

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF BEDFORD
CALHOUN COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

MASTER PLAN

**PREPARED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF BEDFORD**

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE/SCOPE OF THE PLAN

- a. The purpose of this comprehensive Master Plan is to establish short- and long-term (five to thirty years) goals for the future development of the Charter Township of Bedford; to plan for the future growth and development of the Township and provide for the health, safety and general welfare of it's residents; and to make the Charter Township of Bedford a desirable place to live, work and play.
- b. This is a statement of the Organization of the Charter Township of Bedford Planning Commission under the provision of the Township Planning Act, Act 168 of the Public Acts of 1959, as amended.

2. GENERAL GOALS

- a. Establish a pattern of land uses that will maximize the health, safety and general welfare of the residents of the Township.
- b. Achieve a balance between the size of the population and the space available for living, working and playing.
- c. Preserve the separate character of urban and rural development areas.
- d. Protect the environment and the natural resources of the Township.
- e. Provide a plan for the long-range growth and development of the Township.
- f. Preserve farm land and the agricultural economic base.
- g. Establish plans to extend sewer and water services to areas of the Township.
- h. Improve policies to enforce housing code compliance.
- i. Improve policies to control undesirable business sites and facilities.

Implement policies to decrease the number of persons in poverty within the Township.
- j. Preserve and protect Township/State/Federal registered historical sites.
- k. Preserve and protect threatened and endangered species within the Township.

1. Consider Planned Unit Development (PUDs) and cluster housing to conserve land use and retain open space.

3. OUTLINE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

- a. Preparation and Community Interaction – In an effort to develop a thorough and comprehensive Master Plan for the future growth in the Charter Township of Bedford, the members of the Planning Commission have spent many hours of discussion to determine current land usage and have reviewed rezoning and development patterns over the past years in consideration of economical and environmental impacts on the Township during the past years. Input from many sources has been carefully considered in the development of this plan.
- b. The planning history of the Charter Township of Bedford has been tracked and reviewed for trends and past conditions. Only by scrutiny of the past can we get a clear picture of the direction the Township is taking so that the future needs of the residents can be met.
- c. Assess Future Conditions: by putting all the information and statistics together the Planning Commission has arrived at a clear picture of the direction of the growth and/or decline. This Master Plan will guide the Township into the future.
- d. The effectiveness of the Master Plan is related to the willingness of the elected officials and the citizens of the Township to follow the plan and keep it correct. The rewards will make the effort beneficial to the Township and Community.

4. PROBLEMS, ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Land is quickly becoming an extinct resource. Unorganized transformations in land use by a mobile, urbanizing society often results in unconscious disregard for the rights of others; that is, the right to move among others freely and the need to prevent interference with the separation and quietude of others.
- b. Economic Trends – In the short term, the economic future does not look very encouraging for the Township or Calhoun County. The long-term economic future for this community has enormous potential. As identified by many sources, our community has outstanding surface transportation (I-69 and I-94) for the movement of goods, services, and supplies, a Port of Entry, airports to accommodate any type of aircraft in any role, infrastructure to include unlimited water and sewer services from the City of Battle Creek to support large factories or commercial endeavors, land for development, and school capacity for both K-12 and four-year degree college programs within our community. We have excellent hospital care facilities

within our community and to our east and west. The area has been designated a Trade Corridor and the general consensus is that future development and industry will continue along I-94 from Ann Arbor on our East to Benton Harbor on our West. Development will also continue along I-69 both to the North and to the South which will influence our community. On the negative side, our community faces many challenges – some more difficult than others. Some are decaying neighborhoods, poverty, taxes, crime, school academic standards, and social issues exceeding that of most of the state, family stability, and perceived racial diversity issues. These negative issues will prevent good industries and businesses from locating in our Township and community. People follow jobs. We must solve these challenges to move forward as a strong Township and community.

- c. Roads throughout the Township were built at a time when the Township was a rural, agricultural community. With the large amount of residential growth that has and is taking place throughout the Township, these roads are becoming inadequate and will be a major consideration in the future.
- d. Another consideration in the future growth of the Township is the extremely high water table throughout the Township. We must plan well to protect our ground water from contamination.
- e. Abandoned wells – according to Michigan State University, Bulletin WZ40, April 2002, abandoned wells pose a hazard to the health and safety of our community and the State. These abandoned wells pose a hazard to our aquifers and our future water supply whether by private wells or municipal service lines.
- f. Buying or building a home in the Township appeals to many people because they can escape the congestion of the city and yet remain within an easily accessible distance from work, shopping and entertainment.
- g. Goals and objectives are to enable the Charter Township of Bedford Planning Commission to determine land use and development policies during the planning period. Development of objectives have been determined for each of the major land use categories to be used by the Township Planning Commission in evaluating future development proposals in relation to this Master Plan.
- h. Develop the Generalized Land Use Plan – using the data gathered from observation, research and community input over a period of several months, a generalized land use plan has been developed and documented.

