

Elbridge Township Master Plan

Adopted April 2011



**WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(WMSRDC)**

The WMSRDC is a regional council of governments representing 127 local governments in the West Michigan counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, and northern Ottawa.

The mission of WMSRDC is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan... through cooperation amongst local governments.



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Elbridge Township
Master Plan

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Chapter I: Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

The goal of any future land use plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses, according to the ability and desire of a unit of government to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. Such planning will minimize the potential for land use conflicts and inappropriate uses of land for the betterment of all residents.

Legal Basis

Although this plan is enabled by Michigan law, it does not have the force of statutory law or ordinance. Its development is guided by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008) which states, in part, that:

A plan comprehensive enough to meet the requirements of Sec. 7(2) must begin with an analysis of the area's existing conditions, facilities, natural resources, population characteristics, economy, environmental features, and land uses. Where appropriate, historical trends should be analyzed to assist in making predictions of future needs. It is also vital to encourage participation of a community throughout the development of a plan in order to ensure an accurate picture of the citizenry. In addition, the community should also engage the involvement of local, state, and federal organizations/agencies during the development of the plan, which will foster coordination, collaboration and potential partnerships, which will assist in the implementation of the completed master plan.

Sec. 7 (2) The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfied all of the following criteria:

- (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
- (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
 - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.
 - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.
 - (iii) Light and air.
 - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
 - (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds

The Planning Process

Every effort has been made to present information that is both current and accurate. Elbridge Township and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) shall not be held liable for any errors and/or omissions that are related to this plan. This plan is a general document; therefore, a thorough investigation with original research materials should be undertaken before proceeding with any specific implementation decisions. These materials might include site plans, legal reviews, etc. and would vary by situation.

Citizen input is vital in identifying and discerning the issues facing local residents, as well as identifying a plan for a community's future. Therefore, Elbridge Township citizens were invited to participate in a public hearing held at the outset of the planning process for this document. The results of this meeting are discussed under "Township Visions" in Chapter 7 – Development Strategy. Input from this gathering strongly influenced the Goals and Objectives, which can also be found in Chapter 7.

This master plan, especially the Goals and Objectives, should be reviewed by the township on a regular basis. When appropriate, it should be modified to reflect changes of a physical nature or those of general public sentiment. A master plan should always be consistent in maintaining the community's goals. The planning process strives to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses. It also balances the township's ability and desire to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction.

How to Use This Plan

The Elbridge Township Master Plan is intended to function as a guide for directing and managing development within the township boundaries. This plan is not a zoning ordinance, which is a legally enforceable document. This plan is a policy-planning document that provides a legal rationale for zoning. It presents a written analysis of the township's physical, social, and historical characteristics, as well as visions and goals for the future of the community. In addition, implementation strategies are identified and are intended to guide policy makers towards accomplishing the established visions and goals of the Elbridge Township Master Plan. Future zoning and/or development decisions for the township should be based on the data and information presented in this plan and should also be consistent with the goals and objectives established during the planning process.

The Master Plan's Relationship with Zoning

While many individuals understand that there is a relationship between a master (i.e. land use) plan (with its future land use map) and a zoning ordinance (with its zoning map), it is often misinterpreted and used inappropriately. The relationship is very important *because you cannot appropriately utilize one without the other*. Formally defined, a master plan is a policy document in which the zoning ordinance is a regulatory tool that is used to implement the goals and objectives of the master plan. In other words, *the master plan and future land use map are designed to provide a glimpse of future conditions within a community, while a zoning ordinance and map provide the means to arrive there*.

The master plan and future land use map are designed to provide a glimpse of future conditions within a community.

A municipality's ability to change a zoning ordinance or zoning map is its primary tool for land use regulation and change. The master plan and future land use map are used to guide and support that process of regulation and change. In other words, the master plan will be utilized to help determine and support what and where zoning changes will occur. An acceptable rezoning request should be consistent with the master plan, which represents the community's desires for the future.

Chapter 2: Location and History

Regional Location

Elbridge Township is located in the heart of Oceana County. The county is situated along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan approximately halfway between Traverse City, Michigan and the Michigan/Indiana border. The total area of the township is 35.9 square miles, of which 35.82 square miles are land and 0.08 is water.

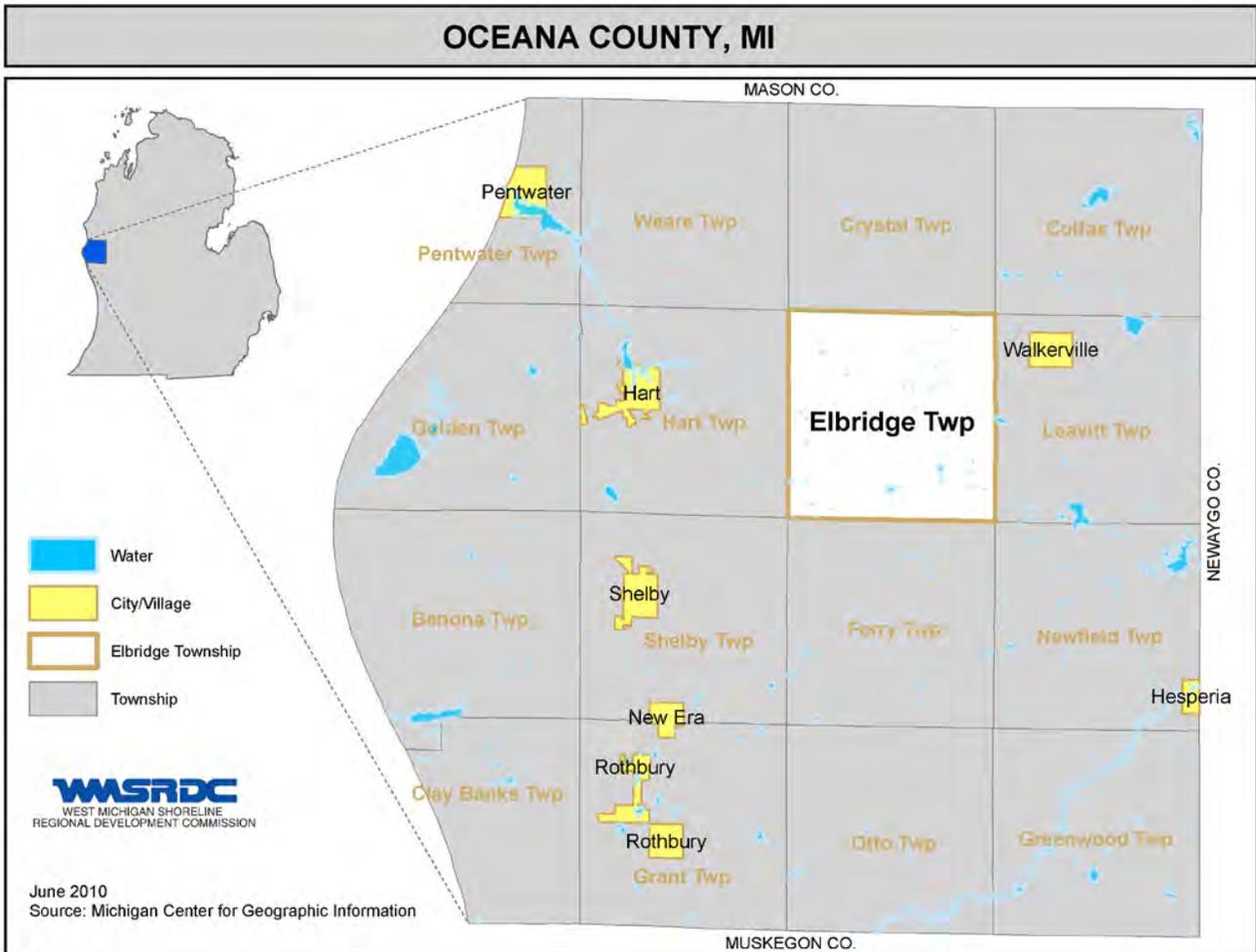
Elbridge is surrounded by the following communities: Leavitt Township to the east, Colfax Township to the northeast, Crystal Township to the north; Weare Township to the northwest; Hart Township to the west; Shelby Township to the southwest; Ferry Township to the south; and Newfield Township to the southeast. Table 1 identifies approximate driving distances from the Elbridge Township Hall to regionally significant locations.

Table 1

Driving Distance* from Elbridge Township	
Ludington	30 mi
Big Rapids	45 mi
Muskegon	45 mi
Grand Rapids	85 mi
Traverse City	100 mi
Lansing	150 mi
Chicago	225 mi
Detroit	240 mi

*Distances approximated with Google Maps

MAP 1



Community History

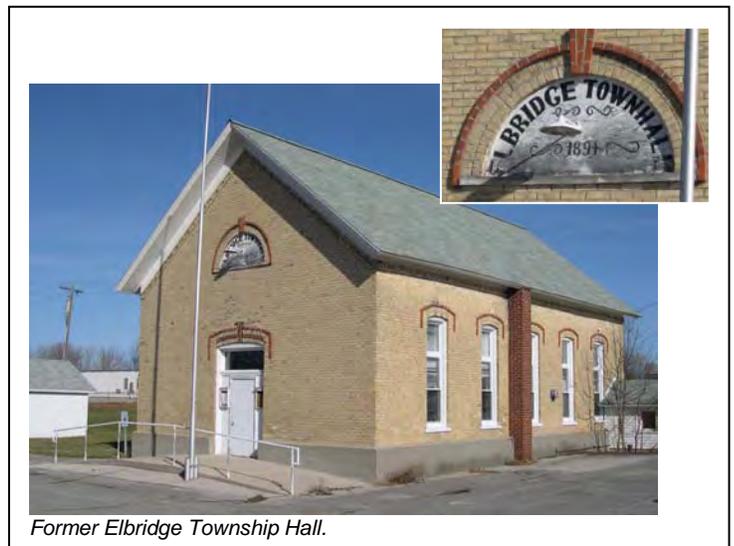
Throughout its history, Elbridge Township has been a close-knit agricultural community. The people have remained dependant on each other as well as the land. This section provides a unique perspective of how the current township came to be. The historical information in this section was obtained from “An Early History of Elbridge Township,” a school paper written by Alan W. Wheeler in 1975.

Elbridge Township was organized April 5, 1858, and named after Elbridge G. Farmer. The original township boundaries included what are now Golden, Hart, Elbridge, and Leavitt townships. In April, 1862, Golden and Hart broke away; and in 1867, Leavitt became its own township as well.

The first permanent settlers of Elbridge were Indian. The Treaty of 1855 created an Indian Reservation out of Elbridge and Crystal townships in Oceana County and Custer and Eden townships in Mason County. Many of the Indians came from Lowell, which is east of Grand Rapids, between 1856 and 1858. They were Ottawa, Pottawatomi and Chippewa. Cob-moo-sa, The Great Walker, was the Indian Chief who led the Indians from Lowell to Elbridge. His home was near present-day Cobmoosa Lake in Elbridge Township.

Hunting and fishing were the Indians' chief occupations. They also farmed corn and potatoes, and made maple syrup. Additionally, some worked for logging companies during the Lumber Era of the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The first families of European decent settled in the 1860's; however there were only about six of them before 1870. These settlers were greeted by a rugged and heavily wooded landscape that had to be cleared before it was farmed. Early crops included apples, peaches, plums, pears, and cherries. Some of these fruits were shipped across Lake Michigan to be sold in Milwaukee and Chicago. In addition, peas, lima beans, red kidney beans, and watermelon were grown in the early days. Livestock were commonly utilized for subsistence more often than for profit. Prior to 1900, supplies were obtained in Pentwater, which was two days away.



Early in the 20th century, agriculture increasingly dominated the way of life in Elbridge as the lumber industry waned. Gradually roads were built, electric and phone lines were installed, and the township's schools were closed. The last school in the township was Elbridge School, which was closed in June 2004. The building now houses the Township Hall as well as an emergency shelter and fire fighter training classrooms.

Chapter 3: Community Facilities and Services

Local Government

Townships are a product of Michigan’s early history. Michigan is one of 20 states that currently have some form of township government. “General law” and “charter” are the two types of townships in Michigan, where state laws authorize townships to perform a wide variety of functions and are required to perform assessment administration, tax collection, and elections administration. Townships may choose to perform numerous governmental functions, including enacting and enforcing ordinances, planning and zoning, fire and police protection, cemeteries, parks and recreation facilities and programs, and many more.

Elbridge Township is a general law township operating under the direction of the Elbridge Township Board of Trustees. The board consists of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. The board members serve four-year terms as elected representatives of the citizenry. The board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM at the township hall located at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, Michigan 49420.

The Elbridge Township Board administers the annual township budget. The primary source of revenue for Michigan townships, such as Elbridge, is the local government’s share of the state sales tax, which has been drastically cut in recent years. Other revenue may be garnered from addition of a millage rate to local property tax fees, fees for building permits, and planning commission review fees. The figures presented in Table 2 reveal the Elbridge Township tax base in 2009.

Table 2

Real and Personal Equalized Valuation - 2009	
Agriculture	\$10,078,543
Commercial	\$ 511,779
Industrial	\$ 166,178
Residential	\$12,212,410
Personal	\$ 1,744,062
Total (real & personal)	\$24,712,972

Source: Michigan Department of Treasury State Tax Commission

Planning and zoning activities in Elbridge Township are the responsibility of a five-member planning commission. Members of the planning commission are appointed by the Township Supervisor and approved by the Township Board. Meetings are held as needed.

Although Elbridge Township does not prepare a written plan for capital improvements, it occasionally takes on projects, such as road improvements, when the budget allows. The township employs a part-time zoning administrator/enforcer. The Township Supervisor also serves as the property assessor. The township does not employ a professional township manager, and it relies on Oceana County for building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical inspection services.

Transportation

Due to the rural nature and location of Elbridge Township, transportation options are fairly limited. The primary mode of transportation is automotive. The township contains a mix of paved roads, graded gravel roads, and two-tracks. Map 2 shows the township's road network, while various other modes of transportation are discussed below.

Highways – There are no state highways located within the township. The nearest is highway M-20, located five miles south of the township's southern border. M-20 runs east/west connecting highway US-31 at its westernmost extent with the Village of Hesperia and other points eastward. The nearest US Highway is US-31, about six miles to the west. The nearest US Interstate is I-96, about 50 miles to the south in Muskegon.

Public Transportation – The Oceana County Council on Aging (OCCOA) provides transportation within Oceana County for all seniors through the bus transportation program. The program is available to all residents of the county; with seniors and the handicapped receiving first priority in order to receive support services, reduce isolation, and promote independent living. The OCCOA also provides volunteer driving transportation for seniors who need transportation to and from medical appointments outside of Oceana County.



Polk Rd, facing west.

Rail – There are no railroads located in Elbridge Township. The nearest active rails include a Michigan Shore Railroad line from Muskegon to the City of Fremont, and a CSX Transportation line from Grand Rapids to the Village of Baldwin via Newaygo County. The nearest passenger rail services include Amtrak stations in Holland, about 70 miles south of the township, and in Grand Rapids, about 80 miles to the southeast.

Air – The Muskegon County Airport is Elbridge's nearest commercial carrier airport. It is located about 35 miles to the south of the Elbridge Township Hall, as the crow flies. Additionally, there are four "General Utility" airports within 25 miles of the Township Hall. The Oceana County Airport is 6 miles to the southwest; the Mason County Airport in Ludington is 21 miles to the northwest; the Fremont Municipal Airport is 20 miles to the southeast; and the White Cloud Airport is 25 miles to the east southeast.

Water – Muskegon and Ludington both have deepwater ports which are within an hour driving distance from Elbridge. These harbors provide shipping and recreational boating access to Lake Michigan, the Great Lakes, and ultimately worldwide. Additionally, both ports offer car ferry services to Wisconsin. In Muskegon, the Lake Express operates from May into November. In Ludington, the Lake Michigan Carferry (also known as the SS Badger) operates daily from May through October. Other nearby harbors providing recreational access to Lake Michigan include White Lake and Pentwater Lake.

