

# Milton Township

Cass County, Michigan



**Draft**  
**Approved for Distribution**

**DRAFT Master Plan**  
**July 2011**

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# MILTON TOWNSHIP

## MASTER PLAN

July, 2011

*Draft*  
*Approved for Distribution*

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*Prepared with the assistance of the professional planners at*

**Williams & Works**

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# Chapter One. Introduction

**Planning for the long-term should be carried at a general level that recognizes the potential for change and provides flexibility.**

Producing a Master Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, requires a solid foundation of data from a variety of resources. Analysis of this data can reveal trends and conditions that may be obvious, or not so obvious, to the residents of Milton Township. The data that is gathered in the initial phase of preparing a Master Plan is vital to support future community goals.

The Milton Township Community Profile is one of several phases in completing an update of the Township Master Plan. The entire process will involve the following elements:

- ◆ A Community Profile
- ◆ A Preferred Future
- ◆ Goal Setting
- ◆ The Comprehensive Plan

In August 1999, Milton Township completed an update of the Township's Master Plan. Public Act 33 of 2008, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, requires a Master Plan be reviewed at five-year intervals; and the 1999 plan was reviewed in 2004 and no revisions were made. The 2004 plan still reflects many current conditions and trends, so the effort to update the Master Plan in 2011 enabled the community to focus on particular challenges rather than restrict the effort to a general overview.

Nevertheless, planning for the long-term should recognize the potential for change and provide flexibility. This results in a Master Plan that can be useful well into the future even if demographic and economic trends stray from those identified in the Community Profile, presented in chapters 2 through 8.

The Community Profile provides a "snapshot" of current conditions in the Township with respect to six key aspects of land use planning. The purpose is to generally define current trends and conditions, and more importantly, to draw some broad conclusions about the implications they will have on the future of the Township. The primary sources for this document are set forth in the bibliography, but the content of the initial eight chapters of this plan has been heavily drawn from the Township's 2004 plan and existing information.

The key areas of focus for this Community Profile are:

- ◆ Natural Resources and Regional Context (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Population (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Housing and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Land Use and Development Patterns (Chapter 5)
- ◆ Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 6)
- ◆ Utilities and Transportation (Chapter 7)

Each article includes an overview of its subject matter along with a brief discussion of the planning trends that are relevant along with implications for the future. Chapter 8 places the conclusions of this document in the context of the larger Master Plan development effort by outlining some of the key implications identified.

## Community Input

The Township held a community visioning workshop to garner opinions of Township residents and business owners and to help inform the planning process. The event was conducted prior to preparation of the plan in one three-hour long session at the Community Center Building on Saturday, May 15, 2010 from 9:00 am to noon. About 40 people participated in the workshop. The results of the activity are presented under separate cover in the Community Visioning Report, dated May 2010. The highest-ranking opportunities identified at the meeting pertained to the preservation of farmland and natural open space in the Township. The highest-ranking threats, according to participants, dealt with uncontrolled growth; density; costs of land acquisition; and the planning processes. Issues of mining, protecting natural features and resources, and preserving a “small town” feel were also recognized. Citizen visions expressed at the meeting were used by the Planning Commission in forming the policies in this plan.

After a draft of the plan was prepared, the Township facilitated an Open House on May 14, 2011 at the Community Center Building to provide the public with an opportunity to review the plan. About 20 people participated in the informal event, which was designed and intended to enable people to observe informational display boards and ask questions. Display boards included mapping; future land use summaries; goals and objectives; and 2010 Census data that had been released since publication of the Community Profile Report, including a comparison of 2010 data to data from earlier Census figure. Generally, citizens gave positive

feedback on the draft plan, though there were some questions centering on the future land use map designation boundaries; the extent of likely residential growth along the southern area of the Township influenced by Indiana; and, possible plans for improvements to US-12. Participants in the Open House generally expressed approval in connection with the Plan's support for viable agriculture.

## Summary

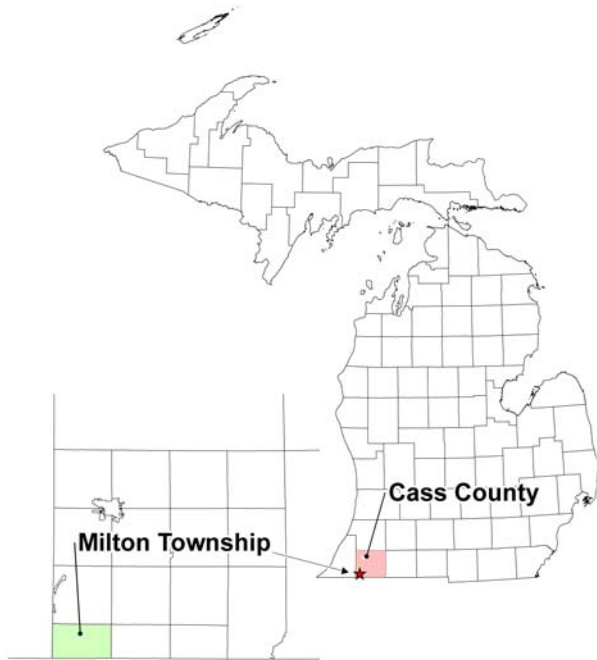
The following paragraphs outline some of the initial impressions that have emerged as this community profile has developed:

- ◆ The relationship with South Bend Indiana and the surrounding region plays an important role in defining the community's character, offering a rural lifestyle for residents in close proximity to the natural environment of the Township.
- ◆ From 2000 to 2010, the Township experienced extremely rapid population growth. Although recent regional trends suggest that the Township's rate of population growth has slowed since the first half of the decade, Milton Township is poised to experience significant additional growth in coming years. The Township's rural character, natural beauty and proximity to regional employment centers make it an ideal location for new families.
- ◆ Milton Township is zoned to limit growth and preserve agricultural land. However, overflow growth from Indiana is occurring along the southern border, primarily within the western half of the Township. Additionally, some areas formerly used for agricultural or range land have been converted into large lot subdivisions within the central sections of the Township. These patterns tend to consume large areas at very low densities which may not be sustainable over the very long term.
- ◆ The Township contains an efficient transportation network that connects residents to employment opportunities throughout the region. Additionally, regional connections by major roads such as US-12 and close proximity to the Indiana Toll Road and US-31 make connections to other modes of transportation such as air service in South Bend convenient.
- ◆ Some of the objectives outlined in the 2004 Master Plan Update have been achieved and others have not. Regardless, all should be reevaluated in light of more current demographic and land use information and in accord with changing local policies. One objective may be strengthening regulations to preserve farmland,

especially in the eastern portion of the Township along the Michigan - Indiana border.

- ◆ Most of the Township's population lives in the western and southern portions of the Township. However, increasing development across the Township can be seen with the addition of new subdivisions. As growth and development continues to alter the community's character, the Township may look to work cooperatively with other surrounding townships to address challenges that may arise.
- ◆ Mining operations are primarily within the north eastern quadrant of the Township. These will continue to impact the character of the community for the foreseeable future and local leaders will continue to be challenged with balancing the needs of local residents with the rights and expectations of operators.
- ◆ Public water and sewer services are currently not available within the Township. Areas of higher density residential such as the southwest section may be logical, however regulations to require developer installation may prevent smaller lot, high density development.

## Chapter Two. Natural and Regional Resources



Milton Township is situated in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan in the south west corner of Cass County, on the State’s border approximately 12 miles north of South Bend, Indiana. The Township has an area of slightly more than 21 square miles and is characterized by abundant agricultural land, wooded habitats, streams and creeks mixed with new and old human development. This Chapter presents the natural and environmental conditions that characterize the community.

The Township is bounded by Howard Township to the north, Clay and Harris Townships in Indiana to the south, Niles Township to the west and Ontwa Township to the east.

### Regional Influences

#### Southwestern Michigan Commission

The Southwestern Michigan Commission (SWMC) is one of 14 Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan and one of 500 in the United States. In Michigan, regions were created under a 1968 Governor's Executive Order. The SWMC was officially organized in late 1973 by resolutions of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of commissioners. The agency has been staffed since the Spring of 1974. The agency's primary function is to assist public and private entities within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties by providing technical assistance for a variety of federal, state, and local programs and projects. The SWMC also acts as an intergovernmental forum to address regional issues.

**Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study**

The purpose of the Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) is to implement the federal transportation legislation (TEA-21) at a level which benefits the local community and business community by constantly seeking to improve the area's transportation decision making process. NATS strives to improve the area's transportation system via data collection, short and long range planning, transit planning, and other specialized projects and issues. Geographically, the NATS area covers communities in both Berrien and Cass counties: Howard and Milton Townships in Cass County; Bertrand and Niles Townships and the Cities of Buchanan and Niles in Berrien County. The study is staffed by the Southwestern Michigan Commission.

**Cass County Planning Commission**

The Cass County Planning Commission (CCPC) reviews all rezoning applications, master plan amendments, PA 116 Agreements, and petitions for road abandonment within the unincorporated portions of the County. The Milton Township Master Plan will be reviewed by the CCPC for consistency with County goals and plans.

**Local Government Influences**

**Niles Township**

Niles Township in Berrien County is located west of Milton Township. The Township has a high level of urban development due to its proximity to the City of Niles, South Bend, and US-31. The Niles Township Planning Commission adopted a Master Plan in 2003. The community also revised its Zoning Ordinance in 2005. Niles Township has planned and zoned medium density residential development (between 7,500 to 12,000 sq. ft. lots) along most of its border with Milton Township.

**Howard Township**

Howard Township is located directly north of Milton Township. The community operates without a Planning Commission or Master Plan. The Howard Township Zoning Map indicates agricultural residential (43,560 sq. ft. lots) along the majority of its border with Milton Township.

**Ontwa Township**

Ontwa Township is located directly east of Milton Township. The Township's development has been greatly influenced by its location (e.g., near beautiful lakes and the Village of Edwardsburg). Ontwa Township has zoned land along the 3.5-mile shared border between Milton Township and Ontwa Township in an Agricultural/ Residential category with a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet. Ontwa Township updated its master plan in 2011, also.

**The west and south borders are zoned to reflect suburban type of development, while the north and east borders reflect a rural life style.**

### Clay and Harris Townships

Both Clay and Harris Townships are located south of Milton Township in Indiana. Land use and zoning for both communities are governed by the Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County. The areas along Milton Township's southern border in both Clay and Harris Townships are zoned for residential (15,000 sq. ft. lots) development.

The Area Plan Commission is currently updating St. Joseph County's master plan, which will affect these two Townships. The most recent master plan was completed in April 2003 to unite the efforts of most of the communities within St. Joseph County in a coordinated, broad-based approach to planning.

## Soils and Water

### Soil Capabilities and Limitations

The Soil Survey of Cass County, Michigan, created by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service in 1991, provides a good picture of the capabilities and limitations of Milton Township's soils. General soil characteristics can be used to compare the suitability of large areas for general land uses. The soil types within the Township range from well drained loamy soils to very poorly drained mucky soils. Map 3 illustrates areas unsuitable for development are often Prime farmland soils delineated by the U.S.D.A. based on their major importance in meeting the Nation's short and long-range needs for food and fiber.

**Prime farmland soils, as defined by the U.S.D.A., comprise 8.26 square miles or 38.7% percent of Milton Township.**

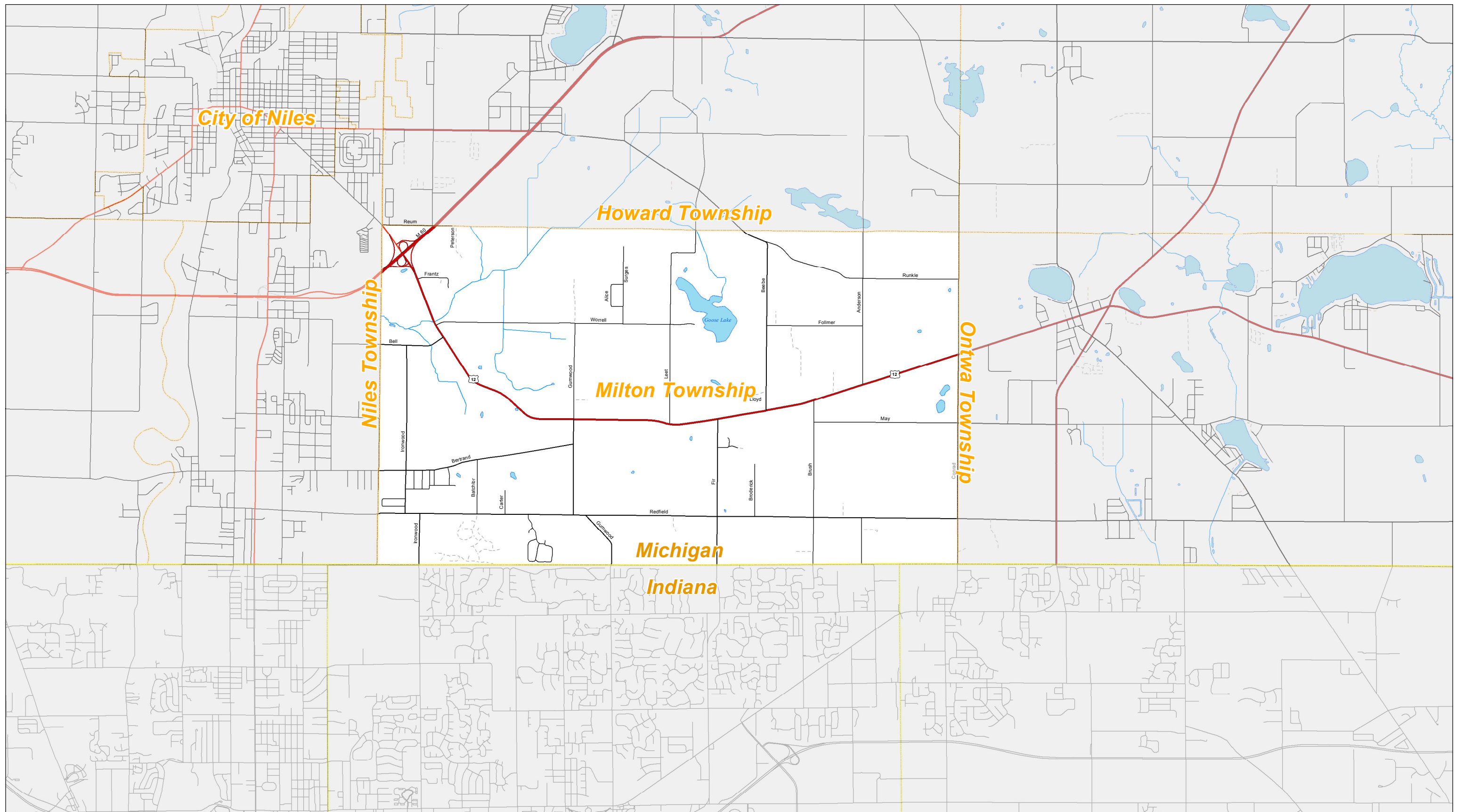
The U.S.D.A recommends that municipalities, as well as individuals, encourage and facilitate the wise use of these lands because of the limited supply of high quality farmland. Map 2 shows that prime farmland soils, as defined by the U.S.D.A., comprise 8.26 square miles or 38.7% percent of Milton Township. Seven percent of the prime farmland has a seasonal high water table, which has the potential to be overcome by drainage measures or flood control.

The Cass County Soil Survey indicates four types of limitations, severe surface slope, septic tank absorption, dwelling limitations, and high water table. Descriptions of their limitations are as follows:

#### 1. Severe Surface Slopes

The slope of the ground surface is 12% or greater requires special site planning and should be avoided whenever possible. Map 5 illustrates where severe surface slopes are located within the Township.