5. USING THE PLAN

- a. Zoning ordinances must support the Master Plan. The Township Master Plan is needed to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability and to limit the improper use of land.

- b. The Master Plan should be utilized regarding future development, rezoning, site plan review, special land use approval and variances. The Master plan is a vision, a goal and a policy which creates the future picture of the Township.
- c. The Master Plan must be kept current to ensure good planning decisions. The Planning Commission should conduct periodic reviews to keep the Master Plan current. During these reviews, goals can be added, changed, deleted, and future land use designations modified. Amendments can also be added to the Master Plan.
- d. The effectiveness of the Master Plan is related to the willingness of the elected officials and the citizens of the Township to follow the plan and keep it current. The Township and its residents will be rewarded with a more stable, vibrant community.

6. DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Master Plan has been developed, recommendations for the implementation of the various aspects of this plan will be developed and implemented.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF BEDFORD

1. Calhoun County laid out its boundaries and was fixed by statute on October 29, 1829. The Territorial Road ran through Calhoun County which benefited settlers and immigrants alike.
2. Originally called Milton Township and renamed to Bedford Township, it was organized in 1838. At the first town meeting held on April 1, 1838, Caleb Kirby was elected as the first Supervisor, and John Meacham became the first Township Clerk, as well as one of the three Justices of the Peace. Isaac Sutton became the first Treasurer. The first Bedford Township meeting was held at the home of Josiah Gilbert.
3. The first recorded land purchase in Bedford Township was for 160 acres bought by John Bertram, April 19, 1832. On July 19, 1832, he recorded the purchase of 80 acres and 685 acres the following year.
4. John Armstrong built the first sawmill in the Township in 1837. It began operation just in time to supply the needed timbers for the homes of the new settlers.
5. By 1840, the Township had grown to the point that a post office was opened in Bedford Village with Erastus R. Wattles as postmaster. Two years later, in 1842, Colonel John Stuart established a stage and mail route that ran from Battle Creek through Bedford to Hastings.
6. Doctor Doane came to Bedford in 1844 to reside just north of Bedford and to practice as a herbal and medical doctor. He put up many of his own medicines and was often seen searching for certain plants for his medicines along streams and in wooded areas.
7. By 1850, Bedford had grown to the point that the need for a cemetery became evident. Mr. Hutchinson donated the land in Section 10, which is part of the village, for the cemetery.
8. In 1855, Simeon Rotherick built the Grist Mill in Bedford for Huntington M. Marvin. It soon became the nucleus of the Village of Bedford and was known for Bedford Best and White Rose flours. The Mill was on the State of Michigan Historical List as Site Number 65 registered June 2, 1966 until a fire destroyed the structure on July 8, 2014.
9. The first school was built in the Village in 1842 and became known as District 6, to educate the children of this growing community.
10. Thomas Peabody opened the first tavern on Marvin Street in about 1850. Much of the beer and wine he sold was supplied by a brewery in Marshall.
11. A group of Methodists began meeting as early as 1838. However a permanent circuit was not established until 1850, with Rev. Benson as the first circuit preacher. The Congregational Society was formed by a Rev. Bradley in 1848 with twenty-six members.

12. Highbred Merino sheep were imported to the area by Colonel Fonda, who later brought blooded Chester White swine to Bedford. With these additions, Bedford became an important center during the Civil War for the production of pork products and navy beans.
13. By the end of the Civil War, Bedford had grown to include two dry goods stores, two grocery stores, one drug store, a hardware store, sawmill, grist mill, a wagon shop, two black smiths, a school, two churches, a hotel and a post office.
14. In the 1870's, rich deposits of red clay were discovered south of Bedford Village on the farms for the Holliday families, who for many years manufactured drainage tiles and bricks, and eventually a bright red-hued pottery.
15. During the early 1840's, a plank road was built through the swampy areas of Bedford and a sturdy wooden bridge, with side railings, was built across Waubascaon Creek.
16. Another area of growth was the Level Park area. Many farms, homes and businesses were located along West Main Street Road (now West Michigan Avenue). This area remained mostly farmland until well after the turn of the century when many farmers began platting their land.
17. Growth was occurring in several areas of the Township. In 1840, missionaries who built a large school to educate the children of spiritualistic parents laid out the Village of Harmonia. Nothing is left of this Village except the cemetery. The last evidence of the Village was destroyed with the building of Fort Custer. Although many of the grave markers have disappeared, the Township does maintain the cemetery and the graves of the veterans are marked with flags each Memorial Day. The Harmonia Cemetery is on the State of Michigan Historical List as Site Number L1131A, registered on November 30, 1982.
18. An Interurban Railroad ran along the side of West Main Street (now West Michigan Avenue). The tracks for it were laid after the turn of the century. The railroad was abandoned and no trace remains.
19. West Main Street (now West Michigan Avenue) was a dirt road until 1921 when it was paved.
20. Mr. Williams Vester built the first store in the settlement of Level Park in 1903. Other than this store there were just a few farmhouses in the area.
21. The first school in the Level Park area, District 3, was built on land donated by William Finlay on Fine Lake Road (now North Uldriks Drive), in about 1864. This school was torn down and another larger one was built at what is now known as 3312 West Michigan Avenue.

