

## LAND USE PLAN

**T**he Land Use Plan chapter of the Master Plan provides recommendations for the future use of land within Bridgewater Township. The formulation of the Land Use Plan was based on factors such as regional influences, land use patterns, natural features, community demographics and need for various land uses. Its purpose is to link the community's goals and objectives developed from the visioning process to specific land use recommendations.

### IDENTIFYING NEEDS

As noted above, one factor that should be considered when developing future land use recommendations is anticipated demand or market potential. Is there a demonstrated need for a specific land use in the Township? A land

*A balanced supply of nonresidential land uses that reflects community character is critical to a municipality.*

use plan should not change to precisely replicate changing market conditions. Rather, it should generally provide for land uses that are reasonably expected to serve the future population, recognizing the overall context of regional influences, community character, natural features, and other factors. The influence of market forces is especially important for land uses such as commercial, office and industrial development. A balanced supply of these uses – provided in a manner that reflects community

character - is critical to a municipality for a number of reasons. If there are fewer acres available than the market can support, a community could lose potential tax base, employment opportunities and decrease the quality of life for residents who need the goods and services that such uses provide. If there is an over abundance of commercial, office or industrial land, marginal businesses may develop and/or building vacancy rates may increase creating the potential for blight. This could also lead to undue competition with traditional city and village centers, which could ultimately encourage sprawl and harm historic commercial business districts. An analysis of the Township's nonresidential land use market potential was conducted in order

to determine how much commercial, office and industrial land Bridgewater will be able to support in the future (see Appendix).

### **Commercial Development**

Results of the commercial market potential analysis indicate that the future population of Bridgewater Township and the surrounding area would not be sufficient to support either community or regional comparison shopping. Neighborhood convenience shopping, however, could be viable in the Township if limited in scale and clustered in appropriate areas.

According to the Market Potential analysis, the estimated 2000 per capita income of Bridgewater residents was \$34,000. Based on this income level, Bridgewater's total convenience retail expenditures (expected to be spent within the community) were projected to be \$8,150,000 in 2010. This

projected amount of retail spending indicates that the community could support approximately 25,000 square feet of convenience retail space. In order to provide this amount of retail space, a minimum of 3 acres of land would be needed for such uses. The total amount of land planned for retail uses, however, should be greater than this minimum because of limitations on total buildable area due to wetlands, steep slopes, etc., as well as to accommodate additional business generated by limited regional influences.

***Bridgewater  
Township's  
future demand  
for  
nonresidential  
development  
will be limited  
due to low  
population  
densities.***

### **Industrial Development**

The market potential analysis details two common methods of forecasting future industrial needs for a community. The preferred method, which is based on the population of an area, estimates that Bridgewater's projected 2020 population of 2,427 could support approximately 29 acres of industrial land. Due to Bridgewater's rural character, separation from interstate highways and other infrastructure, and limited amount of existing industrial use, the population-based method is more appropriate for the Township than land percentage methodologies.

### **Office Development**

Using information regarding the employment of Bridgewater residents, the market potential analysis estimates a modest amount of office development could be supported, even if residents working in office settings outside the Township were to relocate within Bridgewater. It is unlikely, however, to expect large multi-tenant office development to occur in Bridgewater's rural setting. Small professional office, medical office, and combination office/industrial buildings are likely to be more viable within the community.

## **Residential**

The need for a variety of housing types in a community must also be considered as part of the long-range planning process. The most common form of residential development is a single family home placed on a large parcel. Some of these are part of a family farm operation. Although there are few examples of other types of residential development in the Township, these other housing styles need to be included in the Township's plan to accommodate anticipated future needs. Not everyone can afford to live in a single family home on a large lot, and many choose to live in more dense residential settings.

Other housing styles found in the region include apartments, attached single family, manufactured housing (mobile home) parks, and single family homes on smaller lots. These types of housing would be inappropriate in many areas of the Township and could negatively impact rural character and result in haphazard land use patterns. Properly placed, however, they can provide alternative and, in some cases, more affordable housing choices that are appropriate for any rural community.

## **LAND USE CATEGORIES**

The following describes the land use categories designated on the Land Use Plan Map. Note that the Land Use Plan Map is intended to show generalized land use and is not intended to indicate precise size, shape or dimension. The recommendations of the Land Use Plan have a long-range planning horizon and do not necessarily imply that short-range rezoning is appropriate.

