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**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
Urban and Regional Planning Program**

**Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Comprehensive Plan  
A Case Study of La Grange Township, Michigan**

**Plan B Terminal Master's Degree Paper  
Presented by:  
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**Submitted To:  
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Lastly, without my wonderful wife, I may never have experienced the challenges of graduate school, insights of planning in Europe, and happiness in the planning profession.



# CHAPTER ONE

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Moving toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many communities across Michigan will amend their comprehensive plan. These municipalities will dedicate hundreds of hours and allocate thousands of dollars toward the update of their plan. Yet, how will they know if their plan is good? How will they judge the effectiveness and implementation of their plan since adoption?

Little material or guidance has been provided to communities with regard to plan evaluation. This paper seeks to fill part of the gap. The purpose of this research is to identify and use objective criteria to evaluate a municipal comprehensive plan. La Grange Township, located in Cass County, Michigan, will be used as a case study. The Township's Land Use Plan, adopted in late 1981, will be evaluated in regards to content and implementation.

The study will use existing evaluation criteria developed by James R. Lightfoot, a former Michigan State University graduate student, to analyze the La Grange Township plan document. In addition, interviews with the Township Supervisor and Planning Commission Chairperson will provide insights in regards to the use and limitations of the plan. Based on the analysis of the plan document and interview responses, deficiencies will be addressed to assist future planning processes.

This case study is of particular importance because many communities in southwestern Michigan are similar in size, character, and government structure. Therefore, this case study can serve as a model for other municipalities in the region that wish to evaluate their plan in the future.

## ***Paper Outline***

This paper includes six chapters. The first chapter provides a general introduction to the topic and defines the purpose of the paper.

The second chapter briefly outlines existing research related to comprehensive plan content and process, tools for plan implementation, and techniques for plan evaluation. This literature review will also present a framework for the analysis of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan.

The third chapter introduces La Grange Township. Demographic information such as population, housing, and economy will be presented. Existing land use, public services, and infrastructure will also be reviewed. This information is provided so that the reader can better understand the evaluations contained in the later chapters.

The fourth chapter outlines the future development recommendations stated in the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan. This section will set the stage for the plan evaluation.

The fifth chapter documents the methodology used to evaluate the Township's plan. The results of a detailed review of the plan's content and interviews are also presented.

The final chapter draws conclusions from the plan evaluation to assist La Grange Township in its future planning efforts.



## ***Paper Intent***

### **Purpose:**

- 1) To evaluate the content of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan, based on explicit criteria.
- 2) To determine if the Township's Land Use Plan is being effectively used by community leaders as a decision-making guide.

### **Need:**

- 1) Provide analysis to inform ongoing planning processes in La Grange Township and the region.
- 2) No case study has been completed for La Grange Township evaluating the effectiveness of its plan.

### **Problem:**

- 1) Is the content of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan of high quality?
- 2) Is La Grange Township effectively utilizing its plan when making decisions?

### **Hypothesis:**

- 1) La Grange Township does not use its Land Use Plan when making decisions.
- 2) Satisfaction of content-based plan document evaluation criteria may be insufficient to ensure that the plan will be implemented.

# CHAPTER TWO

## **CHAPTER TWO: EXISTING RESEARCH REVIEW**

This chapter reviews and critiques the existing literature related to evaluating the effectiveness of municipal comprehensive plans. The following bodies of literature have been identified as relevant to this research: 1) materials describing and recommending plan content and process; 2) information defining tools for plan implementation; and 3) articles identifying techniques for plan evaluation.

### ***Plan Content and Process***

In order to evaluate a comprehensive plan, it is critical to understand the contents of a plan and how the planning process is typically conducted. First, it is important to clarify that “comprehensive plan” is just one name for this type of municipal document. Over the years, communities have used other names, for example, master plan, general development plan, basic plan, policy plan, municipal plan, and land use plan (Michigan Society of Planning Officials, 1999). Whatever it is called, the plan is a portrait of the desired future condition of the community (Gans, 1968).

The comprehensive plan is the foundation for determining how a community should be developed in the future, which is used by community leaders as a guide when making land use decisions (Ford, 1990). The plan includes maps, charts, descriptions, and explanations regarding a wide range of development issues such as land use, transportation/circulation, recreation, community facilities, utilities, natural environment, etc. (Hoteling and Moffat, 1980).

The general purpose of the plan is to guide and accomplish coordinated,



adjusted, and harmonious development which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of community development (Mandelker et al., 1990).

The father of the contemporary comprehensive plan is educator T.J. Kent, Jr., a professor at the University of California at Berkeley. Typically, plans created today follow the general guidelines provided by Kent, which were founded in rational planning theory (Kasier and Godschalk, 1995).

Rational planning theory or “rationalism” places a strong emphasis on techniques of data collection, measurement, and analysis. It assumes that all relevant information about a situation can be discovered and analyzed prior to the time that a decision must be reached. When both the means and ends are clearly defined and well understood, planning can follow a purely rational model (Cantanese and Snyder, 1988).

For example, T.J. Kent, Jr., in his 1964 book *The Urban General Plan*, advocated that plans: 1) be long-range; 2) be comprehensive; 3) be general; 4) focus on physical development; 5) be related to social and economic forces; and 6) be officially adopted by the local legislative body (Kaiser and Godschalk, 1995).

Kent noted that comprehensive plans consist of “a core” which identifies trends, issues, general goals, basic design concepts, major policies, and major plan proposals. He also believed that these long range plans should have a 15 to 25-year time horizon, but should be amended as needed to remain up-to-date and continue to reflect the

policies of the local legislative body. It is recommended that these plans be reviewed annually, with a comprehensive review every five to seven years (Anderson, 1995).

Like Kent, the Michigan Society of Planning Officials (1999) also promote a planning process grounded in rational planning theory:

1. An analysis of existing trends and conditions.
2. Discussion of problems, trends, and potentials, resulting in the establishment of a consensus on community goals and objectives.
3. The preparation of technical studies and maps.
4. The development of alternative plans for community growth.
5. Discussion and development of a consensus on the desired alternative.
6. Adoption of a plan, according to planning statutes.
7. Implementation of various plan proposals, new zone districts, etc.
8. Periodic review and updating of the plan as community conditions change; leading back to the first step of the planning process.

Although it is the dominant theory, the rational planning model is not the only planning process available to communities. Over the years, the typical “cookie cutter” plan formed under the rational planning process has had its critics. Critics have argued that no one could or should try to formulate goals for something as complex as a community (So and Getzels, 1988).

According to Alan Altshuler, for example, T.J. Kent’s rational planning model often fell short of its objectives. Based on case studies of planning in Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1965, Altshuler describes an incremental or middle-range approach:

Many planners have themselves abandoned the comprehensive planning ideal in favor of the ideal of middle-range planning. Middle-range planners pursue operational, though still relatively general goals. The middle-range planning ideal has much to recommend it. It provides no basis, however, for planners to claim to understand overall community goals. With it as a guide, therefore, the fundamental distinction between planning and other specialties is likely to become progressively more blurred (Altshuler, 1965).

Often the ends being sought and the means to attain them are not understood. Charles E. Lindbloom describes decision making under these circumstances as a series of small incremental steps, edging into the future and toward the unknown. He called this type of planning disjointed incrementalism or “muddling through.” This type of planning has been criticized as not a form of planning, but a description of what happens without planning. Yet, it is noted that elaborate analysis and studies are often a waste of time if neither the planners, nor the public, nor the decision makers understand what is being considered and what the alternatives may be. Under such circumstances, the “rational” approach would be to take small steps and evaluate as you go (Cantanese and Snyder, 1988).

The utopian view also has its place in comprehensive planning. For example, Daniel Burnham, city-beautiful planner, often stated: “Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood (Cantanese and Snyder, 1988).” Often goals are clearly and powerfully stated, even though the means of accomplishing them may be unclear. Today, planners use variations of utopianism in planning programs that promote new urbanism, better housing, and the elimination of poverty (Cantanese and Snyder, 1988).

While other theories exist, the rational planning model is the most dominant comprehensive planning process used in the United States. Critics may find that the rational planning theory is too broad, however, historically it has become the most used model by municipalities. Rational planning, though not perfect, does provide a solid institutional setting within which planning can occur.



### ***Tools for Plan Implementation***

This study will evaluate the effectiveness of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan based on its implementation. Therefore, it is important to understand how a plan is implemented by decision-makers

According to Larz T. Anderson, plans are implemented by the following actors:

1) planning department staff; 2) staff members in other departments; 3) planning commissions; 4) local legislative body; 5) nearby municipalities and counties; 6) state governmental agencies; 7) regional governmental agencies; 8) land developers; 9) conservation groups; 10) homeowners' associations; 11) potential home buyers; 12) market analysts (retail store location, industrial location, etc.); and 13) community residents. While governmental agencies dominate the above list, private citizens are important forces for implementing these plans (Anderson, 1995).