22. In about 1900, that school was torn down and a two room school was built on Coldwater Street.
23. From 1915 through the 1920's, the building industry enjoyed quite a boom in Bedford Township. The population grew rapidly enrolling many more children in the school. As the population continued to grow, the two-room school was replaced by a four-room school on West Michigan Avenue and later enlarged by several additions.
24. Due to Bedford Township's close proximity to the City of Battle Creek, the Township has continued to grow and become a "bedroom" community with a small amount of commercial development.
25. In 1936-1937, the Township built two fire stations: Fire Station 1 that is located in the Village of Bedford on Bedford Road, or M-37, and Fire Station 2 that is located on South Uldriks Drive. In addition, Fire Station 1 also houses the Maintenance Department for the Township. In 2002, a state of the art facility was built to replace Station 2 and house the Township offices.
26. In 1960, on Morgan Road, Fire Station 3 was built. This facility was demolished in 1997 and a new, modern facility was constructed to accommodate updated fire equipment.
27. The Township became a charter township in 1982 in an effort to protect its boundaries from annexation. Other than making annexation more difficult, becoming chartered has no major effect on the daily operations of the Township.
28. The Township has seven elected officials. The supervisor, clerk and treasurer are full-time. The four trustees attend regularly scheduled board meetings and take an active role in various committees and duties if requested by the Township Board.
29. At the time the supervisor's office also employed a full-time secretary. This position no longer exists due to attrition and advances in technology. The Clerk and Treasurer can by state statute hire deputies.
30. In addition, the Assessor and Building and Zoning Administrator are both part-time positions. The assessor places values on 4,311 parcels of property. The Building and Zoning Administrator issues building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing permits, oversees land use and zoning, and attends to assignment of necessary inspections, ordinance violations and zoning problems. The Building and Zoning Administrator also oversees and coordinates the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals. The building department has inspectors for all building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical permits to oversee work underway and completed within the Township. Any future growth of the Charter Township of Bedford will require additional funding to support this office.
31. A contract with the Battle Creek City police department was established in 1995 to provide police protection to the Charter Township of Bedford.

32. The Maintenance Department has one full-time and one seasonal employee. When needed the Township occasionally contracts services for various jobs or hires additional part-time help to support this position. The Township Maintenance Department oversees cemeteries, buildings and parks.
33. The Charter Township of Bedford contracts water and sewer services from the City of Battle Creek for a limited number of homes and businesses in the Township. The serious need for water and especially sewer expansion will require the immediate attention by the Township for future business and commercial development.
34. In the past 10 years there have been few road improvements or additions in the Township. The Michigan Department of Transportation maintains 7.5 miles of road in the Township: M-89 (Michigan Avenue) and M-37 (Bedford Road). The Calhoun County Road Department owns and maintains the remainder of the roads in Bedford.

CHAPTER 3: EXISTING AND HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

1. REGIONAL SETTING

The Charter Township of Bedford is located in the northwest corner of Calhoun County; bounded by Barry County on the North, and Kalamazoo County on the West. The cities of Springfield and Battle Creek abut the South and the Charter Township of Pennfield abuts the Charter Township of Bedford on the East.

Along with these state and local legal boundary neighbors, the U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs maintains a large facility within our southern boundaries.

The Townships close proximity to the cities of Battle Creek and Springfield, with their large industrial parcels and support utilities, has pushed Bedford into becoming an urban location. The division of rural farms for housing development exacerbates this situation. Without sufficient sewer and municipal water in the proper locations industrial and commercial endeavors are at a disadvantage.

2. NATURAL CONDITIONS

- a. **CLIMATE:** Lake Michigan affects the climate of the Township, which is approximately 50 miles to our west. Summers are warm and humid, while winters are moderate to severe with abundant snowfalls. This causes precipitation levels to be from 40-70 inches a year maintaining our streams, lakes and wetlands.
- b. **WATER SOURCES:** The Waubascaon Creek flows from the northwest corner of the Township through the center until it reaches the Kalamazoo River, which traverses the southern portion of the Township. The seven-mile creek bisects the western one-third of the Township and flows into the Kalamazoo River. Several drains run north to south within the Township draining the wetlands. These drains run into the creeks as well as to the river. The Township has within its boundaries many small private lakes that are mostly within the agricultural zones. There are also two large lakes: St. Mary's Lake and Waubascaon Lake. Approximately one-half of St Mary's Lake is in the Township while the other half is in the Charter Township of Pennfield.