### **Agricultural**

This category is intended to accommodate primarily agricultural land uses, farm dwellings, and non-farm dwellings that are in keeping with the rural and agricultural character. It is also intended for agricultural preservation. Agricultural land uses would be characterized by traditional cash crops, animal raising, horse boarding, nurseries, and similar uses. Outdoor recreation, extraction of mineral and gas resources, and limited business uses may also be appropriate when specific development standards are provided. Anticipated residential density within the Agricultural category is 0.5 dwelling units per acre.



### **Low Density Agriculture/ Residential**

This category should accommodate non-farm, single family dwellings with an anticipated density of 1.0 dwelling unit per acre. These areas are intended to be rural in character and compatible with surrounding agricultural and natural

areas. Parcels that are at least 20 acres in size are intended for agricultural preservation. Residential care facilities and limited outdoor recreation uses may also be appropriate in such areas when specific development standards are provided.

### **Medium Density Suburban Residential**

Areas designated for medium density residential are intended to accommodate primarily residential development with densities up to 5.0

dwelling units per acre. Single family dwellings on smaller lots, two-family dwellings, and manufactured housing parks are appropriate uses in such areas.

***Recommended residential densities range from 0.5 to 7.0 dwelling units per acre.***

### **Medium Density Village Residential**

This category is intended for residential uses that are in keeping with the established character of the Hamlet area. This would include single family homes on smaller lots, two-family dwellings, but would not include manufactured home parks. Anticipated densities within the Village Residential category are up to 4.0 dwelling units per acre.

### **Multiple Family / Townhome Residential**

Areas designated for this type of residential development are intended to accommodate multiple family uses. Densities up to 7.0 dwelling units per acre are anticipated for this category; however, such uses should be compatible with and reflect Bridgewater Township's rural character.

### **Commercial**

The Commercial land use category is intended to accommodate the convenience shopping needs of the Township and the surrounding community.

Development in these areas should be consistent with Bridgewater's rural character and should compliment the areas existing commercial centers. Small-scale office uses may also be appropriate in such areas.



## **Industrial**

This category is intended to accommodate light industrial and research and development land uses carried out primarily within enclosed buildings. Light Industrial uses should be in keeping with Bridgewater's rural and agricultural setting and compatible with the Township's natural features.



## **Natural Features**

Areas designated in this category are primarily dominated by significant natural features such as rivers, lakes and heavy woodlands. The intent of this category is the preservation of these

natural features to the maximum extent possible. Uses in these areas should be very low-impact, such as passive recreation and conservation areas. Development of residential uses in surrounding areas should be clustered to preserve open space and should be in keeping with the intent of the Natural Features category.

## **Agricultural Preservation Overlay**

The Agricultural Preservation Overlay Map (Map LUP2) is presented to indicate areas in the Township where preservation of agricultural land is supported. The following land use categories are included: Agricultural, Natural Features, and Low Density Agricultural/Residential. Parcels of land that are at least 20 acres in size in the Low Density Agricultural/Residential category are intended for agricultural preservation. The methods of land preservation include the purchase of development rights and the transfer of development rights. Enrollment of land in the P.A. 116 farmland protection program also serves the purpose of preserving land for a limited time.

The Agricultural Preservation Area (the Area) was selected to include areas of prime agricultural land. Most of Bridgewater Township has Class II soils, according to the USDA Soil Conservation Service, which are the highest ranking soils for crop production in Washtenaw County. In order to encourage and support existing long-term agricultural operations, land that is currently farmed, as well as inactive land was included in the area. Because non-agricultural residences on scattered lots interfere with the sustainability of the area for farm operations, the Area includes contiguous parcels of land where the predominant use is agricultural. The Area designated for agricultural preservation is also outside of planned public water and sewer service areas.

The designation of the Agricultural Preservation Area was done with the support of Township residents and property owners, as evidenced by their opinions in the Township survey and input provided at the visioning session. The designation of the area furthers the Township's goal of supporting stable, long-term operations and to qualify the area for the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund program.

**Public / Quasi-Public**

Land uses categorized as Public / Quasi-Public include facilities such as churches, cemeteries, schools, government buildings, and public and private outdoor recreation areas, such as community parks and golf courses.

## LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following describes how the goals and objectives identified by the Planning Commission through the community vision process directly relate to the Land Use Plan.



### Community Character and Agriculture Uses

#### Goals

Maintain Bridgewater Township's rural character.

Support stable agricultural areas and operations in Bridgewater Township.

#### Objectives

Maintain and promote the rural, agricultural, and historic characteristics of the Township.