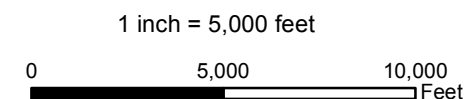




# Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

Map 1. Location & Base Map



Data Source:  
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

## 2. Septic Tank Absorption

Septic tank absorption field limitations are considered "severe" or "unsuitable" if soil properties or site features prevent the reasonable installation of a septic tank. These conditions are often so difficult or so unfavorable that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required.

## 3. Dwelling Limitations

Ratings are created by the U.S.D.A for the soil's ability to support the load of a three-story single-family home. Ratings are based on soil properties, site features, and observed performance of the soil. A high water table, flooding, hilly or steep slopes, shrink-swell potential, and organic layers can cause movement of footings and affect the ease of excavation and construction. This information is of particular importance because it identifies areas of "severe" building limitations because soil properties and site features that are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome and possibly increases in construction costs are required. These areas are illustrated on Map 3.

## 4. High Water Table

Soil where the water table is "apparent" or "high" usually has water within one to three feet of the surface during a portion of the year is shown on Map 4 under the classification of areas of potentially high groundwater. These soils do not "perc" well and should generally be avoided for construction if other more suitable places are available on the property for development.

## Creeks

The state only recognizes one named stream in the Township, Brandywine Creek; however, several other smaller, unnamed streams meander across much of the northeast corner of the Township. This area also has the highest water table.

## Ponds and Lake

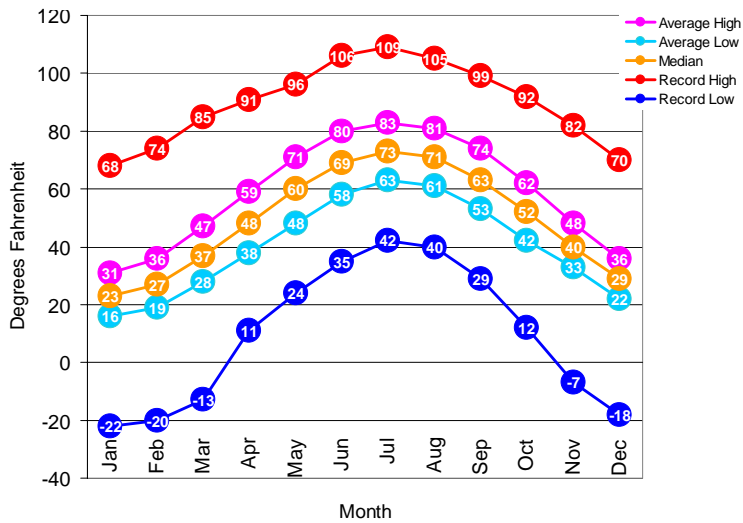
Goose Lake, located east of Leet, is a shallow lake and wetland area comprising of 0.15 square miles. Several areas in section 5 also have low land wet areas which stretch north into Howard Township.

## Climate

Milton Township is located in a climate band known as "Dfa, Humid Continental, Warm Summer." This band runs from the central great planes, through the Ohio River Valley, to the upper-middle east coast and often does not result in unusually violent weather such as hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, or severe droughts. However, heavy snowstorms in

the winter and strong thunder storms in the summer are likely to occur. This climate typically has a wide range of temperatures with the highest

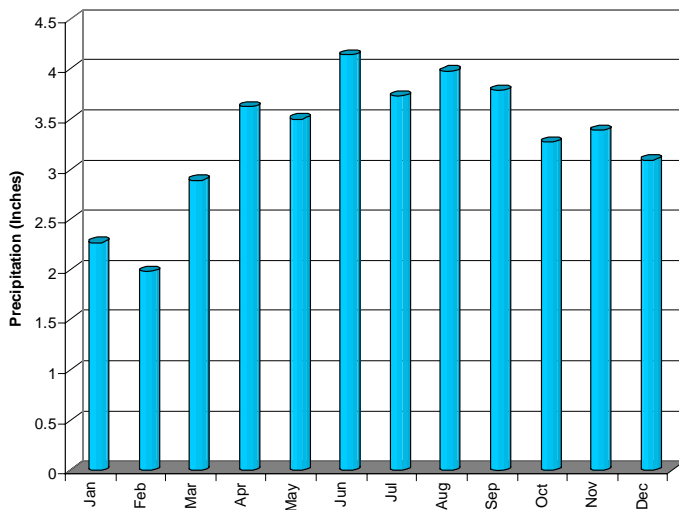
**Graph 3.1  
Temperature**



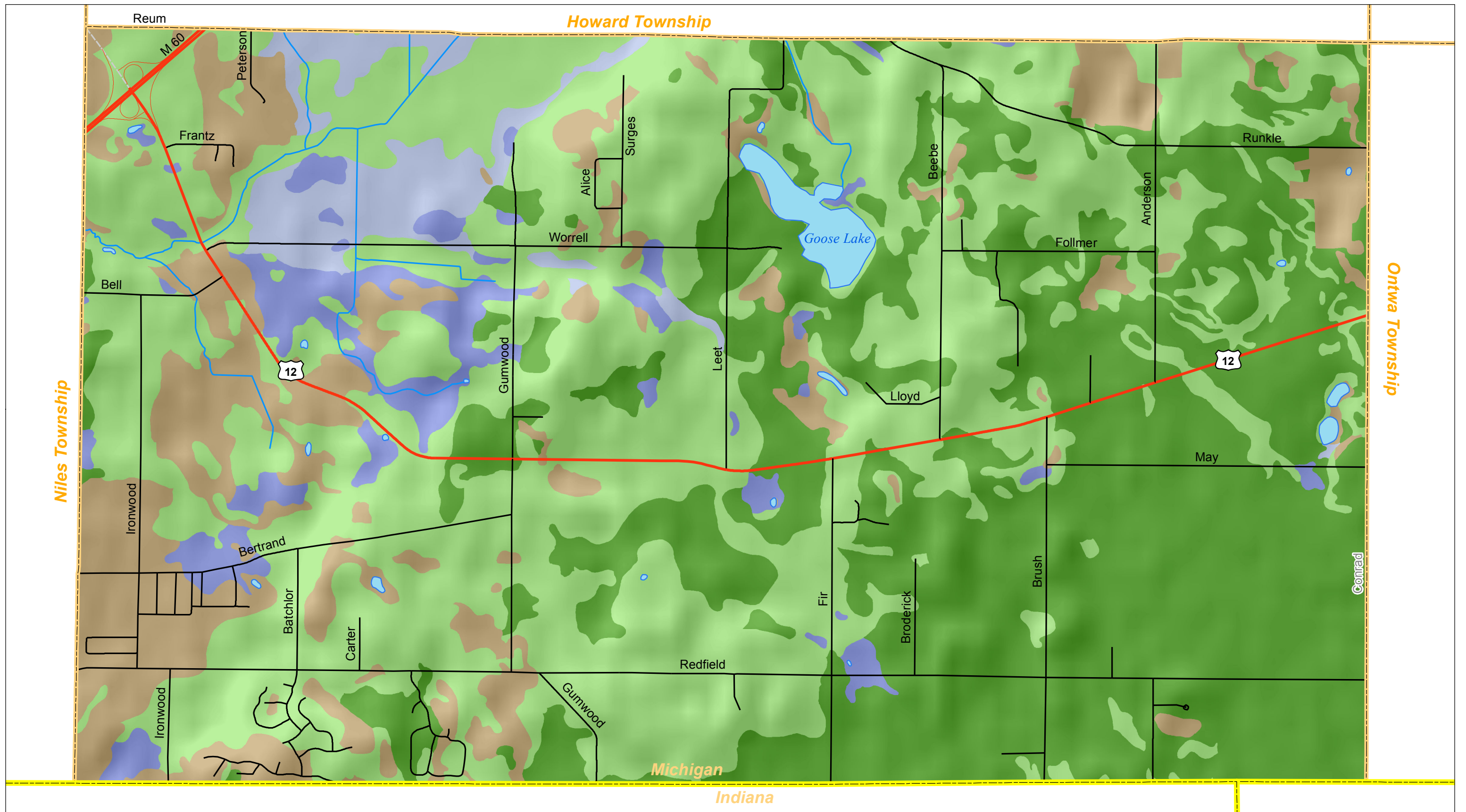
temperature in July and the lowest in January. As noted in Graph 2.1, Milton Township has a record high temperature of 109 degrees Fahrenheit (July 24, 1934) with a median July temperature of 73 degrees Fahrenheit. The Township has a record low of 22 degrees Fahrenheit below zero, (January 20, 1943 and January 25, 1987) whereas the median January temperature is 23 degrees Fahrenheit. The median year round temperature is 49 degrees Fahrenheit.

The average yearly rainfall is almost 40 inches per year with the peak months in June and August, both around 4 inches. The Township experiences the least in February with less than two inches. Like other locations within the Dfa climate, precipitation is often in the form of snow during December, January and February and rain the remaining months.

**Graph 3.2  
Precipitation**







# Milton Township Master Plan

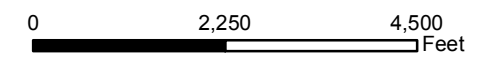
Cass County, Michigan

Map 2. Prime Farmland Soils

### Legend

- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding
- Not prime farmland

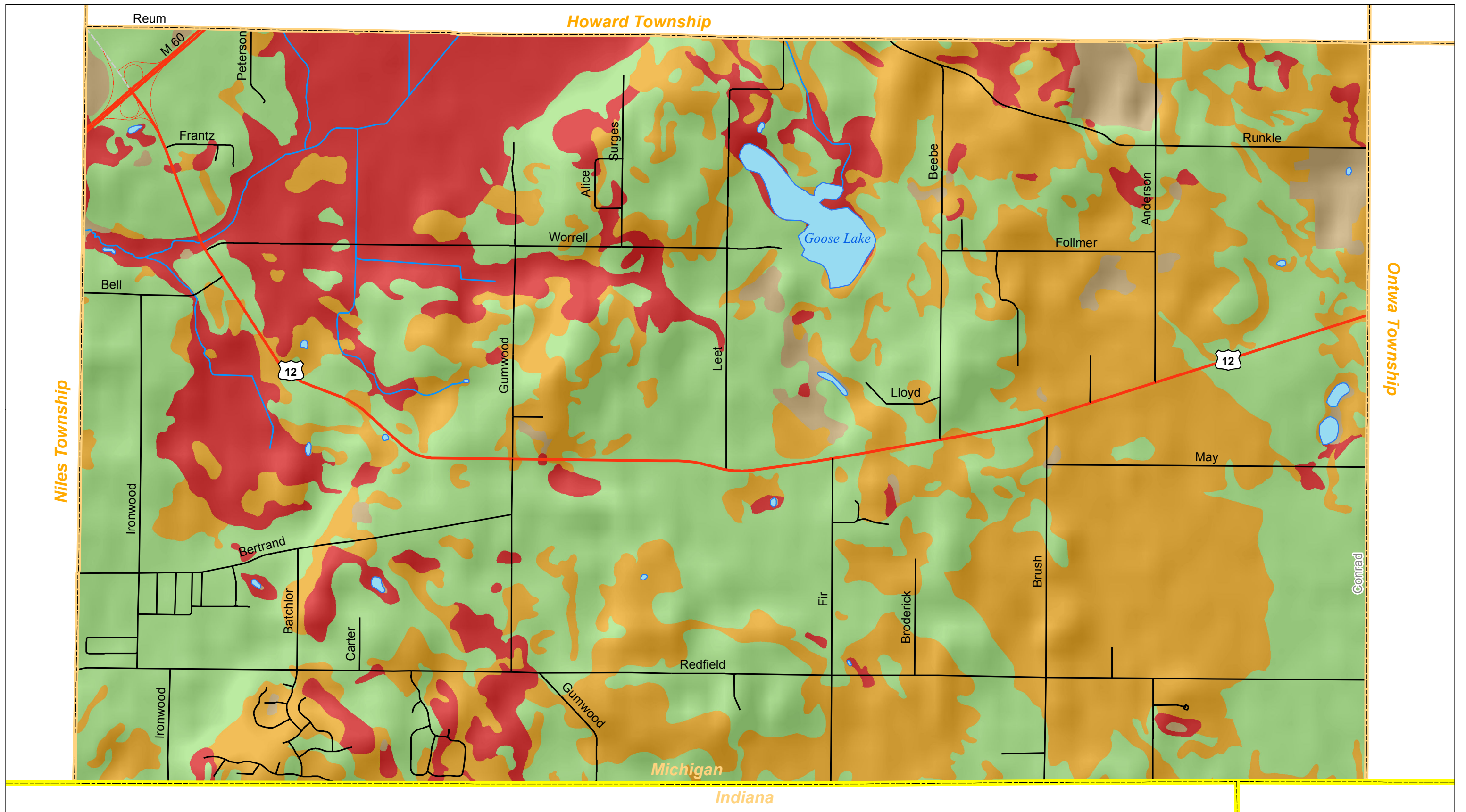
1 inch = 2,250 feet



**Williams & Works**

Source Data:  
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)





# Milton Township Master Plan

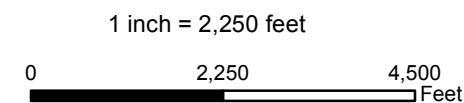
Cass County, Michigan

Map 3. Development Suitability

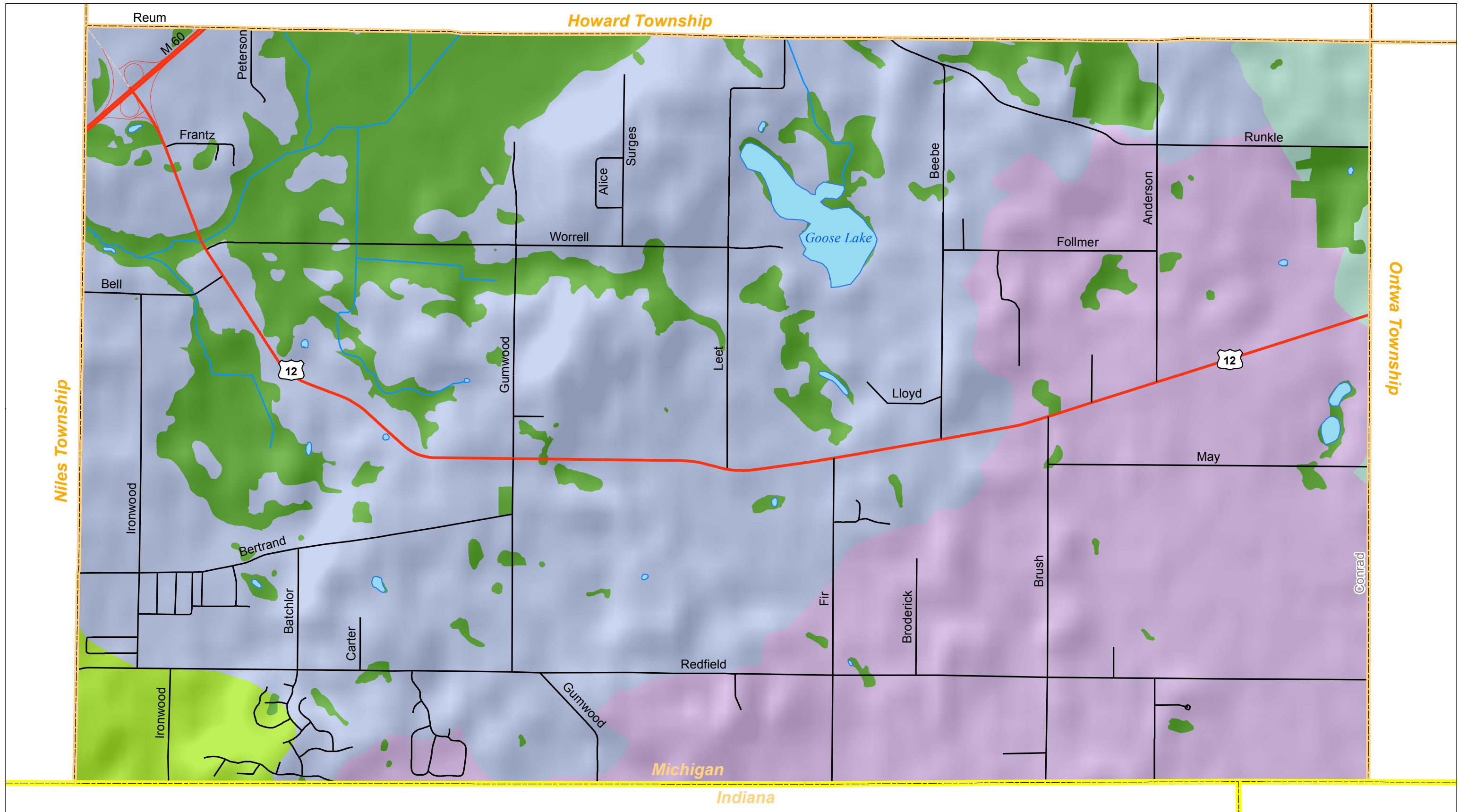
- Soils**
- Not rated
  - Not limited
  - Somewhat limited
  - Very limited