The comprehensive plan is primarily implemented through the zoning ordinance (Michigan Society of Planning Officials, 1986). The zoning ordinance delineates the precise areas, or zones, where houses can be built, as distinguished from where commercial and industrial uses can exist (Ford, 1990). Under Michigan law, zoning is recognized as a legitimate exercise of the police power. The plan is implemented when rezoning decisions and zoning ordinance text amendments are made by the legislative body (Hoteling and Moffat, 1980).

Plans are also implemented through techniques other than zoning. Subdivision regulations are standards of design and construction that a municipality can legally impose on land that is to be subdivided for development. These regulations normally

provide a checklist in order to assure both the subdivider of land and the municipality that a proposed subdivision conforms to the community's comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances, and subdivision regulations. Second, a capital improvement program (CIP) establishes the priority, timing, and financing of specific public improvement proposals. Under Michigan statutes, planning commissions are required to prepare and adopt a CIP annually and recommend it to the legislative body for their use in considering public works projects (Hoteling, 1988).

### ***Techniques for Plan Evaluation***

The primary focus of this research paper is to evaluate the content of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan and to evaluate its implementation. Surprisingly, the planning profession has developed relatively few criteria for this type of evaluation.

William C. Baer, professor at the University of Southern California writes:

How would you know a good plan if you saw one? The planners' answer is dangerously near to the apocryphal answer to a similar question about good art: "I don't know much about art (plans), but I know what I like." As a profession, we have developed few guides (Baer, 1997).

Baer explains that existing literature written about plan evaluation typically uses one or more of the following techniques:

1. **Plan Critique:**

This evaluation is similar to a book or movie review. Done by persons other than the plan's authors after its publication, but usually before it has been put into practice. Baer describes criteria being used by the critic as "individual, implicit, and somewhat idiosyncratic, being based on the critic's professional

virtualities.” Examples of this type of review can be found in old issues of the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* (Baer, 1997). One example of this type of evaluation was a critique of the “Brandywine Plan.” The plan was developed to guide development in the Upper East Branch Watershed on the Brandywine Creek in Chester County, Pennsylvania (Keene and Strong, 1970).

2. Plan Testing and Evaluation:

This technique was often used in the 1970's. The evaluation is performed by those preparing the plan, not by outside critics. The methods are explicit and reproducible by others, not idiosyncratic. The evaluation process has several stages and analytic techniques such as cost-benefit analysis and goals achievement analysis. Implicit criteria are not used (Baer, 1997).

3. Comparative Plans Research and Professional Evaluation:

This type of evaluation occurs after a plan is adopted. The technique is similar to the plan critique but the methodology is different. The evaluator is a researcher, either one inside the organization that prepares the plan or an outsider trained in planning. Usually several plans are compared systematically using predetermined criteria. Typically, the evaluation deals with the quality of the plan document content, not on plan outcomes (Baer, 1997).

4. Post Hoc Plan Evaluation:

This is an empirical review that is completed after the plan is adopted and implemented. The purpose of this review is to discover if the plan was implemented, and if so how it performed or how effective it was. This is the most common review used to evaluate a comprehensive plan. The post hoc evaluator must be clear about the purpose of the review and the criteria for evaluation (e.g., what was expected versus what happened). Generally, criteria for this evaluation depend on the community (Baer, 1997).

James R. Lightfoot combined two of the above techniques in his 1966 Michigan State University Master's Thesis. Lightfoot reviewed several community plans evaluating them based on specific, predetermined criteria. His study included two phases. First, the Comparative Plan Research and Professional Evaluation technique was used to evaluate the published plans of five communities that had completed their documents under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954. Second, a Post Hoc Plan Evaluation was completed for the five communities to gauge plan implementation through questions asked during personal interviews (Lightfoot, 1966).

### ***General Critique of Background Literature***

This chapter shows that much has been written about comprehensive plans, but there is relatively little empirical research for plan evaluation. The available literature, for example, provides few examples of criteria for "post hoc" municipal plan evaluation. Lightfoot (1966) provides interview questions for a post hoc evaluation. These questions, however, were designed to measure the effectiveness of a 701 planning program. Since the Section 701 federal planning requirements no longer exist, it is this author's opinion that Lightfoot's interview questions are not relevant to present day planning. Bear (1997) addresses the issue of post hoc evaluation, but does not provide specific criteria or interview questions for the evaluation of existing plans. Because of this gap in the literature, new criteria and questions were created for the interviews with La Grange Township officials conducted for this paper.

Available literature does provide some direction in terms of evaluation of plan

content. Criteria developed by Lightfoot, for example, will be used in this study to evaluate the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan. Specific criteria used in the Lightfoot study for plan content evaluation will be outlined in the methodology section in the fifth chapter.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **CHAPTER THREE: LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP DEFINED**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of La Grange Township as a community. First, basic statistics on population, housing, and the economy will be presented. Second, existing land use, public services, and infrastructure will be reviewed. This information is being provided so that the reader can better understand the evaluations conducted in the later chapters.

### ***Overview***

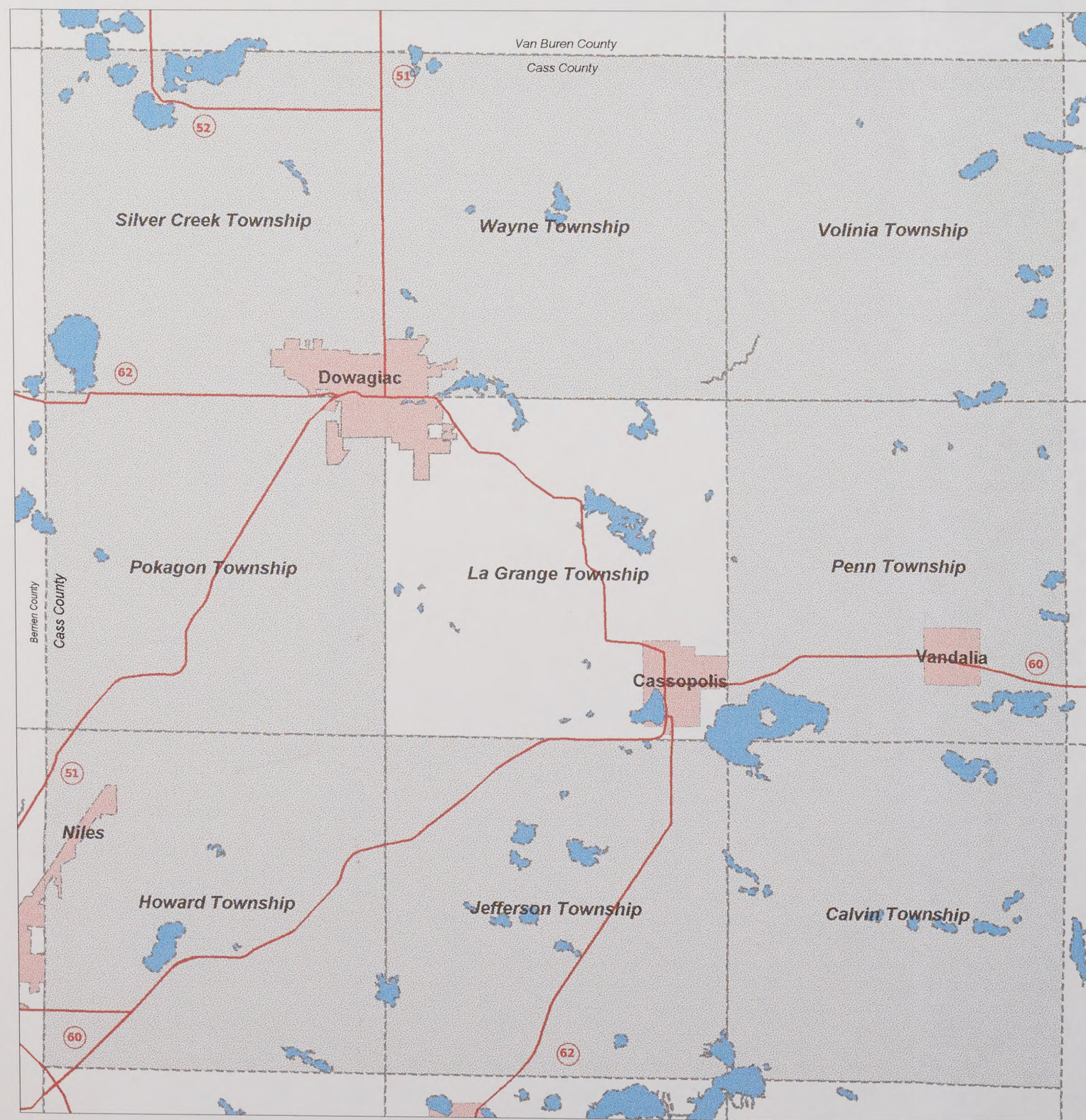
La Grange Township is situated near the center of Cass County in the southwestern part of Michigan's lower peninsula, as shown in Figure 1. The Township is approximately 25 miles north of South Bend, Indiana, and 120 miles northeast of Chicago, Illinois.

The Township is primarily rural and agricultural in character. It is unique in that it has two urban areas located at its northwest (City of Dowagiac) and southeast (Village of Cassopolis) corners. The Township is bisected by a state highway, M-62, which provides access to major cities such as St. Joseph / Benton Harbor and Niles, Michigan, and Elkhart and South Bend, Indiana.

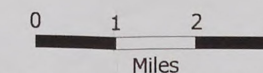
### ***Population Characteristics***

La Grange Township's population has remained stable since the Land Use Plan was created in late 1981. The Township's population was estimated at 1,598 in 1998, which was five more people than the 1980 count. The Township's population has also





**FIGURE 1.  
REGIONAL LOCATION MAP**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, TIGER/Line Files, 1995



Map produced by the  
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remained predominantly white with an approximate 50/50 mix of male and female residents (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998).

La Grange Township has a low population density in comparison to neighboring Townships. The Township is composed of approximately 33.1 square miles, excluding the City of Dowagiac and Village of Cassopolis. This corresponds to a population density of 49.7 persons per square mile in 1990. Neighboring communities, such as Howard Township (182.2), Silver Creek Township (96.3), Wayne Township (81.0), Pokagon Township (63.2), and Jefferson Township (60.3), all have more persons per square mile (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990). This extremely low density shows the overall rural nature of the Township.

The largest share of La Grange Township's 1990 population can be found in the family forming age group (18 to 44 years old). This segment represented 619 persons or 39.1 percent of the Township's population. The number of La Grange Township residents under the age of 18 (25.1 percent) and over the age of 45 (35.8 percent) mirror Cass County (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990).

### ***Housing Characteristics***

In 1990, La Grange Township had 769 housing units within its boundaries. This number represents a 3.2 percent increase since 1980 and a 27.3 percent increase since 1970. While housing increased by 27.3 percent between 1970 and 1990, population only increased by 7.0 percent. During that period, persons per household decreased from 2.44 to 2.05. This decrease corresponds with the national trend toward

smaller households (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990).

The most recent estimate is that 832 homes existed in the Township in 1998. If correct, this would be an 8.2 percent increase in housing since 1990, while population increased by only 0.9 percent (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999). This differential is important when analyzing population projections and future housing needs as: 1) fewer people may be occupying housing units or 2) more homes within the community are vacant/abandoned.

### ***Economic Characteristics***

The Township's per capita income in 1989 was \$11,456. This was a 22.5 percent increase from the 1979 amount of \$5,580 (\$9,352 adjusted for inflation). Despite the increase, the Township's per capita income was still lower than the County as a whole (\$12,167) and the tri-county area (\$12,203) (Southwestern Michigan Commission, 1998). Per capita income can be useful in determining La Grange Township's relative economic standing and the ability of its residents to support local programs.

The labor force of La Grange Township is defined as those residents age sixteen and over who are currently working and those who are not working, but seeking work. The labor force in 1990 was 66.6 percent. Almost 20 percent of La Grange Township workers were employed in precision production and craft/repair fields. The Township had a higher percentage of professional specialty workers than Cass County as a whole, but fewer employed in service establishments and as machine operators

and assemblers (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990).

### ***Existing Land Use***

The Existing Land Use Analysis compiled for the La Grange Township Land Use Plan was based on a 1977 land use map created by the Southwestern Michigan Commission. The 1977 map was updated by the Township's consultant using 1980 aerial photographs and windshield survey techniques.

In 1980, the Township was primarily agricultural in nature – agricultural uses comprised approximately 12,355 acres or 60.4 percent of the total land area. The land use analysis also indicated that forests and wetlands comprised 36.2 percent of the Township. The remaining 3.4 percent of land was dedicated to residential (subdivision), recreational, commercial, industrial, and public/institutional land uses (La Grange Township, 1981).

It is important to note that a substantial share of the Township's population lived in areas not formally classified as "residential use." Many residences located in low density rural areas were included in the totals for other land use categories, such as agriculture and woodlands.

### ***Transportation System***

Two state highway trunklines pass through La Grange Township: M-60 which cuts across the extreme southeast of the Township; and M-62 which connects the Village of Cassopolis and the City of Dowagiac. These two roads carry the major

portion of through traffic in the Township and provide access to surrounding municipalities.

M-62 is not an all-weather road, and it is closed to heavy commercial traffic during certain times of the year. The primary north/south county roads in the Township are O'Keefe Road and Dailey Road; the primary east/west county roads are Dutch Settlement Road and Pokagon Highway.

### ***Public Utilities and Community Services***

The majority of La Grange Township residents are not served by public sewer or water. Most Township residents will not need these services in the near future due to good soils and low population density. A public sewer line has been constructed along M-62 between the City of Dowagiac and Village of Cassopolis. Public sewers have also been provided, through the Village of Cassopolis sewer system, to the densely developed areas around Diamond Lake in the southwestern portion of the Township.

The Township is currently served by the Cassopolis and Dowagiac Fire Districts. Most of the Township is within the four-mile radius recommended to provide adequate service. Equipment and manpower are sufficient to fight fires within the Township (La Grange Township, 1981). Ambulance service is provided by the City of Dowagiac and Village of Cassopolis. Lee Memorial Hospital, located in Dowagiac, is the primary hospital in the area. Police service is provided by the Cass County Sheriff Department at no charge. This arrangement is typical for most rural townships in the area because it is more efficient and economical for the County to provide police service in this

manner.

Cassopolis and Dowagiac School Districts serve the Township. Both serve grades K-12. The only school located within the Township is Brookside School, built in 1959, which is used for special education. Children who reside in La Grange Township attend schools in Cassopolis or Dowagiac. Schools in both districts are reported to be well below capacity.

### ***Government Structure***

La Grange Township operates with a five member elected Township Board, five member appointed Planning Commission, and three member appointed Zoning Board of Appeals. The Township has no full time staff. The Township Supervisor, Naida Wallace, also serves as the community's part-time Zoning Administrator.

As Township Supervisor, Ms. Wallace is the chief elected officer in La Grange Township. According to Michigan State University professor Kenneth VerBurg (1990), the Township Supervisor "has the license to inquire into virtually all affairs of township government and make proposals to solve township problems." Ms. Wallace serves as chair of Township Board meetings which are held monthly.

The Township Planning Commission is the body in charge of planning policy. While its planning function is advisory, the Commission charts the desired course of what the Township should be in the future. The Planning Commission adopted a Land Use Plan on December 9, 1981, to guide future development, which is the primary focus of this study.

The Planning Commission also provides recommendations to the Township Board in regards to specific development proposals and changes to the zoning ordinance. Chairperson Carol Labar runs the Planning Commission meetings, which are held four times a year. Additional special meetings are scheduled upon request.

The role of the Zoning Administrator is to interpret and enforce Township zoning regulations. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets on an as-needed basis to review appeals to the zoning ordinance.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE 1981 LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN**

In late 1979, the Township Board contracted with Gove Associates, Inc., a Kalamazoo, Michigan based planning consultant firm, to create a land use plan for the community. The planning process took one year to complete and the plan was adopted by the Planning Commission in late 1981.

The Township's plan included the following elements: 1) Population Studies; 2) Economic Studies; 3) Natural Features Inventory; 4) Housing Trends; 5) Public Utilities and Community Facilities Inventory; 6) Existing Land Use Analysis; 7) Goals and Policies; 8) Development Plan (Future Land Use Plan); and 9) Land Use Implementation and Evaluation. The plan document consisted of 66 pages.

### ***Plan Recommendations***

The 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan provided recommendations in regard to the following future needs: 1) population and housing; 2) commercial and industrial; 3) recreational; 4) community facilities; and 5) plan implementation and evaluation. Specific land use recommendations provided in the plan and described below are illustrated in Figure 2.

#### **1. Population and Housing**

The document's Future Land Use Plan was designed to accommodate a maximum year 2000 population of 2,270. Thus, 250 additional housing units were planned for by the Township. Specifically, the following residential densities and acreage were determined by the Planning Commission to be needed by 2000:



A. 75 units of high density (5 or more units/acre) on 10 to 15 acres

The high density residential areas were located on the Future Land Use Plan around both the City of Dowagiac and Village of Cassopolis due to their accessibility to primary roads and utilities. It was determined that these areas would be the most appropriate location for mobile home park development.

B. 100 units of medium density housing (3-5 units/acre) on 25 to 35 acres

New areas were designated on the Future Land Use Plan for medium density housing west of the Village of Cassopolis and south and east of the City of Dowagiac. These areas were chosen due to their proximity to existing commercial centers, availability of sewer and water, and compatibility with adjacent land uses. These new medium density housing areas were in addition to existing areas around Diamond and Kelsey Lakes and the Township center.

C. 75 units of low density housing (1-2 units/acre) on 45 to 75 acres

The Future Land Use Plan called for additional low density housing in the areas just north of the Village of Cassopolis, around the City of Dowagiac, and south of the Township center (La Grange Township, 1981).

2. Commercial and Industrial

The Future Land Use Plan called for an additional two to five acres of commercial land by 2000. Areas designated for commercial growth were near existing commercial areas located in the Township center and along M-62 just east of the City of Dowagiac. These areas were only slightly expanded due to the Township's proximity to the larger commercial areas in the City of Dowagiac and Village of Cassopolis. The Plan also called for 10 additional acres of industrial land. It was determined that the area located just to the northeast of the Village of Cassopolis would be the best location for industrial development due to its proximity to rail service and adjacent industrial land within the Village

limits. The existing industrial area south of Cassopolis was not expanded (La Grange Township, 1981).

3. Recreational Development

The Planning Commission determined that existing recreational areas in adjacent communities and at the Southwestern Michigan College were sufficient to fulfill the needs of the Township. However, it designated land in Section 7 next to the Southwestern Michigan College as an ideal spot for expansion of recreational facilities (La Grange Township, 1981).

4. Community Facilities Recommendations

The Township supported the expansion of an existing Village of Cassopolis sewage treatment facility located in Sections 34 and 35. This expansion would service properties in the medium density areas in the Diamond Lake area of the Township. It was reported that the City of Dowagiac had the capacity to provide water and sewer to Township areas adjacent to the City. It was indicated that high and medium density development should connect to the City's utilities. Fire protection, school facilities, medical facilities, and the transportation system were deemed adequate to serve future growth in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan (La Grange Township, 1981).

5. Plan Implementation and Evaluation Recommendations

The Planning Commission intended the plan to be actively used, as represented by the following statement in the plan:

Once the Plan is completed and approved, it should not be "put away on the shelf," but should be utilized actively in guiding the Township's development (La Grange Township Land Use Plan, 1981).

In terms of implementation of the plan document, it was recommended that the zoning ordinance be amended to add the following: 1) specific zoning districts on a map along with ordinance text consistent with the Land Use Plan; 2) special land uses; and 3) site plan review procedures. The plan also reported that a subdivision control ordinance could be adopted by the Township under Michigan law, but it did not specifically recommend the adoption of such an ordinance. Federal and State programs which assist in infrastructure construction and farmland preservation were briefly explained, along with the Michigan Right to Farm Act and the concept of Agricultural Zoning (La Grange Township, 1981).

Lastly, the plan document was very clear in terms of its recommendations for future evaluation:

The Plan should be reviewed, say once a year, to keep it up to date even if there have been no rezoning that might necessitate a plan change. This annual review might also be an excellent time to evaluate the plan's implementation or lack thereof (La Grange Township, 1981).

### ***Current Status of the Plan***

The La Grange Township Land Use Plan has not been updated since its adoption in late 1981. Recently, through the leadership of the Township Supervisor, the community has begun to consider updating the plan to address anticipated growth and development.

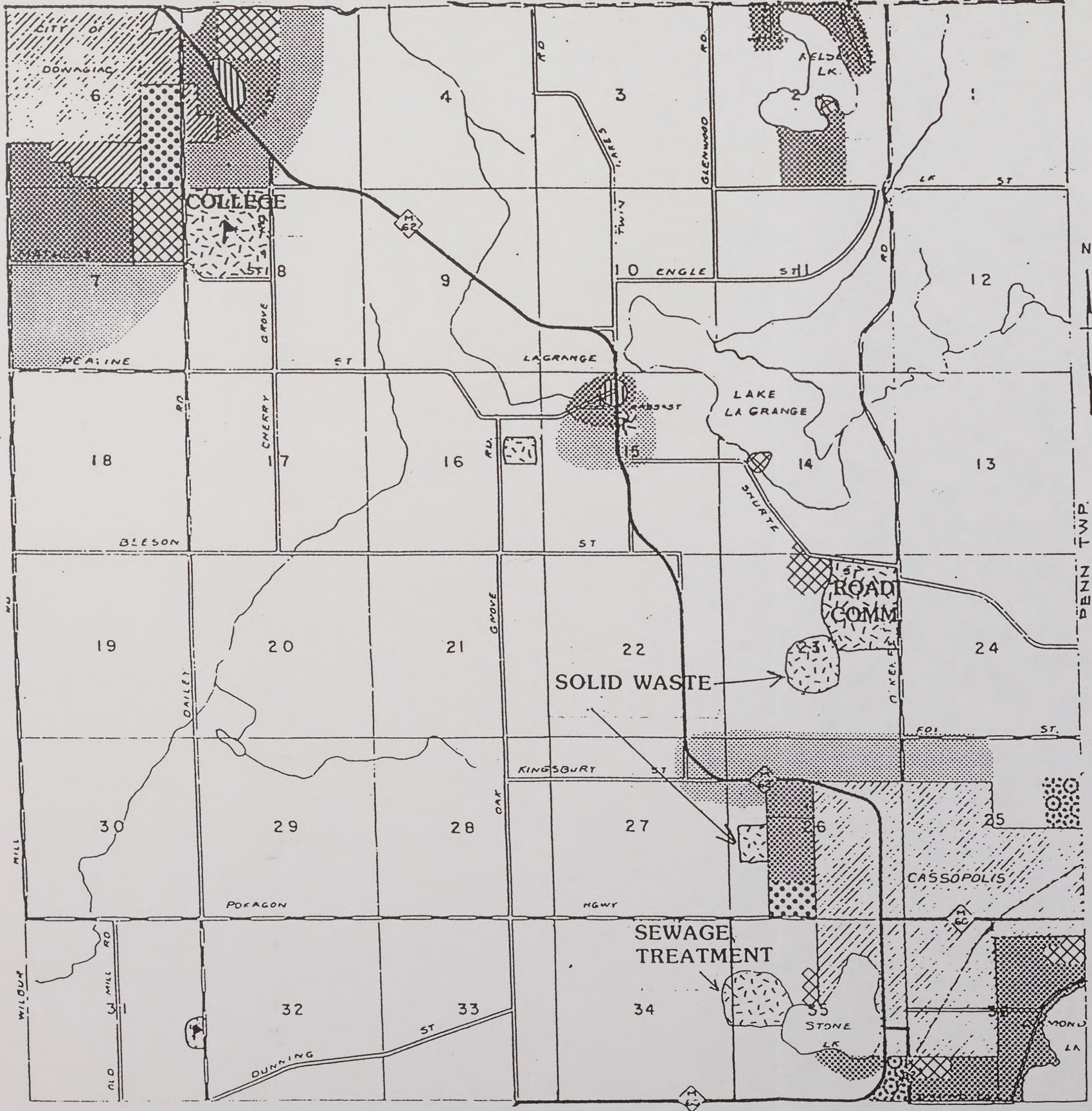
Development trends in the region have shown that many people desire the rural lifestyle. Due to improvements in the economy, low interest rates, and record low unemployment, many people can now afford to build new homes, often preferring open areas like La Grange Township and its neighboring communities.

Because of this trend, new interest is being shown for subdivision development within the community. The Township is very attractive because of its natural beauty, low taxes, and proximity to employment opportunities in Elkhart and South Bend, Indiana, and Benton Harbor and Niles, Michigan. Further, Amtrak intends to use an existing rail line for high-speed trains. These high-speed trains would run from Chicago to Detroit, with a stop in the City of Dowagiac, located at La Grange Township's doorstep. The Township Supervisor feels unprepared for the anticipated growth and development and believes the 1981 plan document should be updated this year.











# FIGURE 2. LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Source: La Grange Township Land Use Plan, 1981



## LEGEND

-  HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  COMMERCIAL
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  RECREATIONAL
-  PUBLIC FACILITIES
-  AGRICULTURE/ OPEN SPACE



# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION OF THE 1981 LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP PLAN**

In preparing an update to the La Grange Township Land Use Plan, it is important to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses over the last 18 years. Therefore, the plan was evaluated in terms of content and actual implementation. The first section of this chapter deals with evaluation of the content of the plan document; the second part is a post hoc evaluation which addresses plan implementation since 1981 based on interviews with key Township officials.

### ***Methodology for Plan Content Evaluation***

The 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan document was evaluated using criteria developed by James R. Lightfoot, in his 1966 Michigan State University Master's Thesis entitled *The Development and Testing of an Evaluation System for Urban Planning Programs*.

Lightfoot's evaluation method was based on an overall grading scale of one-hundred points. A numerical scoring system was necessary because his analysis involved a comparison of five comprehensive plans developed during the early 1960's. Lightfoot needed a way to rank each community in his study. The weight allotted to each section by Lightfoot in 1966 is still appropriate for the evaluation of La Grange Township's plan.

The sections of the evaluation were as follows: 1) Presentation - 10 percent; 2) Goals and Objectives - 15 percent; 3) Inventory and Analysis - 30 percent; 4) Plans - 30 percent; and 5) Implementation - 15 percent.

Lightfoot developed the following specific evaluation criteria to rank his five test communities:

1. Presentation/Overall Considerations - 10 Percent

A. Internal Consistency:

Use of a logical approach in development of the study; objectives, inventory, analysis, conclusions or plans, and next steps to be taken or implementation measures.

B. Involvement:

Was there reference to the involvement of community groups in the preparation of the plan, such as organization charts, lists of names, or acknowledgments?

C. Presentation:

1. Presentability; format, neatness.
2. Continuity in presentation of ideas and data.
3. Clarity and detail for use of the layman.
4. Use of a summary section, brief analysis of the report.
5. Use and effectiveness of tables, diagrams, and illustrations.
6. Mapping presentation;
  - a) Legibility
  - b) Correlation with text
  - c) Complete data; legend, title block, etc.
7. Correct grammar.

2. Goals and Objectives - 15 Percent

A. Is there an explicit statement of the following types of community goals and the relationships between them?:

1. Social improvement
2. Economic improvement
3. Political - Decision making
4. Physical development

B. Are these goals expressed where possible as directions rather than static ends?

C. Are the sources of the goals and objectives identified?

D. Do the proposed goals fit the scale of the community and the space for growth?

E. Are the program goals, the purposes and objectives of each individual study clearly stated?

3. Inventory and Analysis - 30 Percent

A. Are the following basic studies included?:

1. Land Use; existing land use and building survey.



2. Physical Characteristics; topography, soils, drainage, geography, geology, climate.
  3. Population; trends, projections, distribution, density, mobility, and other characteristics
  4. Transportation; circulation, both highway and other means.
  5. Community Facilities and Service; schools, recreation, utilities, and others.
  6. Economic Base; employment, commerce, relation to region, trends, and projections.
- B. Is the statistical data and other information relevant to the purposes of the study?
  - C. Does the study describe trends of population or economic change?
  - D. Does it give reasons for these changes?
  - E. Does it describe factors that are expected to influence the future growth of the community?
  - F. Does the study contain a statement of categories and definitions used in the gathering of data?
  - G. Are the bases and methods used for making projections and defining future needs clearly stated?
  - H. Are major opportunities and limitations clearly identified?
  - I. Are standards fitted to local goals and requirements?
  - J. Is the data adequate?
  - K. Are sources of data and standards shown?
4. Plans - 30 Percent
- A. Are the following basic plan elements included?:
    1. Land Use; overall space needs, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, should contain guide to interrelationships of land uses, to policy for physical development.
    2. Community Facilities; schools, recreation areas, facilities, public buildings, utilities.
    3. Transportation; major streets, other means, standards, relationship of transportation with other land uses.
  - B. Are the plans long-range, covering twenty years or more?
  - C. Does the plan show how the separate elements have been adjusted to each other in achieving coordination among highways, recreation, housing, industry, community facilities, and other land uses?
  - D. Does the plan seem to reflect a reasonable balance among the community's several objectives?
  - E. Is there evidence of coordination with other planning efforts?
  - F. Do plan recommendations relate to community goals and objectives?
  - G. Do they solve major problems and exploit opportunities identified?
  - H. Does the plan provide justification for the recommendations?

- I. Does the study or plan include a definition of its own limitations?
5. Implementation - 15 Percent
- A. Is there a statement of next steps needed to implement the plan or pursue the study conclusions?
  - B. Is the development program proposed reasonable in the light of experience of similar communities and the analysis of community resources and the proposed time span?
  - C. Does the capital improvement program show the basis of determining the recommended financing and debt policies?
  - D. Are projects drawn from the General Plan and bases defined for establishing their priorities?
  - E. Are reasons given for raising, continuing, or lowering the present volume of capital expenditure?
  - F. Are steps needed to establish continuous programming of capital improvements specifically recommended?
  - G. Zoning Ordinance or Subdivision Regulations;
    1. Are the administrative demands of the ordinance in proportion to the local governmental structure?
    2. Is the proposed ordinance likely to prove sufficient to handle the implementation of the land use proposals of the General Plan?

### ***Results of Plan Content Evaluation***

The following are the results of an evaluation of the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan based on the Lightfoot criteria:

1. Presentation/Overall Considerations:

This plan is well-written and fairly comprehensive for the Township's population size. Public involvement was provided through a public opinion survey conducted at the beginning of the planning process. The plan does not indicate any other means of obtaining information from the Township residents, such as community visioning meetings, focus groups, etc. It is likely that residents who attended Planning Commission meetings were provided the opportunity to state their opinions on the plan. Input from the survey was utilized by the Planning Commission as basis for the plan's goals and objectives. This goal formation

process was typical for rural communities and is still in practice today. The presentation, use of graphics, mapping, format, and writing of the plan are acceptable, but not spectacular or creative. A few grammar and clerical mistakes were found, but no major errors. A major criticism of the plan is the lack of an “executive summary.” The typical Township resident would not be able to understand the purpose of the plan or its recommendations, unless he or she reviewed the document in depth. (Score - 7 of 10)

2. Goals and Objectives:

Goals are well defined by category and clearly stated in the plan. The goals fit the scale of the community and its level of development. The only stated source for goals was the public opinion survey and Planning Commission discussion. The plan was designed to be flexible, so the goals are general. Specifically, goals for “government input and information” and “review and update” show the community used excellent forethought when developing this section. (Score - 13 of 15)

3. Inventory and Analysis:

The inventory is adequate. All of the basic recommended sections were provided (e.g., population, economic base, natural features, housing trends, public utilities and community facilities, and existing land use). All the data were relevant to the study, and trends were shown in a clear and concise manner. Trends are explained, but not in great depth. Sources for data are clearly shown. (Score - 25 of 30)

4. Plans:

All the elements are covered effectively in the document’s “Development Plan/Future Land Use Plan.” The plan is long-range, covering twenty years into the future. This portion of the plan is easy to read and follow. Coordination is

emphasized between each element. For example, high-density residential is recommended for a particular section of the Township, subject to development of adequate utilities and recreation facilities being provided. The plan is reasonably balanced and often relates directly back to the community goals and objectives. Justifications for recommendations are provided in the plan based on accepted planning standards. This is the jewel of the plan because it gives clear direction to the community for future development. Bravo!

(Score - 29 of 30)

5. Implementation:

A section was provided on the “next steps” needed to implement and evaluate the plan. The plan uses a flexible approach, providing general words of advice, instead of specific direction. For example, general changes are recommended for the zoning ordinance, but no specific plan for action. The plan did not have a capital improvements program (CIP). This is a major omission because the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act requires local governments to develop a CIP as part of the budget process (MCL 141.435(g)(h)). The CIP is a list ranking and scheduling capital improvements that the Township needs and wants to construct over a period of years -- such as the sewer expansion project planned around Diamond Lake. (Score - 11 of 15)

In total, the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan was found to be well written and thoughtful. It was not exciting looking or inspiring in content. All necessary plan elements, however, were provided and sufficient. The plan contained specific direction to guide the Planning Commission and Township Board members with future decisions. The plan needed an executive summary to explain its purpose and conclusions, but it appeared to lay a foundation for planning in the Township. The final

score was 85 percent.

La Grange Township's plan received a higher score than any of those tested by Lightfoot in his 1966 study (scores ranged from 56 to 79 percent). It is possible that the content of La Grange Township's plan is better than all of those documents evaluated by Lightfoot in 1966. However, the difference in scores might also be attributed to easier grading by this author. It is impossible to determine the extent to which Lightfoot's scoring was more critical, because he did not reveal the identity of the five communities he evaluated.

### ***Methodology for Post Hoc Evaluation Interview***

To get a better idea of how well the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan had been implemented since its adoption, Naida Wallace, Township Supervisor, and Carol Labar, Planning Commission Chair, were interviewed in March 1999. Ms. Wallace has served as Township Supervisor since 1977. Ms. Labar has served on the Planning Commission since 1989.

Wallace and Labar were asked the following questions to gauge how well the Land Use Plan had been accepted and implemented by the community:

1. Political Climate
  - A. Do you believe community residents are aware of your planning efforts?
  - B. Do you think there is any opposition to planning?
  - C. Do residents participate in public meetings? When? What issues?
  - D. Have there been any issues/problems in the community related to planning, zoning, or capital improvements since the adoption of the plan?
  - E. Does the local newspaper cover community planning issues?

2. Relationship between the Planning Commission and Township Board
  - A. Does the community have a Planning Commission?
  - B. What are the sex, approximate age, and profession of the Planning Commission members?
  - C. How often does the Planning Commission meet?
  - D. What issues does the Planning Commission discuss?
  - E. How do the Township and Planning Commission work together?
  - F. Does the community budget allow for education, planning advice (staff or consultant), planning studies, etc.?
  - G. Does the Township Board seek the advice of the Planning Commission on matters related to the physical development of the community?
3. Evaluation of the Plan
  - A. Has the plan been updated since its adoption?
  - B. What circumstances have caused the revisions?
  - C. Does every member have a copy of the plan?
  - D. Do they bring their copy to the meetings? How is it used?
  - E. Do the Planning Commissioners use the plan as a guide for decisions?
  - F. How do you feel about the plan? Have they differed with the goals or development policies outlined in the plan?
  - G. What changes would you recommend be made to the plan?
  - H. Does the Township Board support recommendations and decisions made by the Planning Commission when based on the plan?
4. Implementation of the Plan
  - A. What changes has the Planning Commission proposed for the zoning ordinance text and map?
  - B. Does the community have a subdivision control ordinance?
  - C. Does the community have a capital improvement program?
  - D. Does the Planning Commission review all public facilities for consistency with the plan? Does the Township Board refer these issues to the Planning Commission?
  - E. How are site plans reviewed?
  - F. Do Planning Commissioners feel the plan resulted in community accomplishments?
  - G. Has the community used questionnaires for a source of citizen input?
  - H. Has the community utilized public hearings and meetings for input and information dissemination?
  - I. Has the community utilized a newsletter or other means to inform residents?

- J. When was the last time the Planning Commission evaluated the plan?
- K. When does the Planning Commission intend to evaluate the plan in the future?

### ***Findings of Post Hoc Evaluation Interview***

The following were the results of the interview of Naida Wallace, Township Supervisor, and Carol Labar, Planning Commission Chair, in March 1999.

1. Political Climate:

When asked whether Township residents are aware of community planning efforts, both the Supervisor and Planning Commission Chair had the same reaction: "some do, some don't ... more are probably not aware." The Township Supervisor indicated that there is some opposition to planning in the community, but it is not visible. It was reported that very few people attend Township Board or Planning Commission meetings. The Township Supervisor stated that people show up only when they receive notice of a public hearing. The Planning Commission Chair indicated that in 1995 about 25 people came to a meeting regarding a cellular tower, but usually only one or two members of the public come to the meetings now.

No major issues or problems have affected the Township since late 1981. The Township Supervisor mentioned that a sewer project, an apartment proposal, and a cellular tower proposal caused some public debate. Newspaper coverage of La Grange Township issues has been nonexistent. The Planning Commission Chair stated that the South Bend Tribune stopped covering the Township, because not enough was going on to report regularly. The Township Supervisor stated that the Cassopolis Vigilant sometimes covers the Township, but not often. The community has been involved in only a few minor lawsuits since the adoption of the plan.

2. Relationship Between the Planning Commission and Township Board:

The Planning Commission Chair reported that the Commission is made up of five members: four males and one female. The average age of the Planning Commission is 49 years old. The Township Supervisor indicated that when the plan was completed, the age range of the Planning Commission was between thirty-five and forty-five years old. The Planning Commission has an older population than ever before. The Township Supervisor indicated that the average age of the Board is about 45 years old.

The Planning Commission Chair reported that the Planning Commission meets regularly four times a year, with special meetings when needed. The Commission reviews site plans, special use permits, and rezoning applications and provides recommendations to the Township Board. The last major rezoning request occurred ten years ago. Two minor rezoning requests were reviewed over the last three years. When asked whether the plan was consulted when reviewing rezoning requests, the Township Supervisor and Planning Commission Chair indicated "no." The Township Supervisor honestly admitted that the plan "draws dust," except when it is reviewed every five years. The Planning Commission and Township Board have not held a joint meeting to discuss community issues since the adoption of the plan in 1981. The Township Supervisor mentioned that the Township Board trusts the Planning Commission, so there is no need for joint meetings to discuss planning and zoning issues. The Township budget includes some monies allocated toward planning and zoning education, but few Township Board and Planning Commission members take advantage of the opportunity.

3. Evaluation of the Plan:

The plan has not been updated since its adoption, but has been reviewed every five years. When asked whether every member of the Planning Commission



and Township Board had a copy of the plan, both informants answered, "no." Therefore, they do not bring copies of the plan to Township meetings.

Both the Township Board and Planning Commission use the zoning ordinance as their guide for decision making, not the plan. The Township Supervisor admitted that she did not always understand the relationship between the land use plan and the zoning. She had thought the plan was only needed to make the zoning valid; she is now starting to understand how to use the plan. The zoning ordinance was the document they used over time because it was the "legal document" and the plan was just supporting material. The Township Supervisor believes the plan needs to be updated due to new developments with high-speed rail in the region, anticipated requests for new subdivision development, and concerns over protection of the Dowagiac River Watershed. The Township Board has budgeted monies for a plan update this year.

4. Implementation:

The zoning ordinance text was last amended in 1997 and only four rezoning applications have been approved since 1981. The community does not have a subdivision control ordinance. The Township Supervisor wishes to create a subdivision ordinance soon. The Township Supervisor and Planning Commission Chair were not aware that a capital improvement program was required by state statute. The Planning Commission reviews the few public facilities that have come up over the years, but not specifically for consistency with the plan. As mentioned earlier, the Planning Commission also reviews site plans, special land use permit, and rezoning applications.

The plan recommended that a newsletter be created to inform residents of events. The Township Supervisor indicated that the community has not had a newsletter since 1981. They tried to develop a newsletter for the last tax bill, but

it was not sent out because it was not completed in time for distribution. The plan also indicated that public opinion polls should be done to obtain input from the community. No Township-wide survey has been completed since the plan's adoption. A smaller-scale survey, however, was sent to about sixty residents in 1995. The survey sought community input in regards to cellular phone service needs within the Township. Lastly, the Township Supervisor reported that the Township has evaluated the plan every five years, but never made amendments. Due to concerns with possible new residential growth affecting the community, the Planning Commission intends to update the plan in 1999 with the help of an outside party.

In total, it was surprising to find that a relatively good plan, as evaluated under the Lightfoot criteria, is not being used by the Township. An analysis of the post hoc interview findings will be discussed in the final chapter.

# CHAPTER SIX

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

The primary purpose of this research paper was to evaluate the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan and to determine if it is being effectively used as a decision-making guide.

Prior to meeting with public officials at La Grange Township, the plan's content was reviewed based on the Lightfoot criteria detailed in Chapter Five. This evaluation showed that the plan was well-written and complete. Specifically, a Future Land Use Plan and Implementation/Evaluation section were integral parts of the document. Yet, when La Grange Township officials were interviewed, they admitted the document was not being used. In fact, many of the specific recommendations provided in the plan were never implemented.

### ***Plan Implementation Failures***

The following are three examples of La Grange Township's failure to implement provisions of the Land Use Plan: 1) lack of coordination between zoning and the land use plan; 2) failure to update plan elements and implement specific recommendations; and 3) failure to use the plan as a guide for decision-making.

#### **1. Lack of Coordination Between Zoning and Land Use Plan**

The Land Use Plan was designed to accommodate a maximum year 2000 population of 2,270, and 250 additional housing units were planned for by the Township (La Grange Township, 1981). The Township's zoning, however, would allow a much higher level of development. A November 1998 build-out analysis conducted by the Southwestern Michigan Commission detailed the

Township's zoning deficiencies. The build-out analysis was completed as part of the Dowagaic River Watershed Project to provide a picture of what future development would look like if maximized under current zoning. As shown in Figure 3 and Table 1, the build-out analysis demonstrated that La Grange Township is zoned for a minimum capacity of 12,409 people and a maximum capacity of 24,889 people -- well beyond the 2,270 people planned for the year 2000 (Southwestern Michigan Commission, 1998). The primary problem is that the minimum lot size requirements provided in the zoning ordinance do not correspond with the development policies stated in the Land Use Plan. For example, agricultural districts allow lot sizes that are too small (10 to 2 acres) to maintain a working farm. Common planning practice within the region requires minimum parcel sizes of 40 acres or more for "prime" agricultural areas.

2. Failure to Update Plan Elements and Implement Specific Recommendations

The plan recommended that the document be reviewed at least once a year. The Township Supervisor, however, reported that the plan had been reviewed every five years. No amendments were ever made to the plan document. The Township should have made basic changes to the document over the years, such as updating the 1980 existing land use inventory and revising the population, housing, and economic statistics based on the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census. For example, the plan allocated land to accommodate a projected year 2000 population of 2,270 -- a much higher figure than today's population of 1,598. In addition, the Township did not follow specific goals stated in the plan such as the utilization of community questionnaires to gain citizen input and the creation of a newsletter for information dissemination.

3. Failure to Use the Plan as Guide for Decision-Making








The plan has not been used over the years to assist with decisions such as

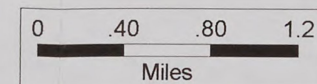
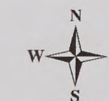


# Build-Out Analysis Map for **LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP**

**Cass County, MI**

## Zoning

-  A-G General Agricultural
-  A-P Prime Agricultural
-  C Commercial
-  I Industrial
-  R-1 Single Family Residential
-  R-2 Medium Density Residential
-  R-3 Lake Residential



Base Data: U.S. Census Bureau, TIGER/Line Files, 1995

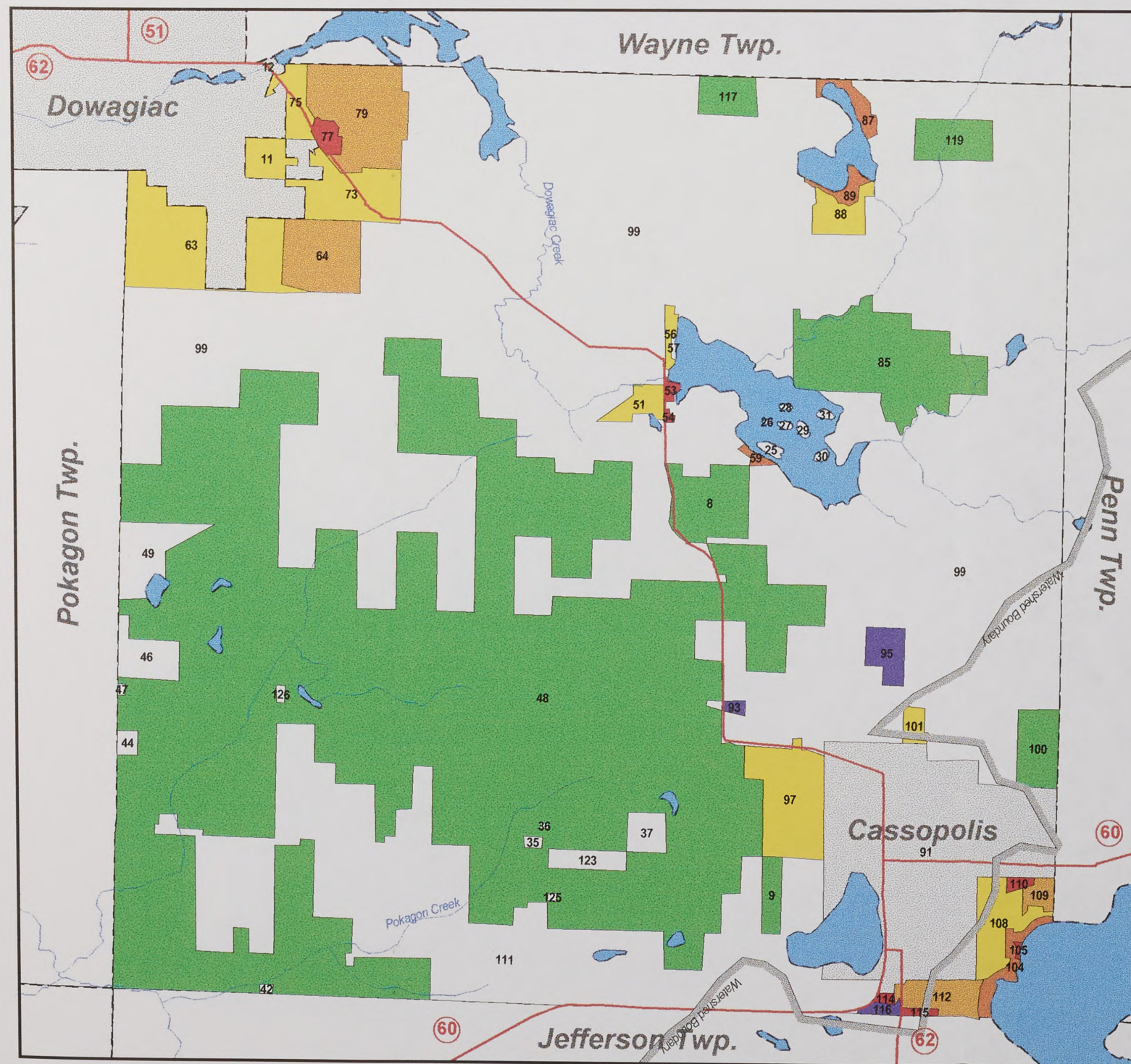
Zoning Data: La Grange Township, 1993



Map prepared by the  
**Southwestern Michigan Commission**  
for the  
**Dowagiac River Watershed Project**

1127 E. State St.  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
Tel: (616) 445-8643 Fax: (616) 445-0619

November, 1998





**TABLE 1.**  
**LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP**  
**BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS**

**Methodology**

This build-out analysis was conducted by the Southwestern Michigan Commission for La Grange Township as part of the Dowagiac River Watershed Project in November 1998.

The zoning classifications allowing residential development were identified and the minimum lot size allowed was recorded. Minimum lot size was calculated in square feet per dwelling unit. For some zoning districts there are a range for the square feet per dwelling unit (a low-end and high-end). This is a result of the zoning ordinance allowing different densities in the same zoning classification depending on the number of dwelling units on the lot or depending on the availability of public sewer and water.

The analysis was performed using a computerized geographic information system. The total areas of each zoning classification were determined and the maximum density allowed in the corresponding zoning classification was assigned to the area. The amount of buildable land was calculated by subtracting thirty (30) percent of the total area. The estimated thirty percent would include land such as roads, other infrastructure, wetlands, or areas with slopes greater than eighteen (18) percent. The thirty percent estimate was based on a build-out analysis performed by Michigan State University.

The maximum number of dwelling units (max. du) was calculated by dividing the maximum density allowed under the zoning ordinance by the buildable area. The estimate for persons per dwelling unit was obtained from the 1990 U.S. Census. The build-out population was determined by multiplying the number of dwelling units by the persons per dwelling unit.

MCD	ID	LOCAL ZONING CLASSIFICATION	AREA (FT²)	BUILDABLE AREA (FT²)	LOW-END MAX. DENSITY (FTYDU)	HIGH-END MAX. DENSITY (FTYDU)	LOW-END MAX. DU	HIGH-END MAX. DU	PERSONS/DU	LOW-END BUILD-OUT POPULATION	HIGH-END BUILD-OUT POPULATION
La Grange Twp.	8	A-P Prime Agricultural	6,262,894	4,384,026	435,600	435,600	10	10	2.57	26	26
La Grange Twp.	9	A-P Prime Agricultural	1,712,357	1,198,650	435,600	435,600	3	3	2.57	7	7
La Grange Twp.	11	R-1 Single Family Residential	1,913,168	1,339,218	20,000	10,000	67	134	2.57	172	344
La Grange Twp.	12	R-1 Single Family Residential	31,307	21,915	20,000	10,000	1	2	2.57	3	6
La Grange Twp.	25	A-G General Agricultural	275,611	192,928	217,800	87,120	1	2	2.57	2	6
La Grange Twp.	26	A-G General Agricultural	34,838	24,387	217,800	87,120	0	0	2.57	0	1
La Grange Twp.	27	A-G General Agricultural	96,231	67,362	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	2
La Grange Twp.	28	A-G General Agricultural	61,295	42,906	217,800	87,120	0	0	2.57	1	1
La Grange Twp.	29	A-G General Agricultural	164,791	115,354	217,800	87,120	1	1	2.57	1	3
La Grange Twp.	30	A-G General Agricultural	141,425	98,998	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	3
La Grange Twp.	31	A-G General Agricultural	135,766	95,036	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	3
La Grange Twp.	35	A-G General Agricultural	233,009	163,106	217,800	87,120	1	2	2.57	2	5
La Grange Twp.	36	A-G General Agricultural	53,364	37,355	217,800	87,120	0	0	2.57	0	1
La Grange Twp.	37	A-G General Agricultural	1,750,721	1,225,505	217,800	87,120	6	14	2.57	14	36
La Grange Twp.	42	A-G General Agricultural	134,897	94,428	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	3
La Grange Twp.	44	A-G General Agricultural	569,671	398,770	217,800	87,120	2	5	2.57	5	12
La Grange Twp.	46	A-G General Agricultural	3,022,638	2,115,846	217,800	87,120	10	24	2.57	25	62
La Grange Twp.	47	A-G General Agricultural	93,607	65,525	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	2
La Grange Twp.	48	A-P Prime Agricultural	285,141,024	199,598,717	435,600	435,600	458	458	2.57	1,178	1,178
La Grange Twp.	49	A-G General Agricultural	4,340,043	3,038,030	217,800	87,120	14	35	2.57	36	90
La Grange Twp.	51	R-1 Single Family Residential	1,627,783	1,139,448	20,000	10,000	57	114	2.57	146	293
La Grange Twp.	53	C Commercial	307,389	215,172					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	54	C Commercial	133,928	93,749					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	56	R-1 Single Family Residential	664,992	465,494	20,000	10,000	23	47	2.57	60	120
La Grange Twp.	57	A-G General Agricultural	110,602	77,422	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	2
La Grange Twp.	59	R-3 Lake Residential	343,128	240,189	8,000	5,000	30	48	2.57	77	123
La Grange Twp.	63	R-1 Single Family Residential	11,981,719	8,387,203	20,000	10,000	419	839	2.57	1,078	2,156
La Grange Twp.	64	R-2 Medium Density Residential	6,218,649	4,353,054	15,000	8,000	290	544	2.57	746	1,398
La Grange Twp.	73	R-1 Single Family Residential	5,839,022	4,087,315	20,000	10,000	204	409	2.57	525	1,050
La Grange Twp.	75	R-1 Single Family Residential	2,209,531	1,546,672	20,000	10,000	77	155	2.57	199	397
La Grange Twp.	77	C Commercial	932,307	652,615					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	79	R-2 Medium Density Residential	9,705,530	6,793,871	15,000	8,000	453	849	2.57	1,164	2,183
La Grange Twp.	85	A-P Prime Agricultural	16,865,562	11,805,893	435,600	435,600	27	27	2.57	70	70
La Grange Twp.	87	R-3 Lake Residential	1,191,140	833,798	8,000	5,000	104	167	2.57	268	429
La Grange Twp.	88	R-1 Single Family Residential	2,361,071	1,652,750	20,000	10,000	83	165	2.57	212	425
La Grange Twp.	89	R-3 Lake Residential	857,294	600,106	8,000	5,000	75	120	2.57	193	308
La Grange Twp.	91	Cassopolis Village	44,072,940	30,851,058					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	93	I Industrial	332,508	232,756					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	95	I Industrial	2,169,063	1,518,344					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	97	R-1 Single Family Residential	8,346,313	5,842,419	20,000	10,000	292	584	2.57	751	1,502
La Grange Twp.	99	A-G General Agricultural	405,075,552	283,552,886	217,800	87,120	1,302	3,255	2.57	3,346	8,365
La Grange Twp.	100	A-P Prime Agricultural	3,633,536	2,543,475	435,600	435,600	6	6	2.57	15	15
La Grange Twp.	101	R-1 Single Family Residential	932,569	652,798	20,000	10,000	33	65	2.57	84	168
La Grange Twp.	104	R-3 Lake Residential	1,744,234	1,220,964	8,000	5,000	153	244	2.57	392	628
La Grange Twp.	105	C Commercial	108,862	76,203					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	108	R-1 Single Family Residential	4,474,748	3,132,324	20,000	10,000	157	313	2.57	403	805
La Grange Twp.	109	R-2 Medium Density Residential	1,003,363	702,354	15,000	8,000	47	88	2.57	120	226
La Grange Twp.	110	C Commercial	347,601	243,321					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	111	A-G General Agricultural	81,168,904	56,818,233	217,800	87,120	261	652	2.57	670	1,676
La Grange Twp.	112	R-2 Medium Density Residential	3,093,636	2,165,545	15,000	8,000	144	271	2.57	371	696
La Grange Twp.	114	C Commercial	228,560	159,992					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	115	C Commercial	336,227	235,359					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	116	I Industrial	514,602	360,222					2.57		
La Grange Twp.	117	A-P Prime Agricultural	2,482,338	1,737,637	435,600	435,600	4	4	2.57	10	10
La Grange Twp.	119	A-P Prime Agricultural	3,637,238	2,546,066	435,600	435,600	6	6	2.57	15	15
La Grange Twp.	123	A-G General Agricultural	1,721,484	1,205,039	217,800	87,120	6	14	2.57	14	36
La Grange Twp.	125	A-G General Agricultural	78,370	54,859	217,800	87,120	0	1	2.57	1	2
La Grange Twp.	126	A-G General Agricultural	166,009	116,206	217,800	87,120	1	1	2.57	1	3
TOTALS			933,186,960	653,230,872			4,829	9,684		12,409	24,889

1996 POPULATION	RANGE FOR BUILD-OUT POPULATION	
1,595	12,409	24,889



rezoning applications and infrastructure improvements. The interviews revealed that the Township Board and Planning Commission members do not even have a copy of the plan, let alone bring them to meetings.

The Township Supervisor and Planning Commission Chairperson indicated that not much development activity has taken place since late 1981. Few rezoning applications and site plans were reviewed over the years. Nevertheless, community meetings could have involved reviewing the elements of the plan document. New population, housing, and economic data could have been obtained from various sources and added to the plan at low cost and effort. Finally, for those few land use and infrastructure decisions that the Township had been called upon to make, the plan might have provided useful guidance for community officials.

### ***Reasons for Lack of Plan Implementation***

The Lightfoot criteria used in this study showed that the 1981 La Grange Township Land Use Plan was a good plan in terms of content. The plan document had every element the community needed to assist with land use decision-making. Yet interviews conducted as part of the post hoc evaluation showed that the plan was not being used to guide decision making. This failure can be attributed to two primary reasons: 1) lack of education and technical assistance, and 2) lack of crisis.

#### **1. Lack of Education and Technical Assistance:**

According to the Township Supervisor, most members of the Planning Commission and Township Board had not attended educational seminars over the years. It appears the overall feeling of the local officials was that they had completed their comprehensive planning responsibilities in 1981. They



reviewed the plan every five years, but felt it was fine. They correctly understood that the plan would be implemented through the zoning ordinance, but failed to understand that the plan was a living document. No technical advice had been given to local officials since the adoption of the plan. Therefore, over time the plan was just ignored. Today, local officials do not have copies of the Land Use Plan; thus they do not refer to it when making decisions.

2. Lack of Crisis:

No major development has happened in La Grange Township since the adoption of the plan, so, "Why should anyone worry about planning?" The community has seen only one major rezoning in ten years and few site plans are submitted. The Planning Commission only holds four to six meetings a year, often with few items on the agenda. Local officials believed for many years that they had done their duty by creating the plan. No one should be surprised that the plan has been effectively ignored, with the zoning ordinance being given top priority in the Township.

***Recommendations for Future Planning Efforts***

The Township Board, through the leadership of the Township Supervisor, has budgeted monies over the next two fiscal years for an update of the plan document. This study has clearly shown that a good plan, as reviewed under the Lightfoot criteria, does not guarantee its implementation.

Common planning practices will assure that the updated plan document will satisfy virtually all of the Lightfoot criteria. The big question is whether the Township invests in planning education and technical assistance to ensure that planning efforts succeed after the adoption of the amended plan. The Township Board must require its

Planning Commissioners to learn about basic planning principles. For example, instructional classes and books, such as those offered by the Michigan Society of Planning Officials and Michigan Townships Association, should be utilized. Also, community planners at the regional planning commission, private consultant firms, and major universities should be contacted to assist the Township with future planning questions and problems. In conclusion, proactive steps must be taken by Township officials to understand the planning process, otherwise the anticipated plan update could be a wasted effort.

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