Encourage future development that is compatible with Bridgewater's rural character.

Encourage and support existing long-term agricultural operations.



### ***“Agriculture defines Bridgewater Township.”***

Bridgewater Township's rural and scenic character and small hometown feel are valued by the community and should be maintained. This character is derived primarily from agricultural activity, while the historic Hamlet of Bridgewater and abundant natural features such as woodlands, wetlands, rivers and small lakes also play a role.

To maintain the community's rural character and its defining agricultural activities, the Land Use Plan map designates most of the land area in the community for Agricultural land uses. As previously described, this classification is primarily intended to accommodate farm uses. Single family non-farm residential uses in these areas are intended to be compatible with the area's agricultural activity and should be developed in a manner that preserves agricultural land. In addition, development in agricultural areas should respect significant historical and cultural resources, important viewsheds, and valuable natural features.

To accomplish this type of development, Township ordinances should provide strong incentives for non-farm dwellings to be developed in a manner that preserves open or landscaped areas, especially along major roads.

## Why Agricultural Land Should Be Preserved

In a survey of Bridgewater Township property owners and registered voters in 2005, the top two Township goals were to maintain rural character and to encourage agricultural operations. Seventy percent of respondents said farmland needs protective measures and 73 percent said the Township should require preservation of farmland or open space in connection with single family residential development. Clearly, the majority of respondents support the preservation of farmland

Bridgewater Township is a desirable place to live, work and visit in large part because of the availability of farmland and the relief from urban landscape that agricultural fields bring. Agricultural operations, scenic views, open spaces, and wildlife habitat are all considered invaluable natural and aesthetic resources that should be preserved.

The climate, variety of soils and terrain make the Township well suited to the production of a great number of row crops, specialty crops and livestock, including many foods available for direct human consumption. These resources include several thousand acres of land currently in agricultural production, and other woodland, wetland, and open lands adjacent to these farmlands. Such lands are an important part of the Township's natural and agricultural heritage.

The agricultural industry in Bridgewater Township provides the opportunity to harvest locally grown foods to sell at roadside stands, farmers' markets, local retail food stores, and other local outlets in the area. Agriculture in Bridgewater Township produces a notable array of products from corn and soybeans to vegetables and fruit. The Township's agricultural acreage contributes tens of thousands of dollars to the local economy in direct sales of agricultural products from the farm.

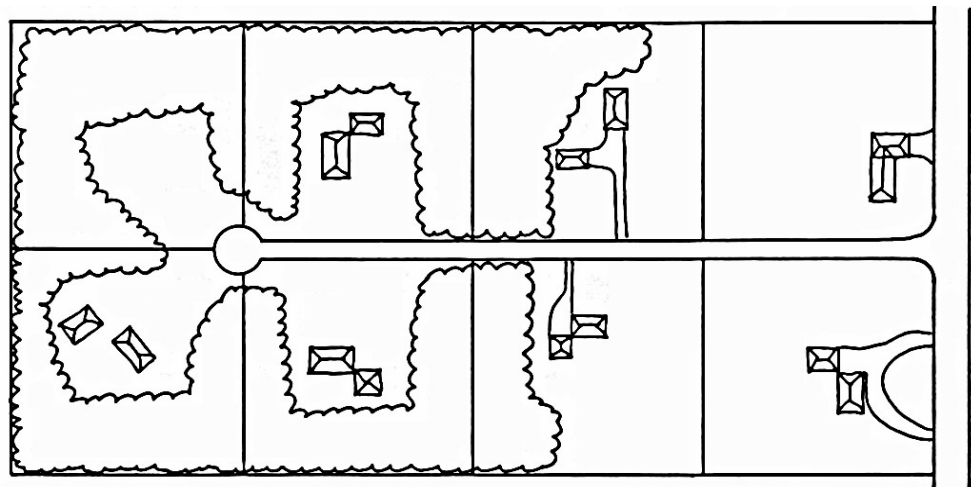
Land suitable for farming is an irreplaceable natural resource with soil and topographic characteristics that have been enhanced by the generations of agricultural use. When such land is converted to residential or other develops uses that do not require those special characteristics, a critical community resources is permanently lost to the citizens of Bridgewater Township. Bridgewater Township is experiencing substantial residential pressures, however, because of its proximity to the urbanized area of southeast Michigan, its attractive landscapes and its excellent public schools. The same characteristics that have made this area so desirable for agricultural production and recreation also make it attractive for residential development. Prime agricultural land often has the features that are desirable for residential areas such as perkable soils.