**Williams & Works**



Source Data:  
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



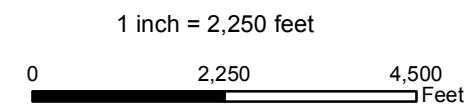
# Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

## Map 4. Watersheds

### Legend

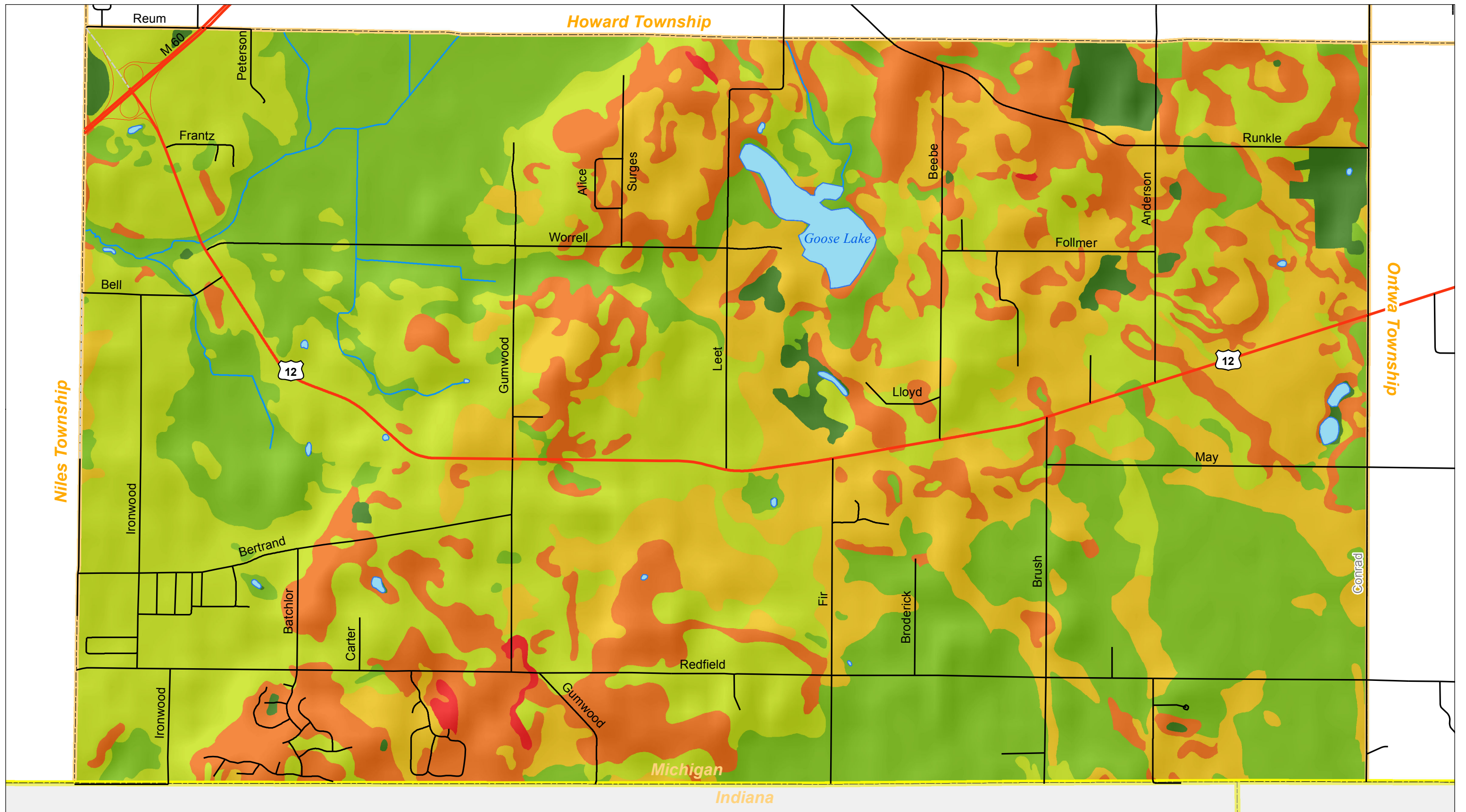
- St. Joseph River Watershed
- Brandywine Creek
- Cobus Creek
- Juday Creek
- St. Joseph River
- Areas of High Watertable



**Williams & Works**

Source Data:  
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



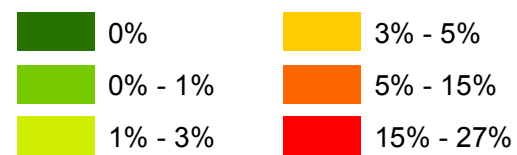


# Milton Township Master Plan

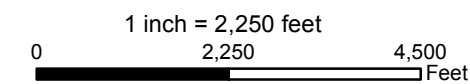
Cass County, Michigan

## Map 5. Topography & Slopes

### Legend



**Williams & Works**



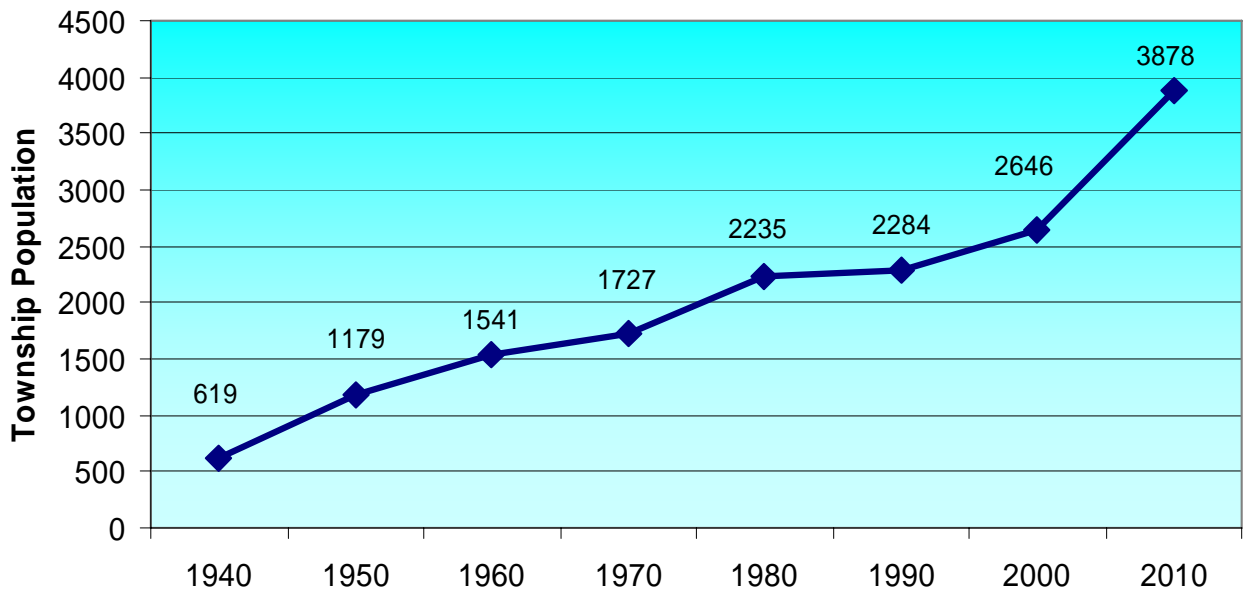
Source Data:  
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

# Chapter Three. Population

## Population Trends

The first U.S. Census for Milton Township was completed in 1840, with a reported population of 439. Between 1840 and 1940, the Township's population fluctuated, but did not substantially increase in number. After World War II, both Milton Township and Cass County began to grow. Between 1940 and 1970, the Township's population expanded by 179%, while the County grew by 97.7%. This post-war trend was greatly influenced by renewed national prosperity, which stimulated automobile and home ownership. Federal and state highway construction programs, along with federal housing programs, also contributed to this growth.

**Graph 3.1**  
Township Population, 1940 – 2010



### Milton Township, 1940 to 2000

Records show that between 1980 and 1990, the Township experienced its smallest population growth rate since World War I. This trend has been attributed to the poor economic conditions experienced in Michigan during that time period. The 2000 U.S. Census indicated that Milton Township had 2,646 people, an increase of about 16% over the 1990



population. But the rate of growth increased significantly between 2000 and 2010, primarily during the first half of the decade before the economic recession. From 2000 to 2010, the Township grew by about 47% and was among the top 15 fastest growing communities in Michigan based on percentage increase, mostly because of the Township’s small base population.

**Comparison to Surrounding Communities**

Milton Township is a fractional township, which means it only has 21.4 square miles, instead of the typical 36 square miles in total land area. This is important when analyzing the Township's development in comparison with its neighbors.

**Table 3.1  
Median Age, 2010**

	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Michigan	37.6	40.0	38.9
Cass County	41.8	43.4	42.6
Niles Township	Unavailable*		41.9
Howard Township	43.8	46.0	44.9
Jefferson Township	42.9	46.3	44.6
<b>Milton Township</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>43.9</b>
Ontwa Township	41.2	42.0	41.6

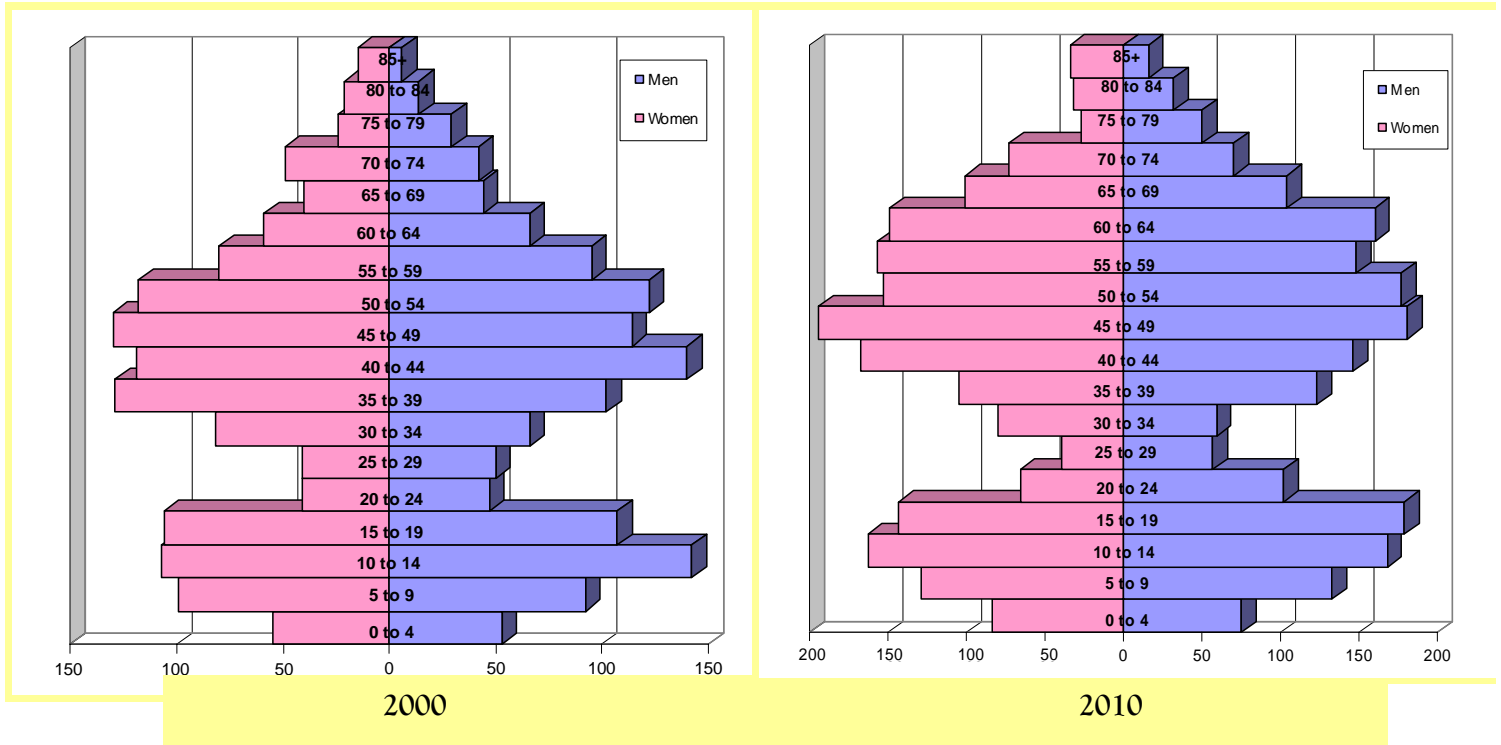
\* Note, as of this writing, not all 2010 census information is available

**Age Distribution of Population**

Compared to the State of Michigan and Cass County, Milton Township had a slightly older population in 2010. The median age of Milton Township's population was 43.9 years old, which was 5 years older than the median for the State and over 7 years older than the median for the United States, based on the 2008 estimate for the latter. In 1990 and 2000, the median age in the Township was only 35.1 years old and 40.1 years old, respectively; revealing a general aging trend.

The Township's higher median age can be traced to the larger percentage of persons within the 50 to 74 age cohort. Over 40% of Milton Township's population was within the traditional employment age and family-forming range of 35 to 59 years old, similar to the State overall. Graph 3.2 illustrates that the age of the population has shifted slightly compared to 2000, with a greater percentage of people over the age of 55. Additionally, it appears that the bulk of people who were under the age of 19 in 2000 have left the community. Table 3.2 further compares the Township with the County and State overall.

Graph 3.2  
Population by Age and Gender, 2000 and 2010



Since 1980, the share of pre-school and school age population has decreased, while the percentage of family forming adults has remained slightly more stable. Thus, it can be inferred that there are slightly more parents and fewer children in the community, in proportion to the total population, than in 2000. This corresponds with the Township's decrease in household size from 3.14 persons per household in 1980, to 2.81 in 2000, and down to 2.79 persons in 2010.

The Township's share of family forming and mature family adults (ages 22-64) has decreased by less than 1% while retirement-age adults (65 and over) increased 3.5 % between 1990 and 2000. The increase of retirement age persons could be traced multiple factors ranging from improved medical technology and health care facilities in the region, to a lack of in-migration or loss of family forming adults.

**Table 3.2**  
**2010 Population Age Percentages**

	Michigan	Cass County	Milton Township
0-19	26.8%	26.2%	27.7%
20-24	6.8%	4.8%	4.3%
25-64	52.6%	53.1%	54.2%
65+	13.7%	16%	14%

**Population Projections**

To estimate future population growth, statistical averaging techniques were employed to project the Township’s likely population growth to the year 2030. These techniques may be helpful, especially since the most recent Census information is ten years old and updated estimates are two years old. These approaches are intended to provide a very general sense of future growth. Future growth trends may not parallel historical statistical trends in communities such as Milton that have experienced rapid rates of development, in part because developable acreage has been consumed over time. The following generalizations are limited in scope and are based on past trends documented by the United States Census Bureau and the Milton Township Building Department, and future projections from the Michigan Department of Transportation.

