21.4%** of respondents want the Township to **allow these to be built with minimal rules, but restrict how they can be used.**
- **1.2%** of respondents want the Township to **prohibit property owners from building accessory dwelling units** or similar additions to their property.
- **2.4%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes letting residents decide what to do with their own properties and ensuring there are adequate utilities to serve accessory dwelling units.

A majority of respondents have their housing needs met by the Township. Additionally, respondents were in favor of exploring more options for single-family housing, missing middle housing, and allowing accessory dwelling units with conditions.

Questions 12: Zoning

The twelfth questions asks if respondents think the Township should create a new zoning district for lakefront (and lake access) properties and neighborhoods? Respondents were prompted to select all that apply. Of the **80** responses,

- **37.5%** of respondents answered **no, I think the current zoning is fine the way it is.**
- **32.5%** of respondents answered **yes, but I think lakefront and lake access properties have more aspects to consider when it comes to zoning regulations.**
- **20.0%** of respondents answered **yes but maintain the current density surrounding the lakes.**
- **6.25%** of respondents answered **yes, allow for higher density around the lakes.**
- **12.5%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes being unsure of the current zoning, not wanting new homes on the lake, and setbacks for environmental considerations.

Overall, respondents slightly favored leaving the zoning the way it is currently is but reassessing the lakefront properties for additional zoning regulations also a common choice.

Question 13 & 17: Utilities

The thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth questions all relate to utilities within the Township. Question 13 asked respondents if they think the Township should consider utility (water/sewer) extensions to lakefront and lake access properties? Of the **83** responses,

- **42.2%** of respondents answered **yes.**
- **24.1%** of respondents answered **unsure or no opinion.**
- **22.9%** of respondents answered **no.**
- **10.8%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes concern over who is paying for the utility extensions and wanting lakefront property owners to decide for themselves.

Question 17 asked respondents about how the Township should handle public utilities. Of the **76** responses,

- **46.1%** of respondents want the Township to **encourage utility expansions** wherever feasible.
- **31.6%** of respondents want the Township to **target specific areas for the expansion** of public utilities.
- **18.4%** of respondents want the Township to **prohibit any expansion of utilities** within Township limits.
- **3.5%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes concerns about leveraging utilities for annexation and balancing growth and utilities.

Overall, respondents are in favor of expanding utilities, both to the lakefront and in general.

Question 14 & 15: Solar Energy

The fourteenth and fifteenth question focused on solar energy facilities within the Township. Question 14 asked respondents what they think the Township should do with regard to utility-scale solar energy. Of the **84** responses,

- **52.4%** of respondents want the Township to be as **restrictive as possible** under State Law to tightly control the potential construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
- **14.3%** of respondents want the Township to **target natural features, such as the lakes and prime farmland areas, for protection from** utility-scale solar energy facilities, but generally allow utility-scale solar farms in other areas.
- **13.1%** of respondents want the Township to **allow landowners broad freedom** to construct utility-scale solar energy facilities on their property.
- **8.3%** of respondents answered **none of the above**.
- **11.9%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes a desire for no solar facilities, keeping solar to industrial areas, and only allowing personal solar facilities.

Question 15 asked respondents what they think the Township should do with regard to personal scale solar energy. Of the **84** responses,

- **32.1%** of respondents want the Township to **place heavy restrictions**, such as maximum heights, setbacks, permitting requirements, fees, and other provisions relating to personal-scale solar energy systems everywhere in the Township.
- **31.0%** of respondents want the Township to **place minimal restrictions**, such as maximum heights and setbacks, on personal-scale solar energy systems in only residential districts.
- **27.4%** of respondents want the Township to **allow broad freedom** for personal-scale solar energy systems everywhere in the Township.
- **6.0%** of respondents answered **none of the above**.
- **3.5%** of respondents answered **other**, which includes not allowing solar at all within the Township.

Overall, respondents indicated that they are largely not in favor of solar energy facilities within the Township, regardless of if the facilities are utility scale or personal scale.