Private wells are the main source of domestic water in the Township and range from 25 to 200 feet in depth. The water table is generally high and, in some instances, can impede septic system installation and operation. As stated, the wet land and flood plain designations are throughout the Township. The Zoning Map displayed in this section is provided for use in identifying the various areas of distinction.

The Morgan Woods/Orchard Park subdivisions are supported by both water and sewer hookups via the City of Battle Creek, as is a portion of St. Mary's Lake. The large manufactured home parks off M-37 (Bedford Road) are supported by sewer and water provided by the City of Battle Creek. Some homes in various parts of the Township are connected to city water because of groundwater contamination.

- c. **WOODLANDS/WETLANDS:** The establishment of wetland designations is a responsibility of the Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). There are lakes and streams throughout the Township. We also have large stands of hard woods and evergreens/pines, which are found mostly in agricultural and open space designations. These wooded plots provide an atmosphere conducive to wildlife development and maintenance. Even with the wetland locations, there is a large abundance of available land for residential development.

The federal government, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has developed the 100-year flood plain designation. This designation, with its accompanying maps, layout the restrictions for development in these areas. If government flood insurance is obtained, residential housing may be built in flood plain areas. Some of the flood plain areas in the Township are part of a continuous designation covering Kalamazoo, Calhoun and Jackson counties.

3. TOPOGRAPHY

While there is a significant amount of agricultural zoning within the Township, farming operations remain limited. There is some dairy farming and crop production, mainly to support the animals.

Large tracks of agricultural land have been divided into residential development over the past 10 years. As the demand for large buildable lots in close proximity to the work space increases, diligent oversight must be maintained to keep the balance of all zoning restrictions harmonious with each other to avoid developmental and living condition problems.

4. POPULATION TRENDS

Over the years the industrial viability of many plants caused their closing. This affected the age of the overall residential occupancy. Many young people were forced to leave the area seeking work. This caused the community demographic to change to an older, established household of 2 adults. The down sizing of the Kellogg Company, the closing of Clark Equipment and Eaton Manufacturing are examples of economic decline affecting the area. Since these negative developments, a huge effort by the City of Battle Creek was successful in developing unused Fort Custer locations into large-scale factories. It, therefore, should be noted that the households in the Townships have begun changing to a younger age. This has not shown up as a plus in the 2010 year census as the household occupancy from 1990 to the present has continued to drop from 2.8 to 2.36.

The expansion of the Fort Custer Industrial Park, abutting the Charter Township of Bedford, has impacted road travel (heavy trucks and cars) on M-37 (Bedford Road) and M-89 (West Michigan Avenue) which enter the complex via a north-south road. This manufacturing development increased demand for economical land to be developed into residential housing. Much of the new manufacturing development has come in at a much lower wage than what was lost over the years, thus the median income has remained low even though the working community has increased dramatically.

There are four (4) school districts in the Township: Gull Lake, Battle Creek, Pennfield and Hastings. Out of the four districts there are no schools located in the Township. School age children are bussed to other locations. Most of the new development in the Township has been to the northwest portion in the Gull Lake School District.

5. HOUSING TRENDS

The census of 1980 had the Township population at 10,157 with 3354 housing units. This gave a household average of 2.86. As stated previously, the census of 2000 showed a population of 9,517, or an average of 2.6 members per household. The northwest portion of the Township is experiencing a growth of new homes whereas the rest of the Township is stagnant. There is very little demolition of older homes or losses from fire damage. Any fire damage is usually rebuilt. Two large manufactured home parks are in the lower east portion of the Township and are starting to decay. Multiple units are vacant and the home park management officials are working to find owners/renters. Efforts to expand have failed through interaction of the citizens and action by the planning commission and Township board.

The types of housing structures within the Township are primarily single family units. There are a few multi-family units and we have experienced some effort to develop site condominiums. Most of all new housing starts conform to single family development. Without municipal water and sewer facilities, the effort for larger multi-family units requiring larger tracts of land cannot be developed.

There are no universal criteria for defining standards of housing adequacy. As in all townships and cities, the Township has its share of structures needing repair. Through diligent management of the Township's blight ordinance, these units are kept at a manageable level.

Vacancy status is divided into three categories: rent, sale and seasonable. The amount of rental units has risen since statistics of the 1980 census, but empty rental units remain small. Units for sale have dropped from 6 percent to less than 2 percent in the recent census. There is an increase of seasonable vacancies: because of the population getting older, as well as an increase in financial capabilities.