The plans of Washtenaw County, Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments, and Bridgewater Township call for the protection, preservation

and enhancement of agricultural lands. The state Natural Resources Environmental Protection Act (PA 197 of 1880) and the Township Zoning Act provide support for the preservation of agricultural land. Ordinances regulating land use by zoning and subdivision control enacted by the Township also serve this purpose. These measures by themselves, however, have not been effective in providing long-term protection of farmland under the pressure of increasing residential development. Additional measures are needed to insure that agricultural lands will remain substantially undeveloped into the long-term future.

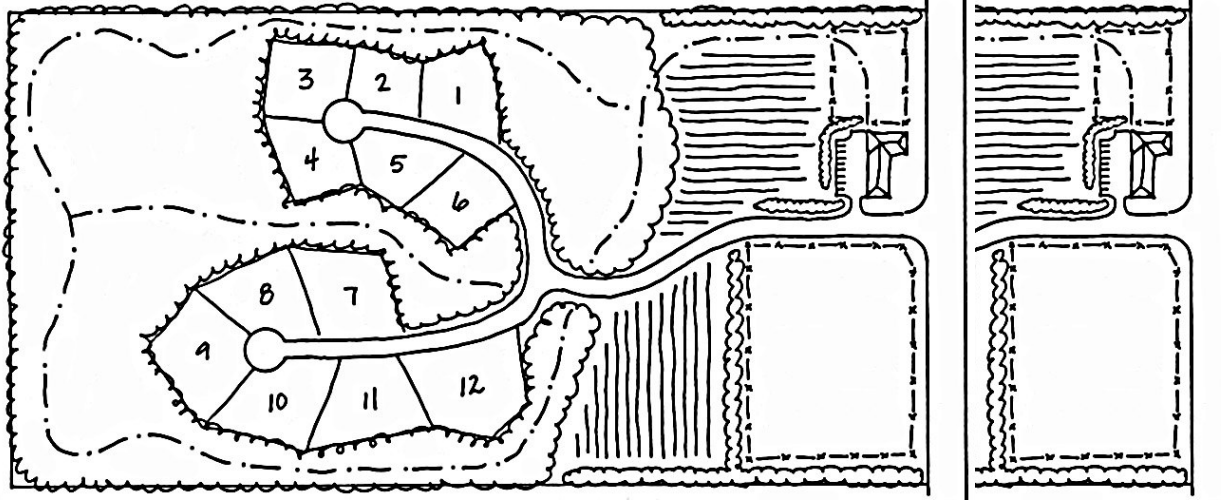
### Development Objectives

Residential developments should be creatively located to minimize their visual impact, as well as to allow the continuation of agricultural uses. As illustrated by the graphics below, these objectives can be accomplished through the use of significant building setbacks, or encouraging unified developments that maintain a portion of farmland or open space along the roadway through the construction of a new road for access to such parcels.



*Traditional Development Example*

Typical traditional development results in the erosion of rural character due to an interruption in the visual landscape and the loss of agricultural land. Open space development, however, preserves rural character by maintaining agricultural land, natural features, and open views.



Open Space Development  
Example

### Residential Land Uses



#### Goal

Maintain residential development that meets the needs of Township residents and preserves Bridgewater's rural character.

#### Objectives

Support residential development techniques that preserve open space and the country atmosphere of the Township.

Provide for higher density and a more diverse mix of housing types near the Village of Clinton and in other appropriate areas identified in the Master Plan.

***”New development should minimize land consumption and preserve open space and farmland.”***

In addition to the Agricultural category, the Land Use Plan defines four distinct residential categories to meet the diverse housing needs of the Bridgewater community. The Land Use Plan designates much of the land in the western portion of the Township near Clinton Road as Low Density Rural Residential. These areas should accommodate low density residential development that reflects the Township's rural character and is compatible with surrounding agricultural uses and natural features. Rural Residential areas should be developed in a manner that encourages the preservation of active farmland, open views and woodlands through innovative open space zoning techniques. While primarily intended for residential use at a slightly higher density than surrounding Agricultural areas, Rural Residential areas should be in keeping with Bridgewater's existing character.



*A natural view of rolling hills, large trees and farmland*

The area designated as Medium Density Suburban Residential on the Land Use Plan map is located along the southern boundary of the Township between the river and Lima Center Road. Accessed by both US-12 and Clinton Road and within close proximity to the Village of Clinton, this area is suited for residential uses with densities up to 5.0 dwelling units per acre.