Questions 18 & 19: Parks and Recreation

The eighteenth and nineteenth questions focused on the parks and recreation opportunities within the Township. Question 18 asked respondents if Cato Township should pursue opportunities to provide parks and recreation amenities within the Township limits, such as parks, paved shoulders, and/or bike paths. Of the 84 responses,

- **69.1%** of respondents answered **yes**.
- **20.2%** of respondents answered **no**.
- **10.7%** of respondents answered **unsure or no opinion**.

Question 19 asked respondents where the Township should consider future parks and recreation facilities. Of the **48** responses, common ideas and locations included **trails around the lake, parks and paths near the airport, recreation near existing natural features, and widening the road for bike lanes**.

Overall, respondents are in favor of expanding parks and recreation opportunities, particularly around the lakes and existing natural areas.

Question 20: Final thoughts

The twentieth question asked respondents if they had any final thoughts regarding the Cato Township Master Plan. Of the 29 responses, common themes included:

- Concerns about solar and wind energy
- Concerns about maintaining rural character
- Desire for increased parks and recreation opportunities
- Concerns about commercial development
- Desire for clean up of poorly maintained properties

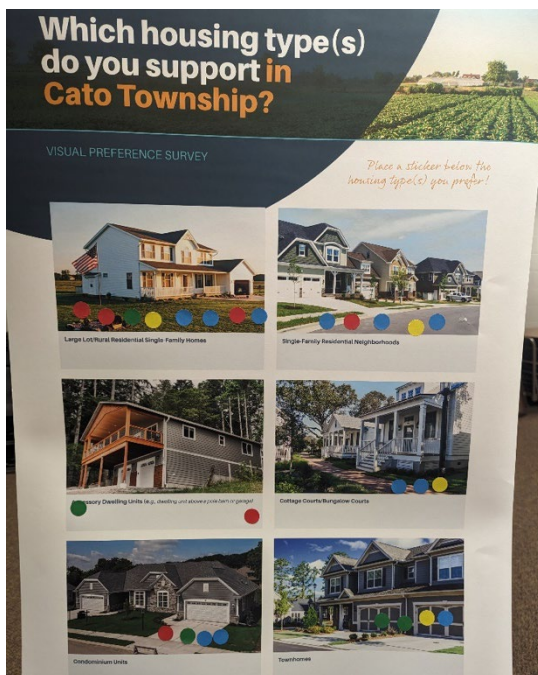
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

In May 2023, the Township hosted a public open house for in-person comments on the Master Plan process. In general, approximately 15-20 people attended the open house. The event was hosted at the Community Center, located in Downtown Lakeview for a few hours in the evening. Those who attended the open house were presented with a series of maps and stickers. Attendees were asked to place a sticker to indicate their preferences on the following themes:

- Where new residential development should occur.
- Where new commercial development should occur.
- Where new parks and recreation amenities should be considered.
- Types of preferred housing to be constructed in the Township.

In general, many folks indicated that housing and commercial growth should occur around the Village limits, as well as along major Township thoroughfares, such as M-46 and M-91. Further, attendees noted that a bike trail extension to connect to the Village's bike path plan around Tamarack Lake would be desired/supported.

The images below include the results of the open house public engagement event. Note: the color of the dot sticker does not have a specific meaning or indication.



Future Land Use

Based on a comprehensive planning process, the Future Land Use Plan serves as a guide for the community's vision for the next 10 to 15 years. To develop a Future Land Use Plan, it is important to consider the following principles and observations:

- Existing land uses.
- Current land uses and emerging land use trends, such as housing needs, flexible commercial uses, and others.
- Preservation of important natural features such as prime farmland, wetlands, and lakes.
- Regional industries, such as large employer facilities or redevelopment sites.
- Regional planning efforts, such as for nonmotorized transportation or public transportation.

The Future Land Use Plan is also based on an analysis of land use pressures facing Cato Township, demographic and housing statistics, physical constraints and resources, existing and planned transportation network, and the Master Plan's overarching goals and objectives.