6. SERVICES

The Township has provided four (4) recreational facilities such as tennis/basketball courts, with child play facilities. Fishing and boating is available on both lakes, as well as the Kalamazoo River.

The fire department, which is strictly paid part-time, is supported by three (3) fire stations. The oldest station, which is #1, is in the Village of Bedford on Bedford Road (M-37). It was built in 1937 and is currently on an environmental cleanup site. The station is outdated and future plans will be made to replace it as current fire apparatus specifications preclude placing updated rigs in this facility. The #2 station is housed in the Township Offices building, which is on S. Uldriks Drive. This building was built in 2001 and is of the size and support capability to house any and all currently specified fire apparatus. The #3 station is on Morgan Road and was built in 1997 and meets all requirements for future needs.

The three (3) fire stations house a total of seven types of apparatus: grass fighting rigs, tankers, and first run engines. Currently 27 fire fighters are trained and certified by the state as having the up-to-date classifications needed to provide emergency services to the Township. As we grow, the older station and present equipment must be maintained, repaired, or replaced. In doing so, careful consideration must be given to financial feasibility.

The Battle Creek Police Department serves the Charter Township of Bedford. Patrols are available 24 hours a day. Bedford currently enjoys a low crime rate as compared to the national and state averages.

Police services are provided via contract with the Battle Creek Police Department. Residents of the Charter Township of Bedford receive the same police services as the residents of the City of Battle Creek. Residents of Bedford benefit from police coverage, the detective lab, criminal investigation services, road patrols and other beneficial services.

The special assessment district levied each year by the Township board, and agreed upon by the citizens, finances both the fire and police department.

The maintenance department of the Township consists of one (1) full-time employee and seasonal part-time help when needed. This department is responsible for mowing of the parks and cemeteries as well as providing sexton services. All minor repairs to the Township buildings are maintained by the head of this department which is housed in fire station #1 in the Village. There are also two storage and maintenance shops at this location.

The Township governing body consists of an elected Supervisor, Clerk and Treasurer, and four board members. The Township has in place an appointed Planning Commission, Board of Appeals, Board of Review, and a Fire Chief. Hired staff include an assessor, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and building inspectors and a building and zoning administrator.

The Charter Township of Bedford has approximately 4,311 parcels of land on the assessment roll.

7. OVERVIEW

- a. The primary use of land in the Township is residential which includes platted subdivisions of record dating back over 50 years and developments. It is expected that this type of expansion will continue due to the available affordable land within the Township.
- b. There is a moderate amount of commercially zoned land, generally along Bedford Road (M-37), Custer Drive, West Michigan Avenue (M-89) and North Avenue. Most of this zoning supports gas stations, convenience stores, auto repair sales, lawn mower sales, hardware and grocery stores.
- c. Industrial zoning is practically non-existent except for a gravel pit and pallet making facility. Industrial development is hampered by not having the availability of municipal water and sewer.
- d. Agricultural land comprises a large part of the Township and most likely will be developed into residential use. Two (2) large dairy farms are in operation in the Township, with their remaining farmable lands under production, supporting livestock and cash crop operations not necessarily in full-time operation.
- e. A review of the zoning map, enclosed in this plan, will give the reader an in-depth understanding of the potentials of the Township.

CHAPTER 4 PROBLEMS, ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1. PROBLEMS OF TOWNSHIP LAND USE

More and more people are leaving the cities and moving to the townships. Their reasons are varied – among them being a search for lower taxes, space and quietude, and the removal from the hustle and bustle of the cities.

With the influx of more people into the Charter Township of Bedford, the frequency of rezoning and conditional use permit applications increases. The Township's ability to maintain successful zoning principles, as well as follow a Master Plan, becomes more difficult. The more congested the Township becomes, the more evident the need for careful planning and control of land use.

Historic development patterns have occurred in situations without regard to the natural environment. Areas of poor drainage and high water table (e.g. portions of section 29) have been developed and continue to have problems with such natural conditions.

2. ADVANTAGES TO TOWNSHIP LIFE

Living in the Charter Township of Bedford offers the property owner a quiet, peaceful atmosphere to get away from daily stressors. The Township offers the beauty and restorative effects of its many natural resources, its lush vegetation, which includes trees and plants of countless varieties (even some very rare plants), many streams and lakes, fresh air and open space. Yet, from any area of the Township it is but a short distance to the shopping centers, grocery stores, schools, medical care and recreational facilities.

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE OF BEDFORD TOWNSHIP

The Charter Township of Bedford has an abundance of available land for home sites. It can offer the quality of life people are searching for and the property taxes are much lower than in the cities. Water is readily available to nearly every parcel of land and there is an abundance of open space to buffer homes from other land uses and to provide the peaceful, quiet atmosphere desired by most new homebuilders.