*Entering the Hamlet along Austin Road*

Multiple Family / Townhome Residential uses with densities up to 7.0 dwelling units per acre are recommended for the area of the Township south of US-12 and west of Lima Center Road. Multiple Family uses increase the Township's mix of housing types. In addition, such uses are consistent with the higher density existing land use pattern in the area, as well as the future land use designation for the area directly to the south in Clinton Township. While intended for a significantly higher density than most of the Township, building and site design of multiple family uses should be in keeping with Bridgewater's overall rural character.



*Hamlet cemetery*

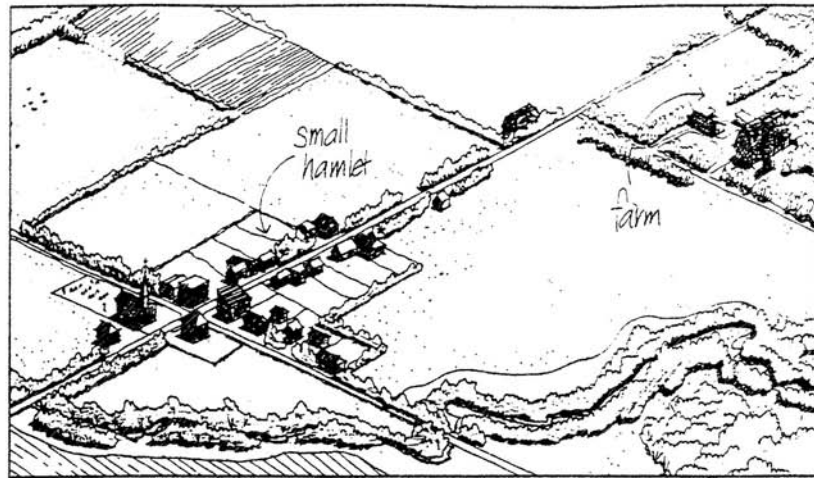
Residential uses in the Hamlet area are designated as Medium Density Village Residential on the Land Use Plan. This designation is intended to encourage future residential uses within and around the Hamlet that compliment the area's existing historical character. Residential uses in this area should be compact, small in scale, and reflective of a traditional Hamlet or Village. The arrangement of residential uses should create a smooth transition between the higher density of the Hamlet area and the surrounding agricultural countryside. In addition, new development within the Village Residential area should directly relate to the existing Hamlet. Creative arrangement of residential developments and the use of existing historic and cultural features as focal points is encouraged to link the new with the old.



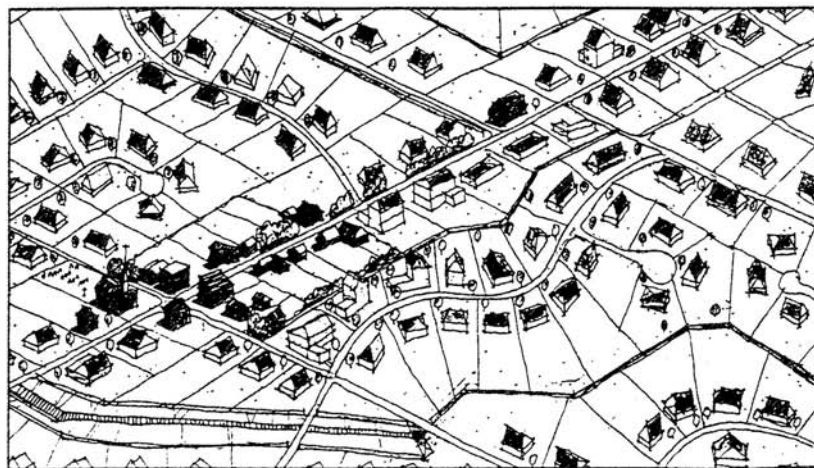
Source: Randall Arendt, *Rural by Design: Maintaining Small Town Character*, APA Planners Press, 1994, Page 188.