Traditionally, a Future Land Use Plan constitutes the development policy of a community. As a community grows, the Future Land Use Plan should be reviewed and updated to address how growth has impacted infrastructure and other existing conditions.

LAND USE METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of the following Future Land Use Map and corresponding designation descriptions is to preserve the existing rural setting of the Township and limit growth to appropriate areas. However, it is also important to anticipate and plan for the possibility of growth and development and allow the greater Cato community to add housing and businesses as necessary to meet market demand. Therefore, the Future Land Use Map establishes most of the anticipated growth (both residential and commercial/industrial) along the Village limits as well as along M-46.

It should also be noted that planned Neighborhood Residential land uses are included on the northeast side of the Township, on the north side of Townline Lake. Much of the existing land use fabric in that area includes higher density residential streets with smaller lot sizes. Because of this, it is anticipated that additional residential growth may occur in this area. As such, the Township should consider municipal infrastructure in these areas. This topic is discussed more in this Chapter.

In the meantime, land should remain zoned A-R (Agricultural Residential) or R-R (Rural Residential) until a property owner specifically requests a rezoning to another category. In that instance, the Zoning Plan chart should be followed rigidly, to ensure that zoning reflects the Master Plan vision. Land that continues to be zoned A-R and R-R (Rural Residential) can be cultivated, or be used for the raising of animals, but should not be converted to land uses that preclude the possibility of future residential, commercial, or industrial development, such as solar farms, utility-scale wind energy systems, junk yards, landfills, oil storage facilities, mineral mining, and any other land-intensive or other use that may contaminate the soil or otherwise render the land undevelopable.



PLANNING PRINCIPLES

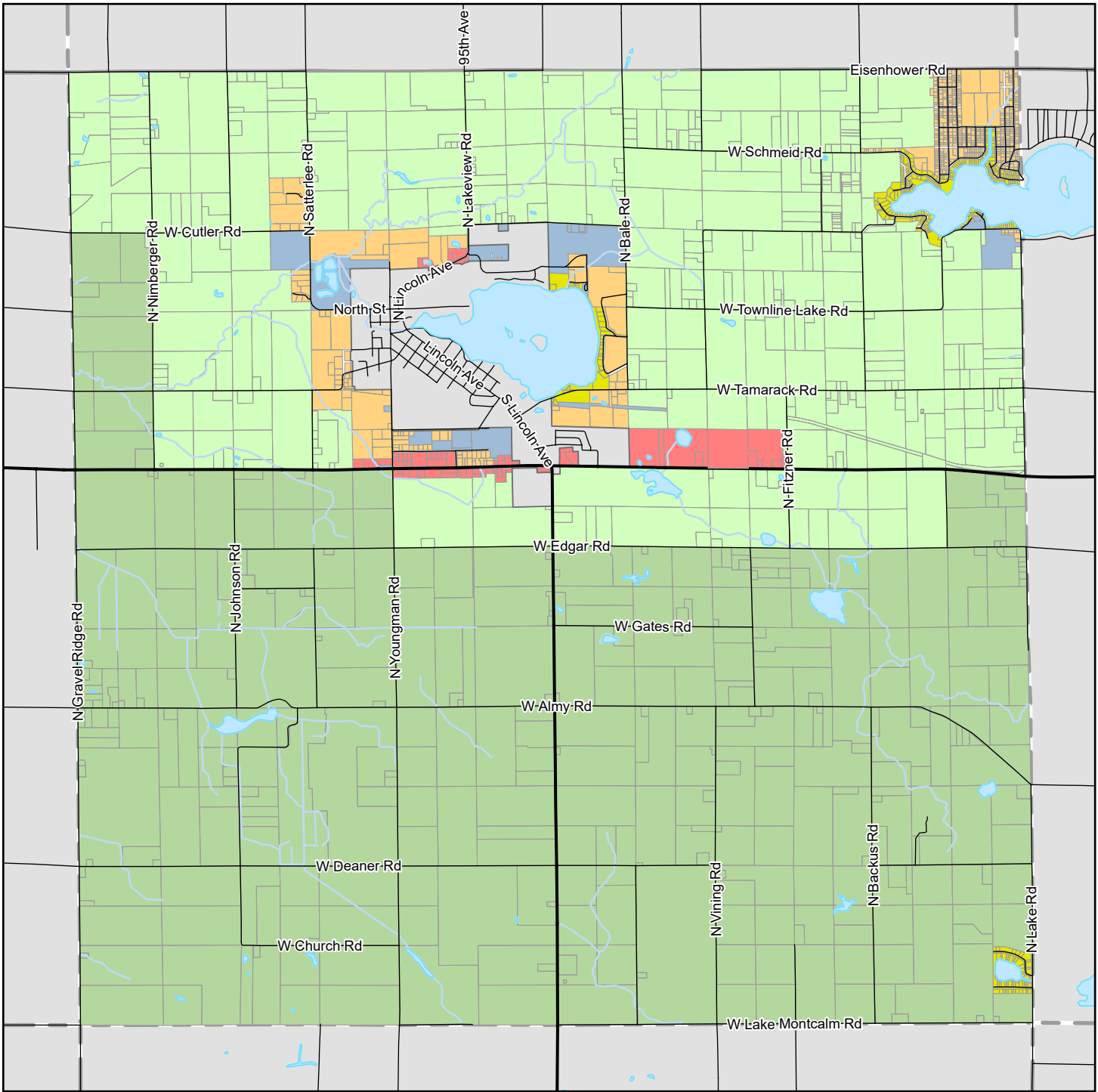
Land use planning principles are used as a guide in evaluating development alternatives and public policy decisions. The following are general planning principles that should be applied to all land use categories:

- **Consistency with the Plan.** Development should be reviewed for general consistency with the intent of the master plan as well as other regional plans. In addition other governing bodies, such as the State or County, should be encouraged to use the Master Plan in considering programming for Cato Township.
- **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. Development should occur in a pragmatic and meaningful way to discourage incompatible adjacent land uses.
- **Sustainability and Natural Systems.** Special consideration should be given when development is proposed in environmentally sensitive areas, particularly around the Township's natural beauty corridors, scenic agricultural areas, lakes, and river and creek systems.
- **Human Scale.** The community should be designed on a human scale with a land use pattern balanced around activity centers such as the lakes, schools, community facilities, parks, or other similar sites.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The land use categories are graphically displayed on the Future Land Use Map and are described in this section of the Master Plan on the following pages.





Future Land Use

Cato Township, Montcalm County, MI

November 16, 2023

LEGEND

- Agriculture
- Rural Residential
- Neighborhood Residential
- Lakefront Residential
- Business Enterprise
- Public/Semi-Public

**Adjacent areas may be considered by the Planning Commission/Board for commercial or industrial expansion if certain circumstances are met.*



0 1,500 3,000
Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Montcalm County 2023. McKenna 2023.



AGRICULTURAL

General Characteristics

One of the predominant Future Land Use categories is Agricultural. This future land use designation encompasses active farmland and large-lot single-family residential land uses. The areas planned for Agriculture are generally located in areas of the Township with prime farmland as well as the immediate surrounding areas.

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate land uses include farms with associated accessory buildings and dwelling units matching the character and density of the surrounding area, agri-businesses, and parks.

Land-intensive uses such as utility-scale wind energy systems and solar farms, and potentially hazardous uses such as junk yards and mineral mining, should be limited to areas where they can be operated in strict compliance with the Township's Zoning Ordinance, while meeting the goals and objectives of this plan.

Streets and Transportation

Streets within the Agriculture Future Land Use designation are typically higher in speed and under the jurisdiction of the County Road Commission. These roads should be easily accessible from nearby highways and able to accommodate heavier vehicle traffic. Private road development is discouraged.

Building and Site Design

New homes and accessory structures should be designed with quality materials and be consistent with surrounding homes in terms of scale, massing, and site design. Homes and any accessory structures (used for agricultural or residential purposes) should have a large front yard setback and be constructed further away from the road.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

AR Agricultural-Residential



RURAL RESIDENTIAL

General Characteristics

The Rural Residential Future Land Use category is intended to provide a transition from the Township limits and Agriculture areas to the Village of Lakeview. In this category, intended land uses include residential homes located on large lots (1 acre or larger) along with accessory buildings, such as pole barns, sheds, and detached garages. This designation is also intended to encompass hobby farming and gardens, but without mass production or confined feeding operations.

Appropriate Land Uses

The appropriate land uses for Neighborhood Residential areas are single-family homes around one unit per acre.

Parks, schools, churches, and preserved rural/open space are also appropriate to support a high quality of life and preserve rural character.

Streets and Transportation

Streets should maintain a rural character. Paved shoulders or bike paths should be included where planned. Private roads are discouraged.

Building and Site Design

Sites should be designed to preserve the natural environment and rural character for the enjoyment of the residents. This is not an agricultural category, but small-scale home agricultural activities, such as chicken coops, horse runs, small cultivation areas, and 4H animal husbandry are encouraged.

Appropriate Districts

R-R Rural Residential



NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

General Characteristics

In order to preserve rural character, residential developments with densities higher than one unit per acre should only be permitted within close proximity to existing development, where municipal infrastructure is appropriate or planned, and within close proximity to the Village of Lakeview limits. Within Neighborhood Residential areas, neighborhoods may be constructed to meet housing demand for the Cato Township community.

Some areas in this category are greenfield, agricultural, or undeveloped sites, while others are low density neighborhoods where infill is desirable, provided that neighborhood character is maintained.

Neighborhood Residential areas located north of Townline Lake are planned to be preserved with existing character. New neighborhood areas (such as between Cherry Drive and Elm Drive) should include municipal infrastructure, if applicable. If municipal infrastructure is not planned for this area, the Township can consider alternative strategies, such as cluster wastewater treatment systems, to prevent any potential for pollution of the Lake as a result of new residential development.

Appropriate Land Uses

The appropriate land uses for Neighborhood Residential areas are single-family homes, and two-family homes up to 4 units per acre. Small apartment buildings may also be appropriate along major corridors, such as M-46.

Parks, schools, churches, and preserved rural/open space are also appropriate to support a high quality of life in the residential areas.

Streets and Transportation

Neighborhood streets are typically low-speed and low-volume. Street patterns should include high connectivity with accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street and bicycle infrastructure where appropriate. On-street parking should be provided where it can be designed safely.

Major thoroughfares should be designed for travel speeds that do not pose a noise or safety threat to surrounding residents and should feature sidewalks or bike paths to allow for non-motorized travel.

Building and Site Design

Sites should be designed to maintain a human, walkable scale, and promote social interaction without negatively impacting existing nearby residential development. New construction or major renovations should be consistent with the existing residential character in terms of setbacks, height, architecture, and function.

Appropriate Districts

R-S Suburban Residential

M-R Multiple-Family Residential (appropriate on properties south of the Village of Lakeview, north of M-46 and east of Youngman Road)



LAKEFRONT RESIDENTIAL

General Characteristics

The purpose of the Lakefront Residential Future Land Use category is to differentiate between Rural Residential and Neighborhood Residential land uses with those properties located around Tamarack Lake and Townline Lake. Another primary purpose and intent of this designation is to preserve and protect the Township's natural body of water assets. These areas may be most appropriate for municipal infrastructure, so as to prevent any water contamination caused by well or septic systems. Lakefront Residential lots tend to be smaller and narrower in size.

Further, lakefront properties tend to have different needs than those that are not located waterfront (or within close proximity). Some of the considerations for lakefront residential homes include:

- Setback considerations (front, side, and rear)
- Building height limitations
- Municipal infrastructure access, expansions, and hookups
- Accessory structures (location, dimensions, number, etc.)
- Boat garages

Appropriate Land Uses

Land uses most appropriate for this designation include residential homes or cottages with accessory structures. Other appropriate land uses include public spaces such as parks and boat launches.

Streets and Transportation

Streets accessing lakefront properties should be of appropriate width for adequate travel. Streets may be either paved or unpaved, depending on the surrounding character of the area.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be of appropriate scale, size, and massing so as to not encroach on lake views. The style and character of new development should be consistent with existing lakefront properties.

Appropriate Districts

New district



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE

General Characteristics

The Business Enterprise Future Land Use designation is a combination of commercial and industrial land uses and is intended to allow for a flexible variety of business uses, with the specific zoning district determined by the conditions of the site in question.

Business Enterprise is intended for office, retail, manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, research and development businesses, and creative industries/artisan facilities. Developments should be designed and operated to be respectful of their surroundings, with minimal truck traffic, noise, odor, dust, or outdoor storage/operations.

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate uses include office, retail, light manufacturing, artisan production, food and beverage production, creative industries, warehousing, logistics, and research and development facilities. Parking areas and loading zones must be properly buffered and landscaped when adjacent to residential and agricultural land uses.

Streets and Transportation

Streets should be designed in a pattern that allows access from abutting areas but does not encourage cut-through traffic by employees and trucks. Within the Business Enterprise district, the streets should be designed to be sufficient for business-traffic. Shared parking agreements can be implemented between adjacent office or retail/commercial uses.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site, including landscaped parking lots, especially adjacent to residential areas.

Businesses (both commercial and industrial in nature) should be supported by sufficient, but not overly excessive parking areas. Parking areas may be located in the front, side, or rear yards of buildings. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees.

Appropriate Districts

C Commercial

I Industrial



PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

General Characteristics

The Public/Semi-Public Future Land Use designation is intended to encompass areas that are typically Township owned properties. This usually includes parks, pathways or trails, community open space, or other similar features. Further, this designation includes Township owned structures and buildings, as applicable. This designation may also include public beaches, boat launches, and other similar facilities.

Appropriate Districts

All



Zoning Plan

Cato Township is committed to enhancing and updating the Township's Zoning Ordinance. One of the key reasons for this is to ensure that the Township's regulations and requirements align with best practices in planning, that the Zoning Ordinance is compliant with State laws, and that the quality of life for residents and business owners is preserved and enhanced.

The following table shows the relationship between Cato Township's Zoning Districts and the Future Land Use categories as described in this Plan. Rezoning requests should be reviewed against this table to determine whether the requested district is supported by this Plan.

Future Land Use Category	Appropriate Zoning Districts
Agricultural	A-R, Agricultural Residential
Rural Residential	R-R, Rural Residential
Lakefront Residential	<i>New District</i>
Neighborhood Residential	S-R, Suburban Residential
Business Enterprise	C, Commercial I, Industrial
Public/Semi-Public	<i>All Districts</i>

The following pages include a complete Zoning Plan that lists and describes the recommended amendments to the current Zoning Ordinance. These recommended amendments are intended to achieve the goals and objectives of this Master Plan, create appropriate zoning for environmentally sensitive areas, provide for flexibility in land uses along major road corridors, and setup a neighborhood residential fabric in appropriate areas.

All new proposed neighborhoods, commercial and industrial developments and redevelopments, and other applicable projects should reference the Master Plan.

ZONING DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS BY FUTURE LAND USE

AGRICULTURAL (A-R, Agricultural Residential) & RURAL RESIDENTIAL (R-R, Rural Residential)

- Consider removing “residential” from the A-R District name. The general intent of the A-R District is to accommodate farms and agricultural production businesses and associated households. Large lot residential homes, and residentially focused land uses, are more appropriate in the R-R District.
- Reevaluate lot size requirements for both open space and agricultural uses to determine if they are sufficient to protect existing agricultural uses. Consider a minimum lot size increase in the A-R District to 10 acres.
- Consider supplementary provisions to regulate agri-tourism uses in the A-R and R-R Districts. Agri-tourism uses can include wedding/event barns, you-pick orchards/patches, corn mazes, cider mills, wineries, etc. Agri-tourism uses could be permitted per special land use approval. Consider other regulatory implications with these uses, such as parking requirements, hours of operation,
- Include concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) as a special land use in the A-R District. Include supplementary regulations for CAFOs, including minimum lot sizes, maximum number of animals on site, parking requirements, and other considerations.
- Consider provisions relating to utility-scale wind and solar farms in the A-R and R-R Districts.
- Prohibit planned unit developments (PUDs) and the development of private roads in the A-R and R-R Districts.
- Prohibit commercial uses, such as golf courses and country clubs in the A-R District. These uses are more appropriate in the R-R District.
- Remove minimum floor area requirements. Floor area shall comply with Michigan Building Code, as amended.
- Consider including regulations pertaining to agricultural workforce housing.
- Develop a “sliding scale” for lot splits in the A-R District. This would establish a density of approximately 1 unit per 10 acres. However, a lot split can occur that will allow for a smaller lot size, provided that the remainder of the parcel will be preserved as open space or for agricultural operations and land uses.
- Prohibit junkyards, salvage yards, nursing homes in the A-R District. These land uses are more appropriate for commercial or industrial areas, or areas planned for higher residential density.

LAKEFRONT RESIDENTIAL (new district)

- Create a new zoning district titled Lakefront Residential.
- Properties fronting any lake should be rezoned to lakefront residential.
- Waterfront setbacks should be large enough to ensure that new development is not contributing to any environmental or flooding concerns.
- Consider stricter building height maximums to ensure that scenic lake views are not being blocked.
- Permit accessory dwelling units by special land use approval, provided that adequate parking, size, fencing, setbacks, and other provisions are met.
- Consider public water/sewer connections and hookups to lakefront properties.
- Consider applicable lakefront provisions such as short-term rentals, boat garages, and other elements.
- Lot sizes should be as such to accommodate existing lakefront and lake access properties. The lot width to depth ratio should not result in development that is uncharacteristic to existing lakefront and lake access development.

- Outdoor recreation uses, such as public access boat launches and beaches are appropriate for this new district.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL (R-S, Suburban Residential)

- Permit higher density housing units by right in the R-S District, such as two-family homes. Higher density housing units should be permitted only where public water/sewer infrastructure is available (or planned).
- Remove minimum floor area requirements.
- New neighborhood developments should:
 - Have sidewalks on both sides of the street.
 - Include street trees and other applicable traffic calming elements.
 - Multiple ingress/egress points, reducing cul-de-sac designs.
 - Provide street or sidewalk/pathway connections to other adjacent neighborhoods, as applicable.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (C, Commercial & I, Industrial)

- Consider combining certain sections of existing commercial and industrial districts to accommodate flexible land uses in Business Enterprise areas. This land use category is intended for a blend of commercial businesses and light industrial uses.
- Higher intensity industrial uses, such as those that require outdoor storage or industrial uses with more nuisance potential (e.g., noise, odor, dust, truck traffic, etc.), should be special land uses in this District.
- Strengthen provisions that relate to high quality building and site design for any new commercial or industrial development. Consider the following site design elements:
 - Landscaping requirements
 - Lighting requirements
 - Parking space requirements and parking lot landscaping requirements
 - Vehicle and pedestrian circulation

OTHER ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations relate to the Cato Township Zoning Ordinance document:

- Conduct a “lean zoning” audit to remove any inconsistencies within the Ordinance, or between districts.
- Remove spelling and grammar errors throughout the Ordinance.
- Remove irrelevant terms and outdated topics. For example, remove all unnecessary definitions in the Ordinance. These include terms that are defined but not used elsewhere in the Ordinance.
- Update hand-drawn images and graphics.
- Remove all provisions that may not be compliant with State and Federal laws. This can include provisions relating to:
 - Signs
 - Home occupations
 - Residential group homes

Action Plan

Implementation strategies are a key component of any community's Master Plan. They determine how the Plan's guidelines and recommendations become reality. The Cato Township Master Plan should not be viewed as a finished product. As events alter conditions within the community or the needs of Township residents change, various adjustments or additions will need to be made to the Plan. It is not anticipated that the Plan's major goals and objectives will require change, but rather, as the Plan is interpreted and implemented, certain aspects will require periodic adjustment.

The following section presents tools and techniques that community leaders, the Planning Commission, and the Township Board can use to implement the Future Land Use Plan. These techniques can be used individually or in tandem to achieve the objectives and eventually the overall goals of this Master Plan. While the direct impact of some of the techniques cannot be immediately assessed, over time these procedures can effectively guide land use decisions and development within Cato Township.

NATURAL AREA & AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

The natural features—the lakes, woodlands, wetlands, streams, and prime soils—are an essential component to life in Cato Township. They establish the rural character, attract people to live and work here, and help drive the local economy. It is vitally important that these resources are protected.

Throughout the duration of this Plan, the Township should consider cultivating partnerships with State, County, and local organizations to implement farmland preservation tools and programs. Program and policy goals related to farmland preservation can include a purchase of development rights (PDR) program, transfer of development rights program (TDR), farmland and open space preservation program (formerly known as PA116), and other tools and resources. The Township can also consider tools and resources to assist local producers with farmland succession efforts. It is recommended that the Township prioritize the various zoning and policy amendments described in this Plan to implement farmland preservation efforts.

LAND DIVISION REGULATION

Like zoning, land division regulation, under the Michigan Land Division Act (P.A. 288 of 1967, as amended through P.A. 591 of 1996) is a tool for the implementation of this Plan. While zoning deals with land use on a site-by-site basis and activities in selected areas, land division standards are concerned with the process of dividing land and maintaining the quality of individual developments.

The Township should review land division provisions, regulating lot splits, to ensure that it is consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan, especially considering the goal for agricultural and farmland preservation. Land divisions should be as such that discourage valuable agricultural properties from being split for residential purposes.

OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT & NEIGHBORHOODS

Rural open space development is an alternative to conventional site development and is intended to promote the preservation of the Township's rural character. Conventional site development often results in residential sprawl that consumes large amounts of land and divides open spaces into fragments on individual home sites. It does not contribute to a rural appearance and is 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 development) on the other hand, allows for the grouping of dwellings onto part of the site, and a permanent easement covers the remainder preserving it as open space. The development also typically has a large setback from the road and limited access points in order to preserve the rural views and limit the corridor development effect.

Township Zoning Ordinance requirements should encourage rural open space development over conventional residential development. This development alternative is most effective when the Township offers a small incentive for

open space development - one or two bonus lots - thereby encouraging developers to use this option. A density bonus is contingent upon the developer preserving a sufficient amount of natural features and open space as well as providing appropriate infrastructure for the dwellings with limited impact on the surrounding area.

Further, neighborhood design plays a large role in the preservation of rural character – including the areas planned for Neighborhood Residential land uses. Some elements that should be required for neighborhood site design include the following:

- Sidewalks on both sides of the street.
- Street trees.
- Street lighting.
- Multiple points of ingress/egress for larger neighborhoods.
- Connections to major Township roads, to avoid congestion on less frequently traveled rural roads.
- Connections to other (future or existing) neighborhoods, via road and/or nonmotorized pathway.
- Space for passive recreation.



Conventional Residential Development



Open Space Development

RECREATION

The Township can consider the implementation of other transportation alternatives, such as the construction of paved shoulders, for nonmotorized recreation opportunities. Paved shoulders are ideal for rural areas where separated roadside pathways may not be feasible. Expanding the width of paved shoulders to 4 feet or wider drastically improves the safety of both cyclists and motorists sharing the road.

Paved shoulder projects can be planned to work in conjunction with road (re)surfacing projects. Implementation of paved shoulder projects requires partnerships and coordination with the Road Commission for Montcalm County and perhaps the Michigan Department of Transportation, as applicable. The Township can develop a plan for priority road segments best suited for expanded road shoulders. Paved shoulder projects can be implemented incrementally as the County develops and advertises a schedule for road improvements.



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