

**Chapter 6
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES**

This chapter presents the goals and objectives that have been developed to provide a strong and coherent direction for the future of Bridgewater Township. Goals are typically general statements about the quality and character of the community, which form the basis for measurable land use and development-related objectives and policy recommendations that can be prioritized and implemented by Township officials.

The following policy recommendations reflect a balance between the public purposes inherent in planning for the long-term future of the Township with the rights of private property owners to develop an appropriate use of their land, and are intended over time to result in a specific quality and character for the community. The goals and objectives have evolved from the desire to remedy existing problems, to maintain positive features, and to provide an attractive and functional community environment in the future.

Other benefits of establishing these goals, objectives, and policy recommendations include:

- **Consistency** - A comprehensive list of statements concerning a variety of planning issues can help avoid arbitrary decision-making in the future.
- **Efficiency** - Clearly stated policy options may help reduce time spent on deliberation, while providing sound planning principles to assist decision-making.
- **Coordination** – The Master Plan provides a framework to guide land use actions by the Township Board, Planning Commission, and the public.
- **Defensibility** – The goals, objectives, and policies of this Master Plan are necessary to provide a strong legal foundation for local land use controls such as zoning. Clearly stated land use and development policies, along with consistent implementation by the Township, can be essential to success if the Township’s zoning and land development ordinances or decisions are challenged in court.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goal: Maintain Bridgewater Township’s rural character.

Objective: Preservation of the rural, agricultural, and historic characteristics of Bridgewater Township.

Policy Recommendations:

- Consider the “Agricultural and the Rural Economy” goals, objectives, and policy recommendations first when making land use and development decisions.
- Inventory significant historic buildings and features in the Township and promote the preservation and re-use of historic barns and other historic structures for activities compatible with the Township Zoning Ordinance.

- ❑ Preserve scenic rural and agricultural views along the US-12 state highway, public road rights-of-way.
- ❑ Encourage preservation/use of native vegetation as part of new development.
- ❑ Continue to improve Township code enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with Township ordinance and standards.

Objective: New development that is compatible with the Township’s predominantly agricultural character.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Provide for adequate buffer areas between new non-farm development and agricultural zoning districts/land uses in the Township Zoning Ordinance.
- ❑ Cluster new non-residential development within the Bridgewater Hamlet.
- ❑ Discourage land divisions that would remove prime or active agricultural land from production, and that would result in incompatible non-farm land uses in close proximity to active farmland.

AGRICULTURE AND THE RURAL ECONOMY

Goal: Support stable agricultural areas and operations in the Township.

Objective: The continuation and growth of a vibrant, agricultural-based economy that is consistent with Bridgewater Township’s rural character.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Encourage non-farm residential development to be located away from prime agricultural land and active farm operations.
- ❑ Encourage the use of the Planned Unit Development option and incentives for clustering of new residential development in the Township Zoning Ordinance to minimize land consumption and preserve open space.
- ❑ Consider the PUD option for transfer of development rights (TDR) from land to be permanently conserved for agricultural uses to land areas around the Hamlet planned for future development served by public sewer.
- ❑ Promote the option for farmers to diversify their income sources through “value added” agricultural activities consistent with Township Zoning Ordinance standards, such as corn mazes, ‘U-pick’ operations, direct marketing of farm products to restaurants and local stores, roadside stands, local farm markets, and farm-based bed and breakfast inns.

- ❑ Encourage seasoned farming experts in the Township to become mentors to young men and women interested in agriculture.
- ❑ Consider the creation of a farm incubator program or other cooperative effort to help young farmers get started in agriculture.

Objective: Maintenance of the Township’s rural environment and appearance, preservation of the private ownership of farmland, and protection of the groundwater, soils, and other natural resources that support agricultural activities.

- ❑ Adopt a Capital Improvements Plan that allocates no funds for paving roads serving agricultural lands or extending public sanitary sewer lines into designated agricultural preservation areas.
- ❑ Encourage Township property owners of agricultural land to work with private nonprofit land trusts and conservancies with the power to buy development rights and establish private conservation easements.
- ❑ Discourage removal of land from private ownership and further expansion of the Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) in the Township.
- ❑ Discourage farm-based ethanol production.

HOUSING

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

Objective: Residential development that preserves open space and enhances the rural environment and appearance of the Township.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Require higher density residential development to be located in the Bridgewater Hamlet and served by the Township’s public sanitary sewerage system.
- ❑ Discourage higher density residential development adjacent to the Village of Clinton, consistent with the Village’s established policies for new growth and expansion of the Village only within Lenawee County.
- ❑ Require pre-application meetings with developers to discuss required standards and available options for development.
- ❑ Encourage the use of the Planned Unit Development option and incentives for clustering of new residential development in the Township Zoning Ordinance.

Objective: Maintenance and improvement of Bridgewater Township’s housing stock.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Consider housing-related goals, objectives, and strategies first when making land use and development decisions.
- ❑ Inventory significant historic residences in the Township, and encourage property owners to participate in Washtenaw County’s historic preservation program.
- ❑ Inventory foreclosed, abandoned, bank-owned, and similar distressed properties in the Township, including a current list of the individuals or entities responsible for maintenance.
- ❑ Request that the Township’s ordinance enforcement officer periodically review such distressed properties for blight conditions or ordinance violations.
- ❑ Encourage low income homeowners and elderly residents in need of assistance to dial “211” to access Washtenaw County’s current list of non-profit organizations and volunteer agencies that may be able to assist with necessary home or property maintenance issues that would otherwise result in ordinance violations.
- ❑ Encourage low and moderate income homeowners to make use of public and private programs, including Washtenaw County’s home weatherization and home rehabilitation programs, to upgrade obsolete infrastructure, improve energy efficiency, and correct structural deficiencies.
- ❑ Consider adopting a rental housing inspection ordinance to require periodic inspection and re-certification of rental properties in the Township for compliance with the building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and property maintenance codes enforced for the Township by the Western Washtenaw Construction Authority.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL

General goals, objectives, and policies for commercial and industrial land uses are provided below. More specific goals, objectives, and policies for the Hamlet are found in Chapter 8 (Bridgewater Hamlet Area Plan).