These projections for the Township have implications pertaining to future land use, the demand for various public services and capital improvements, and help to understand the future position of the Township in terms of growth and total population. The following describes the projection techniques.

**Growth Rate Method**

This model assumes that the amount of population will increase over a period of time at the same percentage as previous growth rates. Milton Township grew at an annualized rate of 2.65% each year between 1940 and 2010; therefore under this method, the population would continue to grow at this rate in the future. These figures are likely to be high as the economic conditions within the State of Michigan have slowed due primarily to the lack of new jobs in the area and an out-migration of recent college graduates.

	Average Annual Growth Rate 1940 - 2010	2010 Population	Projection	
			2020	2030
Milton Township	2.65%	3,878	5,037	6,543

**Ratio Method**

This model assumes that Milton Township will maintain the same percentage of Cass County's population in future years, which was 7.41% in 2010. According to estimates prepared by Woods & Pool Economics, the County's population is forecasted to be 53,076 in 2020 and 56,706 in 2030. Using this method, if the Township continued to account for 7.41% of the County, it would have the following population.

	2010 Population	Projection	
		2020	2030
Cass County	52,293	53,076	56,706
Milton Township	3,878	3,932	4,201

**Arithmetic Method**

This method assumes that the growth experienced in previous decades will continue into the future. It is recommended that a longer historic timeframe be used for a more accurate forecast. From 1940 to 2010, the Township gained 3,259 persons or about 47 per year. Using this annual increase, it is possible to extrapolate the following.

	Average Annual Increase (Number of Persons)	2010 Population	Projection	
			2020	2030
Milton Township	47	3,878	4,348	4,818

**Building Permit.** The Building Permit Method may be the most reliable projection method because it projects population trends based on current building permit data. It was determined that the Township has issued an average of about residential 24 building permits annually since 1999. This average is substantially higher than more recent trends from 2008 where only 7 new home permits were issued and in 2009, where only 6 permits were issued.

Assuming that the building activity will rebound and continue at this average rate, and utilizing the Township's average household size of 2.79 persons (2010 U.S. Census), future population figures can be estimated. This method predicts that the Township will increase approximately 66.9 persons per year. Using this figure, the Township's population using the

building permit method will be 4,547 by 2020 and 5,216 by 2030. However, as noted above, the actual number of building permits expected to be issued in the next few years may be less than the 24-permit average.

	Average No. of Permits/ Year <sup>(1)</sup>	Pph <sup>(2)</sup>	2010 Population	Projection 2020	Projection 2030
Milton Township	24	2.79	3,878	4547	5,216

<sup>(1)</sup> Based on building permit data provided by the Township.

<sup>(2)</sup> Pph - Persons per household as per 2010 U.S. Census data.

To overcome some of the limitations of each of the projection techniques, the results from the four tables may be averaged. The following table presents the average of each of the four techniques with a resulting set of projections for Milton Township.

	2010 Population	Projection	
		2020	2030
Growth Rate Method	3,878	5,037	6,543
Ratio Method	3,878	3,979	4,201
Arithmetic Method	3,878	4,348	4,818
Building Permit Method	3,878	4,547	5,216
<b>Average</b>	<b>3,878</b>	<b>4,477</b>	<b>5,195</b>

# Chapter Four. Housing & Economic Development

## Educational Attainment

The educational attainment for persons 25 years and older was comparable to County and State averages, as shown in Table 4.1. The percent of Milton Township residents 25 years and older with a high school degree or higher was 87.5%.

**Table 4.1**  
**Educational Attainment**

	United States	Michigan	Cass County	St Joseph County, IN	Howard Township	<b>Milton Township</b>	Ontwa Township
Less than HS Diploma	15.5%	12.6%	14.9%	13.9%	11.3%	<b>12.5%</b>	12.1%
HS Diploma	29.3%	31.8%	38.0%	32.8%	38.4%	<b>33.9%</b>	33.0%
Some College No Degree	20.3%	23.1%	23.1%	20.8%	25.3%	<b>21.9%</b>	29.5%
Associate Degree	7.4%	8.0%	8.1%	6.7%	9.5%	<b>7.2%</b>	5.9%
Bachelor's Degree	17.4%	15.2%	10.7%	15.8%	10.1%	<b>17.0%</b>	12.4%
Graduate or Professional Degree	10.1%	9.3%	5.4%	9.9%	5.4%	<b>7.6%</b>	7.0%

## Income

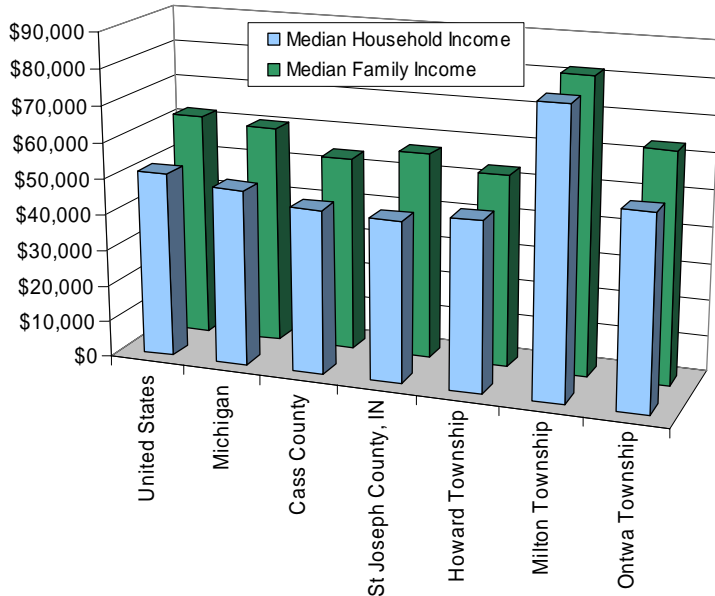
Graph 4.1 shows the median household<sup>1</sup> and family<sup>2</sup> income in Milton Township, surrounding communities, Cass County, St. Joseph County and the State of Michigan and is based on 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The US Census Bureau defines household as “A person or group of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The number of households equals the number of occupied housing units in a census.”

<sup>2</sup> The US Census Bureau defines family as “a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A family household may contain people not related to the householder, but those people are not included as part of the householder’s family in census tabulations. Thus, the number of family households is equal to the number of families, but family households may include more members than do families. A household can contain only one family for purposes of census tabulations. Not all households contain families since a household may comprise a group of unrelated people or one person living alone.”

<sup>3</sup> Information on educational attainment and income was not gathered in the 2010 complete Census, but is provided through the latest American Community Survey reports.

**Graph 4.1  
Median Household and Family Incomes**



The Township's median family income was \$81,725 and the median household income was \$78,984. As shown in Graph 4.1, both are higher in the Township than the State, County, and surrounding townships.

The labor force consists of those Cass County residents age 16 and over who are currently working and those who are not working but actively seeking work. The labor force was 65.88% of the population in 2000. In 2009, the County reported an unemployment of 11% which is almost twice the 2008 average rate.

Table 4.2 shows that over 40% of Milton Township's labor force worked in the service industry in 2000. Manufacturing and construction, was the second largest employer at 35.6%, followed by retail / wholesale trade at

11.86%. This is a shift from the 1990 census where manufacturing employed more people than the service industry. This manufacturing to service industry shift is consistent across much of the Midwest.

**Table 4.2  
Employment Classes**

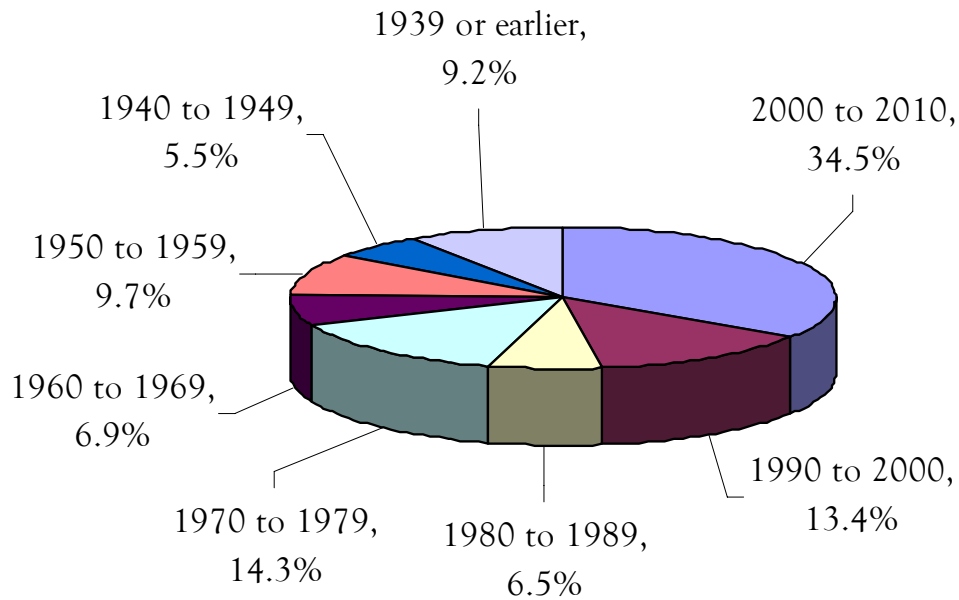
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.59%
Construction	7.48%
Manufacturing	28.12%
Wholesale trade	2.19%
Retail trade	9.67%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6.73%
Information*	0.98%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing*	3.10%
Professional, scientific, mgmt, admin, & waste management services*	7.03%
Educational, health and social services*	19.20%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services*	5.82%
Other services (except public administration)*	6.80%
Public administration*	1.28%

\* denotes service industry employment

## Housing Stock

According to the 2000 Census, a total of 964 units comprised the Township's housing stock, and represents an increase of 171 housing units between 1990 and 2000. This total constituted 4% of the County's overall housing stock, a 0.5% increase over a decade. Records show that 96.6% of the Township's 2000 housing stock consisted of single-family homes. By the 2010 Census, the Township had a reported total 1,471 housing units, reflecting the remarkable growth experienced in the early years of the decade.

**Graph 4.2**  
**Year Structure Built**



Graph 4.2 shows that over 85% of the Township's housing stock was built after 1950 and slightly more than one-half of Milton Township's housing was built between 1980 and 2010, according to the 2010 U.S. Census..



## Household and Family Size

As shown in Table 4.3, the 2010 US Census determined that the average household size in Milton Township is 2.79 persons per household. Average household size has decreased from 3.14 in 1980 and from 2.81 in 2000. In comparison, average persons per household for Cass County also decreased from 2.86 to 2.51 during the same time period.

This decrease corresponds with the national trend toward smaller households due to various social reasons (e.g., couples are having fewer children, higher divorce rates, and an increased number of single-parent families). This decline is important when analyzing future housing needs and population projections as housing units will be occupied by fewer people.

**Table 4.3  
Median Household and Median Family Size**

	United States	Michigan	Cass County	Clay Township	Harris Township	Howard Township	Milton Township	Ontwa Township
Average Household Size	2.58	2.49	2.51	2.29	2.84	2.45	2.79	2.5
Average Family Size	3.14	3.05	2.96	2.88	3.27	2.87	3.09	2.94

## Chapter Five. Land Use & Development Patterns

### Existing Land Use

This article reviews Milton Township as it exists, providing a snapshot of current land use patterns and a thorough description of its community character. Existing land uses within Milton Township were specifically broken down into 11 general categories based upon the standard land cover/use categories established under the Michigan Resources Information System (MIRIS). These are described below and illustrated generally on Map 6.



#### 1. Agricultural

Agricultural land is broadly defined as land used primarily for the production of farm commodities. This includes raising of crops or livestock for commercial purposes. At about 6,729 acres or 49% of the land area, agriculture accounts for the largest share of land cover within the Township and includes both crops and livestock.



#### 2. Commercial

Commercial areas are those used predominantly for the sale of products and services. These include central business districts, shopping centers, commercial strip developments, and resorts. Milton Township has limited commercial operations, however the residents are served by several of the commercial areas within neighboring municipalities.



#### 3. Extractive

Extractive land encompasses both surface and subsurface mining operations, such as sand and gravel pits, stone quarries, oil and gas wells, and metallic and nonmetallic mines. Several gravel mining businesses are in operation, primarily in the north east area of the Township, covering about 283 acres.



**4. Forested**

Forested lands are lands that are at least ten percent covered by or stocked with trees producing an influence on the climate or water regime.



**5. Industrial**

Industrial areas may include a wide array of uses from light manufacturing and industrial parks to heavy manufacturing plants. Milton Township’s largest employer, Hess Manufacturing, is a light industrial facility, located at 30287 Redfield.



**6. Open Field**

Open field land is defined as areas supporting early stages of plant succession consisting of plant communities characterized by grasses or shrubs. Most of the Township’s open fields are associated with other uses. These include fallow fields, or pasture lands, subdivisions, riding stables, or similar private uses.



**7. Recreational**

Recreational land includes areas used for outdoor, public assembly, and recreational purposes. They may, however, include incidental buildings such as shelters, toilets, beach changing areas, etc. The Township has only one recreational facility, a baseball field behind the Township Offices, although a private golf course exists on the border. Several recreational facilities, including soccer fields, tennis courts and school playgrounds are located within the surrounding communities.





**8. Residential**

Residential land uses range from high density, represented by multiple unit structures, to low density, where houses are on lots of more than an acre. The Township has several different residential styles including modern subdivisions, older farm houses, rural country houses, and several large lot homes on a golf course. Residential lands comprise about 1,586 acres or about 12% of the Township’s land area.



**9. Water**

Water includes all areas that are predominantly or persistently covered with water. Water bodies that are vegetated are placed in the wetlands category. Milton Township has one water body, Goose Lake located in the center of the Township.



**10. Wetlands**

Wetlands are those areas where the water table is at, near, or above the land surface for a significant part of most years. Examples include marshes, mudflats, wooded swamps, and floating vegetation situated on the shallow margins of lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, and man-made impounds such as reservoirs. Several areas of wetlands dot the central sections of the Township.

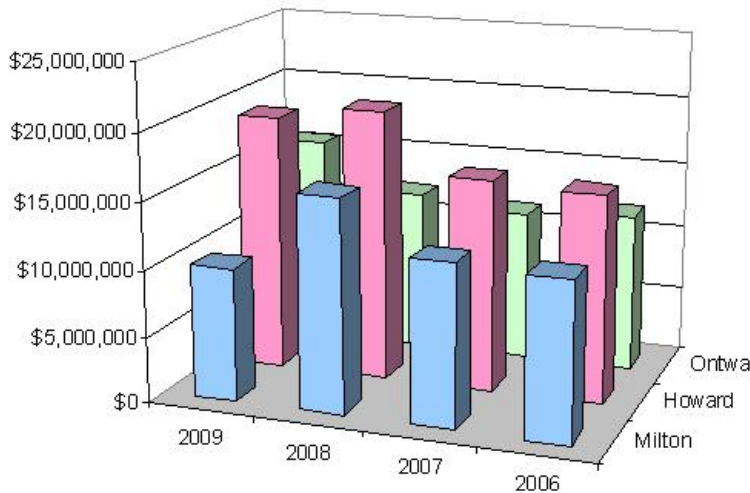
**11. Other**

These classifications include land used for transportation, communication, and utilities infrastructure such as highway right-of-ways and cemeteries.

Map 6 shows Milton Township's land use cover in 2009. It is important to understand that data sources for this study were taken from a photo interpretation analysis done on aerial photographs from 2008 and on site review in the spring of 2010. The map is generalized in character and not a representation of precise land use on an individual parcel basis.