Map 2

Elbridge Township Road Network



Map created in June 10, 2010 by:

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
Michigan Geographic Framework: Oceana County (Version 9b),
Michigan Center for Geographic Information

Note:
This map is a general representation of the roads and trails in Elbridge Township and is intended for general planning purposes only.

Map created in June 10, 2010 by:

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
Michigan Geographic Framework: Oceana County (Version 9b),
Michigan Center for Geographic Information

Note:
This map is a general representation of the roads and trails in Elbridge Township and is intended for general planning purposes only.

Parks and Recreation

A vast majority of Elbridge Township is privately owned. Map #3 Public Lands and Recreation reveals the general location of the publicly-owned lands, as well as water features and other recreation opportunities in the township. Listed below are descriptions of many recreation opportunities within the township.

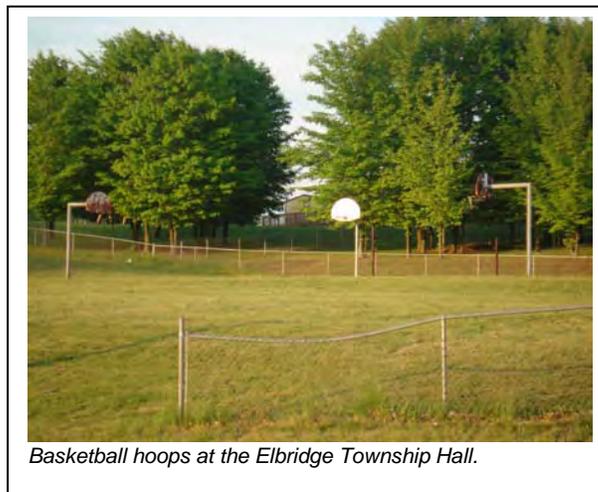
United States Forest Service (USFS) – Elbridge contains about 200 acres of the Manistee National Forest near the southeast corner of the township.

The Manistee National Forest was established in 1938 and covers about 540,187 acres in West Michigan. This land is not one continuous mass, but is broken by private property and towns. Much of the land had been abandoned by logging companies after being logged off in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Oceana County – The County owns and maintains Gales Pond Park located at Filmore Road and 112th Avenue. This park is the site of a former saw mill pond which was donated to the county in 1939. Current facilities include bridges, boardwalks, marked trails, grills, and picnic tables.

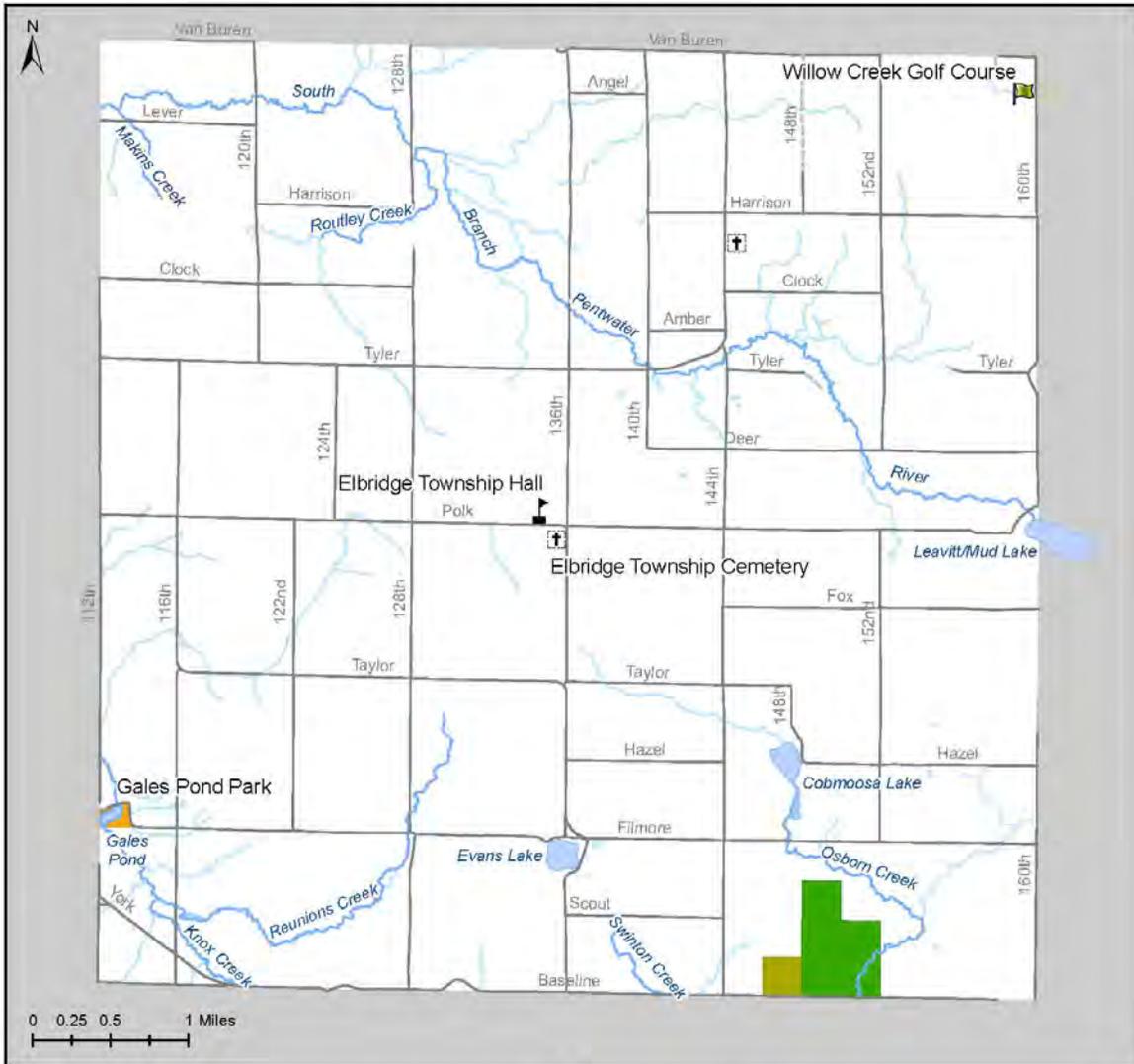
Elbridge Township – Elbridge Township does not own or operate any public parks or trails. It does, however, own a forested 40-acre parcel on Baseline Rd.

Willow Creek Golf Course – Willow Creek is a 9-hole, par 36 golf course nestled in the northeast corner of the township on 160th Avenue.



Map 3

Elbridge Township Public Lands and Recreation



-  Golf Course
-  Township Hall
-  Cemetery
-  Oceana County
-  Elbridge Township
-  Manistee National Forest
-  Lake
-  River/Stream

Map created in June 22, 2010 by:



Data Sources:
Michigan Geographic Framework: Oceana County (Version 9b),
Michigan Center for Geographic Information
Oceana County 2006 Plat Book

Note:
This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Education

Elbridge Township lies within the Hart Public School District. According to sunshinereview.net, the district contained 1,323 students for the 2007-08 school year.

Additionally, there are five higher education institutions within approximately 75 miles from the township. Table 3 lists these institutions, as well as approximate driving distances from the Elbridge Township Hall, as calculated with Google Maps.

Table 3

Nearby Colleges & Universities		
West Shore Community College	Scottville	35 mi
Baker College	Muskegon	45 mi
Muskegon Community College	Muskegon	45 mi
Ferris State University	Big Rapids	45 mi
Grand Valley State University	Allendale	75 mi

Fire and Police

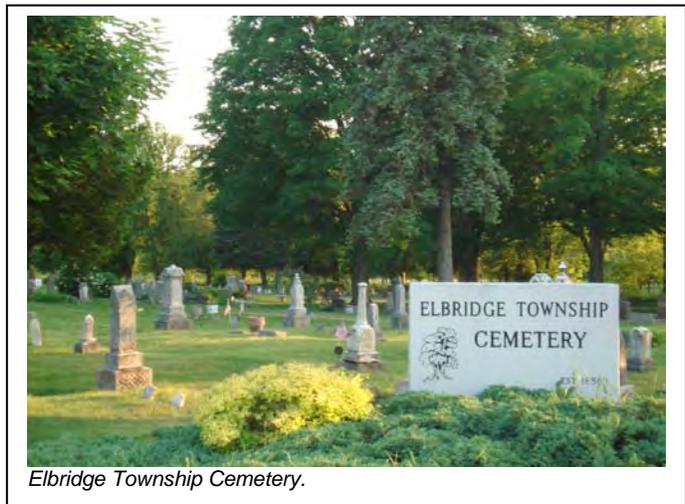
Fire protection in Elbridge Township is provided by the Walkerville Area Fire & Rescue. In addition, all county-wide firefighter training is held at the Elbridge Township Hall. For many years, the training was rotated around Oceana County. However, it became very cumbersome to haul the necessary training equipment from location to location. Therefore, when Elbridge Township purchased its current township hall building, a former elementary school, it offered to host the monthly firefighter training classes in some of the extra classrooms. The township hall, which is centrally located within the county, now permanently hosts county-wide firefighter training. The township has dedicated two former classrooms for the monthly training classes, as well as storage of all the necessary training equipment.

Law enforcement in Elbridge Township is provided by the Oceana County Sheriff's Department in Hart, and Michigan State Police posts in the cities of Newaygo and Hart.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

As a rural community with a low density of development, Elbridge Township contains little along the lines of public facilities and infrastructure. Roads are by far the most prevalent form of infrastructure in the township. Oceana County Road Commission is responsible for most of the roads in the township.

Elbridge Township owns and maintains the Elbridge Township Hall at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, MI 49420. It also maintains a cemetery at the intersection of Polk Road and 136th Avenue.



A list of utilities providing services in Elbridge Township is given in Table 4.

Table 4

Private Utilities	
Electric Energy	- Consumers Energy - Great Lakes Energy
Natural Gas	- NONE
Telephone	- Frontier
Cable TV	- NONE
Internet Service	- Dial-up and satellite internet services are available

Chapter 4: Community Profile

Population characteristics; such as growth, age distribution, income, and educational level; and housing characteristics help community planners make predictions based on historic patterns. A picture of the future can be painted by analyzing these factors.

The following sections provide a community profile of Elbridge Township, utilizing figures from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing. It should be noted that many demographic statistics of Elbridge Township, the State of Michigan, and the United States of America have been significantly impacted by a worldwide economic recession since the 2000 Census was taken. The 2010 U.S. Census statistics will help illustrate some of these impacts, however the new data were not yet available when this document was written.

Population Trends

According to the 2000 Census, Elbridge Township contained 1,233 persons. This marked a 50.4% increase from the township's population of 820 as of the 1990 Census. Comparatively, Oceana County's population grew by 19.7% between the 1990 Census and 2000 Census.

Between 1990 and 2000, population of Elbridge Township increased by 50.4 percent.

Growth in Elbridge Township is expected to continue; however, the rate of growth can only be estimated. While Elbridge Township contains large areas of desirable, undeveloped, and natural land, it is difficult to predict future developmental pressures. Table 5 details the growth for the township since 1970 and estimates growth in five-year increments from 2010 to 2030. Note that these projections are made on a countywide level (annual average growth for the previous ten years applied to current population) and then distributed to the municipal level according to the municipality's share of county population. They do not take into account variations in development trends between individual municipalities.

Table 5

Population Trends and Projections										
	Actual Census Figures				2008 Estimate 2008	Projected Population*				
	1970	1980	1990	2000		2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Elbridge Township	799	899	820	1,233	1,286	1,313	1,385	1,460	1,539	1,623
Oceana County	17,984	22,002	22,454	26,873	27,598	28,188	29,718	31,332	33,033	34,827

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

*Projections calculated by WMSRDC

Age and Gender

According to the 2000 Census, Elbridge Township hosts a slightly younger population than the entire population of Oceana County. Elbridge Township has a median age of 34.9, while the county's median age is 36.9. Table 6 illustrates that the distributions of age within Elbridge Township resemble those of Oceana County. Children and teenagers make up 31.7 percent of the population, adults between 20 and 54 years old make up 42.9 percent, and residents aged 55 and older represent the remaining 25.4 percent of the population. This demonstrates a healthy population distribution.

Table 8 shows that Elbridge Township's population is comprised of more males (51.5%) than females (48.5%). The gender distribution of Oceana County is slightly more level, with 50.4% of the population being male and 49.6% female.

Table 6

Age Distribution				
Age	Elbridge Township		Oceana County	
	number of persons	percent of persons	number of persons	percent of persons
0-4	97	7.9%	1,733	6.4%
5-9	84	6.8%	2,044	7.5%
10-14	109	8.8%	2,303	8.6%
15-19	101	8.2%	2,288	8.5%
20-24	81	6.6%	1,371	5.1%
25-34	145	11.8%	2,989	11.1%
35-44	173	14.0%	4,094	15.2%
45-54	130	10.5%	3,633	13.5%
55-59	58	4.7%	1,432	5.3%
60-64	47	3.8%	1,266	4.7%
65-74	62	5.0%	2,120	7.9%
75-84	76	6.2%	1,235	4.6%
85+	70	5.7%	405	1.5%
Total	1,233	100.0%	26,873	100%

Source: 2000 U.S Bureau of the Census

Table 7

Gender Distribution		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Male	635 (51.5%)	13,544 (50.4%)
Female	598 (48.5%)	13,329 (49.6%)

Source: 2000 U.S Bureau of the Census

Housing

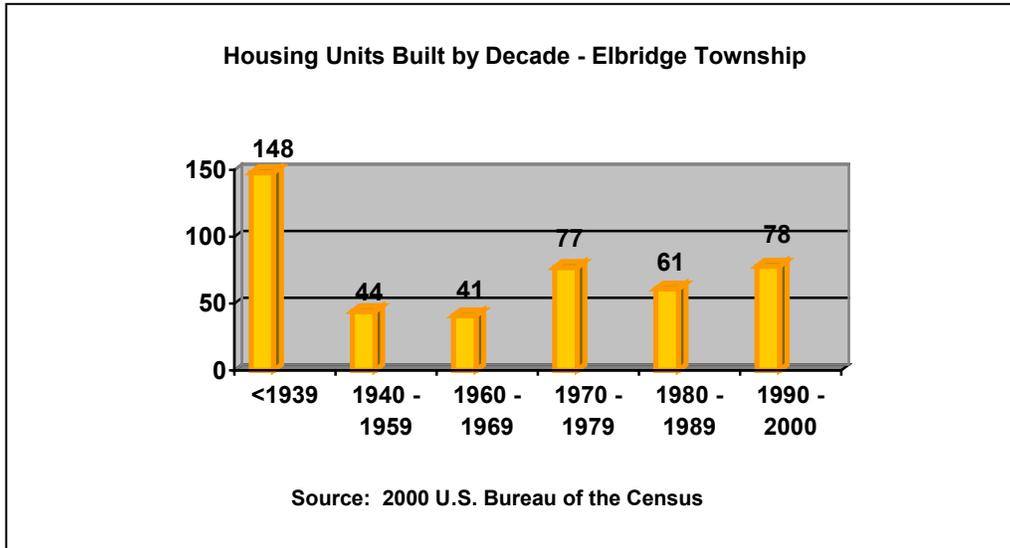
Housing and significant changes in an area's housing stock have a direct impact on planning decisions. It is important to note that changing trends related to housing stock are often the first indications that important changes are taking place with the population base and land use. It is also important to note that a vital aspect of housing stock is the presence of a variety of house choices (i.e. traditional single-family homes, duplexes, and manufactured homes). Various housing types allow for affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population.

The total number of housing units in Elbridge Township increased by 13.7 percent between 1990 and 2000.

The housing characteristics presented herein for Elbridge Township are based on the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing summary data and, therefore, do not reflect changes that have occurred since then. According to demographic information, the total number of housing units in the township increased from 395 to 449 (13.7%) between 1990 and 2000. Of the housing units present in 2000, about 18.5 percent were mobile homes.

Although one-third of the housing stock in Elbridge Township is older than 60 years old, nearly one-third has been built since 1980. With the afore-mentioned increase in

population expected, the coming decades promise a continued expansion of the housing stock as well. The township must remain proactive in addressing housing issues in order to preserve its rural character as well as to protect the environment.