*New development that does not relate to the historic settlement pattern (above left) has an “unraveling” effect, as seen in the example in the middle. To avoid this, growth should be a natural extension of the existing pattern, as seen in the example on the right.*

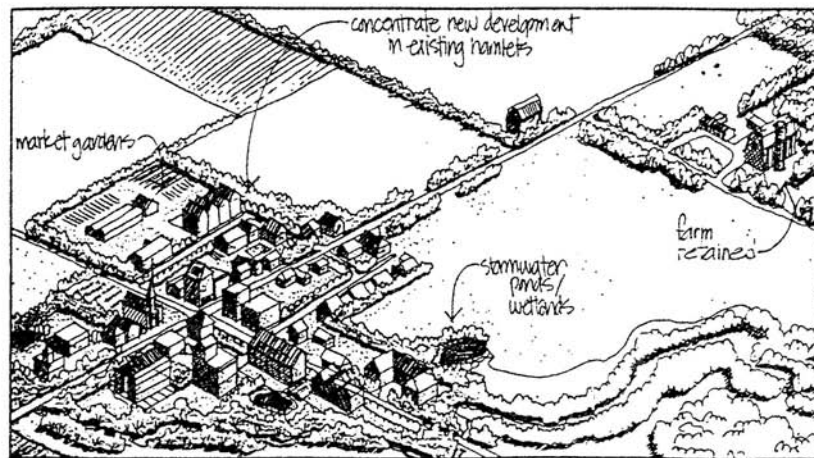
As illustrated by the contrasting graphics on the following page, the type of development recommended for the Village Residential area will enable the unique setting of Bridgewater's Hamlet and its surrounding area to be preserved. Note that the density of the clustering in the example below is more intense than what would be anticipated or planned for within the Hamlet.



Traditional rural village in the moraine



Village and farmland obliterated by conventional development



Clustering new development around existing hamlet

Illustration from *Regeneration: Toronto's Waterfront and the Sustainable City: Final Report*, Published by Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, 1992, Pages 244-245.



## Commercial Land Uses

### *Goal*

Maintain small commercial operations, which will meet the needs of Township residents and not detract from the visual character and rural atmosphere of the Township.



### *Objectives*

Concentrate future commercial development near the Village of Clinton and the Hamlet of Bridgewater.

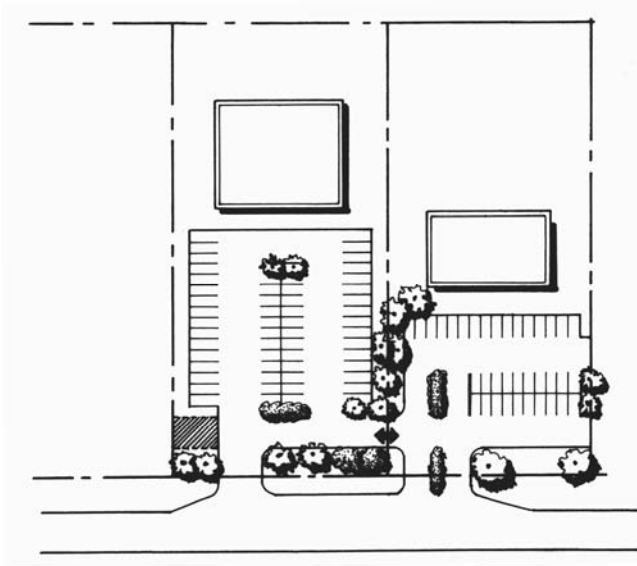
Ensure that new commercial development is compatible with the community's rural character.