Goal: Maintain small commercial operations that meet the needs of Township residents and do not detract from the Township’s rural character.

Objective: New commercial and industrial development that is compatible with the community’s rural character.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Concentrate future commercial development near the Bridgewater Hamlet, and encourage commercial development that will complement, not compete with or duplicate the adjacent commercial centers of Saline, Manchester, and Clinton.

- ❑ Support locally-owned and operated businesses in the Township, and the addition of compatible new commercial and light industrial operations in the Bridgewater Hamlet.
- ❑ Promote the reuse of historic structures in the Hamlet consistent with Township Zoning Ordinance standards.
- ❑ Use the commercial goals and objectives as guidelines when considering for commercial rezoning petitions.
- ❑ Discourage suburban-style strip commercial zoning or development along US-12.
- ❑ Prohibit new billboards and discourage the use of electronic message boards and other signs that would distract drivers and impair safety along US-12 and the county primary roads in the Township.
- ❑ Encourage residents to make prudent use of the home occupation provisions of the Zoning Ordinance to start and grow small businesses in the Township.
- ❑ Encourage the growth of a cluster of light industrial business operations within the Bridgewater Hamlet, with special focus on agricultural research facilities, farm implement repair and servicing, and other agricultural support services.
- ❑ Require strict adherence to the use standards of the Zoning Ordinance when reviewing special land use permit applications for more intensive industrial operations.
- ❑ Discourage development of intensive commercial or industrial operations that would create any dangerous, injurious, noxious or otherwise objectionable element or condition.

NATURAL FEATURES

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

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

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Inventory and map sensitive wildlife habitat and native plants in the Township.
- ❑ Implement the natural features preservation provisions of the Township Zoning Ordinance to protect and conserve important natural resources and fragile lands such as wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, floodplains, groundwater recharge areas, native plants and sensitive wildlife habitat.

- ❑ Encourage the use of the Planned Unit Development option in the Township Zoning Ordinance to minimize land consumption and preserve natural features within a development site.
- ❑ Consider the PUD option for transfer of development rights (TDR) from land with significant natural features to be permanently conserved through a private conservation easement to land areas around the Hamlet planned for future development served by public sewer.

Objective: Private conservation of open space and natural features in the Township.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Encourage owners of land along rivers or streams or that has significant natural features to work with private nonprofit land trusts and conservancies with the power to buy development rights and establish private conservation easements to preserve such features for future generations.
- ❑ Discourage removal of land from private ownership and further expansion of the Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) in the Township.

Objective: Maintenance of land with significant natural features primarily under private ownership and control.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Continue to work with the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission and the County Sheriff's Office to ensure regular patrol and maintenance of the county's established nature preserves.
- ❑ Encourage the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission to consider Township input and direction for prudent use of Natural Areas Preservation program (NAPP) resources to ensure that future county nature preserves do not become an attractive nuisance or adversely impact Township residents.
- ❑ Prohibit future county nature preserves near existing residences and planned rural residential areas of the Township.
- ❑ Discourage development of county nature preserves or other Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission facilities with more intensive park amenities such as kiosks, signage, buildings, observation decks, and boardwalks.

TRANSPORTATION

General goals, objectives, and policies for transportation, traffic, and circulation are provided below. Also see Chapter 9 (Transportation Plan).

Goal: Maintain a transportation network that facilitates efficient circulation while reinforcing the Township’s rural character.

Objective: Maintenance of the Township’s network of unpaved roads in a manner compatible with the Township’s rural character, safe driving conditions, and adequate access in all seasons.

Policy Recommendations:

- Pursue designation of natural beauty road status for appropriate Township roads.
- Work proactively with the Washtenaw County Road commission to control dust on unpaved roads as an alternative to road paving.

Objective: Improve traffic circulation patterns and alleviate potential traffic hazards.

Policy Recommendations:

- Explore possible measures to correct safety deficiencies and slow traffic along the Township’s paved roads.
- Work with law enforcement personnel serving the Township to achieve more effective police patrol along county primary roads and US-12.
- Consider road improvements where unpaved roads intersect with paved roads.
- Explore access management techniques, as indicated in Chapter 9 (Transportation Plan), to improve safety on roads within the Township.
- Work with the Washtenaw County Road Commission to reconfigure county roads within the Bridgewater Hamlet consistent with the recommendations of Chapter 8 (Bridgewater Hamlet Area Plan).

Objective: Improve access to transportation for all Township residents.

Policy Recommendations:

- Consider the future need for an expanded “Dial-A-Ride” type service for Township residents who no longer can drive themselves or have limited access to private transportation.
- Work with the Washtenaw County Road Commission to address the needs and safety of bicyclists along Austin Road, Clinton Road, and Schneider Road as future road improvement projects are planned and implemented.

Objective: Minimize impacts on the Township’s public road network from more intensive residential development.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❑ Where an abutting county public road is in fair or poor condition, the permitted dwelling unit density for any new residential development accessing that road should be adjusted proportionally downward. Allowances should be made where the county Road Commission approves plans for necessary road improvements.
- ❑ The Planned Unit Development (PUD) review process should be followed for new residential development abutting any unpaved gravel road.