According to Table 8, housing units in Elbridge Township have a much higher rate of occupancy (81.8%) than the entire county (65.1%) and, consequently, a lower number of vacancies. Additionally, about 8 percent of the housing units in the township are for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

Table 8

Housing Occupancy				
	Total Units	Occupied	Vacant	Vacant for seasonal, recreational or occasional use
Elbridge Township	451	344 (76.3%)	107 (23.7%)	36 (8.0%)
Oceana County	15,009	9,778 (65.1%)	5,226 (34.9%)	4,155 (27.7%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Racial Composition

Table 9 illustrates the racial distribution within Elbridge Township and Oceana County. As noted in the table, the majority (80.5%) of the township residents have a white ethnic background. This concentration is less than Oceana County, which shows 90.4 percent.

Table 9

Ethnicity		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Total Population	1,233	26,873
White	992 (80.5%)	24,284 (90.4%)
Black or African American	5 (0.4%)	86 (0.3%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	11 (0.9%)	279 (1.0%)
Asian	0 (0.0%)	67 (0.2%)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0 (0.0%)	8 (0.01%)
Other Race	179 (14.5%)	1,640 (6.1%)
Two or More Races	46 (3.7%)	509 (1.9%)
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	307 (24.9%)	3,119 (11.6%)

*Hispanic origin is included in all races, therefore, totals will not equal the Total Population section
Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Income and Poverty

Table 10 identifies the gross annual income in Elbridge Township and Oceana County, while Table 11 shows their distribution. These figures show that the township and the county have very similar income distributions.

Table 12 identifies poverty statistics for Elbridge Township and Oceana County, according to the U.S. Census. Of the 1,233 residents in Elbridge, 293 persons were listed as being below the poverty level. This is equal to 25.4 percent of the population and is well above the overall county poverty rate of 14.7 percent.

Educational Attainment

Table 13 details levels of educational attainment for Elbridge Township and Oceana County residents 25 years of age and over. It should be noted that 28.6 percent of the township's population has had some college or obtained higher education degrees, which is less than the county's level of 40.3 percent.

Labor Force Composition

The population of residents 16 years of age and over in Elbridge Township totaled 911 persons in 2000. Of those individuals, 416 were employed. About 60 percent of laborers work in one of the three main industry sectors of Manufacturing (25.0%); Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining (19.0%); and Education, health, and social services (16.8%). Tables 14 and 15 give additional employment distribution and labor force statistics for Elbridge Township and Oceana County.

Table 10

Gross Annual Income (1999)		
	Per Capita Income	Median Family Income
Elbridge Township	\$11,755	\$35,662
Oceana County	\$15,878	\$40,602

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 11

Household Income Distribution		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Total	365	9,826
Less than \$10,000	45 (12.3%)	947 (9.6%)
\$10,000 to \$14,999	33 (9.0%)	761 (7.7%)
\$15,000 to \$24,999	62 (17.0%)	1,578 (16.1%)
\$25,000 to \$34,999	57 (15.6%)	1,576 (16.0%)
\$35,000 to \$49,999	64 (17.5%)	1,887 (19.2%)
\$50,000 to \$74,999	76 (20.8%)	1,870 (19.0%)
\$75,000 to \$99,999	23 (6.3%)	781 (7.9%)
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2 (0.5%)	279 (2.8%)
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0 (0.0%)	76 (0.8%)
\$200,000 or more	3 (0.8%)	71 (0.7%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 12

Poverty		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Percentage of Population in Poverty	25.4%	14.7%
<i>Of those in poverty:</i> Under 18 years	35.3%	19.6%
18 to 64 years	25.8%	71.4%
65 years and Over	38.9%	9.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 13

Educational Attainment: Persons 25 Years and Over		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Less than 9 th grade	143 (19.6%)	1,313 (7.7 %)
9 th – 12 th Grade	98 (13.4 %)	2,153 (12.6 %)
High School Diploma	279 (38.3 %)	6,754 (39.4 %)
Some College	118 (16.2 %)	3,533 (20.6 %)
Associate Degree	39 (5.3 %)	1,224 (7.1 %)
Bachelor's Degree	38 (5.2 %)	1,373 (8.0 %)
Graduate or Professional Degree	14 (1.9 %)	784 (4.6 %)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 14

Industry Employment: Ages 16 Years and Over		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Total Employed	416	11,367
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	79 (19.0%)	756 (6.7%)
Construction	31 (7.5%)	968 (8.5%)
Manufacturing	104 (25.0%)	3,103 (27.3%)
Wholesale trade	25 (6.0%)	256 (2.3%)
Retail trade	30 (7.2%)	1,120 (18.3%)
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	25 (6.0%)	374 (3.3%)
Information	0 (0.0%)	111 (1.0%)
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	4 (1.0%)	327 (2.9%)
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	5 (1.2%)	428 (3.8%)
Education, health and social services	70 (16.8%)	2,077 (18.3%)
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	20 (4.8%)	827 (7.3%)
Other services (except public administration)	10 (2.4%)	548 (4.8%)
Public administration	13 (3.1%)	472 (4.2%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 15

Labor Force Composition: Ages 16 and Over		
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County
Total Employed	416	11,367
Private wage and salary workers	319 (76.7%)	8,856 (77.9%)
Government workers	56 (13.5%)	1,493 (13.1%)
Self-employed workers	41 (9.9%)	969 (8.5%)
Unpaid family workers	0 (0.0%)	49 (0.4%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Unemployment

Table 16 identifies the total labor force and gives information on employment and unemployment for Elbridge Township, Oceana County, and the State of Michigan in 2000. The township's unemployment rate (13.3% of the civilian labor force) was higher than the county's (7.9%), and the state's (5.8%). It was also higher than the national unemployment rate for 2006 (4.6%). Between 2000 and 2008, unemployment rates increased to 10.8 percent in Oceana County (MI Dept. of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth), 8.4 percent in Michigan (MI DELEG), and 5.8 percent across the United States (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Unemployment figures for Elbridge in 2008 are not available.

Table 16

Civilian Labor Force			
	Elbridge Township	Oceana County	Michigan
Civilian Labor Force	480	12,348	4,922,453
Employed	416 (86.7%)	11,367 (92.1%)	4,637,461 (94.2%)
Unemployed	64 (13.3%)	981 (7.9%)	284,992 (5.8%)

Source: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Economic Outlook

In 2000, 411 of Elbridge Township's 416 employed citizens commuted to work with an average travel time of 22.6 minutes. The 1990 Census revealed 310 commuters with an average travel time of 25.6 minutes. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of commuters increased 32.6 percent and their average travel time decreased 11.9 percent. Although these statistics suggest that a significant portion of the population travels outside the township to work, they also reveal that a greater number of township citizens found work closer to home.

In light of the information presented above, it may be useful to look at recent changes in the makeup of employment for the surrounding communities. This will allow a view into the economic course of the region around Elbridge Township. Table 17 contains employment estimates for the seven largest employment sectors of Oceana, Newaygo and Muskegon counties. It reveals that, although Oceana increased manufacturing jobs by over 50% between 2004 and 2006, the county still lost about 204 (2.2%) jobs overall. This trend is unique to Oceana, however, as Muskegon and Newaygo both experienced increases in total employment despite losing manufacturing jobs.



Table 17

Major Employment Sectors: 2004 & 2006						
	Oceana		Newaygo		Muskegon	
	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006
Accommodation and food services	1,198	1,237	903	939	6,693	6,689
Construction	914	754	1,190	1,276	4,411	4,497
Government and government enterprises	1,635	1,609	2,764	2,740	9,742	9,640
Health care and social assistance	563	528	1,524	1,598	11,515	12,173
Manufacturing	1,430	2,053	1,964	1,916	14,108	13,560
Other services, except public	618	591	1,286	1,279	4,386	4,449
Retail trade	1,068	1,091	2,124	2,124	13,184	13,683
Total Employment*	11,048	10,652	17,034	17,201	84,287	85,418

RED figures show employment loss; **GREEN** figures show employment gain.

* includes other sectors not presented above, some for which specific data is not available

Chapter 5: Natural Resources

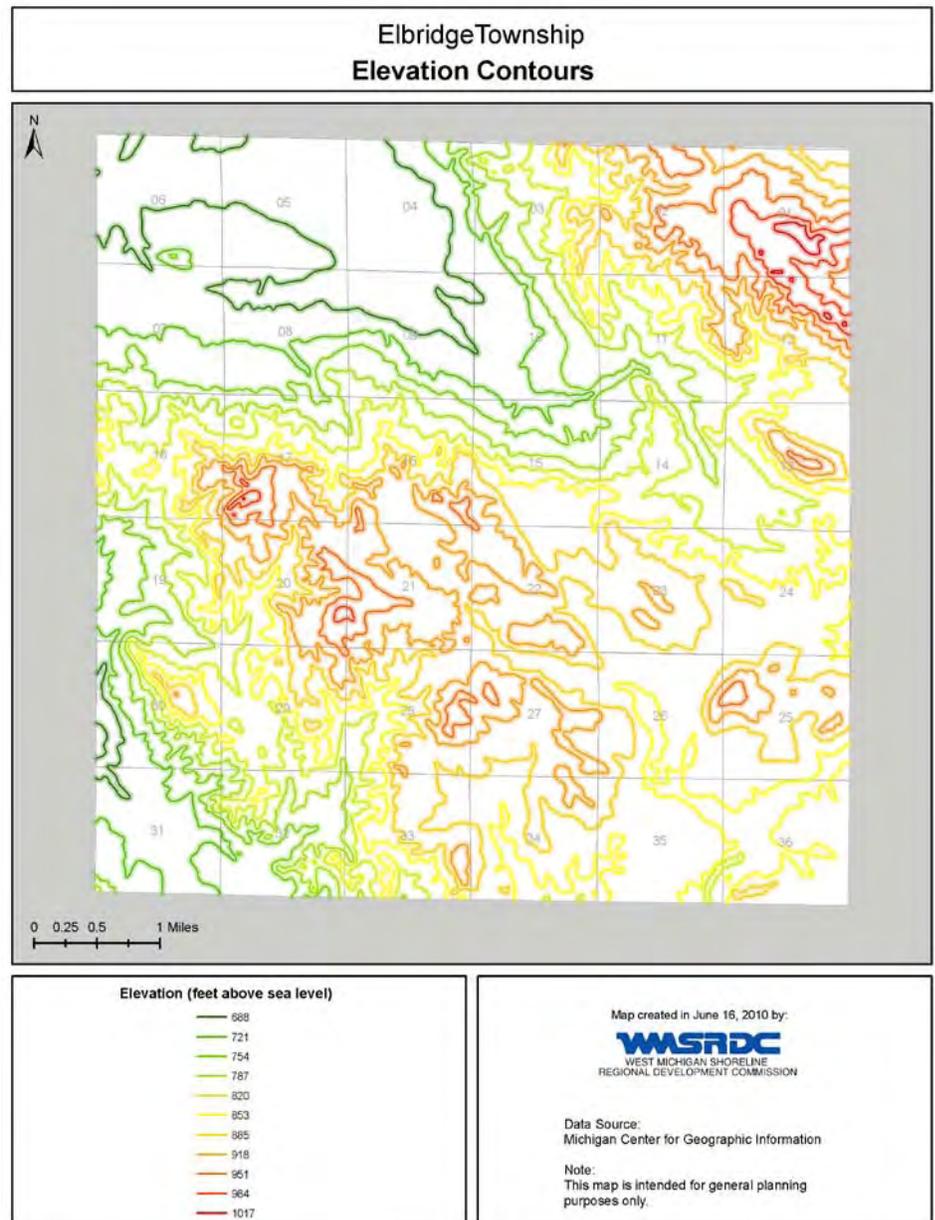
Elbridge Township contains an abundance of undeveloped, natural areas that contribute to its rural character. The following sections describe those resources.

Topography

The varied topographic features found across Michigan, including Oceana County, owe their existence to the activity of glaciers. The formation, movement, and recession of glaciers shaped the landscape by moving soil, cutting rivers, and depositing lakes.

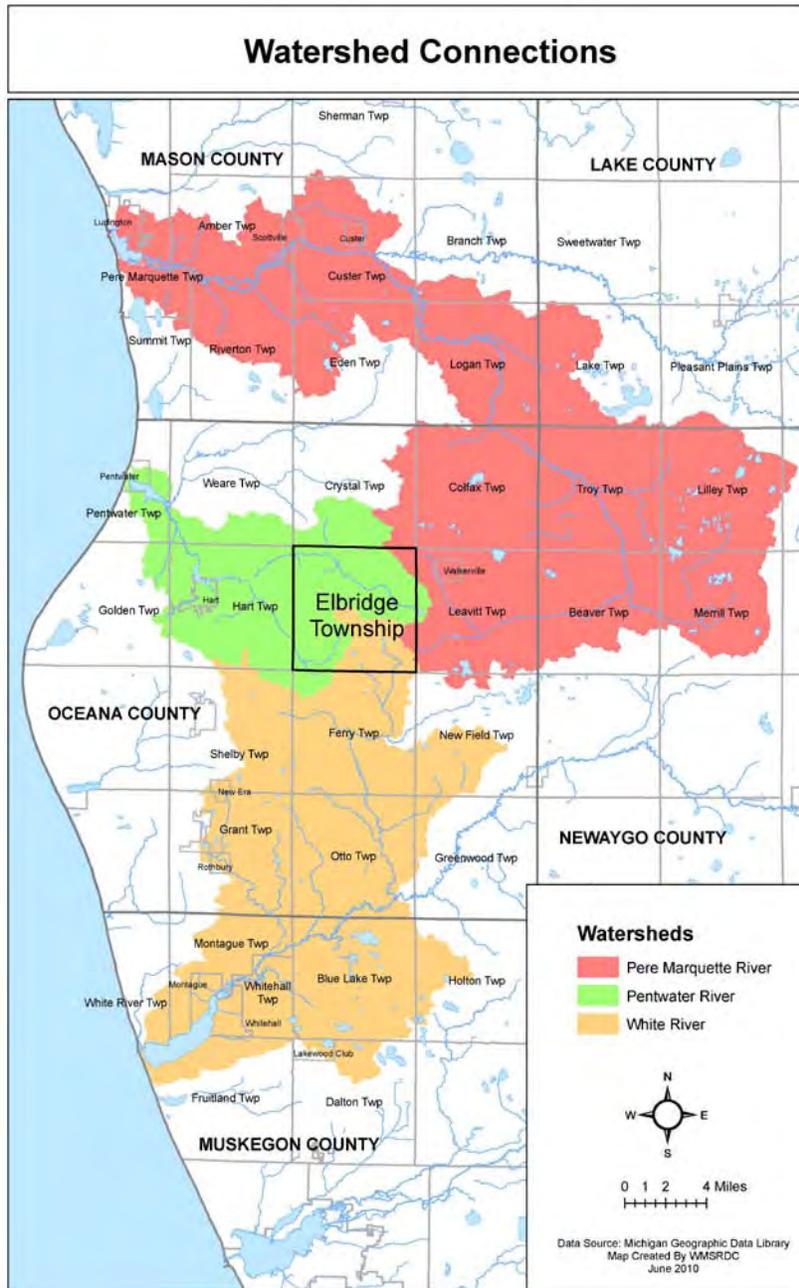
Elbridge Township contains some of the tallest hills in Oceana County. The highest elevations, topping 1010 feet above sea level, are located in Section 1, Section 12, and Section 17 in the township. The lowest points, around 680 feet above sea level, are located at the South Branch of the Pentwater River at the township's northwestern border, and near Gales Pond at the southwestern border. Map 4 illustrates elevation in the township, with red contour lines representing the highest elevation and green contour lines representing the lowest elevation.

Map 4



There are three watersheds that drain Elbridge Township: Pentwater River watershed, Pere Marquette River watershed, and the White River watershed. Thanks to the relatively high elevation, watercourses and groundwater will tend to migrate away from the township. On one hand, this is a safeguard against polluted groundwater or surface water flowing into Elbridge. On the other hand, land uses in the township carry the potential for affecting lands downstream. It is important to recognize that watersheds cover broad expanses of land without regard for municipal borders. Land use decisions in one municipality may have negative effects upon environments in neighboring communities within a watershed. Map 5 illustrates the three watersheds of Elbridge Township, as well as the communities that are connected “downstream” of the township via these important natural features.