Considering the continuing growth in the industrial park and the commercial centers of the city, more people will be looking for homes and home sites, and many of those will recognize the advantages, opportunities and beauty of living in the Charter Township of Bedford.

4. TOWNSHIP OF BEDFORD GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Recognizing the potential for future growth within the Charter Township of Bedford, it becomes imperative that careful planning for that future growth be done now to prevent problems from arising out of uncontrolled urban sprawl. The Charter Township of Bedford must decide where it would like to be 20 years from now and then carefully plan how to get to that point.

Current home building trends must be thoroughly studied and then projected to the future to determine how these trends will affect the Township. Would the current trends, if continued, create inadequacies in the transportation system? In utility availability? Would they adversely affect the quality of the ground water, open space and wildlife habitats? Is township office staffing and equipment sufficient? How can municipal water, sanitary sewers, and drainage issues be improved? Can we facilitate recreational needs? More importantly, our need for increased Police and Fire over the next twenty (20) years needs to be periodically reviewed.

5. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

If the present trends continue, the vast majority of the future township growth will be residential dwellings. The Charter Township of Bedford has historically been a bedroom community with very small commercial growth and practically no industrial growth. The close proximity of the Townships to industrial parks and the commercial centers of the city make it an ideal location for living.

A thorough examination of existing recorded plats except in the areas of west M-37 (Bedford Road); reveals there are few buildable lots available. Therefore, there is a potential for the development of new plats during the next two decades.

The trend now is toward larger parcels (5 to 10 acres) for building sites. However, with the ever-increasing cost of land, it can be expected that future development may revolve back to the platted lot, as well as, acreage less than five acres.

The Charter Township of Bedford should be mindful of the sensitivity of our groundwater, the importance of maintaining open space and the needs of our wildlife sanctuaries while planning for the future so that controlled growth is beneficial to all parties.

6. AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

With the topography of the Township in mind, it is not probable there will be any significant agricultural development.

During the past several years, many farming operations have ceased and an increasing number of the farmers, who had placed their acreage under P.A. 116, have or have attempted to withdraw from P.A. 116 so their land could be used for other options.

The land that is productive agriculturally must be protected from encroachment by any land use which would be harmful to those agricultural uses. Commercial and residential development must be carefully monitored to prevent further erosion of agriculturally zoned areas in the Township.

7. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Along with residential growth, a certain amount of commercial development generally occurs to accommodate the needs of a growing population. The present commercial establishments are located generally along M-89 (West Michigan Avenue), M-37 (Bedford Road), Custer Drive and North Avenue. Since those are the main thoroughfares of the Township, it is predictable that future commercial development will be along those corridors.

To prevent the problems of traffic congestion caused by improper zoning and development allowing a multitude of driveways onto a busy street, Bedford must carefully consider and plan for any future commercial growth. The lack of municipal water and sewer will deter most large commercial developments.

Controlled street access and buffer zones must be a priority consideration in future commercial development. Strip commercial zoning should be discouraged. The building of service roads and alleys in existing strip commercial zoned areas might be considered, if practical, to help alleviate the number of curb cuts along transportation routes.

Home occupations appear to be on the increase. Residents are starting home businesses to augment their incomes and to maintain or improve their life style. These home occupations must be watched carefully and controlled so they do not infringe upon the rights of adjacent property owners.

The Charter Township of Bedford desires to permit, rather than mandate, a mix of commercial and residential uses within the same property. The new mixed-use district will replace the current commercial and industrial districts with the intent of promoting a more complete and realistic district that limits sprawl and integrates shopping and services within the main corridors mixed with living units.

The intent is to accommodate a physical pattern of development often found along village main streets and in neighborhood commercial areas of older cities throughout the previous commercial and industrial areas of the Township.

This will alleviate commercial /residential issues along W. Michigan Avenue and allow for residential use of commercial property either as a mixed use with an existing commercial business, or as a variance for use of an already existing home in the commercial district.

8. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Charter Township of Bedford has very little industrial development and the highly sensitive nature of the ground water, the location of the Township in relation to the major transportation routes and the lack of public water and sewer will deter the development of most industry.

9. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

There are many lakes, streams and wetlands in Bedford, which enhance the aesthetic beauty of the area and provide a natural habitat for a variety of wildlife and plant life. Future development must be carefully planned and controlled to prevent contamination and infringement upon these areas. Sufficient set back requirements must be established. The National Flood Insurance Program and State of Michigan Wetland laws must be fully enforced. The high water table and highly sensitive nature of the water aquifers throughout the Township must be considered in every development project.

Recreational facilities in Bedford are limited. However, a wide-variety of recreational and entertainment activities are available within a short drive. With further development the need for additional parks and a wider range of recreation facilities will emerge. The Recreation Plan of the Charter Township of Bedford must be updated and goals established to provide those needs for a growing community.

10. TRANSPORTATION

Battle Creek Transit is available in some areas of the Township on routes to the VA hospital and Fort Custer Industrial Facility. Included is a stop at Bansil/West Michigan Avenue and Bedford Hills Mobile Village.

Private vehicles mostly meet the transportation needs of the Township residents. This information is supported by data from the Battle Creek Area Transportation Services group. There are two state roads, M-89 (West Michigan Avenue) and M-37 (Bedford Road), along with a network of county roads and few private roads.

With a growing population the need for better roads will undoubtedly occur. Upgrading and widening of some roads may become necessary. A thorough study of the roads in Bedford has been undertaken and a future needs plan developed. Roads are currently under maintenance and repair to meet the needs of the Township residents.

11. UTILITIES

Electricity and telephone lines service all areas of the Township. A portion of the Township has natural gas and cable services available. Only a small amount of about 500 to 600 homes is serviced by municipal water and/or sewer. Two mobile home parks located on M-37 (Bedford Road) have sanitary sewers and municipal water.

The need for public sewers and water will increase along with further growth. These future needs must be considered and should be included in any planning.

CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDED FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

1. RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Considering the trends in the Charter Township of Bedford, over the past several decades, away from agriculture to primarily residential uses, careful consideration has been given to future residential trends.

The Township's close proximity to the cities of Battle Creek and Springfield and their commercial and industrial centers places the Township in a unique position for residential development.

Due to the high water table in much of the Township and the highly sensitive nature of groundwater aquifers, as depicted by FEMA maps, the lack of public water and sewer, and considerable evidence that the majority of land purchases are for larger building sites, this land use classification has been expanded considerably in this Master Plan to include the majority of open land use for conversion into home sites as depicted on the revised Master Land Use Plans as noted below.

a. Low-Density

Density refers to the suggested number of units per acre, not the type of residential unit. Low-density residential areas can be developed at densities of .50 per acre, which would be one (1) dwelling per each two (2) acres or a lot two (2) acres in size with two hundred (200) feet of road frontage.

b. Medium Density Residential

This land use classification has not been expanded in this Master Plan. Considering the minimal lot size versus the high water table and the highly sensitive groundwater, it is felt that an expansion of this land would only create or compound problems with septic systems, groundwater contamination and congestion. Medium to High Density will be limited to existing areas as depicted on Master Land Use Plans.

c. Multi-Family

Existing zoning for the most part already reflects the majority of multiple family residential areas illustrated on the Master Land Use Plan Map. The most significant new areas for future multi-family development is the M-37 (Bedford Road), North Avenue and M-89 (West Michigan Avenue) corridors. It is envisioned that such development should occur in concert with commercial growth in that area. Multi-family and commercial uses developed under an overall plan containing a variety of retail, office and residential uses are considered desirable for this area.

d. Manufactured Housing Parks

The Master Land Use Map recognizes the existing Manufactured Home Parks within the Township as well as Manufactured Modular Homes.

Given the several existing parks, it is felt that with the proposed additional areas adequate land will be provided to satisfy long-range demands while minimizing conflicts between these uses and adjacent low or medium density single family residential areas.

As a general policy, it is recommended that the rezoning of any land in support of manufactured housing and multi-family residential development illustrated on the Master Land Use Plan be deferred until specific applications are made. This will allow maximum opportunity to ensure that appropriate levels of public utilities are available to support this type of development.

2. AGRICULTURAL/OPEN SPACE LAND USE

While the Township is growing and many of its lands are gradually witnessing a transition from rural to urban, there remain significant areas of rural open spaces, many of which continue to be actively farmed. Agricultural operations are scattered throughout much of rural Bedford Township. Unfortunately, many of these farms are being impacted by the encroachment of rural, non-farm residential development.

The Township is noted for its rich agricultural lands. Some acreage throughout the community remains in agricultural production. These farming operations not only contribute to the economic well being of the Township but also comprise a significant element of its prized rural character.

A close look at the history of agriculture in the Charter Township of Bedford over the past many years shows us a major decrease in the number of people and the number of acres involved in agricultural pursuits. Also to be considered is the terrain and the type of soils found in the Township. There are few level plains and, generally, the terrain is quite hilly. The soils are predominately gravel, sand or clay with many areas of wetland neither of which are conducive to agriculture.

Considering the direction development in the Township has been taking in the past several years, and the drastic decline in agricultural pursuits, much consideration has been given to the minimum size requirements for a building site in the agricultural areas.

In view of the above consideration, it is generally agreed that a minimum of 2.0 acres with two hundred (200) feet of road frontage, would be more advantageous to purchasers and the agricultural community.

3. COMMERCIAL LAND USE

The lack of public sewer and water throughout most of the Township, the highly sensitive nature of the groundwater aquifers, the terrain and the soils in the Charter Township of Bedford will likely preclude the development of any major regional commercial centers.

Community service commercial will undoubtedly continue to increase in relationship to residential growth in the Township. Most commercial development has been along West Michigan Avenue (M-89), Bedford Road (M-37), North Avenue and Custer Drive.

4. INDUSTRIAL LAND USE

Industrial land use is minimal in the Township and will continue to be restricted. As stated in the above commercial paragraph, the lack of sewer and water, coupled with the wet land and flood plain designation, restricts any viable development of this type.

The Township is abutted by the Battle Creek Industrial Park on its south border. It is conceivable that extension of the services to this park can be made available to the Charter Township of Bedford. This being possible there could be a small amount of development along Custer Drive/River Road.

5. PUBLIC/QUASI PUBLIC

Lands and facilities devoted to public or quasi-public uses are included in this category. Specific uses include public buildings such as Township Offices, Fire Stations, and Schools, along with facilities such as the Water Supply and Cemetery. Parks and recreation lands are also included in this category.

The Charter Township of Bedford maintains and will continue to maintain three (3) Fire Stations supported by on-call fire fighters. Police protection will continue to be supported by contracts with the City of Battle Creek. The Parks and Cemeteries will be maintained by the Township maintenance department. It is to be considered that the water and sewer support to the Township in the future will be supported by a contract with the Public Works Department of Battle Creek as it is today.

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

- a. To effect a safe, healthful and peaceful environment.
- b. To preserve agriculturally productive lands for farming.
- c. To protect and preserve the natural environment so it may remain the source of well-being for the community.
- d. To provide enough residentially zoned property to ensure home sites for a gradually expanding population in areas not detrimental to natural resources or productive agriculture.

2. POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- a. Clean air and clean water are basic for a healthful life and paramount for the livelihood of residents in the Charter Township of Bedford. The Township shall endeavor to maintain these conditions by joining with regional, national and international groups to abate pollution and by promulgating standards in its ordinances, which inhibit pollution of its air and water.
- b. The Charter Township of Bedford shall continue to investigate ways and means to eliminate pollution problems along the lake shores and in any other densely settled areas including erosion control measures and control of point and non-point pollution, and the expansion of the sewer collection system.
- c. The Charter Township of Bedford will cooperate with the county to establish and enforce a county drainage plan.
- d. Soil and subsoil conditions shall be evaluated in land use decisions to avoid the erosion and leaching of unfiltered waste water into aquifers and lakes, streams or other surface water bodies. Zoning and other ordinances shall be promulgated to limit population growth adjacent to sensitive natural areas. The Township shall also encourage region-wide hydrological studies to further define critical areas and to provide information upon which to base development decisions.
- e. The Township shall cooperate with the county to ensure proper disposal of solid wastes as well as promoting efficient use of resources to lessen the accumulation of solid wastes.

- f. Recognizing the vital role the forests play in the ecosystem and in the maintenance of its rural character, the Township shall strive to preserve its woodlands by including trees and other vegetation in the site review process.
- g. The Township shall do everything possible to encourage and aid farming, allowing development in agricultural areas on only non-productive land, encouraging clustering or other land uses which will allow agricultural land to stay in production.
- h. Overall low-density residential development shall be allowed in non-productive agricultural areas.
- i. The Township shall work with the Calhoun County Road Commission and the Michigan State Highway Department to keep rural and scenic standards on the Township's roads and highways. Safe access should be provided for residents and for tourists to recreational areas.
- j. The Township shall encourage commercial and industrial development which will provide needed services and jobs within the community, thereby eliminating the need to commute or travel for everyday necessities.

3. RESIDENTIAL LAND USE AND HOUSING

The general goal of the Charter Township of Bedford residential land use and housing policy is to ensure a wide range of housing types and prices while maintaining the quality of the environment and the rural character of the community. All available data, as well as obvious evidence on the ground, shows that both full and part-time residency is increasing in the Township. Since most of this development is rural and single-family, the effects upon rural character, agricultural, natural and scenic qualities of the community have been noticeable and may become more severe if allowed to continue without direction.

This plan does not distinguish among types, or densities, of residential development. The Commission believes that the zoning ordinances can address this issue through specific districts and the Planned Residential section of the ordinance.

Township residents have various recreational facilities available to them. The impact to the fire and police services are well within their capabilities. As indicated earlier, the environment is incapable of carrying an unlimited increasing population without diminishing greatly in quality, and the effects of using up the Township's natural resource assets could be unfortunate and irreversible.