## ***“Commercial uses must blend with the Township’s rural character.”***

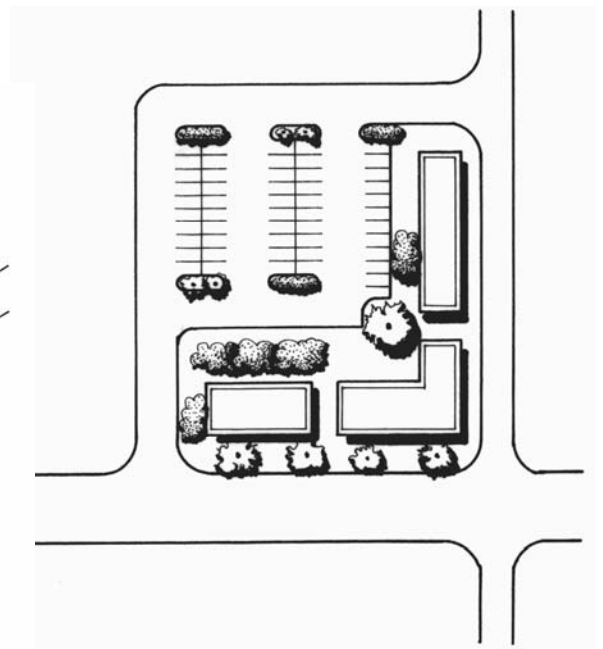
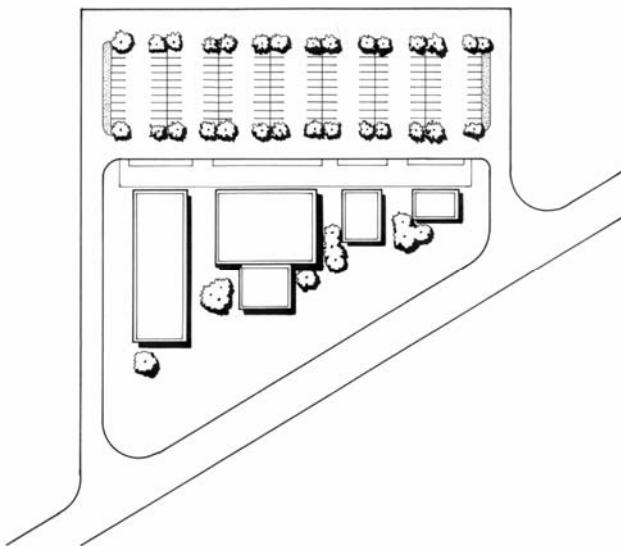
The Land Use Plan map designates two areas of the Township for Commercial land uses. Both of these areas are intended for convenience retail and small office uses; large-scale, comparison retail and highway-oriented commercial uses are discouraged. Commercial businesses within the Township are intended to serve the convenience needs of Bridgewater and its immediately surrounding areas. Such uses are not intended to compete with the area's established commercial centers of Clinton and Manchester.

Development in Commercial areas should fit into Bridgewater's rural setting. Uses should be designed in a manner, which is compatible with surrounding residential and agricultural uses and consistent with the Township's existing commercial uses. Buildings and site layout should reflect a small-town, rural character, not strip or suburban-style commercial developments. Specifically, commercial buildings should be situated close to the road with the majority of parking located in the rear. In addition, building facades, signage and lighting should be appropriate for a rural area.

As seen in the graphics below, rear parking and shared access drives allow commercial buildings to have a close relationship to each other and the road, unlike typical more suburban-style commercial developments.



*Typical suburban-style commercial development with parking areas in front of buildings (left); options for shared parking located behind commercial buildings (below).*





## **Industrial Land Uses**

### *Goal*

Maintain limited light industrial operations that will not detract from the visual character and rural atmosphere of the Township.

### *Objectives*

Ensure that new light industrial development is compatible with the community's rural character and will exert minimal impact on the Township.

***“Industrial uses must have minimal negative impacts on surrounding agricultural and natural areas.”***

The Land Use Plan designates the northern Hamlet area for industrial uses. Such uses are intended to be light industrial or research and development type establishments, such as warehousing with accessory office and research or testing facilities. Concentrating future light industrial uses in this area of the Township will likely be dependant upon a community sanitary sewer system servicing the Hamlet area. Industrial buildings and sites should be designed to have minimal negative impacts on surrounding areas and natural features. All uses should be carried out within completely enclosed buildings or, when limited outdoor storage is provided, with appropriate screening of storage areas from all property lines. In general, all industrial uses must be screened from adjacent residential and agricultural property. Because of the Hamlet's unique character, it is important that light industrial uses be designed to reflect their small-town, rural setting, not detract from it. High traffic generators are not appropriate.



## **Natural Features**

### *Goal*

Maintain natural features and open space for the enjoyment of current and future residents.

### *Objectives*

Encourage development to occur in a manner that will preserve open space and protect valuable natural features.

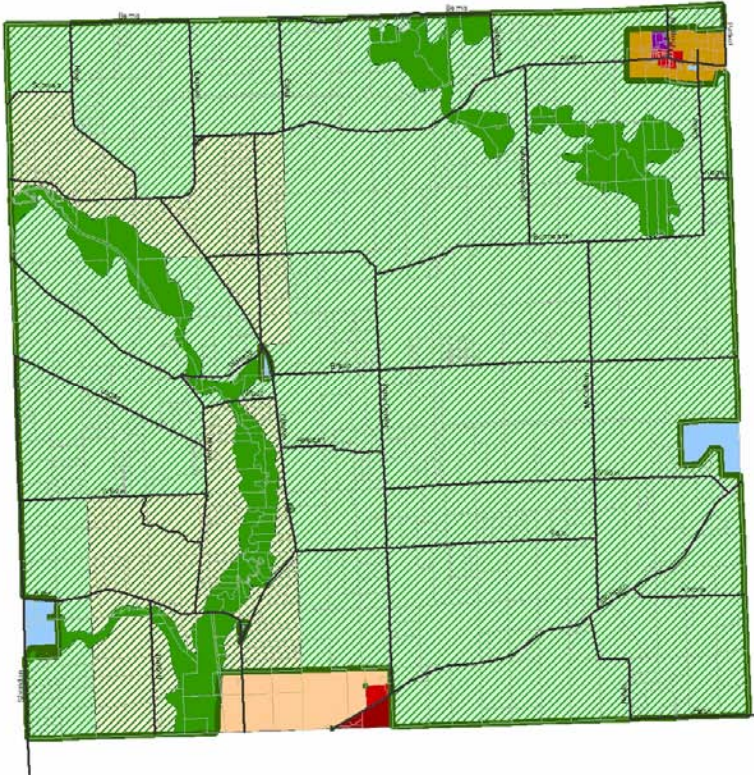
Support a network of open space and natural features throughout the Township.