Map 5



Water Resources

Groundwater, surface water, and wetlands located within Elbridge Township are valuable assets. Essential to the character of the township, they provide potable water, diverse natural habitats, recreation opportunities, and desirable places to live. These attributes must be protected in order to ensure future prosperity. Notable water features within the township include: the South Branch Pentwater River, Cobmoosa Lake, Evans Lake, Gales Pond, and Leavitt/Mud Lake. These features are shown on Map 6 – Water and Wetland Features.

All water features must be properly managed and protected to prevent detriment to the environment. Eutrophication, erosion, and polluted runoff are just a few examples of how water systems can be degraded. Potential sources for polluted runoff in Elbridge Township include roads, homes (including lawn care measures, sewage, etc.), erosion, and agriculture. Increased siltation and eutrophication are examples of adverse effects that could result from contaminated runoff or erosion.

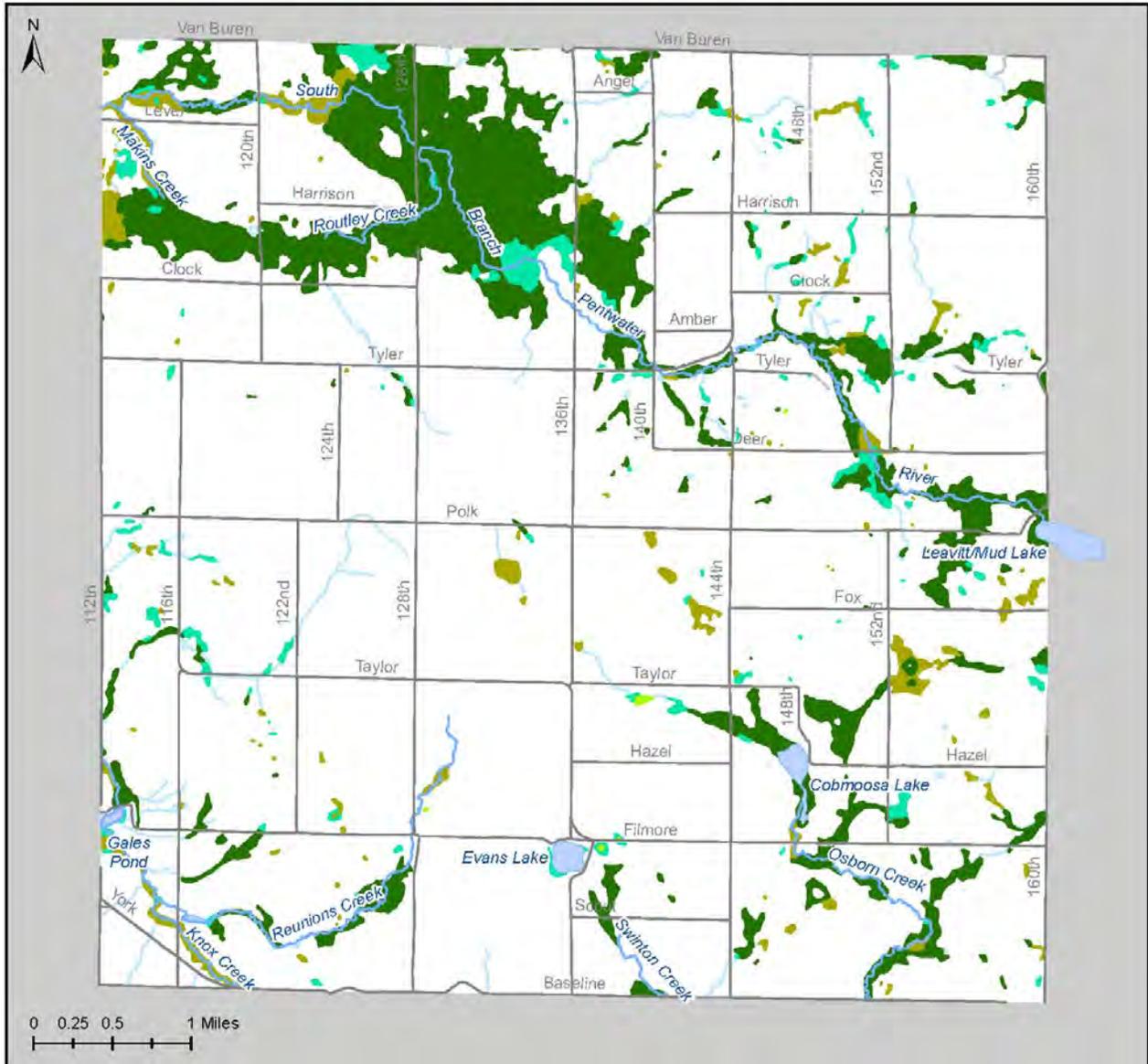
Another important surface water resource is wetland. Commonly known as marshes or swamps, wetlands are lands that are wet for most of the year. Wetlands have the capacity to perform many functions such as, provide important and diverse habitats, protect from flooding, and filter water runoff. This filtering process includes removing many toxic elements from precipitation or surface water as it seeps into the ground and eventually into the groundwater supply. Wetlands in Elbridge Township are generally found adjacent to surface water features. The largest contiguous wetland area is located along the South Branch Pentwater River.

Floods are caused when the ground becomes saturated beyond its capacity to absorb any more water or when precipitation is so intense that the ground cannot absorb it quickly enough. The less permeable the soil and the higher the water table, the more susceptible an area is to flooding. Flooding often transmits contaminants from streets, parking lots, soils, etc., into surface water sources.

Although flooding is possible virtually anywhere, it is most likely to occur in low-lying areas and near bodies of water. In Elbridge Township, floodplains along the Pentwater River and its tributaries and Gales Pond tributaries are subject to frequent flooding. This, however, does not pose a significant threat to Elbridge Township because lands along these areas are largely undeveloped. Map 7 – Flooding Soils shows areas of the township identified by the Soil Survey of Oceana County (1992) as having flooding characteristics.

Map 6

Elbridge Township Water and Wetland Features



	River/Stream
	Lake
Wetlands	
	Aquatic Bed
	Emergent
	Forested
	Scrub-Shrub

Map created in June 17, 2010 by:

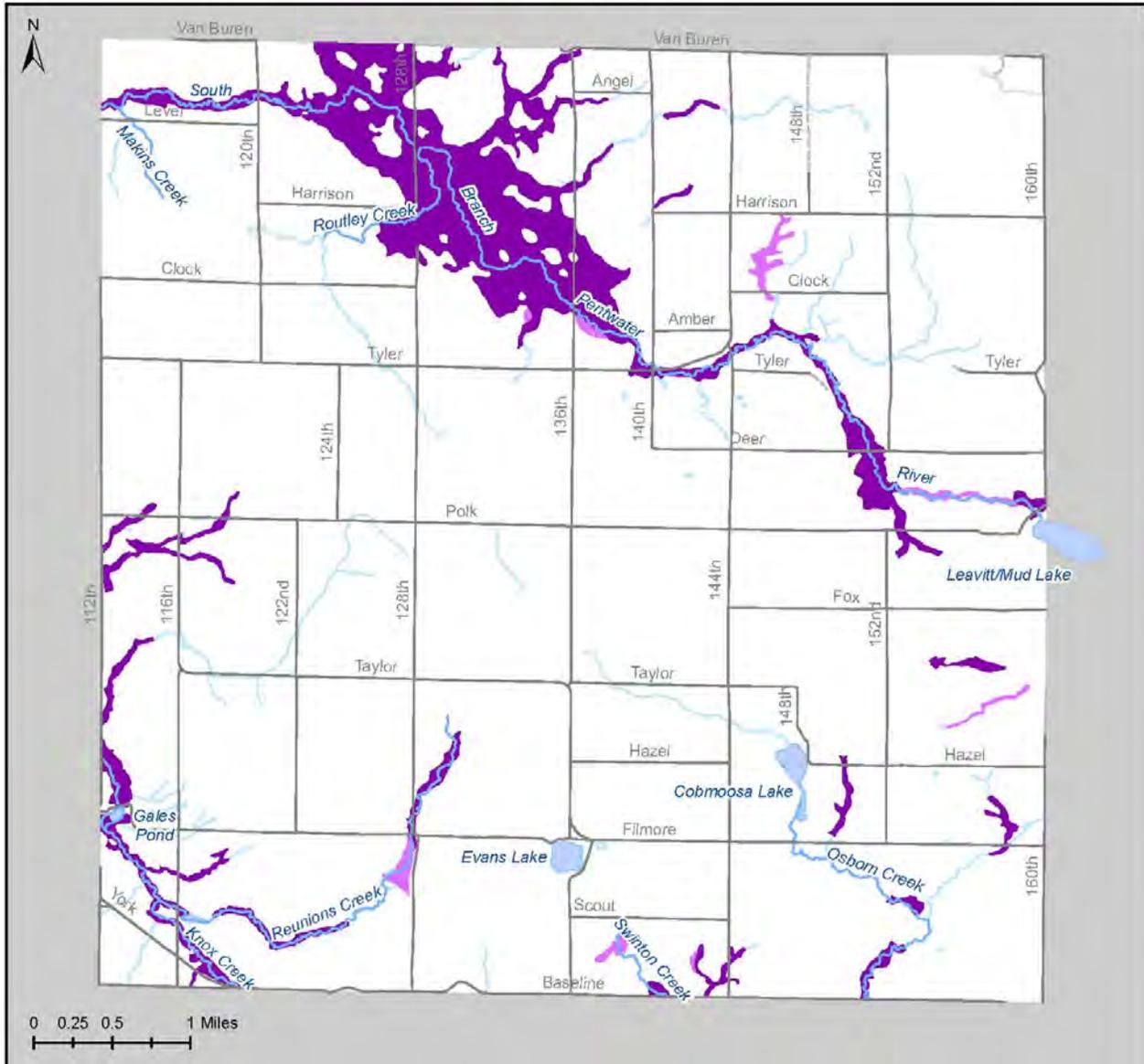
WMRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory (obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information)

Note:
This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Map 7

Elbridge Township Flooding Soils



	Frequent - flooding occurs often under normal weather conditions (more than 50% chance of flooding in any year)
	Occasional - flooding occurs infrequently under normal weather conditions (5% to 50% chance of flooding in any year)

Map created in June 17, 2010 by:

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information;
Soil Survey of Oceana County (USGS)

Note:
This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Soils

Soil is a primary factor in determining where future development will occur. It is especially important in areas such as Elbridge Township where there are no public water or sewer services available. The suitability of soils for developments such as roads, foundations, wells, and septic systems is important to consider when determining their location and intensity.

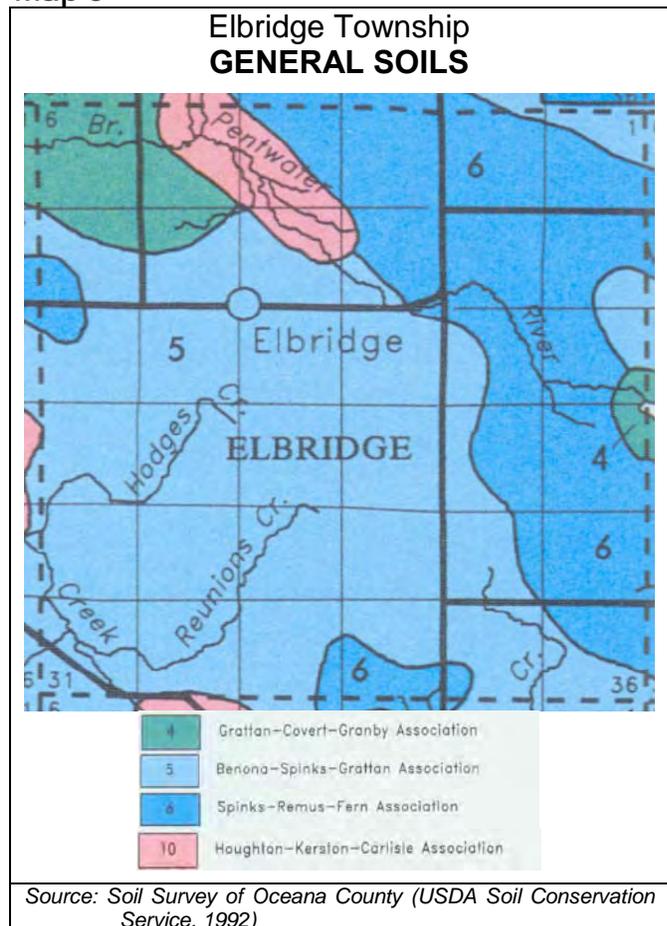
Soil surveys are a primary source of soil information. Soils in Elbridge Township are described in the Soil Survey of Oceana County (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1992). It provides information that may assist in determining soil characteristics such as the extent and location of flood-prone areas, access to aquifers, erosion and sedimentation potential, ability to accommodate site septic tanks and absorption fields, and the limitations for construction. Maps are an important component of the soil survey and are critical to the planning process because they can geographically depict areas that have development limitations based on the soil(s) present. Map 9 - Soil Limitations for Dwellings With and Without Basements provides an example of the detailed information available from the survey. The map illustrates areas of Elbridge Township that are more favorable for construction or placement of dwellings based on the properties of soils present.

General Soils

Map 8 - General Soils shows soil associations in Elbridge Township. Each association is a unique landscape with a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. The general soils map can be used to compare the suitability of large areas for general land uses such as building site development, farming, recreational development, and other uses. This may be helpful for broad land use planning, however is not suitable for selecting a site; such as the location of a farm, road, or other development; for a specific use because of its small scale.

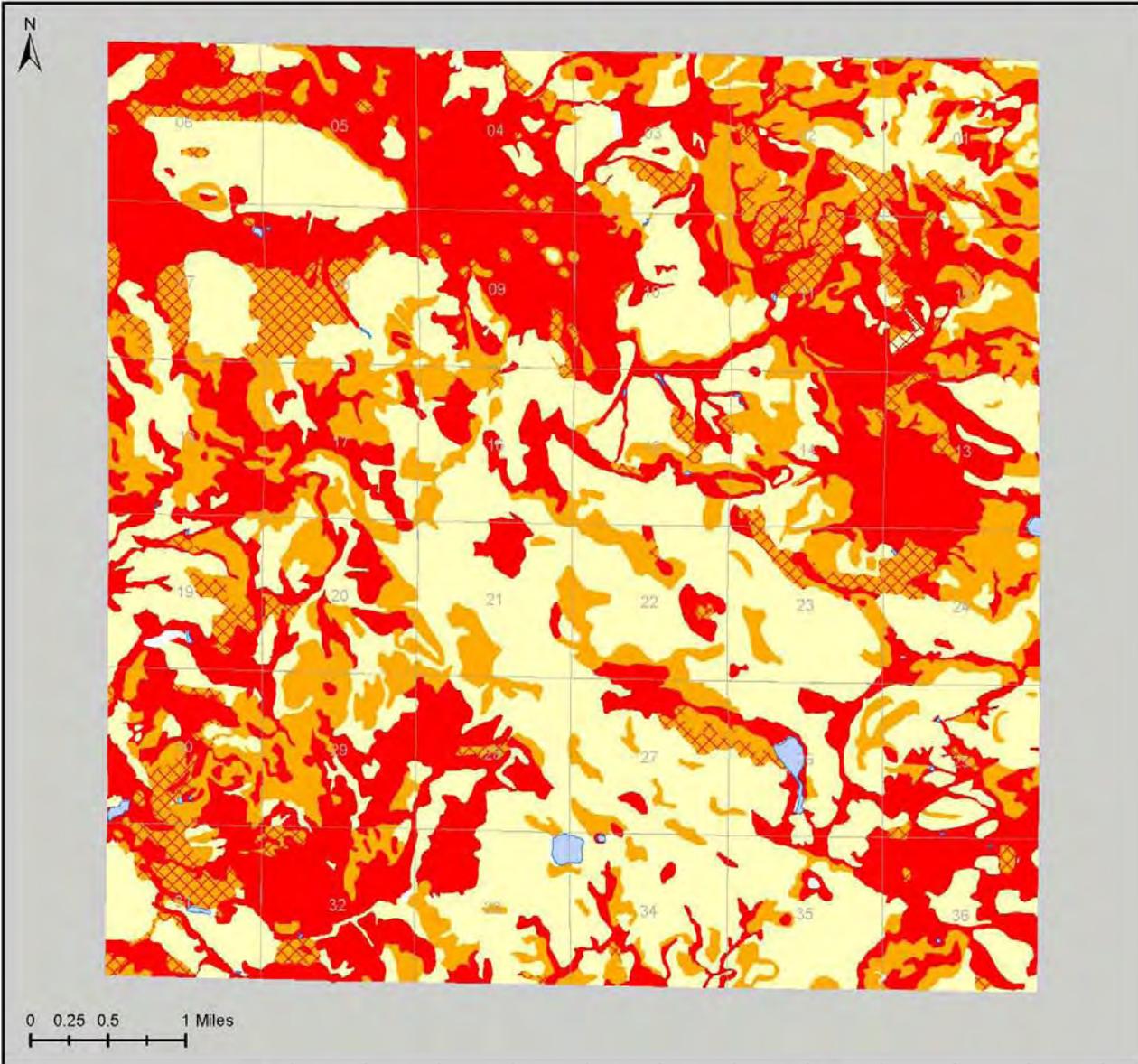
The most common soil associations in Elbridge Township are the Benona-Spinks-Grattan Association and the Spinks-Remus-Fern Association, both of which are fairly well-suited to be used as cropland. Two other associations include the Grattan-Covert-Granby Association and the Houghton-Kerston-Carlisle Association, both of which are situated along the Pentwater River. Detailed descriptions of the soil associations illustrated on Map 8 have been included in the Appendix.

Map 8



Map 9

**Elbridge Township
Soil Limitations for Dwellings With and Without Basements**



	Slight
	Slight-Severe
	Moderate
	Moderate-Severe
	Severe
	Water Body
	Township Sections

Slight- soil properties and site features are generally favorable and limitations are minor and easily overcome.

Moderate- soil properties or site features are not favorable and special planning, design and maintenance is needed to overcome or minimize the limitations.

Severe- soil properties or site features are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required.

Map created in June 2010 by:

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information; Soil Survey of Oceana County (USGS)

Note:
This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Septic Suitability

Soil is not considered to be suitable for residential septic tank systems if it has excessively high or low permeability, if the slope is excessive, or if the water table is too close to the surface. The permeability and coarseness of soil has a direct impact on its ability to properly filter toxins (i.e. septic material) as they pass through the soil. This is cause for caution in areas of the township that have highly permeable, sandy soils because of their excessive percolation and poor filtration capabilities subsequently lead to a potential for groundwater pollution.

Soils with a high flood frequency are also not generally considered to be adequate locations for septic systems. As the ground becomes saturated and floods, the toxins may be removed from septic tanks and flow into groundwater or surface water supplies. Quite often the waste deposited in septic systems is much more hazardous than human waste alone because materials such as household cleaners, bacteria, and other toxic nuisances may be present as well. Frequently flooded soils are generally situated near surface water features and most commonly located along the South Branch Pentwater River in Elbridge Township (See Map 7 – Flooding Soils).

In order to reduce the amount of pollution released from septic tanks, citizens should refrain from the disposal of medicines and household chemicals, such as ammonia, bleach or other hazardous substances, into the septic system. Septic tank maintenance should also be addressed on a regular schedule by adding necessary chemicals, cleaning, and using only to capacity. Additionally, a septic system should be emptied at a minimum of once every seven years but preferably every other year.

Soil Erosion

Soil information presented earlier in this section has indicated the presence of sandy soils, which tend to be susceptible to erosion. However, the prevalence of forests and other natural land cover in the township greatly reduces the erosion potential. Natural cover acts as a barrier to erosion in that trees, grasses, forest litter and stones hold the soil in place, even during torrential rainfall. Removal of this cover could expose the soil to its erosion potential. In addition, changes in development patterns often create substantial changes in the ratio of permeable surfaces in an area. Even in a heavily forested area, addition of asphalt, pavement, and roofs can make a substantial difference.

Population trends in Elbridge Township between 1990 and 2006 reveal increases in population (see Chapter 4: Community Profile for U.S. Census statistics). If recent trends continue into the future, developments will need to be monitored to mitigate effects on the land with respect to erosion. Table 18 highlights important considerations for development with respect to erosion.

Table 18

Soil Erosion Characteristics	
1	The amount of runoff generated is dependent upon the type of soil and the kind of land use prevalent in any given area.
2	Natural areas, where vegetation remains intact, are almost always better-equipped to absorb and retain water than are areas in either agricultural or urban use.
3	Those areas best able to absorb and retain rainfall include forests and other areas of dense vegetation.
4	Those areas which have the greatest impact on the amount of runoff created typically include urban lands with high percentages of impervious surfaces, and agricultural lands typically in row crops.

Climate

Elbridge Township is located in an area of the United States which experiences unique and diverse climatic conditions due to its proximity to Lake Michigan. Oceana County is classified as having “quasi-marine” (when westerly winds pass over Lake Michigan) and “continental” climates (when the winds become easterly or southeasterly and pass over a large expanse of land).

Because Elbridge Township is located in central Oceana County, inland from Lake Michigan, its climate is more “continental” than the western areas of the county. This translates into slightly warmer maximum summer temperatures and slightly cooler winter minimum temperatures. Table 19 shows notable climatic data from the 30-year period between 1971-2000 including temperature and precipitation averages and records for the City of Hart, which is the nearest NOAA weather station to Elbridge Township.

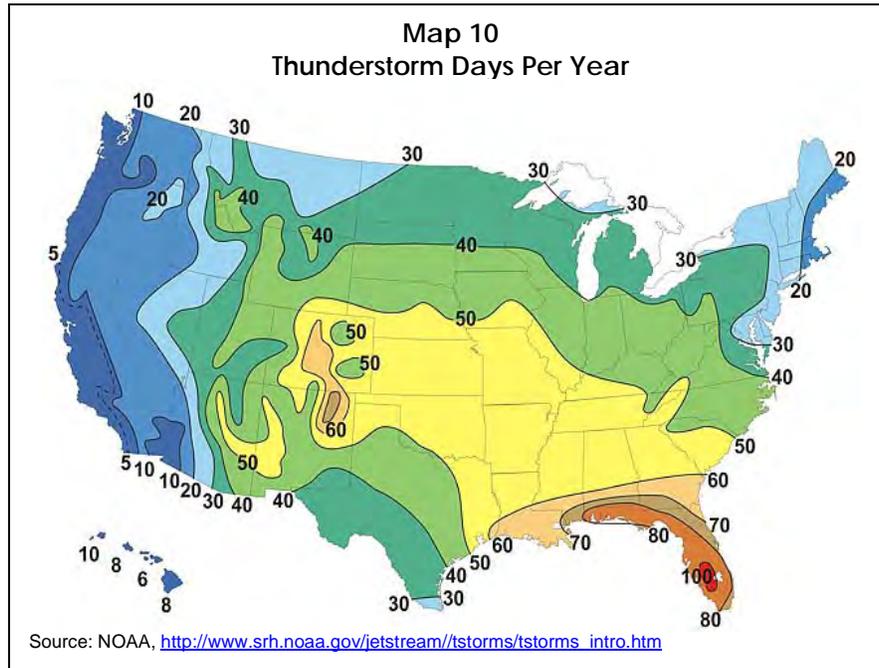
Table 19

Temperature and Precipitation Summary for Hart for the 30-Year Period Between 1971 and 2000								
Month	Average Daily Temperatures (Fahrenheit)			Average Monthly Precipitation (Inches)				
	maximum	minimum	mean	mean	Liquid Equivalent			Snowfall mean
					mean # of days with at least:			
					.1"	.25"	.5"	
January	28.9	15.4	22.2	2.57	9	3	1	31.0
February	31.8	16.3	24.1	1.73	5	2	1	18.7
March	41.3	23.8	32.5	2.40	6	3	2	8.5
April	54.0	34.0	44.0	2.86	7	4	2	2.1
May	67.1	43.9	55.5	3.04	6	4	2	0.0
June	75.6	53.5	64.6	3.29	7	4	2	0.0
July	80.2	58.2	69.2	2.85	6	3	2	0.0
August	77.8	57.5	67.7	4.09	7	4	3	0.0
September	70.2	49.9	60.1	3.86	7	5	3	0.0
October	58.2	39.9	49.1	3.56	7	4	3	0.2
November	44.9	30.8	37.8	3.29	8	4	2	6.3
December	33.6	21.4	27.5	2.65	8	3	1	24.0
Annual Averages	55.3	37.1	46.2	36.19	82	44	22	90.9

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office. <http://climate.geo.msu.edu/stations/3632/>.6-18-10.

The proximity of Lake Michigan (about 15-20 miles to the west of Elbridge Township) causes a meteorological phenomenon called lake effect snow. During the winter months, the relatively warm waters of the lake provide moisture for weather fronts as they cross over from Wisconsin. When these fronts reach the cooler land of Michigan, the moisture condenses and falls as snow. Lake effect snows can be serious and hazardous weather events; however, their actual duration and severity can vary greatly. Winter weather, often in the form of lake effect snow, will annually affect Elbridge Township through treacherous driving conditions, cost of snow removal, and infrastructure failures. Rural and secondary roads often experience the worst driving conditions during the winter because they are the last to be cleared and salted.

In addition to severe winter weather, Elbridge Township may experience severe thunderstorms and high wind. According to FEMA's "Wind Zones in the United States" map, Elbridge is located in the Zone IV, where winds of up to 250 miles per hour are possible. These winds may be produced by strong weather systems, tornadoes, or thunderstorms. The NOAA estimates that the township should experience around 30-40 thunderstorm days per year. Thunderstorms are most likely to occur during the warm months between spring and fall, but may occur any time of the year.



Forest Lands

As a rural, farming community, Elbridge Township is primarily covered by either cultivated or naturally occurring vegetation. The largest contiguous forested areas are commonly found along water features and wetlands. Otherwise, pockets of forests are peppered throughout the agricultural landscape of the township. There are also a number of Christmas tree farms scattered throughout the township, such as the one pictured to the right. Also of note, according to the 2006 Plat Book of Oceana County, published by Farm & Home Publishers, about 200 acres of forested land belong to the Manistee-Huron National Forest.



A Christmas tree farm in Elbridge Township.

Chapter 6: Existing Land Uses and Cover

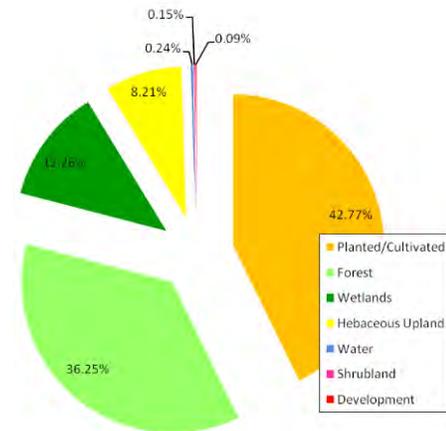
Despite the fact that the Elbridge Township population increased by about 56% between 1990 and 2008, the character of Elbridge Township has remained rural. There have been no major changes or disruptions to the township's land uses or land cover. Elbridge Township's rural nature is reflected by its land use and land cover, which is illustrated on Map 11 - Land Cover circa 1992. Although the land cover data presented in this section is rather out-dated, it remains useful for identifying land cover patterns in the township.

Elbridge Township does not contain any significant concentrations of development. With only few exceptions, development in the township is primarily residential. Map 10 reveals that the majority of Elbridge Township is either forested or cultivated, accounting for almost 80 percent of the landscape. Wetlands are the third most common land cover in the township and can be found primarily near water features. Table 20 and the accompanying chart give an approximate statistical breakdown of land covers illustrated on Map 10.

Map 10 – Land Cover circa 1992, was derived from the National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) published by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1999. The data represents conditions in the early 1990's and is displayed on the map by 30-meter pixel detail. The USGS states that this data is most accurate when viewed at the state or multi-state level (rather than the township level). Therefore, it is important to note that this map is very general and should not be consulted for site-specific land cover analysis. Definitions of the NLCD Land Cover Classifications are listed in Table 21.

Table 20

Land Cover Distribution circa 1992	
Land Cover Category	%
Development	0.09%
Planted/Cultivated	42.77%
Herbaceous Upland	8.21%
Shrubland	0.15%
Forest	36.25%
Wetland	12.26%
Water	0.24%



Statistics derived from National Land Cover Dataset (USGS, 1992).

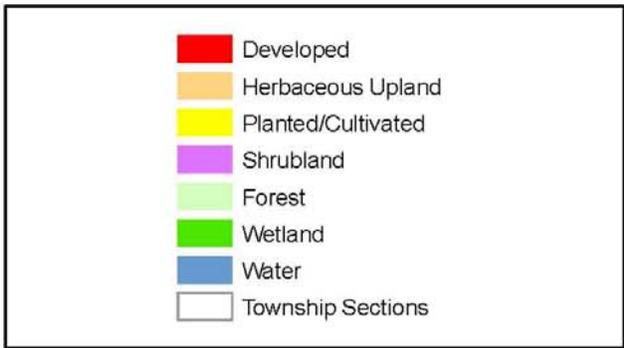
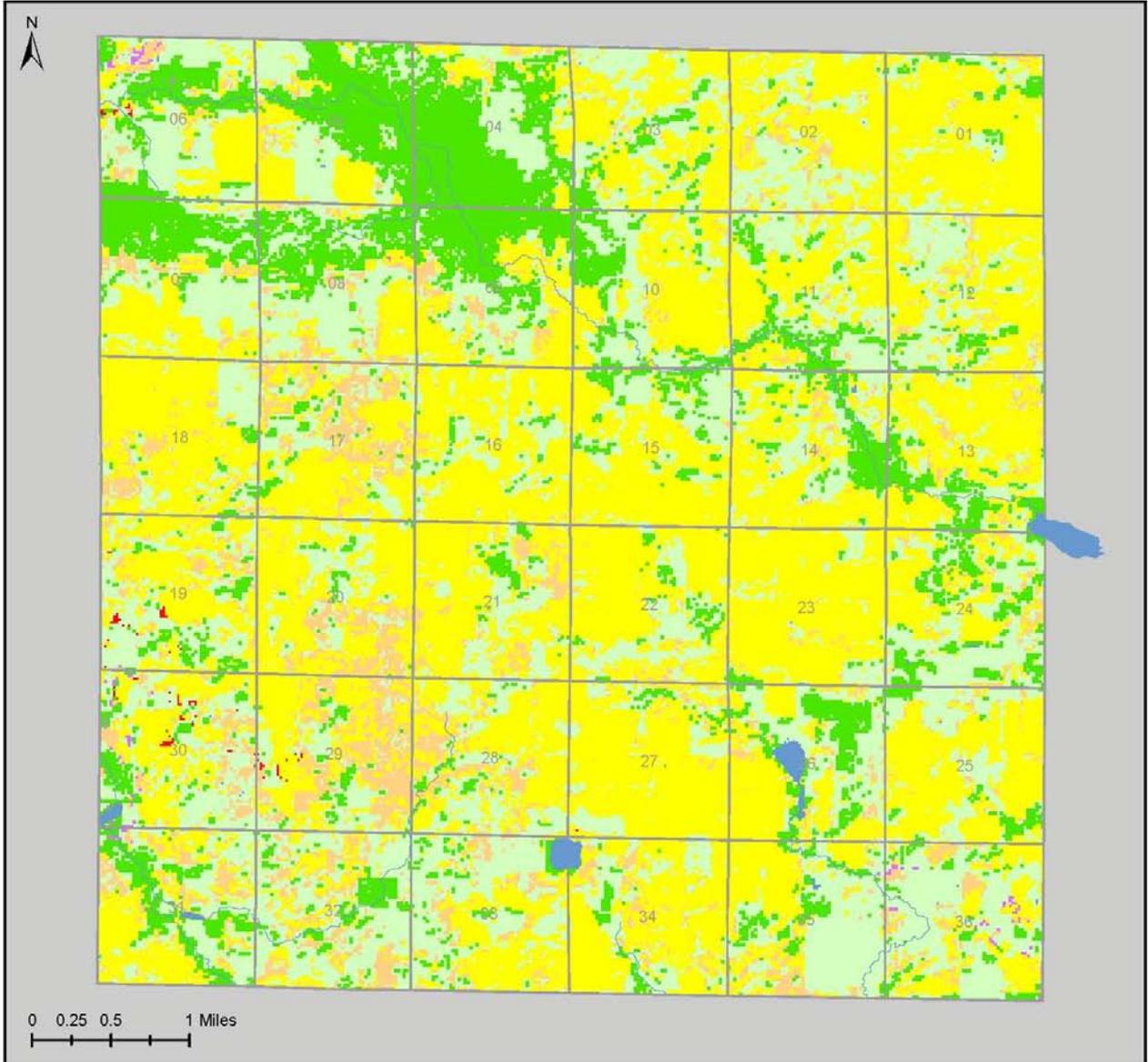
Table 21

NLCD Land Cover Classification Definitions	
Developed	Areas characterized by high percentage (approximately 30% or greater) of constructed material (e.g. asphalt, concrete, buildings, etc.).
Herbaceous Upland	Upland areas characterized by natural or semi-natural herbaceous vegetation; herbaceous vegetation accounts for 75-100 percent of the cover.
Herbaceous Planted/Cultivated	Areas characterized by herbaceous vegetation that has been planted or is intensively managed for the production of food, feed, or fiber; or is maintained in developed settings for specific purposes. Herbaceous vegetation accounts for 75-100 percent of the cover.
Shrubland	Areas characterized by natural or semi-natural woody vegetations with aerial stems, generally less than 6 meters tall with individuals or clumps not touching to interlocking. Both evergreen and deciduous species of true shrubs, young trees, and trees or shrubs that are small or stunted because of environmental conditions.
Vegetated/ Natural Forest Upland	Areas characterized by tree cover (natural or semi-natural woody vegetation, generally greater than 6 meters tall); Tree canopy accounts for 25 to 100 percent of the cover.
Wetlands	Areas where the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water.

Source: National Land Cover Dataset (USGS, 1992)

Map 11

Elbridge Township
Land Cover circa 1992



Map created in June 22, 2010 by:
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Source:
National Land Cover Dataset (USGS, 1992)

Note:
This map is intended for general planning
purposes only.

Chapter 7: Development Strategy

One must obtain a thorough understanding of a community in order to establish an appropriate development strategy for its future. The previous chapters of this document describe the township's history, infrastructure, demographics, and physical geography. However, one critical component to the analysis of Elbridge Township has yet to be addressed: public opinion. It is described in the "Township Visions" section below. The information presented therein is then synthesized with the information from previous chapters of this document to form the final section of this chapter, "Goals and Objectives."

Township Visions

In order to develop an effective master plan, the needs and desires of the citizens must be carefully considered. To help develop the visions and goals included in this chapter, the following efforts were made to seek public input from township residents.

A special public meeting was held at the township hall on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 in order to gather input from interested citizens regarding land use decisions in the Elbridge Township Master Plan and the future direction of the township. Township officials published a notice of this meeting in the March 18, 2010 edition of the Oceana Herald-Journal.

During the meeting, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis exercise was conducted by staff from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC). Attendees of the meeting were asked to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing Elbridge Township. These responses were recorded and combined into the "Elbridge Township SWOT Analysis Report" which has been included in Appendix C of this plan.

A **SWOT Analysis** is a highly effective method of identifying **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** (existing conditions) as well as **Opportunities** and **Threats** (future conditions). This kind of exercise assists in the process of identifying and focusing on important issues within a community.

The SWOT activity revealed a number of issues facing the township and produced many alternative solutions to address those issues. Interestingly, many of the identified "opportunities" were also listed as "threats." For example, it was noted that installation of wind turbines offers the potential for increased tax and local revenue, however if mismanaged or misdeveloped, turbines may harm the township in the future. Input such as this provided valuable Elbridge Township perspectives, and strongly influenced the Goals and Objectives found in the following section.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives are intended to describe a desirable end state or condition of the township within the next 20 to 25 years. They are intentionally general but are all attainable through a proactive and collaborative community effort. The objectives tend to be more specific and may be viewed as milestones used in the process to achieve the larger goal. The goals and objectives were not listed in a

significant order, and have been organized under the following four subject areas: Land Use and Development; Infrastructure; Local Economy; and Community Character.

Land Use and Development

GOAL: Strive for a healthy balance between future development and maintaining the rural character of Elbridge Township.

- Continue to support residential and agriculture as the main land uses within the township.
- Consider the quality of the land in the township when making future land use decisions.
- Maintain straightforward and concise zoning established by the township.
- Strive to minimize governmental regulations in Elbridge Township.
- Minimize the potential for overdevelopment within the township.

Infrastructure

GOAL: Continue to work for and offer quality infrastructure for area residents within Elbridge Township.

- Sustain the good quality of roads within the township through local efforts as well as fostering a strong working relationship with the Oceana County Road Commission.
- Work with local providers to encourage the availability of high speed internet access to township residents.
- Remain cautious and proactive towards the potential development of wind turbines within Elbridge Township.

Local Economy

GOAL: Strive to maintain the rural character of the local economy while promoting and supporting the welfare of existing and future local businesses.

- Continue to support agriculture as the leading industry in Elbridge Township while promoting the potential future growth of the agriculture industry.
- Remain proactive in the development of small retail and cottage industries (home-based businesses) while staying cautious of the potential impacts of such development.
- Maintain a strong relationship with the Oceana County Economic Development Corporation regarding future development throughout Oceana County.

Community Character

GOAL: Preserve the rural community character of Elbridge Township in order to maintain the high quality of life enjoyed by residents.

- Utilize the current Elbridge Township Hall facility for the benefit and betterment of the community.
- Continue to host local fire fighter training and maintain a strong relationship with area fire departments for the safety and protection of area residents.
- Promote and preserve the high quality of the environment including natural vegetation, groundwater, air and land/soil found in Elbridge Township.
- Work with local health providers to improve accessibility to emergency care for township residents.

Chapter 8: Implementation

Future Land Use

A future land use map requires a synthesis of all the information included in a master plan and results in a map that generally depicts the various types of recommended land uses and their locations in the community. The map is accompanied by text explaining the “districts” or “categories” used on the map. These “categories” describe the character of the land use as well as their relation, if any, to the zoning districts dictated by the Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance.

A master plan and a zoning ordinance are separate documents, yet are closely related and often mistaken for one-another. Generally speaking, the master plan and future land use map are intended to reflect the future ambitions of the community, while a zoning ordinance provides the means to arrive at that point. The future land use map is intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions over a longer period of time, while the zoning map is a mechanism for shaping immediate development decisions.

A zoning ordinance is the legal arm of a master plan. It is the most frequently used and effective regulatory tool to implement a master plan, as it regulates land use. The primary land use regulation tool is a community’s ability to alter and adjust regulations spelled out in the zoning ordinance. The master plan and future land use map can be utilized to guide and encourage what and where zoning changes will occur. For example, rezoning requests are often required to be consistent with the master plan’s designations, which are consistent with the community’s desires for the future.

The word “district” is often used in both kinds of documents; however, the term must be used carefully. On one hand, using similar terms for the various land use designations is one way to demonstrate the relationship between the two documents, and it helps to avoid confusion and translation difficulties. On the other hand, it is imperative to acknowledge that future land use map and a zoning map districts are not necessarily equal. For example, the use of a term such as “cluster housing” in a future land use map does not necessarily translate into specific numbers in terms of lot sizes and other elements of zoning. Zoning districts should be specific and precise for legal reasons, while future land use districts should remain general to allow for future flexibility and interpretation.

With assistance from a special Elbridge Township Planning Commission meeting, three general future land use categories have been identified for the township. These districts were chosen as a result of the analysis of current land uses and ownership, physical and environmental suitability, and compatibility with goals and objectives identified in the plan. These land uses include:

- Agricultural Residential
- Commercial
- Light Industrial

Future Land Use Category Descriptions

Agricultural Residential

The Agricultural Residential category is intended to preserve the rural character of the community. The preservation of natural corridors, agriculture, and environmentally sensitive areas shall be encouraged. Permissible land uses shall consist of agricultural activities, single family housing on large lots, and undeveloped land. Housing sites should be restricted to locations with soils suitable to on-site septic systems.

This land use category corresponds with the “Residential” and “Agricultural Residential” zoning districts in the Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance. It is the most common land use on the future land use map.

Commercial

The Commercial category is intended to allow for retail, office, and/or service establishments to serve local and regional markets. Any developments shall be compatible and harmonious with adjacent surroundings. The preservation of environmentally sensitive areas and natural corridors should be encouraged.

The Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance does not contain a zoning district that directly corresponds with the Commercial land use district. Therefore, it is not possible to relate the Commercial land use district with a counterpart in the Zoning Ordinance. It is important to note that Elbridge Township has no intentions of promoting or encouraging commercial development within the township. However, township officials recognize that small commercial developments may happen in the future and wish to remain proactive in the placement of potential commercial development. Therefore, officials designated a general area that would be best suited to handle minimal commercial development, if it were to occur. This area is located at the corner of 144th Avenue and Tyler Avenue, which is the site of a former gas station.

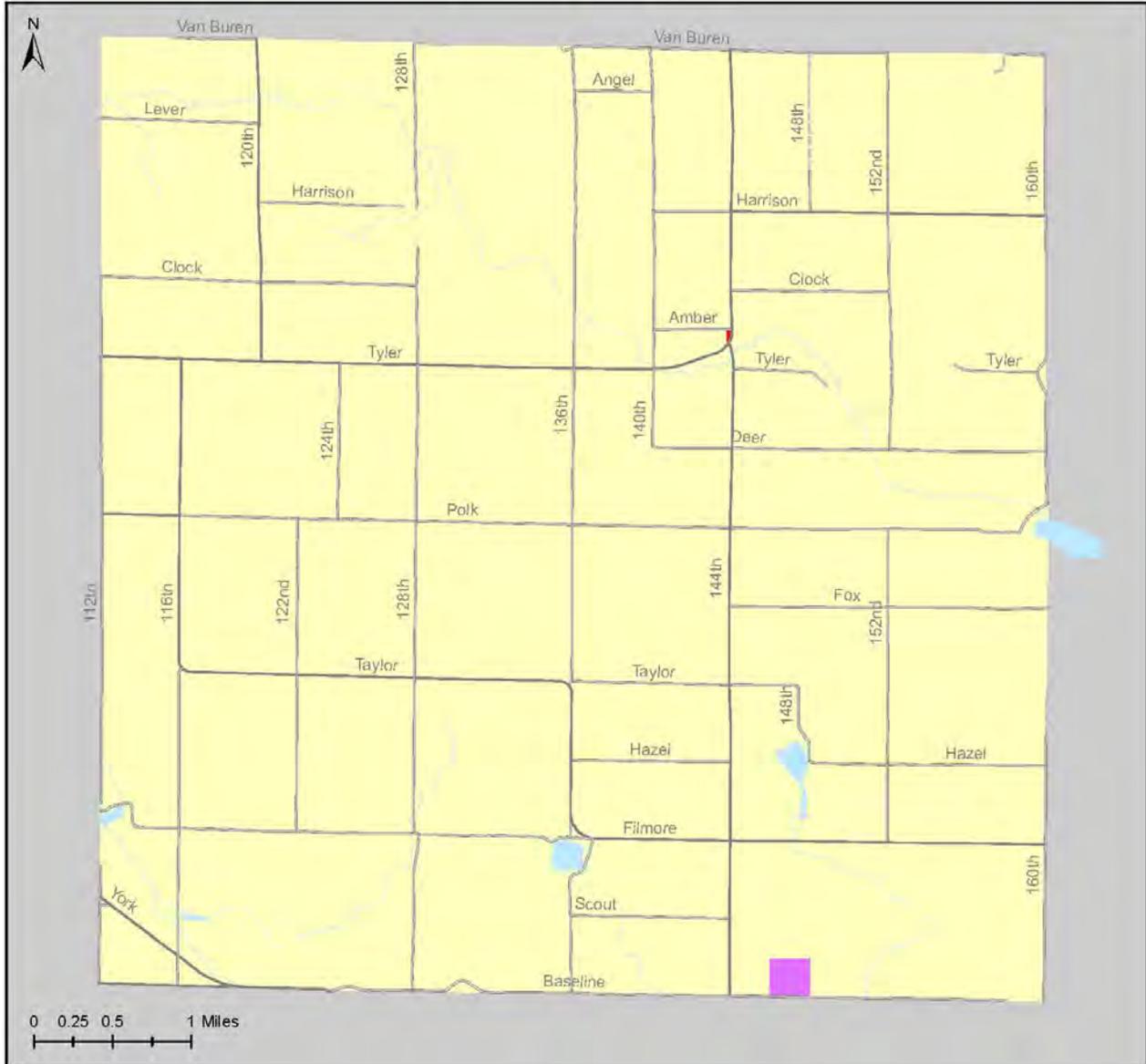
Light Industrial

The Light Industrial category provides an area within the township for light industry to be located. Ideal industrial operations in this area would exist without causing nuisance to nearby properties or the general public, and have minimal environmental impact. Research and development businesses should be favored, as the traditional industrial economy wanes and the knowledge economy increases. It is generally recommended that these areas have access to major transportation routes, as well as municipal water and wastewater services.

This land use category is not specifically addressed in the Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance, and has been included on the Future Land Use Map as a precautionary measure. It is important to note that Elbridge Township has no intentions of promoting or encouraging industrial development within the township. However, township officials recognize that small industrial type developments may happen in the future and wish to remain proactive in the placement of potential industrial development. Therefore, officials designated a general area that would be best suited to handle minimal industrial development, if it were to occur. This designated area is township-owned property located along Baseline Road in the southeast corner of the township.

Map 12

Elbridge Township Future Land Use



- Agricultural Residential
- Commercial
- Light Industrial

Dates Approved:
 Elbridge Township Planning Commission - March 29, 2011
 Elbridge Township Board - April 12, 2011

Prepared by WMSRDC.
WMSRDC
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Data Sources:
 Michigan Geographic Framework: Oceana County (Version 9b),
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information

Note:
 This map is intended for general planning purposes only.

Planning Implementation Tools & Techniques

The ultimate goal of planning, of course, is implementation. Implementing the ideas generated through the planning process is the culmination of the analysis, goal setting, and interaction activities, which took place during the creation of this Master Plan. This portion of the Plan is designed to guide the community in taking the actions necessary to achieve its goals and objectives.

The Plan is intended to be a working document that provides township decision makers with information on the goals desired and communicated by the community. The Plan should be consulted whenever policy issues arise, especially those relating to land use. Additionally, when the visions of the township change or advance, the Plan should be updated accordingly.

Successful implementation requires a dedicated effort on the part of the Elbridge Township Planning Commission, Township Board, and the community at large. It is essential that each member of the Planning Commission and Township Board understands the Plan, knows his/her own role as it relates to the Plan, and promotes implementation of the Plan.

The goals and objectives of the Elbridge Township Master Plan can be implemented through the use of the following described tools and techniques that are available to the township. The list of tools and techniques is certainly not exhaustive, and some items on it are more applicable to the township than others. Many of the tools and techniques can be used for multiple purposes by the township to achieve its goals and objectives, even though they are listed under specific headings.

Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is the primary regulatory tool used to implement master plans. Following the adoption of the Plan, the township should complete an internal inventory and review its priorities. It should then amend the Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance as appropriate. This will ensure that the zoning ordinance will be consistent with the approved Master Plan, and will also help the township defend its land use-related decisions.

Land Division Act

Townships are authorized to regulate and control the subdivision of land within their jurisdictions pursuant to Public Act 591 of 1996, the Land Division Act (formerly known as P.A. 288 of 1967, the Subdivision Control Act). Amended in 1997, this act gave a township with a land division ordinance more control over how land could be divided and lessened state controls. The act governed the division of existing parcels, called “parent parcels,” as identified by the state.