## State Equalized Values

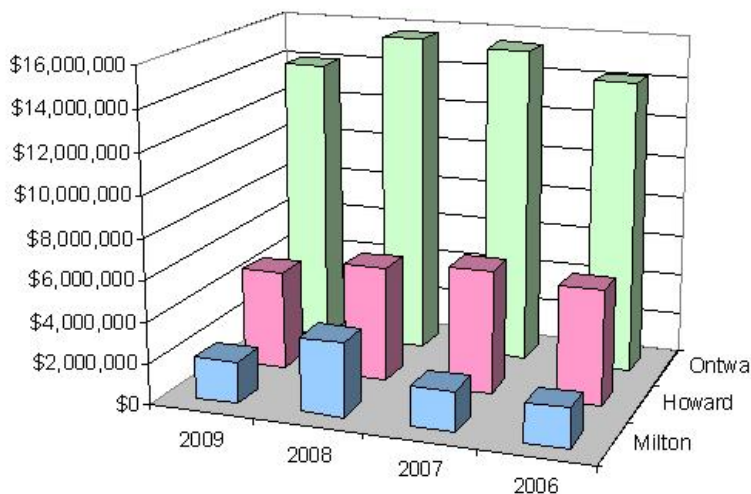
**Graph 5.1  
Agricultural SEV**



### Agricultural

One measure of land use is the value of the real property as determined by the State Equalized Value (SEV). As indicated in graph 5.1, the value of agricultural land has decreased from 2008 to 2009. This however is because a new “Developmental” land use category was established and lands poised for development were shifted to that category. In comparison to Ontwa and Howard Townships, Milton had a lower SEV for agricultural land in 2009, but traditionally, has had a higher value than Ontwa.

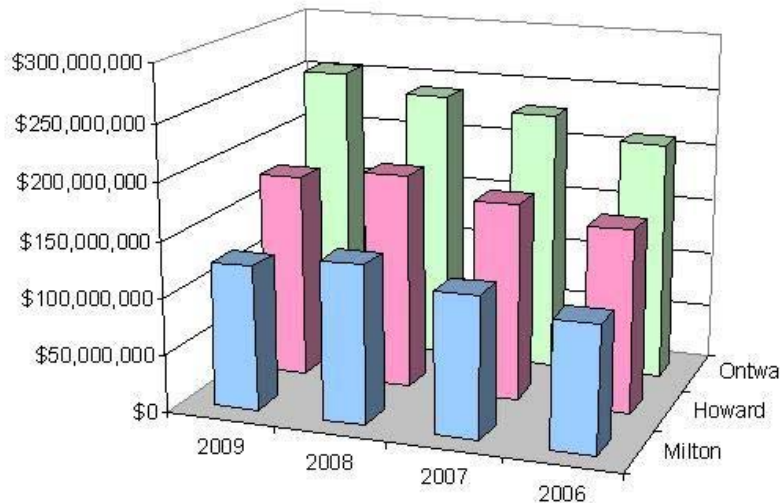
**Graph 5.2  
Commercial SEV**



### Commercial

Milton Township’s rural nature is a defining characteristic. This is reflected in the commercial SEV values when compared to other municipalities. Ontwa Township has a stronger commercial base than both Howard and Milton Townships. In 2009, the Commercial SEV decreased from \$3,603,700 in 2008 to \$2,062,600. This, too, is partly due to shifts to the new developmental category, but could also be a reflection of the economy and declining property values.

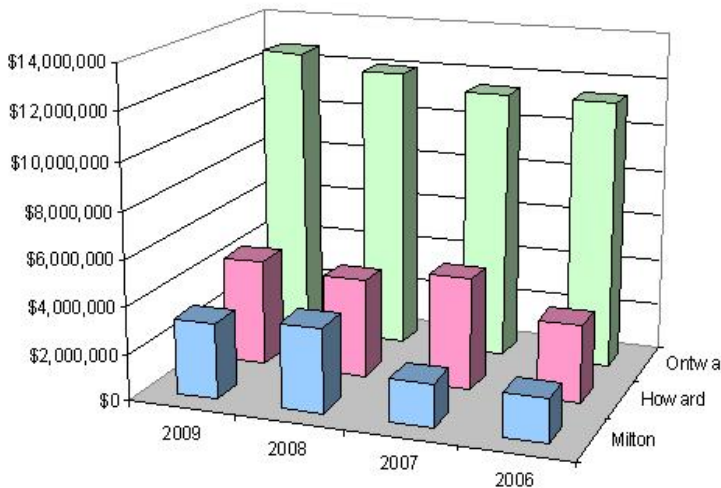
**Graph 5.3  
Residential SEV**



**Residential**

Residential land use is often the largest component of local real property in terms of SEV. However the cost of services demanded by residential lands is often greater than the property tax income it generates. This land use accounts for 84% of the total 2009 Milton Township SEV. Like many other municipalities, Milton and Howard Township’s residential SEV decreased between 2008 and 2009.

**Graph 5.4  
Industrial SEV**



**Industrial**

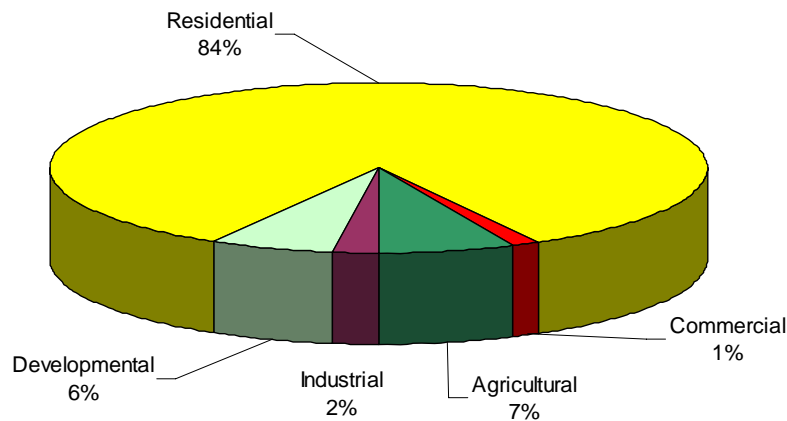
Much like commercial land uses, Milton Township has a substantially lower Industrial SEV compared to Ontwa Township. The \$3,255,500 value accounts for only 2% of the total 2009 Milton Township SEV and 7.35% of Cass County total. This is a slight decrease from the 2008 Industrial SEV of \$3,603,700.

**Overall Township SEV Breakdown**

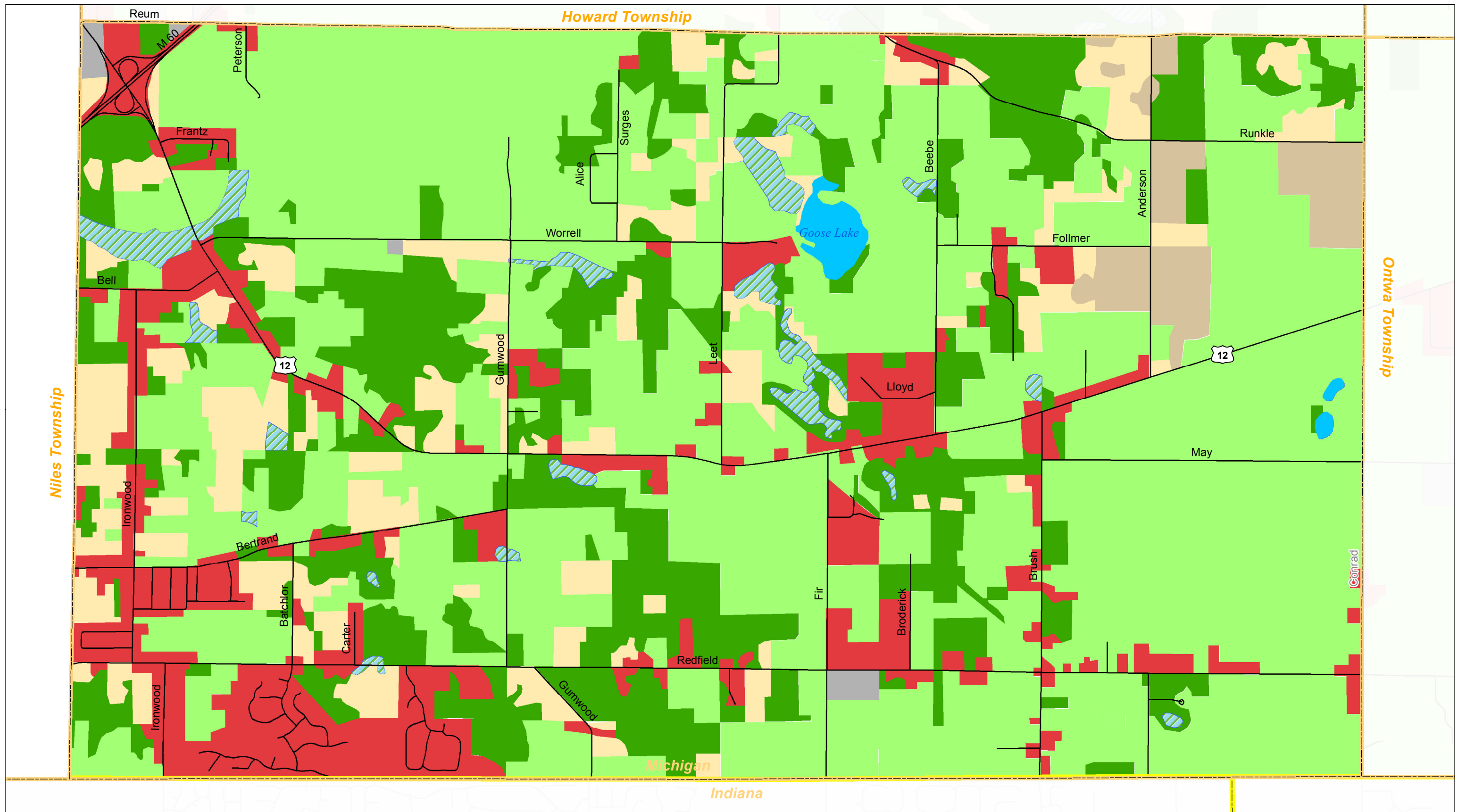
In 2009, 84% of the total Township SEV was residential, followed by 7% for agricultural, 6% for developmental, 2% for industrial and only 1% for commercial. Only 2% of the Township SEV is drawn from the Industrial classification as compared to more than 7% for the county overall.

Another interesting comparison is the fact that land values within Milton Township account for more than 18% of County’s 2009 total SEV, but the Township only occupies 21.4 square miles which is only 4.2% of the County and its population represents only 5.67 % of the County.

**Graph 5.5**  
2009 Milton Township SEV







# Milton Township Master Plan

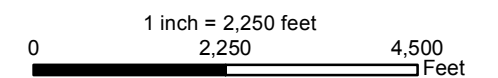
Cass County, Michigan

## Map 6. Current Land Use

Note: This map is based on photo interpretation and onsite review; but must be regarded as generalized and not precise at the parcel level.

### Legend

- Wetlands
- Water
- Rangeland
- Urban and Built Up
- Forest Land
- Agricultural Land
- Industrial
- Extractive



**Williams & Works**



# Chapter Six. Community Facilities & Services

## Public Schools

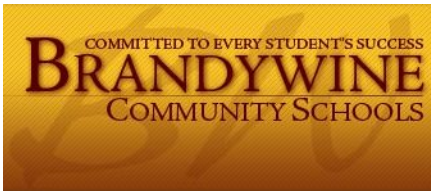
The Brandywine and Edwardsburg Public School Districts, both of which educate grades K-12, serve Milton Township. While there are no K-12 public schools located within Milton Township, Southwestern Michigan College - Niles Campus is located in the northwest corner of the Township.

### Edwardsburg Public Schools:



Serving the east portion of Milton Township, the Edwardsburg School system has five schools and serves the majority of township residents. According to the 2009 Strategic Plan, “the Edwardsburg Public Schools shall provide the best and most comprehensive education possible for each student within the limits of the resources of the district. The school shall share with the parents the responsibility for the development of appropriate moral, ethical, and social values in the students as well as the responsibility for developing aesthetic values and appreciation. To meet the challenges of an ever changing world, the school shall share with the community the responsibility to plan, initiate, and provide programs and experiences so that individual pupils will develop the skills they need to accomplish their best and fulfill their potential.”

### Brandywine Public Schools:



Brandywine Public Schools District is located in the western part of the Township. The district contains four schools and serves over 1,400 students each year. Brandywine’s mission is “to provide every student – through the cooperative efforts of community, students, staff and parents – an outstanding education in a safe, caring environment that prepares all for life-long success in an ever changing world.”

Under state law, the “schools of choice” provision permits local school districts to enroll nonresident students without the permission of the district of residence. Therefore, although the Township is encompassed within two districts, students who live in the Township may potentially attend other districts. Map 7 illustrates school district boundaries.

### Southwestern Michigan College



The Southwestern-Michigan College (SMC) - Niles Area Campus is located in the northwestern corner of Milton Township, adjacent to the M-12 interchange. In 1998 SMC constructed a \$3.1 million addition which doubled the original size of its campus. Currently, 5,000 students

attend classes at the full service educational facility. SMC provides important technical training and education for area residents.

According to the SMC website, “The Niles Area Campus offers day, evening, and weekend classes. The Niles Area Campus also offers academic support services ranging from financial aid advising to drop-in tutoring at the Teaching and Learning Center. The Michigan Technical Education Center (MTEC @ SMC) is also located at our Niles Area Campus.”

## **Fire Protection**

Two Fire Districts currently serve Milton Township. The service is divided at Gumwood, with the Niles Township Fire Department serving the western part and the Edwardsburg Fire Department serving the eastern part of the Township. Equipment and manpower are reported to be sufficient to fight fires and provide emergency response within Milton Township. Map 8 illustrates fire districts.

## **Police Protection**

The Michigan State Police and Cass County Sheriffs Department provide police protection within the Township.

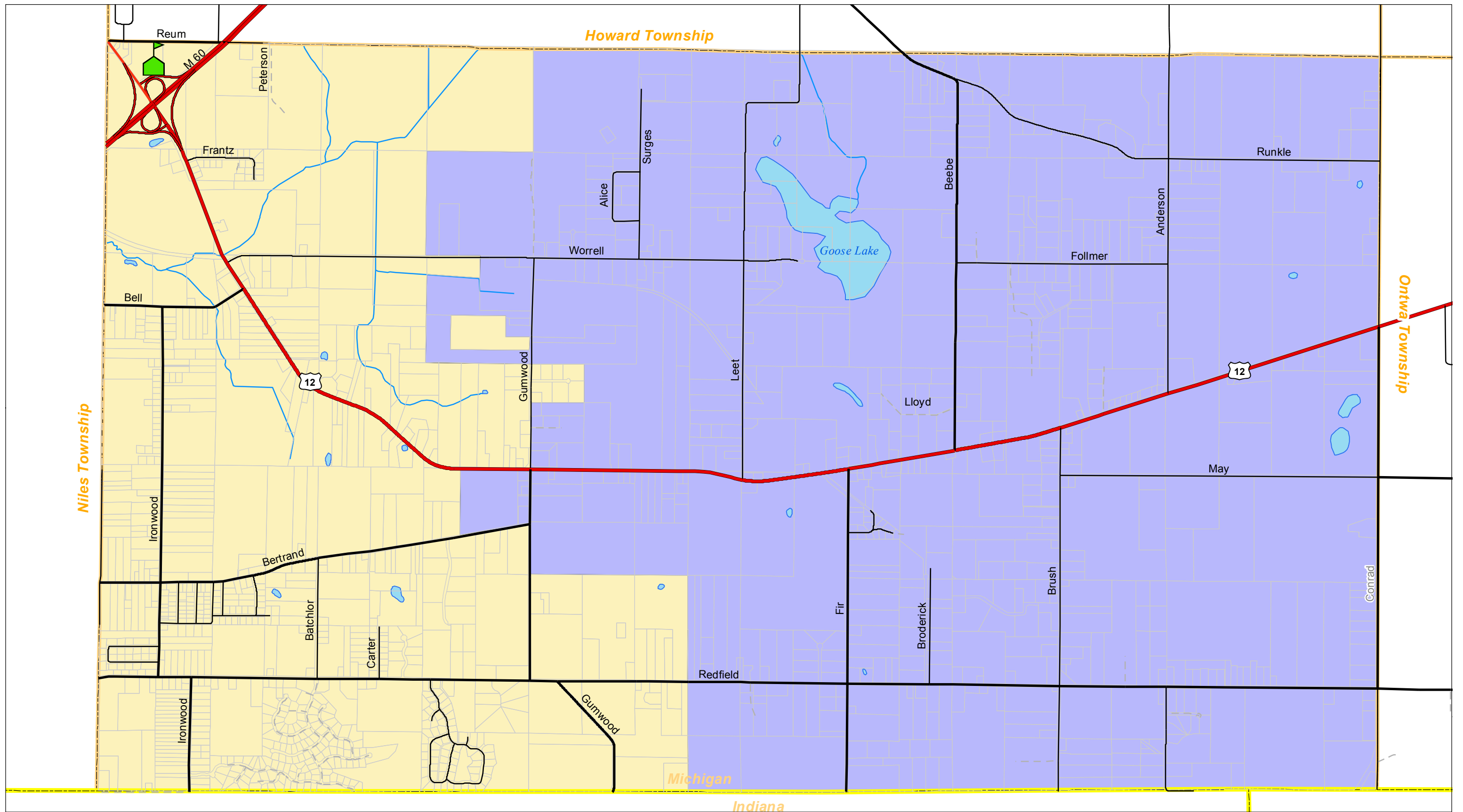
## **Emergency Ambulance**

The Township engages a yearly contract with a local ambulance service.

## **Government Services and Facilities**

Milton Township operates with a five member elected Board of Trustees, seven member appointed Planning Commission, three member appointed Zoning Board of Appeals, and a three member appointed Board of Review. The Township has one part time secretary, but no full time staff. The Township contracts with local experts to provide assistance ranging from assessing to zoning administration.





In the late 1990’s the Township opened a new office facility south of Bertrand, between Ironwood and Gumwood. This building is located adjacent to the Township Community Center and 15-acre Township Park.

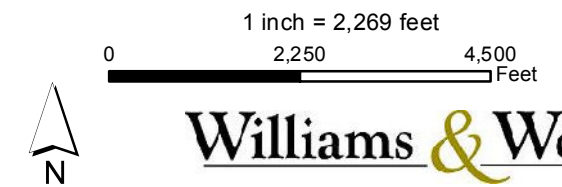


# Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

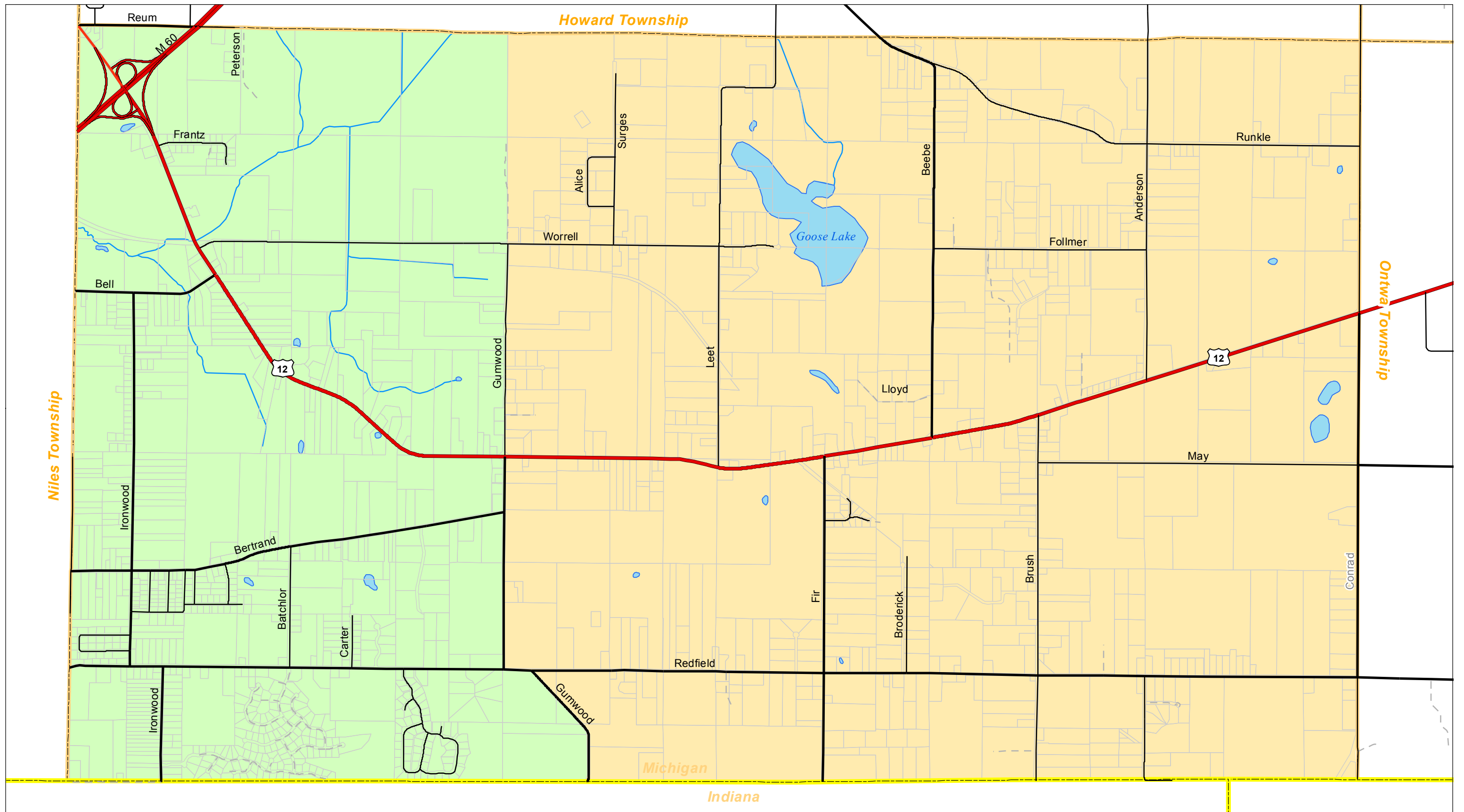
## Map 7. School Districts

-  Parcels
-  Brandywine Community Schools
-  Edwardsburg Public Schools
-  Southwestern Michigan College, Nilis Campus



**Williams & Works**

Source Data:  
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



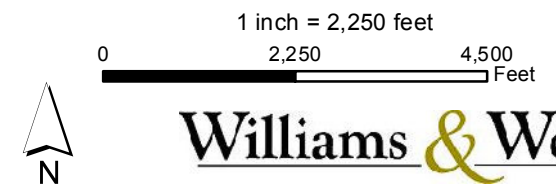
# Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

Map 8. Fire Districts

## Fire Districts

- Edwardsburg Fire
- Niles Twp Fire



**Williams & Works**

Source Data:  
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

## Smith's Chapel



The Township owns and maintains Smith's Chapel, located north of Redfield, between Brush and Fir. The facility is a historic structure that was restored in 2009. Smith's Chapel is the oldest known church building in Cass County, and probably also the oldest in southwest Michigan according to the State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office. Built in 1840 by settlers on Beardsley's Prairie in what became Milton Township, the chapel is the most visible product of an early colonization of the area by settlers from Delaware. The work of Methodist circuit preachers led to the organization of a church on July 1, 1839. Cannon and Charlotte Smith, formerly of Delaware, sold the land and donated liberally to build the chapel which was named in their honor. In 1879, contractor W. S. Beswick was hired to remodel and modernize the church. The adjoining cemetery grounds were purchased in 1872 and many remains and monuments of early settlers, including those of the Smiths, moved from family plots to this ground. The chapel is no longer used for regular worship, but is occasionally the site of weddings and funerals, and is available for other events, as well.



## Chapter Seven. Utilities & Transportation

### Public Water and Sewer Facilities

Public water and sewer services are extremely costly for local units of government to provide to their residents. Currently, the Township is not served by either public water or sewer. Most residents have not needed or desired these services due to the Township's good soils and low population density. If needed, public water and sewer connections may be possible in neighboring Niles Township in Berrien County. Possible connections exist along the Township line at Redfield, Bertrand, Bell, and US-12. Both water and sewer systems are reported to have capacity for future growth.

### Road Classifications

The National Functional Classification is a planning tool which federal, state, and local transportation agencies have used since the late 1960's. The National Highway Administration developed this system of classifying all streets, roads, and highways according to their function. The National Functional Classification for the roads within Milton Township as of December 2009 includes the following:

#### Principal Arterials

These roads generally carry long distance, through-traffic. They also provide access to important traffic generators, such as major airports or regional shopping centers. Examples include interstate and other freeways; state routes between large cities, and important streets in large cities. M-60 and US-12 are the only principal arterial roads found in Milton Township, as shown on Map 9.

#### Minor Arterials

These roads are similar in function to principal arterials, except they carry trips of shorter distance and to lesser traffic generators. Examples include state routes between smaller cities, surface streets of medium importance in large cities, and important surface streets in smaller cities. Minor arterials found in Milton Township are Ironwood, Bell between Ironwood and US-12, Bertrand between the Berrien County border and Ironwood, Redfield between the Berrien County border and Gumwood, and Gumwood south of US-12.

#### Rural Collectors

These roads tend to provide more access to property than arterials. Collectors also funnel traffic from residential rural-areas to arterials. Examples include county, farm-to-market roads, and various connecting

streets in large and small cities. Roads classified as rural collectors within Milton Township include Beebe, Fir, Redfield east of Gumwood, Bertrand between Ironwood and Gumwood, Conrad between US-12 and Redfield, and Bell between the Township border and Ironwood.

### **Local Roads**

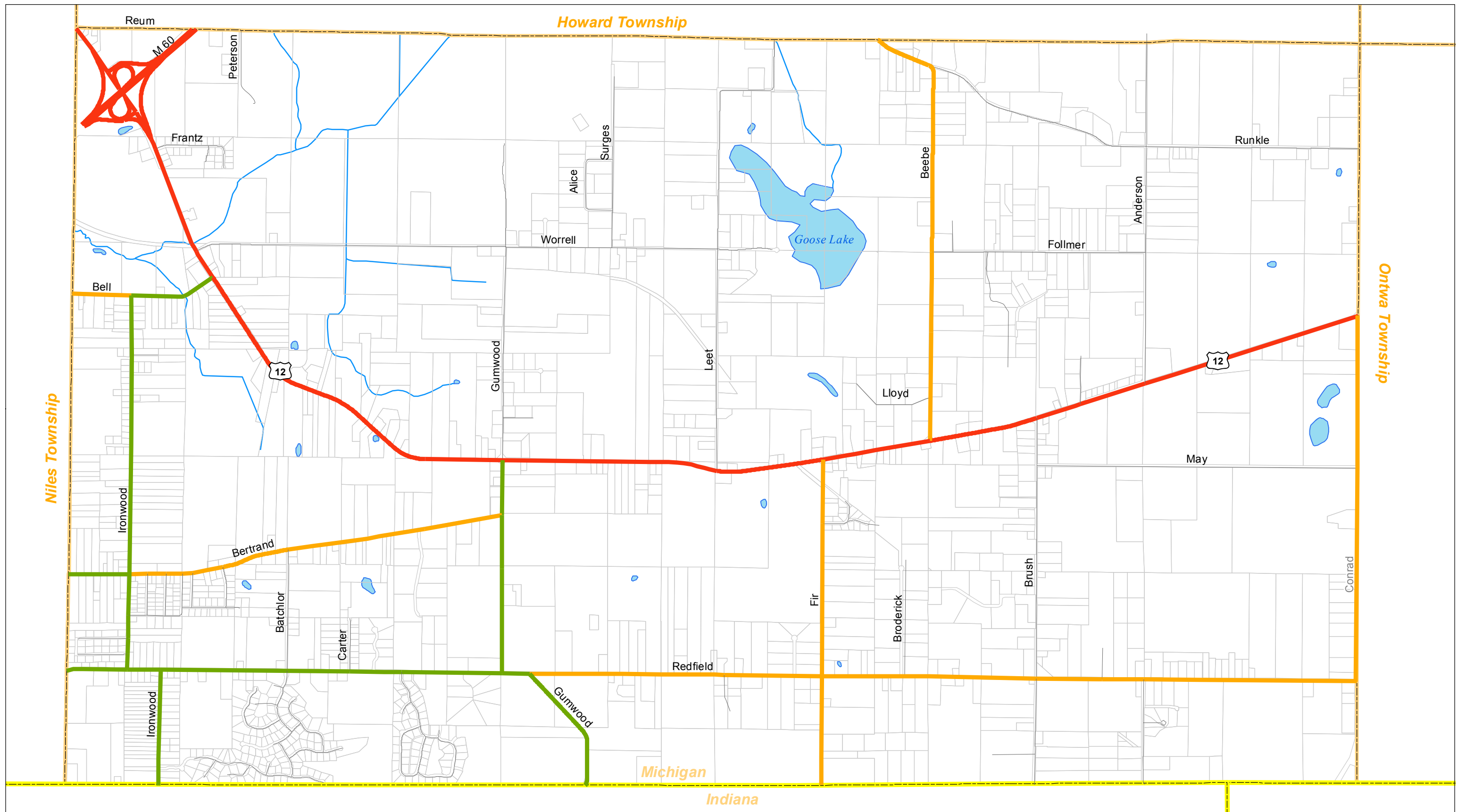
These roads primarily provide access to property. Examples include residential streets and lightly traveled county roads. All roads within Milton Township not classified as principal arterials, minor arterials, or collectors are considered local roads. The highest volume roads within Milton Township are found in the southwestern areas of the community. Redfield between the Berrien County border and Ironwood carries close to 10,000 vehicles per day.

### **Air Service**

The Jerry Tyler Memorial Airport located at 2018 Lake Street in the City of Niles is the closest airport to the Township. According to the a airport, it is a “general utility airport, owned and operated by the City of Niles. The airport serves general aviation needs in the Michiana area. Situated on the northeast side of the city at 2018 Lake St., the airport features a NW/SE 4,100 foot paved runway (15/33) and a NE/SW 3,300 paved runway (4/22). Approximately 35 aircraft are based at the airport. The airport provides both corporate and recreational flyers with a conveniently located facility.”

The closest airport with commercial service is the South Bend Regional Airport in South Bend Indiana which offers services from 5 carriers and with connections through O’Hare or Detroit, service around the world. In 2007, the South Bend Regional Airport completed construction of a 1,100-foot extension to the north/south runway for a total of 7,100 feet. In 2010, a new airport terminal was constructed with a 45,000 square foot concourse, 5 new gates, and accessory facilities including a lounge, gift shop, and children’s room.





# Milton Township Master Plan

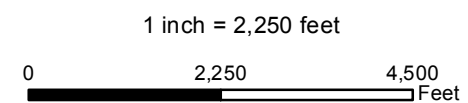
Cass County, Michigan

## Map 9. Road Classification

### Legend

#### Road Classification

-  Principal Arterials
-  Minor Arterials
-  Rural Collectors
-  Local Roads



**Williams & Works**

Source Data:  
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
Michigan Department of Transportation

## Chapter Eight. Planning Implications

The initial chapters of this Plan form broad profile of Milton Township. They present a brief “snapshot” of current conditions in the community and the forces that are apparent. With an analysis of those forces, the challenges that are facing the community today and those that will materialize in the future become apparent.

Some of the implications of the materials presented here include the following observations:

**Without proper planning, growth and development would begin to undermine the very features that attract it.**

- ◆ While it may not seem that Milton Township is poised for significant growth and development at the current time, it is still essential to acknowledge the potential of growth and change in the future. Development pressure may increase, in part, because of the Township’s scenic farmland and small-town character; and in part due to proximity to the South Bend, Niles and Edwardsburg communities. Small town characteristics have historically been desirable and tend to draw population. Without proper planning, however, growth and development would begin to undermine the very features that attract it.
- ◆ The tendency in the current marketplace to encourage land-consumptive large lot development will continue to keep population density low and spread out. In the longer term, however, these patterns required longer commutes to jobs and services and as a consequence greater traffic congestions. In addition, low density development is much more costly to retrofit for public utilities when and if the demand materializes.
- ◆ Significant areas of the Township hold sand and gravel resources and it is probable that the Township will face mining impacts for many years to come. There are limits to the Township’s ability to regulate these uses, but that does not mean that reasonable operating and reclamation standards cannot be used to mitigate the impacts of extraction operations.
- ◆ Agricultural activity in the community thrives, partly because of high quality soils, especially in the southeastern portion of the community. Because of the economic importance of agriculture in the region and its contribution to the community’s rural character, it will behoove the Township to steer new development and the parceling of farmland toward portions of the community that are not characterized by these unique soils and where utility and commercial services are more likely to be available.

**If growth is desired, it will be appropriate to steer it away from high quality farmland.**

- ◆ Milton Township's population is older, on average, than the County, the State or the nation. While the difference is not significant, this does signal a probable short-term demand for services to aid an aging population, and the Township generally supports the concept of assisted living in a context-sensitive, rural setting. It also implies that the community's demographics are likely to see significant shifts if new and younger residents replace the maturing members of the population. This could mean a greater demand in the future for services required by young families. It is also possible that without proper planning, the community will not see significant turn-over and it could struggle to maintain its population. This may signal a trend toward long-term housing vacancies and a softening of housing values.
- ◆ Agriculture and residential make up the vast majority of local land uses. With Michigan's current local revenue structure, this fact has implications on the fiscal viability of local government. Agriculture lands typically have lower values and may be subject to caps that reduce their tax obligations. Residential lands - especially single-family neighborhoods - pay significantly higher taxes, but they also demand the highest level of services from local government (including the public schools). The predominance of these land uses results in a very attractive, low density environment for the community, but it also implies an impending fiscal challenge as emerging neighborhoods demand greater levels of service.

## Chapter Nine. Chapter Nine Goals and Objectives

As a result of the Township's efforts to form a community consensus about growth and development, a series of six broad goal statements has been developed. These goals and objectives are founded on the input received during the Visioning Workshop that was held in support of the plan and the knowledge of the Planning Commission and local officials.

Each goal is supported by more specific objectives, and the policies of this plan are based on these statements. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of the Township twenty to thirty years into the future. They are intentionally general but attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

**Goals and Objectives are founded on the input received during the Visioning Workshop.**

An effective goal serves as a useful guide for policy decisions by the Planning Commission, Township staff and the Township Board. For a goal to be useful, it should meet the following criteria:

- **Define a desired end.** A goal statement should describe a desired end state, outcome or result. The statement may be worded in either the present or future tense, but if the future tense is used, it should be stated as a prediction, rather than a hope.
- **State in positive terms.** For a goal to be effective, it should state a positive outcome, as opposed to avoidance of an undesirable result. It is tempting to state goals as the reversal of an undesirable trend, such as "Milton Township will limit significant additional development in agricultural areas." This statement, however, does not address the underlying issue: Protection of the Township's productive farmlands for the benefit of future generations.
- **Bold, but realistic.** For a statement to be meaningful, it needs to require effort to achieve. If goals were achieved without effort, they would simply be re-statements of current trends. On the other hand, a goal also needs to be realistic. Goals that are impossible to achieve will languish, resulting in community frustration and acrimony.
- **Reflect a consensus.** Most importantly for goal setting, the goal must reflect a community consensus on a particular issue. Since implementation of these goals will require broad community support, the goals need to reflect community ideas and values. A statement that does not reflect the ideas and values of a broad section of the community is doomed to failure.

Each goal statement is supported by a series of objectives, which may be thought of as milestones to achieving that particular goal. While a goal describes a desired end, objectives answer the question, “If this is our goal, what must happen or what must we achieve to realize the goal?” The actual action strategies will be presented in the final chapter of the Master Plan and will be drawn from these objectives.

## **Agriculture and Farmland Preservation**

### **GOAL 1**

Productive commercial agriculture will comprise a significant element of Milton Township. It will be characterized by economically viable farm operations and their supporting facilities and services. It will be sited on lands best suited to the purpose and sustained by land use policies intended to ensure long-term viability of agriculture in the region.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete a survey of farmland owners to determine their long- and immediate-term interests with regard to commercial agriculture as a basis for forming helpful regulations.
- b. Focus agricultural land use and zoning on prime farm ground with the least degree of fragmentation.
- c. Work with regional and state agencies and organizations to support and implement viable farmland preservation programs, such as purchase and transfer of development rights.
- d. Support use of PA 116 Agreements and other opportunities to preserve farmland.
- e. Within prime farmland areas, develop zoning and development standards to encourage land uses that may conflict with agriculture to locate in areas with the least impact on commercial agriculture.

## **Rural Character and Natural Features**

### **GOAL 2**

The fundamentally rural nature of Milton Township will be maintained and strengthened with key defining features permanently protected and supportive rural land uses and activities encouraged. Even in areas of development, the rural character of the community will be expressed with design techniques that embrace a rural lifestyle and protect important features and rural land uses and activities.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete a natural features inventory to identify those features and land forms that are important to the rural character of the Township including a ranking that may be used to guide preservation and development standards.
- b. Adopt incentives, including reduced lot size or increased density, to enable the preservation of natural features identified as important in the inventory (see 2, a).
- c. Establish design standards requiring the establishment of green buffers along the county road network and between developments to protect the rural aspect of the community, even while accommodating development.
- d. Establish development incentives, such as reduced interior setbacks or density offsets, to compensate for design elements such as conservation strips along county roads, inter-connections, preservation of scenic vistas, winding access drives and sustainable development techniques (duplicates 4, c).

**Land Use Planning and Zoning****GOAL 3**

The Township's land use plans and zoning standards will strike an effective balance between the goals and objectives of this Plan to protect important features and promote high quality development with the varied interests of land owners. This will be achieved and maintained by fostering an on-going dialog among the varied interests while continually working to tailor appropriate responses to emerging land use challenges.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete an "audit" of the existing zoning and development standards in the Township to assure consistency with the policies of the Master Plan. Incorporate standards to encourage and support low impact home occupations.
- b. Promote increased communication between Township boards and commissions with joint training exercises.
- c. Establish expectations for board and commission members to attend training programs directed at staying ahead of emerging trends.
- d. Seek out opportunities for cooperation and partnerships with neighboring communities and seek to establish consistent and complementary regional regulations.

## Growth and Development

### GOAL 4

New development in the Township will be carefully planned and controlled with an emphasis on high quality, a varied mix of uses and a reasonable and sustainable scale of growth. Development will be planned and designed to enhance the rural aspects of the community both through architectural design and by protecting open space and important features.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish regulations to encourage and govern community wastewater systems within areas planned for higher densities.
- b. Establish and maintain a program of communication with residents, developers and businesses to increase understanding of Township land use policies and to build support for balanced land use and zoning standards and for efficient local government services. (duplicates 5, a).
- c. Establish development incentives, such as reduced interior setbacks or density offsets, to compensate for design elements such as conservation strips along county roads, inter-connections, preservation of scenic vistas, winding access drives and sustainable development techniques (duplicates 2, d).
- d. Establish standards and incentives to achieve an appropriate and sustainable balance of housing types to serve the needs of all segments of the community (duplicates 6, a).
- e. Establish standards regulating land divisions which encourage flexibility in terms of parcel size and shape resulting in the efficient use of land and the reduction of long, narrow land divisions.

## Community Facilities and Services

### GOAL 5

Milton Township residents will enjoy public services and facilities scaled appropriately for the community. These will include effective, and well-supported public safety services, well-used and desirable recreation facilities and public facilities and offices to support efficient local government services.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish and maintain a program of communication with residents, developers and businesses to increase understanding of Township land use policies and to build support for balanced land use and

zoning standards and for efficient local government services. (duplicates 4, b).

- b. Seek out ways to improve coordination and interaction between the Township and the neighboring educational institutions to promote a sense of community within the region.
- c. Develop mechanisms to cooperate with developers, neighboring communities, and regional authorities in the establishment and maintenance of a regional system of recreation and non-motorized trails.
- d. Maintain and strengthen cooperative public safety and emergency services with officials from the county and neighboring communities.
- e. As the population of the Township expands, seek out appropriate opportunities to expand park and recreation spaces and to improve existing facilities.

## Housing and Neighborhoods

### GOAL 6

The Township's neighborhoods will be well-designed, inviting and scaled for comfortable community formation. Some will support a mix of high quality housing types to serve the broad spectrum of the marketplace including young families, empty-nesters and aging residents, but all will be arranged in keeping with the Township's rural identity and commitment to quality design and amenities.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish standards and incentives to achieve an appropriate and sustainable balance of housing types to serve the needs of all segments of the community. (duplicates 4, d).
- b. Establish standards to guide the scale of residential neighborhoods to foster the formation of inviting and diverse neighborhoods.
- c. Establish authority to require detailed analyses of larger scale developments to gain a complete understanding of possible environmental and traffic impacts.
- d. Establish specific requirements to protect the health and safety of residents within limited access developments.
- e. Create standards requiring private infrastructure to be constructed to county standards.





# Chapter Ten. Future Land Use and Zoning Plan

The Milton Township Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to thirty years. This Plan constitutes a practical and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of growth suggested by growth trends and existing patterns of development. The intent is to foster efficient and sustainable forms of development that preserve the community’s rural personality and natural features while accommodating modest levels of sustainable growth.

**The intent is to foster efficient and sustainable forms of development that preserve the community’s rural personality and natural features while accommodating modest levels of sustainable growth.**

Township residents have indicated that they wish to preserve their agricultural operations in Township and protect the Township’s woodlands, wetlands and other natural areas. They also recognize emerging residential development patterns along the Michigan/Indiana boundary and some limited commercial development expansion near the US-12 interchange and, potentially, in small, village-scale nodes. This Plan will provide guidance for new development while protecting farmland and critical natural resources.

The overall purpose of the future land use designations is to guide new development in logical and viable patterns while offering fair, and in some cases, value-enhancing opportunities for development, where appropriate. Public utilities are generally not anticipated in the Township, although in areas where private community water and wastewater systems are proposed, the Township will seek to capitalize on such systems by encouraging the preservation of important natural features in exchange for greater densities for the areas served by those systems.

## Support for Complete Streets

Objectives under Community Facilities and Services and Housing and Neighborhoods in Chapter 9 support the promotion of high quality transportation infrastructure and non-motorized trails. This Plan further supports enacting complete streets policy, in the form of a Township Resolution or Zoning Ordinance amendments. Complete streets are roadways planned, designed and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another. Complete streets can result in increased safety for non-motorized users, improved public health, a cleaner environment, mobility equity and enhanced quality of life through increased modal choices and more inviting streets.

While Milton Township relies on the Cass County Road Commission for local public road infrastructure and private developers for neighborhood street development, it can support policies that enhance safe and efficient

travel for all roadway users. Michigan law encourages MDOT to give additional consideration to enhancement grant applicants with complete streets policies. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act has also been amended to stipulate that transportation improvements be respectful of the surrounding context, further ensuring that more equitable and attractive streets become reality.

The Township's objective will be to work jointly with surrounding communities and developers to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities through the development of a non-motorized network. Suggested design elements may include sidewalks on both sides of a roadway or street; adequate lighting; pedestrian signals and signage; bike lanes; multi-use trails; and other features. Even though Milton Township is a rural community, these elements are feasible in certain areas of the Township.

Some features may be accomplished through simple road restriping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. The Township should work with neighboring communities, developers, the road commission, and other pertinent agencies in implementation of complete streets policy.

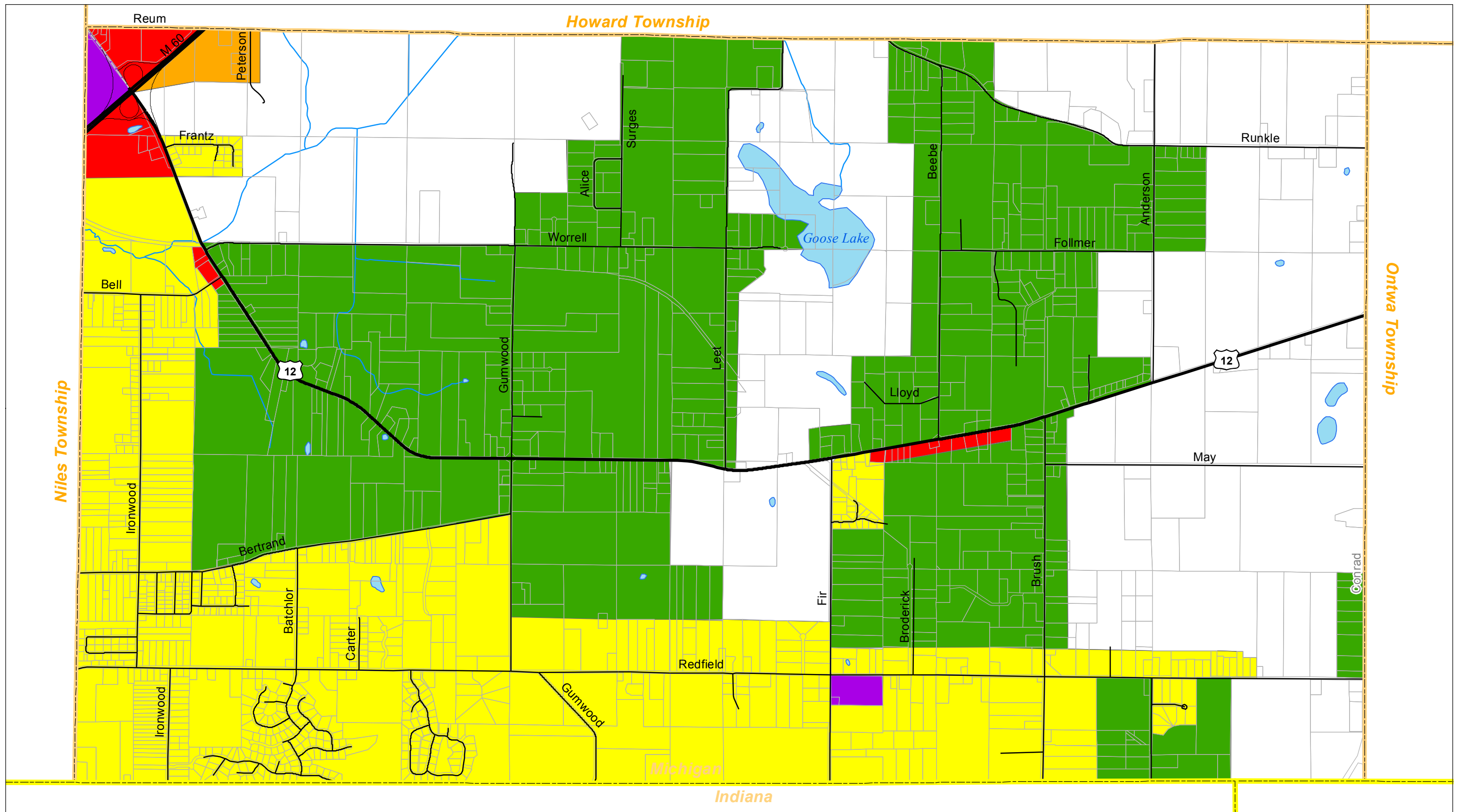
## FUTURE LAND USES

The following pages describe the future land use designations as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Map Ten). Each Future Land Use designation is intended to foster a character distinctive of that district and unique to this community. Furthermore, it is intended that as the community develops over the next twenty to thirty years, a significant share of the natural features existing today will have been preserved.

Finally, it must be understood that the future land use designations on the map are meant to be seen as general with indistinct edges. Along the margins, where two or more designations adjoin, either land use may be appropriate in keeping with the predominate conditions of the area.

### Agriculture Residential

Milton Township contains several agricultural operations that not only produce high-quality agricultural products, but aid in the establishment of the rural character that the Township residents seek to maintain. Maintaining these productive agricultural lands is a high priority among Township residents, and preserving large and contiguous tracts of productive farmland is essential to that goal.



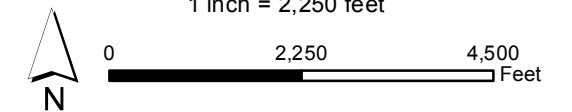
# Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

Map 10. Future Land Use Map

## Future Land Use

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Agriculture Residential   |  Medium-Density / Multi-Family Residential |
|  Rural Residential         |  Commercial                                |
|  Single Family Residential |  Industrial                                |



Williams & Works

To this end, this plan strongly encourages the continuation of these farming activities. The agricultural future land use designation will help preserve agricultural productivity and viability within the Township by allowing for enough land to support agriculture and related services. It is intended to accommodate farming as well as to provide for very low-density residential development with an average density of approximately one unit per five acres.

The land designated as agriculture amounts to about 5,700 acres, or approximately 42% of total land area within the Township. The most important factors informing the decision to designate particular parcels of land as Agriculture are (1) an examination of local and county data identifying productive agricultural land uses; (2) the relative size and contiguity of those agricultural properties; (3) soil conditions identified as prime farmland.



**Preserving large, contiguous tracts of productive farmland is essential to supporting viable agriculture**

Voluntary farmland protection techniques such as P.A. 116, Purchase of Development Rights, Farmland Conservation Easements, and Transfer of Development Rights will be actively supported in this area. Furthermore, with the mineral resources within this area, mining in parts of the Township are likely. Regulatory standards will be established to mitigate long-term impacts of mining within the Township.

### Rural Residential

The Township wishes to encourage the continuation of agricultural operations, while allowing low-density residential development on lands with little quality prime farmland soils (e.g., prime farmland soils defined as "drainage required" by the U.S.D.A.). Residential development is anticipated at densities of an average of one unit per two acres. These areas are not intended to be serviced with public sewer or water. This designation is intended to serve as a transitional zone from the agricultural northern, western and far eastern portions of the Township and increasing residential development to the south. Much of these areas contain significant development constraints such as wetlands, floodplains, and high water table characteristics. The provision of Rural Residential areas will lead toward the preservation of the Township's rural atmosphere.



**A preferred alternative clusters residences in small groups with significant open space buffers**

The traditional development pattern in rural residential areas consists of large-lot single-family residences and hobby farms strung out along county roads. A preferred alternative encouraged in this plan anticipates residences clustered to preserve areas

of natural resources, open spaces, or farmland. It is the Township's intent to allow clustered residential lots to be of a size significantly smaller than two acres but an overall density no greater on average than one unit per two acres. Both the clustered residential provisions and the dedication methods for open space will be defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may include planned unit developments, site condominiums, or full land divisions where an equal or greater area of open space is maintained as part of an association or trust. Each cluster will be separated by open spaces where the rural character of the land and natural habitat are retained. Typically less road infrastructure is needed for the development, residential areas are hidden from major roadways and cul-de-sacs and other road configurations limit through traffic and dedicated open space provides recreational opportunities.

**Single Family Residential**

This land use category recognizes existing single-family platted subdivisions generally within the southern portion of the Township and makes provision for new residential developments with an average overall



**Extensive landscaping and preservation of existing woodlands help to create inviting, high quality neighborhoods**

density of one acre per dwelling unit. This land use category is intended to preserve and promote single-family dwellings as the predominant land use. These areas are not intended to be serviced with public sewer or water. New developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community. However, the bulk, scale and positioning of buildings must be carefully managed to preserve the aesthetics of a neighborhood and any important views within the area.

The traditional residential development pattern in rural communities consists of large-lot single-family residences strung out along county roads, or in large subdivisions. A preferred alternative encouraged in this plan anticipates residences clustered to preserve areas of natural resources, significant areas of open spaces, parkland, or farmland. It is the Township's intent to allow clustered residential lots with an average density of one acre per dwelling unit and possibly with greater local densities where public utilities are available. With appropriate regulatory controls, these provisions may be used to encourage high quality open space design with modest increases in density. Both the clustered residential provisions and the dedication methods for open space will be defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may include planned unit developments, site condominiums, or full land divisions where a quarter of the total development is maintained as part of an association or trust as perpetual open space. The clusters of dwellings may vary significantly in size

depending on the characteristics of the site with the clusters separated by open spaces where the rural character of the land and natural habitat are retained. Typically less road infrastructure is needed for the development, residential areas are hidden from major roadways and cul-de-sacs and other road configurations limit through traffic and dedicated open space provides recreational opportunities.

### **Medium-Density/ Multiple Family Residential**

The purpose of the medium density residential land use category is to accommodate a range of residential uses including attached and detached single-family dwellings, multiple-family dwellings, and mobile home subdivisions. Special attention will be given to buffering between medium-density and adjacent low-density land uses. New developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community. The area chosen for this category is in close proximity to water and sewer connections and major roadways.

### **Commercial**

The commercial land use category is intended to accommodate limited retail and daily necessity goods and services to primarily serve Township residents. Limited areas along major thoroughfares or at major intersections including the US-12 interchange would be the most desirable for commercial uses. This category would also include similar educational or institutional uses. Landscaping and setback standards should be established to create a balance between the needs of a commercial operation and the preservation of the rural character of Milton Township.

### **Industrial**

Milton Township's rural character is compatible only with very limited industrial uses. As such, uses within this land use category should be of such nature that they will not negatively impact the surrounding uses or discourage agricultural production. One site is located south of Redfield and east of Fir. Another site is located north of M-60 and west of US-12 and is occupied by the Michigan Department of Transportation as a storage site. Expansion of industrial uses should be permitted only if the use is connected to municipal water and sewer and new developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community.



**Local Commercial Sub-Area Plan**

It is recognized that the Township will likely experience growth trends and opportunities that originate outside the community or which are the result of regional trends. Often the effect is to create a market opportunity for higher intensity development at critical transportation nodes and, without careful planning, such nodes can evolve into inefficient strip patterns that represent low-value development and foster suburban sprawl.

Consequently, this plan recognizes a potential need for a small, attractively designed node of local commercial and service uses during the planning horizon of this Plan. Such a node could include convenience commercial and, potentially some locally-oriented office or commercial uses to serve the nearby residential neighborhoods and the traffic that traverses the community. This is desirable in that would offer a convenience to residents that otherwise will need to travel outside the community for such services. However, if not carefully managed, such land uses can expand and alter the character of the community, so it will be important that when the demand for a commercial node materializes, that it be carefully located in areas characterized by higher traffic volume with good connections to residential areas.

An exact location for such a node is not established by this Plan, but locations that are not characterized by higher traffic volumes with reasonable connections to residential areas should be avoided. In

addition, any such development must be carefully designed and executed to maintain the Township’s rural character and, as such, would be relatively small in scale – likely less than ten acres in total and regulated by effective design standards.

This Plan anticipates some pressure for commercial or service uses to address the needs of local population and when interest emerges, the Township will determine the most appropriate location and undertake a more detailed sub-area planning process to define future land uses for that node. It is intended that once such a node becomes established no further expansion of commercial land uses will be needed during the planning horizon of this Master Plan, or any subsequent extension of it.



**Eventual development of a small-scale commercial node is anticipated in the Township**



## Zoning Plan

Section 33, (2), (d), of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires that Master Plans adopted after September 1, 2008 include a Zoning Plan to explain how the future land use categories in this Plan relate to the zoning districts incorporated in the Township’s Zoning Ordinance. The following table relates the more general future land use categories with the zoning districts and discusses features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands in the Township consistent with this plan.

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts*	Evaluation Factors and Features*
Agriculture Residential	Agriculture Production	Rural Residential	In those portions of the Township where commercial agriculture has waned and an emerging pattern of smaller land divisions is apparent, Rural Residential zoning may be appropriate.
Rural Residential	Rural Residential and Agriculture Production	None	
Single Family Residential	Rural Residential and Single Family Residential	Agriculture Production	Areas of the Township that may ultimately evolve into suburban residential patterns could retain significant rural character for many years. Primarily in the southeastern portion of the Township and as long as commercial agriculture remains viable, Agriculture Production zoning may be appropriate if it does not foreclose the eventual shift to single family residential uses.
Medium Density/Multi-Family Residential	Medium Density Residential	Rural Residential or Single Family Residential	Immediately east of the US-12/M-60 interchange, the Future Land Use Plan anticipates an emerging area of higher density residential development. However, given the overall residential character of the area, the Township may consider a lower density alternative

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts*	Evaluation Factors and Features*
Commercial	Commercial or Service Commercial	Medium Density Residential	In the vicinity of the US-12/M-60 interchange areas planned for commercial uses may find alternative uses in medium density residential limited to developments designed to moderate traffic and other impacts that could emanate from an intense residential development.
Industrial	Industrial	None	
Local Commercial Sub Area	Commercial (or a new District)	Single Family Residential Medium Density Residential	When and if a local commercial Sub Area Plan is established, it must incorporate appropriate zoning guidance. Likely zoning districts to implement such a Plan will include the Commercial or Service Commercial districts, but Single Family or Medium Density Residential may be appropriate if called for in the Plan and carefully designed to create a unified development plan.

In considering a request to rezone property in Milton Township, the Planning Commission shall consider the future land use map (Map Ten) and the future land use descriptive narrative of this plan. The foregoing table shall be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is, or may be, consistent with this plan together with an evaluation of the specific request. The proposed rezoning shall also consider whether the proposed site may be reasonably used as it is currently zoned, whether the proposed site is an appropriate location any and all of the land uses that might be permitted within the requested zoning district, whether there may be other locations in the community that are better suited to accommodate such uses and any potential detrimental impact on the surrounding property that could result from the proposed rezoning.

In all cases, this Zoning Plan shall be applied as a guideline for the Planning Commission subject to the appropriate application of the discretionary authority permitted to the Planning Commission and Township Board by statutory authority, case law and good planning practice. Nothing in this Zoning Plan will preclude the Planning Commission and Township Board from considering amendments to this Master Plan to better serve the public interests of the community.

## Chapter Eleven. Implementation Strategies

An effective Master Plan must provide not only a vision for future development, it must also outline strategic activities to be undertaken to achieve that vision. Many visions are never realized when communities allow the plan to languish and do not take the proactive steps necessary to give the plan life.

**Often planning visions are never realized when communities fail to take proactive steps to achieve them. This plan avoids this by outlining specific implementation strategies.**

To avoid this in Milton Township, this plan includes the following strategies to implement the goals and objective and land use recommendations contained in these pages. It is recognized that many strategies will be long-term in nature and that many entities in addition to Milton Township must cooperate to fully implement the Plan. In many instances, the Township's role is that of facilitator for some of the strategies outlined. Finally, it is important to recognize that, while implementation of this plan and the following strategies will be important, they must be addressed in the context of the broader priorities of the Township and may, at times, take subordinate importance to more immediate demands.

1. **Zoning Ordinance Audit and Evaluation.** The Zoning Ordinance offers a vitally important set of tools, regulations and policies to implement the Master Plan. Therefore, it is important that the intent statements and district standards of the ordinance be evaluated to assure they are fully compatible with the Plan. Detailed design standards for subdivisions and site condos, lot area adjustments to enable green area set-asides, inter-connectivity standards are some of the tools that could be considered. In addition, there are a few areas of the Township where the Plan calls for less intense land uses than would be permitted currently by the Zoning Ordinance. These should be carefully evaluated for rezoning to a less intense district. Areas of the Township planned for more intense land uses typically need not be rezoned immediately, but can wait for owner interest. The result of this task would be an extended narrative report that considers the existing Zoning Ordinance in the context of the plan and recommends a series of amendments to further the Plan's objectives.
2. **Strategic Zoning Ordinance Amendments.** Once this audit report is completed, the Planning Commission can establish priorities for strategic amendments to the document. This activity would consist of the necessary amendments to assure the Township has the tools and standards that are appropriate to move the plan forward. These could be implemented one at a time, or in a comprehensive amendment, as appropriate.

**The Township will be equipped with sufficient information to accurately evaluate and guide development to protect features where possible**

3. **Natural Features Inventory.** This strategy is called for in the goals and objectives (see objective 2a), and it is important to protecting the most significant natural features. The purpose of the inventory would be to identify and map areas of significant wildlife habitat, healthy and scenic woodlands and wetlands, historic features or areas, important viewsheds, etc. These features should be described in detail and mapped as part of the inventory. Then when proposals come forward proposing development in their vicinity, the Planning Commission may use the inventory to minimize negative impact on features. This need not mean that no development will occur in or around important natural areas, but it does mean that the Township will be equipped with sufficient information to accurately evaluate and guide development to protect features where possible. It also can be useful to developers as they study a site informed by the detailed analysis in such an inventory.
4. **Survey of Farmers.** The policies of the Master Plan strongly support a continuation of productive agriculture in the community. Zoning can be very useful in this area, but in many rural communities stringent zoning standards intended to protect farmland are not embraced by farmers. This is often due to the fact that they regard the zoning provisions as an imposition that restricts their property rights. However, in some communities, farmers welcome standards that facilitate productive agriculture, if they can participate in developing them. Therefore, the purpose of this task is to meet with or survey the people actively involved in commercial agriculture to isolate policies that might be inhibiting farming and to seek ways the Township could work with them to strengthen farming. Examples of some of the provisions we have helped other communities we serve prepare include standards for Agri-Tourism businesses, more liberal standards for small-scale retailing from agricultural properties (e.g., country markets, U-Pick operations, small craft operations), and standards to guide any residential development in Agricultural areas to lands least suited for commercial farms.
5. **Standards for Community Wastewater Systems.** In several places the Master Plan emphasizes conservation cluster form subdivisions as a means to protect open space. In these forms, lot size may be reduced in exchange for dedicated open space. This pattern can be a very attractive alternative to “slice and dice” subdivisions, but it sometimes means that individual lots become too small to accommodate on-site wastewater systems. This does not mean, however, that public sewers must be installed, merely that a community wastewater collection and on-site treatment system should be installed. Both the County Health Department and the MDNRE have regulatory standards to govern the technical aspects of these systems and it is not necessary for the

Township to duplicate those. But it is important that the Township have a clear understanding of the funding mechanism for the capital cost of development and for on-going operations and maintenance and provisions that address these matters should be a part of the Township's development standards.

6. **Neighborhood Commercial Sub-Area Plan.** The future land use plan recognizes the probability that over the next twenty years a demand for some local commercial services and facilities may emerge. The plan does not identify a specific location, but provides guidance in terms of traffic and connections to nearby residential. It also discusses the desirability of attractive and inviting design standards for the node that develops. The most appropriate approach to achieve these would be to complete a detailed sub-area plan for the location selected, including desired land uses, design standards, circulation plans and implementation mechanisms. These could be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance as specific overlay provisions, or they could be adopted as more general policy guidance as a supplement to the Master Plan. The most effective planning process would involve the property owners in the vicinity to gain broad acceptance.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following texts, resources and websites were consulted in the preparation of this Master Plan.

Brandywine School District Annual Report

Cass County Michigan Master Plan

Edwardsburg School District Master Plan

Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

Milton Township Master Plan (1999)

Milton Township Zoning Ordinance

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Niles Township Zoning Ordinance

Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study

South West Michigan College Website

South West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

St. Joseph County/ South Bend Indiana Master Plan

St. Joseph County/ South Bend Indiana Zoning Ordinance

State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information

State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information

State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office

US Census Bureau

Woods & Poole Population Projections