## ***“Bridgewater’s natural features and scenic character must be preserved.”***

The Land Use Plan map identifies several areas that are dominated by significant natural features, such as rivers, lakes and major woodlands. To the maximum extent possible, areas within this category should be preserved and maintained. Development should be low-impact and primarily limited to passive recreation and conservation areas. Innovative design techniques should be considered for surrounding residential development in order to exert minimal impact on these natural features.

## **CONCLUSION**

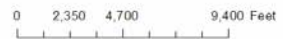
The Land Use Plan seeks to promote the rural and agricultural character of Bridgewater, as well as important natural features. It is a policy document intended to guide future decisions regarding land use and overall community development, and it is intended to provide a clear link between the community’s goals and objectives and specific land use recommendations. While the Land Use Plan portrays the community’s vision for the future, implementation of the Plan is the real key to achieving that vision.



# Bridgewater Township Master Plan

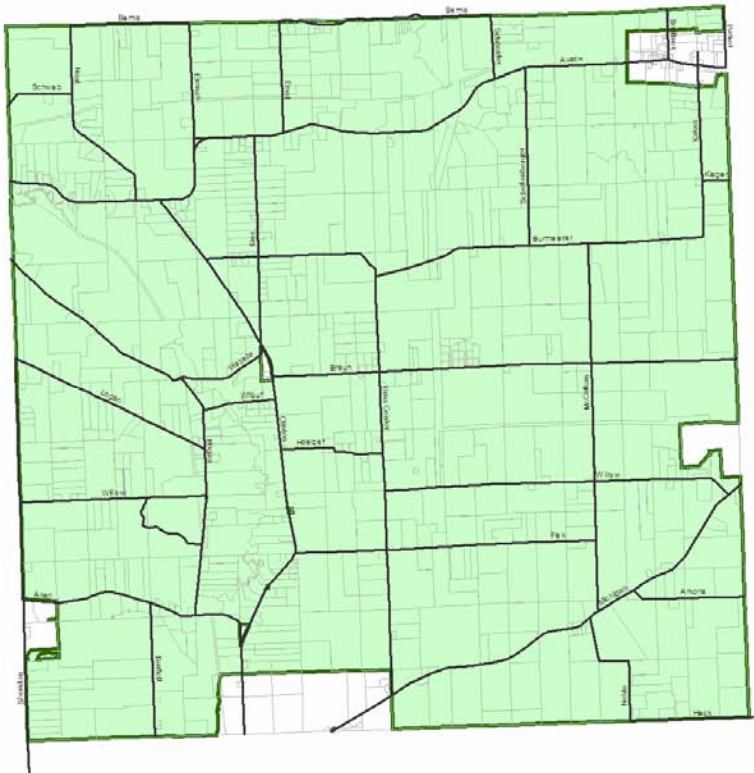
- Legend**
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- DISTRICT**
- Agricultural
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Low Density Agricultural/Residential
  - Low-Density Residential
  - Medium Density Suburban
  - Medium Density Village
  - Multiple Family / Townhome
  - Natural Features
  - Public / Quasi Public

MAP LUP 1



The data depicted is from a variety of sources, thus the information is provided with the understanding that the conclusions drawn from such information are solely the responsibility of the user. Any assumption of legal status of this data is hereby disclaimed.

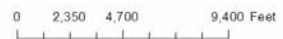
Last updated: February 7, 2006  
By Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment



# Bridgewater Township Master Plan Agricultural Preservation Overlay

- Legend**
- Agricultural Preservation Overlay

MAP LUP 2



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By Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment