4.0 Existing Land Use Analysis

The rational application of the planning process in the preparation of the Future Land Use Plan is possible only when there is a clear understanding of existing conditions and relationships between land uses. Knowledge of existing land development furnishes the basic information by which decisions can be made concerning proposals for future residential, commercial, industrial, and public land use activities. The Existing Land Use Map and table, which are included in this section of the report, will serve as a ready reference for the Township in its consideration for land use management and public improvement proposals.

4.1 Survey Methodology

A computer-generated base map for the Township was first created using the digital information from the Huron County Geographic Information System (GIS), recently prepared by Wade-Trim. The map was further updated and checked for accuracy by the Planning Commission. The base map included the Township boundary line, streets with names, water bodies, creeks, railroads, and property lines.

A parcel-by-parcel field survey of the entire Township was conducted by Wade-Trim and some Planning Commission Members on November 17, 1998. Each land use was recorded on the base map according to a predetermined land use classification system. The information was later digitized and an Existing Land Use Map was thus created (Map 1). The map was reviewed with the Planning Commission for accuracy. Land use acreages were then derived directly from the digital information (Table 14).

Table 14
Existing Land Use Acreage, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Category</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Residential</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture</td>
<td>7,353</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commercial</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Institutional</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recreation</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DNR Wildlife and Preserve</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rush Lake</td>
<td>(1,312)</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Vacant</td>
<td>1,445</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,735</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Land Use Analysis

The Township of Lake encompasses a total area of 12,735 acres, or just under 20 square miles. The overall land use pattern in the Township can be characterized as a combination of a very intensive residential strip development along the Saginaw Bay shoreline, a large State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife and preserve area, and agricultural use. Over one-half (57.7%) of the Township is in agricultural use, followed by just under one-quarter (23.7%) under DNR ownership, which includes the 1,312-acre Rush Lake.

Each land use category is described below.

1. Residential

Residential use accounts for 730 acres, or 5.7% of the Township area. As stated above, the majority of the residential use is located along the shoreline. Most of this use includes single family homes on very narrow and small lots. These homes are used by permanent, seasonal, and part-time residents of the Township.

The rest of the homes are located along section line roads throughout the Township.

2. Agriculture

In keeping with Huron County’s reputation as one of the most agriculturally productive County in the state, agriculture is the predominant land use in Lake Township. It covers 7,353 acres, or over one-half (57.7%) of the Township area. Agricultural use is spread throughout the Township.

3. Commercial

Commercial use (9 acres, or 0.1%) in the Township includes a handful of small retail and service establishments, located near the shoreline development in the northern section of the Township.

4. Institutional

Lake Township Hall (0.1 acre) is the only institutional use in the Township. There are no schools, churches, or other institutional uses in the Township.

5. Recreation

Recreation use (176 acres or 1.4%) includes a large state park on State Park Road fronting the Saginaw Bay, a golf course on Griggs Road, and a handful of smaller parks along the shoreline.

6. DNR Wildlife and Preserve

The State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns almost one-fourth (23.7%) of the Township land area. Of the 3,022 acres under DNR ownership, Rush Lake accounts for 1,312 acres, Albert E. Sleeper State Park covers 723 acres, and the remaining 987 acres is mostly forested land and classified as wildlife preservation area.

Rush Lake covers predominantly a shallow water-body or a wetland area. Albert E. Sleeper State Park is a campground and features 280 modern campsites.

7. Vacant

The remaining 1,445 acres, or 11.3%, in the Township is classified as vacant land and the land devoted to the road rights-of-way. Virtually all of the vacant lands are lands lying fallow and lands with environmental limitations, such as woodlands and wetlands.

4.3 Land Use Considerations

In the process of evaluating and adopting proposed land use policies for the Township, potential development problems and opportunities must be examined. These are discussed below.
Shoreline Development

The Saginaw Bay shore is the most vital resource of the Township. However, parts of the shoreline are developed by unsightly and very dense residential developments. Also, there are potential problems with the disposal of sanitary sewer and supply of clean, potable water. Future planning for the Township must take into consideration the redevelopment, preservation, and maintenance of the shoreline as an attractive asset to the Township.

Sprawl Development

Future land use planning in Lake Township should take into account the regional location of the Township in relation to the future growth and development pressures that may spread outward from the Village of Caseville. Proper planning will help the Township guide future growth and counteract sprawl development pressures.

Parceling

There are many lots in Lake Township which front section line roads, are excessively long and narrow, and require private roads or long drives to serve residences placed off the roadway. Often, a portion of a lot is developed while the balance remains vacant and impractical to develop or split. Without adequate land assembly, such vacant acreage will remain inaccessible.

Accessibility

The Township’s location relative to M-25, M-142, and M-53 and other primary roads is an important consideration when planning for future development in Lake Township. Highway access provides human and market mobility and broadens its relationship to surrounding communities.

Public Utilities

Sanitary sewer and public water supply systems are important not only from a public health and safety standpoint, but are necessary to accommodate high intensity development. Access to public utilities and potential expansion of utility services should be taken into consideration when determining the future land use of the Township. Currently, there are no public sanitary or water facilities available within the Township.