A township can have an important voice in the design and layout of subdivisions and can set uniform standards for streets and roads, utilities, and other improvements with the utilization of a local land division control ordinance. The land division ordinance can reference all other township ordinances and require conformance with them. Conformance with the zoning ordinance and the insertion of land division design standards while updating the ordinance offers control over density.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

The planned unit development concept is utilized by many communities to encourage innovative and imaginative project design. As a development type, it permits flexibility in site design and usage. It allows buildings to be clustered by mixing types, or by combining housing with ancillary uses such as neighborhood shopping. It allows for better design and arrangement of open space and the retention of such natural features as forests, slope, and floodplains. As a regulatory tool, it allows variation in many of the traditional controls related to density, setback, use and open space.

Cluster Development

Cluster development is a residential site design and zoning technique used to protect natural, cultural, or recreational features of the landscape while allowing new development. The basic idea is to cluster new development on one portion of a property, while leaving a large tract of environmentally sensitive or scenic land intact on the remainder of the parcel. If used carefully, this technique can significantly lower the impact on the natural landscape and minimize the costs of providing public services to new homes since they are located in proximity to each other.

While similar to PUD development, Cluster development should not be confused with planned unit development (PUD). Cluster development places a greater emphasis on protecting open space and typically applies only to residential units. PUDs, on the other hand, focus on infrastructure reduction and often allow compatible commercial development (e.g., convenience stores, office, etc.) to be included in the overall development.

Open Space Preservation

A variation on the PUD theme is an Open Space Preservation district. In this type of district, or in a residential district with this feature, developers are encouraged to set aside open space in perpetuity in exchange for flexibility on the part of the township with respect to zoning requirements. Open space conservation is important because open space needs to be planned and provided for prior to complete development occurring.

Key characteristics of an Open Space Preservation District/Overlay, when combined with elements of the PUD concept or Cluster concept, include:

- Flexibility in the design of a development.
- Lot size restrictions in traditional zoning are converted to density limitations where the unit of measurement is the entire project, not the individual lot.
- Allowance for slightly greater density than normal zoning, in most cases, as *an incentive*.
- Buffering/open space in the development is *in exchange* for flexibility on the part of the township, so the alternative (i.e. traditional zoning) must be fairly rigid, more restrictive, and strictly enforced.
- The developer saves money through lower up-front costs for infrastructure, and tends to make more profit through higher initial sales price and greater sales volume.

Open Space Zoning allows the developer to have some additional units to market, in exchange for the promise to set aside a portion of the development as open space in perpetuity.

Growth Management

“Growth management refers to the systematic attempt by a community to guide the type, rate, location, timing, public cost of, and often the quality and character of land re-development” (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Coastal Management Program). Growth management must be, first and foremost, well integrated into the planning and zoning process. As an overview, there are several possible avenues to explore when considering a growth management strategy. Among them are:

Purchase of Development Rights. In this scenario, the township directly remunerates the land owner in return for exclusive rights to develop the property as the township sees fit or to preserve it. The rights may also be sold to yet another property owner who can (or will) develop the land as the township wishes. The land owner participates voluntarily, still owns the land, and can use or sell the land for specified purposes, such as farming or hunting.

Once a Purchase of Development Rights agreement is made, a permanent deed restriction is placed on the property which limits the type of development that may take place on the land. A legally binding guarantee is thus achieved to ensure that the parcel will remain as it is or be developed only as wished. The deed restriction can also be referred to as a conservation easement.

Transfer of Development Rights. Although not authorized by statute for use between jurisdictions in Michigan, this technique has been used successfully elsewhere. It is a variation on the above, except a trade is made between two or more parcels. It essentially is a method for protecting land by transferring the “right to develop” from one area (sending) and giving it to another area (receiving). A consensus must be reached on where the public wishes to preserve low density or open space and where it will allow for increases in development densities.

“Receiving” areas generally have streets, public water and sewer, and other improvements or the improvements are such that they can be extended a short distance without extensive cost. The costs of purchasing the easements are recovered from the developers who receive building “bonuses” according to the values agreed upon. As with Purchase of Development Rights, the owner of the preserved site participates voluntarily and retains existing use rights while receiving compensation for the development value of the land.

Concurrency. This is a situation in which the township ties development (i.e. density and type) to established bench marks regarding public service (i.e. water, sewer, roadway capacity, police, fire, educational and others) to control development. No development can occur in a given area until the benchmarks are met, either by the township or the developer. This method also requires a carefully laid out capital improvements plan to be fully effective.

Development Agreements. This would operate much like a contract/site plan review process combined. It would cover a fixed period in time, and would identify specific

elements of development covered. It would offer assurances for both sides that planning could take place and there would be no changing of the rules in the middle of the game.

Regional Impact Coordination. In a larger sense, this concept amounts to a specific agreement to involve other jurisdictions in any development which has a “regional impact”. One way to implement such coordination is through the establishment of a joint planning commission (JPC), as enabled by the State of Michigan’s Joint Municipal Planning Act PA 226 of 2003.

The State of Michigan has taken another step by making it mandatory that amendments to a community’s master plan be submitted, for review and comment, to all bordering jurisdictions, the acting regional planning commission, and ultimately the County. While presently these comments have no regulatory implications, this legislation is the first step in working towards a collaborative effort amongst bordering municipalities encouraging similar land uses on adjacent parcels.

Capital Improvements Program

A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a fiscal plan outlining the means for the township to finance selected projects requiring capital, either on a short-term or long-range basis. The CIP thus sets priorities for future development. Projects typically included are public facilities such as township halls and parks, land improvements, roads, bridges, acquisitions, utilities, planning projects, etc.

Dedicated Millage

A dedicated millage can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose and, in so doing, can implement recommendations of the Master Plan. For example, a dedicated millage could be used to establish a land acquisition fund, a recreational path fund, or a conservation easement program. All of these would be useful tools for promoting open space preservation.

Although acquisition of land by a governmental unit provides the greatest level of land use control, it is also the most expensive. In addition to acquisition costs, purchase removes property from the tax rolls and decreases property tax revenues.

Land Conservancy

While property owners can voluntarily donate or sell land or easements in the interest of conserving natural resources or natural features, and perhaps qualify for income, estate and property tax benefits, private land trusts can facilitate a resource protection program by use of a variety of land acquisition and conservation techniques.

For instance, The Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) “protects lands that contribute to the distinctive character and quality of life in West Michigan; lands that are important for their values as habitat for native plants and animals, as centers for study and quiet recreation, and as elements of scenic beauty and rural character. LCWM offers positive, non-regulatory solutions to disappearing open space that benefit landowners and local communities.”

LCWM acquires natural land through donation or “bargain sale” purchase of high priority land for the purpose of creating nature preserves that are open to the public. It

also assists with conservation easements and works with developers to construct easements for open space design. Finally, LCWM assists local governments with identifying important natural areas, preserving lands, creating community parks, and writing grant applications for project funding.

Conservation Easements

The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act of 1974 provides for dedication of a conservation easement to a public entity while the Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement Act of 1980 gives a third party, such as a land trust, the right to receive and the resulting responsibility to enforce an easement. Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between landowners and a land conservancy or government agency and are distinct property rights that may be sold or donated separately from other rights.

Conservation easements are effective for preserving sensitive lands, providing public access along rivers or greenways, and allowing property owners to consider land stewardship while they continue to live on their land. They permanently limit development of the property in order to protect the conservation values of the land. The landowner continues to bear all costs and liabilities related to ownership and maintenance of the property.

The relationship between Purchase of Development Rights and conservation easements is close and the terms are often used interchangeably. However, conservation easements can be both sold or donated. When a land owner sells the development rights for less than their full value, it is called a “bargain sale.” Bargain sales and donations can reduce income, inheritance, and property taxes while providing cash for needed purposes when meeting the necessary requirements.

Chapter 9: Recommendations

Elbridge Township contains an abundance of natural resources and is centrally located between regional centers of Big Rapids, Ludington, and Muskegon. These attributes have combined to create a desirable environment to live, farm, and play. This is reflected in the township's increasing population trends and forecasts for future growth.

Protection of the township's valuable natural resources will become paramount to the preservation of its rural character. It will be increasingly important to reference this document when making recommendations regarding development and land use decisions. If utilized properly, this plan will provide a central vision from which township officials can make decisions. Additionally, the township should continually revisit the visions, goals, and objectives identified in this document, and prioritize those of greatest and most timely importance, to ensure the plan's relevance and usefulness.

The township, by adopting the Elbridge Township Master Plan and Future Land Use Map, is preparing itself to manage its growth. Prior to the completion of this master plan, the township had no such document. It is therefore important for the township to review the Elbridge Township Zoning Ordinance, and make appropriate adjustments so that it reflects the goals and objectives contained within this document.

As previously stated, the goal of any plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the suitability and capability of the land for sustaining those uses, according to the ability and desire of the municipality to provide public services throughout the jurisdiction. Careful consideration must be given to the preservation of the township's unique resources as well.

Recognition of impending development pressures associated with future population increases helps to highlight the importance of proactive growth management, preserving natural resources, and maintaining the character of the township. Objectives for growth management include on-going education on growth management techniques, utilization of those techniques, and inclusion of environmental and infrastructure considerations in development decisions. Objectives for preserving natural resources include those that focus on building partnerships; while objectives for promoting existing resources for recreational purposes include the expansion of recreational uses and the adoption of a Community Recreation Plan.

The communities surrounding and including Elbridge Township share many of the same rural characteristics. Consequently, many of the communities' goals and objectives may coincide as well. In some cases, it may be more feasible to achieve these goals and objectives through municipal collaboration, rather than by each community on its own. While only appropriate under certain circumstances, municipal collaboration is a viable option to improve standard of living through the provision of more and/or better quality services. One example already being implemented by Elbridge Township is the provision of fire service. Elbridge Township is able to utilize the capacity of the Walkerville Area Fire & Rescue, rather than invest in a fire department of its own. The potential for future collaborations certainly exists, and could include recreational trail systems, park facilities, or nature preserves.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The changes envisioned in this master plan will occur as a result of cumulative private and public decisions about such things as opening a business, locating a residential development, and installing a public park. The inner-workings of investments by private actors and individual entrepreneurs, as well as development decisions by public and quasi-public agencies, bring about physical changes to an area.

If properly used, this master plan can help advise government about where public development should go and why. It can give potential investors a general sense of where the community would prefer residential and commercial development to be located. In short, the purpose of a master plan is to offer guidance to any and all actors whose decisions affect land. In more particular terms, this plan offers several professional suggestions for achieving commonly held aspirations for the community's future development.

The master plan provides a clear vision for the management of Elbridge Township's future. It describes, through the Future Land Use Map, where various types of future land uses (i.e. development) should be located. It also provides guidance as to the form, characteristics, and appearance that are desired for future development. However, the vision embodied by the master plan is but a step in making those visions a reality.

Beyond this plan awaits the need for a commitment by the township to dedicate the necessary resources for review of the master plan at a minimum of every five years. This will enable the Elbridge Township Planning Commission to track progress of implementation, while taking the pulse of the community to determine whether the goals are still appropriate and if additional goals should be added.

The Elbridge Township Master Plan should be consulted regularly as it is a guide for land use decisions, and should be updated accordingly as the local situation warrants. It is important to note that change is inevitable, and managing that change will be the key to Elbridge Township's success in the management of development and the desired character of the township.



Agriculture in Elbridge Township.

Appendix A

Public Notices and Plan Approvals

This section chronicles efforts of Elbridge Township to invite the public, and neighboring communities, to participate in the planning processes for the Elbridge Township Master Plan. Also included are meeting minutes and resolutions relevant to the development and adoption of this document.

Notice of Intent to Plan – Below is an example of the letter that was mailed to the listed communities on February 16, 2010.

Oceana County Planning Commission
Colfax Township
Crystal Township
Ferry Township
Hart Township
Leavitt Township

Newfield Township
Shelby Township
Weare Township
Consumers Energy
Great Lakes Energy

February 16, 2010

Ms. Jean Pease, Chairperson
Oceana County Planning Commission
3475 S. 154th Avenue
Hesperia, MI 49421

Dear Ms. Pease,

On behalf of the Elbridge Township Board of Trustees, I would like to advise you that Elbridge Township with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission has started the process of developing a Township Master Plan. It is anticipated that this plan will act as the Township's official Master Plan once completed and adopted. We are requesting your cooperation and comment during this process.

A public meeting has been scheduled for 7:30 PM on Tuesday, March 23 at the Elbridge Township Hall located at 2266 East Polk Road. The purpose of the meeting is to gather community input for the Master Plan.

A draft document is expected to be completed by October 2010. At that time, a copy of the draft document will be submitted to you for your review and comment. We look forward to receiving your input regarding the Elbridge Township Master Plan.

If you have any questions regarding the Elbridge Township Master Plan, please contact me at (231) 722-7878 extension 18 or at ekuhn@wmsrde.org. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erin Kuhn
Program Manager

Public Hearing Notice – Published in the Thursday, March 18, 2010 edition of the Oceana Herald-Journal.

NOTICE OF TOWNSHIP MEETING REGARDING
ELBRIDGE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Please be advised that Elbridge Township, with the assistance of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC), will hold a Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 to receive public input for the Elbridge Township Master Plan. The meeting will take place at 7:30 PM at the Elbridge Township Hall located at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, Michigan 49420. The meeting is open to the public, and everyone with an interest in the future direction of Elbridge Township is encouraged to attend the meeting. Citizen participation in this process is essential.

Written comments may also be submitted by March 22, 2010 to the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, P.O. Box 387, Muskegon, Michigan 49443 or via electronic mail at wmsrdc@wmsrdc.org. If there are any questions, please contact Ms. Erin Kuhn, Program Manager, at (231) 722-7878, extension 18 or at ekuhn@wmsrdc.org.

Border Review – Below is an example of the letter that was sent on November 22, 2010 to the same entities that were sent a Notice of Intent to Plan.

November 22, 2010

Ms. Jean Pease, Chairperson
Oceana County Planning Commission
3475 S. 154th Avenue
Hesperia, MI 49421

Dear Ms. Pease,

On behalf of the Elbridge Township Planning Commission, I would like to advise you that Elbridge Township, with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, has completed a draft of the Elbridge Township Master Plan. It is anticipated that this plan will act as the Township's official Master Plan once adopted.

At the November 9, 2010 Elbridge Township Regular Board Meeting, the Township Board approved the draft Plan for the state mandated Bordering Township and County 63-day Review Period. Enclosed is a CD copy of the draft Elbridge Township Master Plan for your review and comment.

Please forward any and all written comments to the Elbridge Township Hall located at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, MI 49420 by January 28, 2011.

A public hearing to receive public comment is currently scheduled for February 2, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at the Elbridge Township Hall. An additional notice of the public hearing will be published in the local newspaper closer to the date of the public hearing.

If you have any questions regarding the draft Elbridge Township Master Plan, please contact me at (231) 722-7878 extension 18 or at ekuhn@wmsrdc.org. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erin Kuhn
Program Manager

Public Notice – Published in the December 16, 2010 and January 13, 2011 editions of the Oceana Herald-Journal.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC VIEWING REGARDING
THE ELBRIDGE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

Please be advised that Elbridge Township with the assistance of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) will hold a public viewing period between Monday, January 3, 2011 and Friday, January 28, 2011 to review the draft Elbridge Township Master Plan. This viewing is open to the public and anyone with an interest in the Elbridge Township Master Plan is encouraged to attend and review the document. The viewing will take place by appointment at the Elbridge Township Hall located at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, MI 49420. To schedule an appointment, call 231-873-3753 or 231-873-7164.

Following the viewing period, a Public Meeting will be held to receive comments on the Elbridge Township Master Plan. The Public Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 2, 2011 at the Elbridge Township Hall, at 7:30 PM.

Written comments may also be submitted by Monday, January 31, 2011 to the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, 316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340, P.O. Box 387, Muskegon, Michigan 49443 or via electronic mail at ekuhn@wmsrdc.org. If there are any questions, please contact Ms. Erin Kuhn, Program Manager, WMSRDC, (231) 722-7878 (extension 18).

Public Notice – The public hearing scheduled for February 2, 2011 was cancelled due to winter weather and rescheduled for March 29, 2011. Notice for the rescheduled hearing was published in the March 7, 2011 edition of the Oceana Herald-Journal.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING
THE ELBRIDGE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

Please be advised that Elbridge Township with the assistance of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) will hold a Public Hearing to receive comments on the Elbridge Township Master Plan. The Public Hearing is scheduled for 7:30 PM on Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at the Elbridge Township Hall located at 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, MI 49420.

Planning Commission Approval – The Elbridge Township Master Plan was approved and passed to the Township Board, by roll call vote, on March 29, 2011. Below are the resolution and minutes from that meeting.

**TOWNSHIP OF ELBRIDGE
COUNTY OF OCEANA, MICHIGAN
RESOLUTION NO. PC 03-2011**

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed new Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on April 12, 2011, the ELBRIDGE Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 29, 2011 to consider public comment on the proposed new Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed new Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning commission finds that proposed new Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

THEREFORE BE IT THEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Adoption of 2011 Master Plan.** The Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the proposed 2011 Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.
2. **Distribution to Township Board and Notice Group.** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 the Township Board has not asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed master Plan and therefore the approval granted herein is the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843 and therefore the plan is effective as of **MARCH 29, 2011**. In addition, the Planning Commission approved distribution of the adopted amendments to the Township board and Notice Group.
3. **Findings of Fact.** The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, input received from the Township Board and public hearing, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the new Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in ELBRIDGE Township.
4. **Effective Date.** The Master Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution.

The foregoing resolution offered by Planning Commissioner **ERIC HERRYGERS**

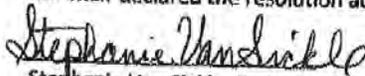
Second offered by Planning Commissioner **CHRIS PAYNE**

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye". **RICK HELMER, ERIC HERRYGERS, CHRIS PAYNE, HAROLD TATE AND BRUCE VARTIAN.**

ABSENT: **BILL EVANS AND MIKE SCHILLER**

The Chair declared the resolution adopted on March 29, 2011


Stephanie Van Sickle, Secretary

Elbridge Township Planning Commission
Regular Meeting / Public Hearing
March 29, 2011

UNOFFICIAL

Meeting called to order by Bruce Vartian at 7:35 p.m. at the Elbridge Township Hall.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all

Roll Call: Bruce Vartian, here; Rick Helmer, here; Harold Tate, here; Eric Herrygers, here; and Chris Payne, here. Mike Schiller and Bill Evans were absent
There were 15 others present.

OLD BUSINESS:

At 7:45 p.m., Bruce Vartian announced the Opening of the Public Hearing regarding the Elbridge Township Master Plan, any questions. Jeff Buter, Dcer Road and Jamie Cutter, 140th Ave, each asked questions.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion on when to hold the next planning commission meeting. The next Planning Commission meeting will be Tuesday, June 7, 2011 at 7:30 pm.

ACTIONS:

Motion by Eric Herrygers to close the public hearing in regards to the Master Plan
Supported by Rick Helmer All Ayes Motion Carried

Motion by Eric Herrygers to present the Master Plan to the Township Board members at their next meeting for approval or rejection
Supported by Chris Payne
Roll Call Vote: Helmer, yes; Herrygers, yes; Payne, yes; Tate, yes; and Vartian, yes.
Motion Carried

Motion by Rick Helmer to adjourn the meeting,
Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully,

Minutes approved June 7, 2011
As presented or corrected

Stephanie Van Sickle
Recording Secretary

Bruce Vartian, Planning Chair

Elbridge Township Board Adoption – The Elbridge Township Master Plan was adopted, by resolution, on April 12, 2010. Below are the minutes from that meeting as well as the resolution of adoption.

**TOWNSHIP OF ELBRIDGE
COUNTY OF OCEANA, MICHIGAN
RESOLUTION NO. 04-2011**

TOWNSHIP BOARD RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed new Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on **APRIL 12, 2011**, the **ELBRIDGE** Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning commission held a public hearing on **MARCH 29, 2011** to consider public comment on the proposed new Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed new Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the MPEA authorizes the Township Board to assert by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Adoption of 2011 Master Plan.** The Township board hereby approves the adopts the proposed 2011 Master Plan, including all the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 the township Board has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore the approval granted herein is the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843 and therefore the plan is effective on **TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2011**.
2. **Distribution to Notice Group.** The Township Board approves distribution of the adopted plan to the Notice Group.
3. **Findings of Fact.** The township board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, input from the Planning Commission and public hearing, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the new Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in Elbridge Township.
4. **Effective Date.** The Master Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution.

The foregoing resolution offered by Board Member **ERIC HERRYGERS**

Second offered by Board Member **STEPHANIE VAN SICKLE**

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye": **ERIC HERRYGERS, ROBERT VAN AGTMAEL, RENEE VANDERLAAN, STEPHANIE VAN SICKLE, AND WALTER WHEELER**

"Nay": _____

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted **ON APRIL 12, 2011**



Stephanie Van Sickle, Clerk

Appendix B

Soil Associations

Grattan-Covert-Granby Association – *Nearly level to rolling, excessively drained, moderately well drained, and poorly drained, sandy soils on lake plains and outwash plains*

Grattan soils are on broad plains, Knolls, foot slopes, and back slopes. Covert soils are on broad plains and low knolls. Granby soils are in depressions.

Most area of this association are used as woodland. An equipment limitation, seedling mortality, and the hazard of windthrow are the main concerns in managing woodland. The soils are poorly suited to cropland because of soil blowing, seasonal droughtiness, and seasonal wetness.

Benona-Spinks-Grattan Association – *Nearly level to very steep, excessively drained and well drained, sandy soils on ground moraines, end moraines, lake plains, and outwash plains*

Benona soils are on broad plains, knolls, back slopes, shoulder slopes, and hillsides. Spinks soils are on broad plains, knolls, back slopes, and shoulder slopes. Grattan soils are on broad plains, back slopes, shoulder slopes, and ridge tops.

In most areas this association is fairly well suited to cropland. Soil blowing, seasonal droughtiness, a low content of organic matter, and a limited available water capacity are the major management concerns. Water erosion also is a management concern in the gently rolling and rolling areas. If these soils are used as woodland, and equipment limitation and seedling mortality are the major management concerns. The erosion hazard also is a management concern in the rolling to very steep areas.

Spinks-Remus-Fern Association – *Nearly level to very steep, well drained, loamy and sandy soils on ground moraines, end moraines, and outwash plains*

Spinks soils are on broad plains, knolls, back slopes, and shoulder slopes. Remus soils are on broad plains, knolls, and back slopes. Fern soils are on broad plains and low knolls.

In most areas this association is fairly well suited to cropland. Soil blowing, seasonal droughtiness, a low content of organic matter, and a limited available water capacity are the major management concerns. Water erosion and the slope are also management concerns in the gently rolling to hilly areas. If these soils are used as woodland, an equipment limitation and seedling mortality are the major management concerns. The erosion hazard also is a management concern in the hilly and steep areas.

Houghton-Kerston-Carlisle Association – *Nearly level, poorly drained, mucky soils on flood plains, ground moraines, outwash plains, and lake plains*

Houghton soils are in depressions on ground moraines, lake plains, and outwash plains. Kerston soils are in depressions on flood plains. Carlisle soils are in depressions on flood plains, ground moraines, and outwash plains.

Most areas of this association are wooded. An equipment limitation, seedling mortality, and the hazard of windthrow are the major management concerns.

Appendix C

SWOT Analysis Report

ELBRIDGE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN SWOT ANALYSIS REPORT

Purpose of the SWOT Analysis:

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is a highly effective way of identifying Strengths and Weaknesses (existing conditions) and also your Opportunities and Threats (possible future conditions). Carrying out this type of analysis will help an entity to focus on the areas where it is strong and where the greatest opportunities lie.

To identify various areas in each of these categories, often a series of questions ought to be answered. The following questions were examined:

Strengths:

- What are this project's advantages?
- What are Elbridge's best attributes?
- How do others' view the Elbridge area and its existing condition?

Weaknesses:

- What are areas for improvement for the Elbridge area?
- What types of things/attitudes should be avoided?

Opportunities:

- In which areas are the good opportunities facing this project?
- What are the interesting trends that you are aware of?

Threats:

- What obstacles does this project face?
- Down the road, who or what will be a force for detriment?

When this analysis is done in a realistic and candid way, it can be very informative – both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting various issues into proper perspective.

The Elbridge Township Master Plan SWOT Analysis:

Elbridge Township, Oceana County, Michigan held a public meeting on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 at 7:30 PM at the township hall in order to gather input from citizens and township leaders regarding the development of the Elbridge Township Master Plan and the future direction of the township. During the meeting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis exercise was conducted by staff from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. Attendees of the meeting were asked to list Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing Elbridge Township. Listed below are responses from the SWOT Analysis.

SWOT Results:

STRENGTHS

- agriculture
- quality land
- people
- scenery
- healthy people
- community
- zoning
- water/air quality
- rural
- community center/ township facility
- stability
- good roads (comparatively)

WEAKNESSES

- roads for future development
- road maintenance
- high speed internet
- misconceptions/ communication
- lack of economic development (cottage industries)
- distance from emergent care

OPPORTUNITIES

- Coffee shop
- Small retail
- Growth of agriculture
- Wind turbines – taxes, local revenues
- Local fire dept
- High speed internet
- Scenic areas, building-suitable
- Land divisions – increase tax base

THREATS

- land divisions – influx of lower incomes
- confined animal feeding operations
- opposition for development
- resistance to wind turbines
- overdevelopment
- mis-development/mismanagement of turbines
- government regulations
- constitutional convention – elimination of townships

Appendix D Comments



Oceana County
PLANNING COMMISSION
County Building
P.O. Box 14
Hart, Michigan 49420



COPY

Elbridge Township Hall
Attn: Township Planners
2266 East Polk Rd.
Hart, MI 49420

COPY

To Whom it may Concern:

Creating an Agriculture/Residential district is sort of an oxymoron, usually resulting in just another layer of constraint to the farmers.

There should be an Agricultural preservation district and the Residential districts (a minimum of low, medium and high density), separate and distinct from each other. The low density district is usually used as the buffer between agriculture/open space and residential.

Division of farmland and land nearby for non-farm residential use has a huge impact on the long term viability of farming by increasing the number of non-farm residents who object to the noise, dust, odor, fertilizers and pesticides used on the farm and to the transport of farm equipment on local roads.

Large parcels of agricultural land are being fragmented by residential development at an alarming rate. This development demands a high level of public services that then requires increased taxes. It fosters local government policies that tax farm land at the same level as developed land although it uses fewer services.

Land Splits – More development does not produce cost effective tax revenue.

In Residential development an average of \$1.45 is spent for every \$1.00 of tax revenue generated. Whereas in farm and open land an average of \$.36 is spent for every \$1.00 of tax revenue generated.

Sincerely,

Jean Pease, Chairperson
Oceana County Planning Comm.

sent Nov 30, 2010



Oceana County
 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
 County Building
 P.O. Box 31
 Hart, Michigan 49420



RECEIVED
 DEC 21 2010
 WMSRDC
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"This institution is an equal opportunity provider"

December 16, 2010

Elbridge Township Planning Commission
 Elbridge Township Hall
 2266 East Polk Road
 Hart, MI 49420

RE: Proposed Elbridge Township Master Plan

Dear Township Planners:

Per Chairperson Pease's instructions during the Oceana County Planning Commission's regular meeting of December 2, 2010, I emailed the draft of the Elbridge Township Master Plan to all the members and requested that they submit their individual comments regarding the Plan to you no later than January 28, 2011.

It is my understanding that Ms. Pease submitted a letter directly to Elbridge Township regarding her personal opinion but I have also enclosed a copy for your files.

To date, I received the following comments from Oceana County Planning Commissioner Lance Malburg regarding the Elbridge Township Master Plan:

1. The document is wordy and says next to nothing other than "keep it all agricultural"
2. Wait to adopt until the 2010 census data is available. The draft includes 2000 census information
3. It appears that Elbridge Township does not want any industry. If that is the case, why not just "say it".

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sue Ann Johnson
 Oceana County
 Administrator/Fiscal Officer

cc: Oceana County Planning Commission
 Ms. Erin Kuhn, Program Manager, WMSRDC
 File

Sue Johnson

From: Lance Malburg [lancem@directv.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2010 11:23 AM
To: Sue Johnson
Subject: Re: Elbridge Township Master Plan - DRAFT

Sue,
This is really wordy but really says next to nothing other than keep it all agricultural.
A couple of comments:

1. Since we are almost in 2011, and by the time this gets finalized, why not wait & include 2010 census data? the 2000 stuff quoted is already 10 years old.
2. I did not know that a township property could be targeted as the only industrial site? Kind of sounds like they don't want any industrial at all. If this the case, why not just say it?

Lance

On Thu, Dec 2, 2010 at 4:13 PM, Sue Johnson <sjohnson@oceana.mi.us> wrote:

Attached is the draft of the Elbridge Township Master Plan. Please review and submit your comments to the Elbridge Township Hall, 2266 East Polk Road, Hart, Michigan 49420 no later than January 28, 2011 as a public hearing of the document is scheduled for February 2, 2011.

If you have any questions regarding the Plan, please feel free to contact Ms. Erin Kuhn, Program Manager, WMSRDC, at ekuhn@wmsrdc.org.

Thank you.



Sue Ann Johnson
Oceana County
Administrator/Fiscal Officer



SUE ANN JOHNSON
OCEANA COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR/FISCAL OFFICER

P.O. Box 31, Hart, MI 49420
Phone (231) 873-4835
Fax (231) 873-5914

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider"

December 21, 2010

Elbridge Township Planning Commission
Elbridge Township Hall
2266 East Polk Road
Hart, MI 49420

RE: Proposed Elbridge Township Master
Plan

Dear Township Planners:

Per Chairperson Pease's instructions during the Oceana County Planning Commission's regular meeting of December 2, 2010, I emailed the draft of the Elbridge Township Master Plan to all the members and requested that they submit their individual comments regarding the Plan to you no later than January 28, 2011. Comments from Chairperson Pease and Planning Commissioner Malburg have already been sent to you.

I have also received the following comments from Planning Commissioner Dave Roseman. He stated that this is an "elegant document" and he was impressed by the wide variety of data that was nicely presented in the maps and charts. While some of it may be "boller plate", it sets a high standard for other master plans.

The fact that agricultural and residential land uses are discussed in the same category, even though zoned separately, reflects the rural nature of the township. The recommendations reflect an interest in maintaining the present character of the area which is assumed represents the wishes of the majority of residents.

Although Commissioner Roseman did not have any substantial suggestions, he felt that the Elbridge Township Master Plan should be a very useful document.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sue Ann Johnson
Oceana County
Administrator/Fiscal Officer

cc: Oceana County Planning Commission
Ms. Erin Kuhn, Program Manager, WMSRDC
File

Sue Johnson

From: David Roseman, MD [dlr@eolas.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 21, 2010 1:17 PM
To: Sue Johnson
Subject: Elbridge Township Master Plan draft

Sue

Following are some thoughts about the Elbridge Township Master Plan draft:

This is an elegant document. I was especially impressed by the use of a wide variety of data, which are very nicely presented in the maps and charts. I am sure that some of this is "boiler plate," but it sets a high standard for other master plans.

The fact that agricultural and residential land uses are discussed in the same category, even though zoned separately, reflects the rural nature of the township. The recommendations reflect an interest in maintaining the present character of the area. I assume that this is the wish of the majority of its residents.

This should be a very useful document. I don't have any substantial suggestions.

One very trivial typo caught my eye. In Appendix B, page a2 under "**Grattan-Covert-Granby Association.**" "Most area of this association are used a woodland." should probably be "Most area of this association are used as woodland."

Thanks

Dave

316 Morris Avenue - Suite 340 - PO Box 387 - Muskegon, MI 49443-0387

Telephone: 231/722-7878 - Fax: 231/722-9362

www.wmsrdc.org - wmsrdc@wmsrdc.org