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**To:** Atlas Township Planning Commission

**From:** Adam Young, AICP

**Date:** March 1, 2024

**Subject:** Atlas Township Master Plan: Proposed Goals and Objectives and Future Land Use Plan

As you know, we are working on an update to the Master Plan for Atlas Township. At the February Planning Commission meeting, we reviewed an initial draft of the Goals and Objectives and Future Land Use Plan for the Township. Minor revisions were requested to the Goals and Objectives. Enclosed is a revised version of the Goals and Objectives, dated March 1, 2024. The following changes were made:

- Change to Residential Areas and Housing Objective #3, to read: Encourage senior independent housing and residential dependent care facilities to support the needs of the Township's aging population and allow citizens to "age in place" within the Township. Ensure that such development is **appropriately sited and** adequately serviced by public infrastructure and services.
- Change to Transportation Objective #5, to read: Continue to build a strong partnership of public and private entities and residents to support regional trail initiatives, **which may include entities such as** Genesee County and Atlas Township Walk, Bike, Run.

Two changes to the proposed Future Land Use Map were requested. Enclosed is a revised version of the Future Land Use Map, dated March 1, 2024. The following changes were made:

- The property along the west side of M-15, immediately south of the village was changed from Residential Urban Multi-Family to Residential Urban.
- The property along the north side of Hegel Road, immediately adjacent to the village was changed from Residential Agricultural to Residential Urban Multi-Family.

No changes were requested to the Future Land Use Category descriptions. This document is enclosed for reference (dated January 30, 2024).

We look forward to a discussion of this item at the March 2024 Planning Commission meeting. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 313.961.3651 or [ayoung@wadetrim.com](mailto:ayoung@wadetrim.com)

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Enclosures:

- Revised Goals and Objectives, dated March 1, 2024
- Revised Future Land Use Map, dated March 1, 2024
- Future Land Use Category Descriptions, dated January 30, 2024

## Introduction

The Atlas Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission recognize that the establishment of adequate and realistic goals and objectives is essential to the formulation of a long-range development plan. These goals and objectives define the boundaries of Atlas Township's needs and aspirations and reflect the type of community and lifestyle desired, given realistic economic and social limitations.

## Basis for the Goals and Objectives

The process of reviewing and revising the goals for the Atlas Township Master Plan involved several steps, the most important of which was gathering public input from the community. This was accomplished through the formation of a citizen Advisory Committee who guided the formulation of the goals and objectives, an online citizen survey, and a town hall meeting. The draft goals and objectives were presented for citizen review during a public open house and were revised based on feedback received.

*[Refer to Citizen Survey Results Summary, August 16, 2023]*

*[Refer to Town Hall Meeting Summary, October 10, 2023]*

## Goals and Objectives

The citizen and stakeholder engagement process outlined above offered planning decision makers and the public an opportunity to intellectualize attitudes and values about community development. Embodying these values, the set of goals and objectives below establishes the parameters around which the Future Land Use Plan will be designed.

In terms relevant to community planning, goals and objectives provide the master plan the philosophical guidance to address the current issues and advance plans into the future. In general, goals and objectives can be defined as follows:

- Goals are overall broad statements that provide a focus for future discussions. Goals are supported by the more specific objectives.
- Objectives are very specific, measurable, action-oriented statements that help achieve the goals.

### **Primary Goal**

**The primary goal implicit in all other secondary goals is the desire of the officials and citizens of Atlas Township to develop and maintain a sustainable, attractive, pleasant, clean, healthful, and economically stable community environment.**

The goals and objectives for Atlas Township are organized around seven major themes:

1. Character and Quality of Life
2. Natural Resources
3. Agriculture
4. Residential Areas and Housing
5. Commercial and Industrial Areas
6. Transportation

## 7. Community Services

### Character and Quality of Life

#### **Goal**

Foster a distinctive, attractive, healthy and engaged community that is rooted in Atlas Township's civic spirit and rural character.

#### **Objectives**

1. Maintain and enhance the Township's historic character and agricultural heritage by protecting and restoring historically significant sites and structures and encouraging the design of new development to be consistent with the Township' character.
2. Promote a healthy living through the Township's expanding shared use pathway network and access to environmental resources and recreational opportunities.
3. Prepare a 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan and work to develop local parks facilities to support the health, recreation and social needs of residents.
4. Ensure and promote public involvement in local planning and zoning decisions and development related policy issues.

### Natural Resources

#### **Goal**

Protect and enhance valuable natural resources and open spaces that contribute to the health of natural systems, wildlife habitats, community character, and quality of life.

#### **Objectives**

1. Direct new growth away from environmentally sensitive areas such as woodlands, wetlands, steep slopes, and areas subject to flooding.
2. Encourage new residential developments to be sited in a manner that protects the natural character and scenic views of the area by maintaining proper setbacks and by providing landscaping screening as appropriate.
3. Encourage the acquisition and use of land as a conservation measure to protect specific natural features.
4. Reinforce in the zoning ordinance the use of riparian buffers adjacent to tributaries, drains, and wetlands and provisions to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

## Agriculture

### Goal

Preserve and promote Atlas Township’s agricultural heritage and facilitate a vibrant local agricultural economy.

### Objectives

1. Retain, wherever possible, agricultural lands in Atlas Township by protecting them from urban development through the concentration of growth in line with the Future Land Use Plan.
2. Promote sustainable agricultural practices, with its emphasis on environmental stewardship, livestock management practices consistent with state standards, wholesome food production, and a locally-oriented customer base.
3. Designate the historic hamlet of Atlas as a focal point for agricultural services and amenities, allowing for such uses as farmers markets, feed supply, nurseries and other related businesses.
4. Utilize legislative tools and techniques such as the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (PA 116) and farmland conservation easements.
5. Within the zoning ordinance, allow and regulate agricultural tourism to showcase Atlas Township’s agricultural heritage and give farmers opportunities to generate supplemental income.

## Residential Areas and Housing

### Goal

Encourage a range of high-quality housing opportunities and choices compatible with the rural character of Atlas Township.

### Objectives

1. Promote and maintain Atlas Township’s predominantly rural and low-density residential development pattern through appropriate minimum lot sizes and other zoning ordinance controls. Consider increasing the minimum lot size of the RSA Zoning District as recommended by the Future Land Use Plan.
2. Encourage new residential development in appropriate areas as designated on the Future Land Use Map and which are adequately served by public infrastructure and services.
3. Encourage senior independent housing and residential dependent care facilities to support the needs of the Township’s aging population and allow citizens to “age in place” within the Township. Ensure that such development is appropriately sited and adequately serviced by public infrastructure and services.
4. Allow cluster housing, planned unit development, and open space preservation developments consistent with local zoning eligibility requirements to preserve open space and provide a mixture of densities and residential unit types.

5. Protect established residential neighborhoods from encroachment by incompatible uses.
6. Encourage the development of affordable housing which blends harmoniously with the existing housing stock.

## Commercial and Industrial Areas

### Goal

Provide for a limited range of commercial and industrial lands and facilities to serve the needs of the local population, in areas suitable for such development.

### Objectives

1. Encourage limited commercial and industrial development that satisfies local market demands and provides a positive contribution to the Township's local tax base.
2. Direct commercial and industrial development to areas designated on the Future Land Use Map which have convenient access to regional transportation systems and public infrastructure in place.
3. Maintain superior site design standards and encourage landscaping and site amenities that enhance architectural and pedestrian appeal.
4. Recognize the role that the adjacent communities of Goodrich, Brandon Township, Grand Blanc Township, Davison Township and Burton play as the primary commercial, shopping, cultural and entertainment destinations within the area. Relate the amount of commercial zoning to be provided within Atlas Township accordingly.
5. Direct commercial and industrial investment to vacant or underutilized properties before development of greenfield sites.
6. Minimize the nuisance effects associated with commercial and industrial development through the use of buffering techniques such as transitional zoning, landscape screening, and setbacks.
7. Strictly enforce codes and regulations applicable to industrial areas. This includes close monitoring of industries that may be using or storing hazardous chemicals or toxic materials.

## Transportation

### Goal

Provide for a variety of transportation choices to serve both the motorized and non-motorized needs of local residents and visitors.

### Objectives

1. Continue to work with transportation organizations such as the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Genesee County Road Commission (GCRC) to provide necessary level of services for business owners, patrons, and residents.

2. Seek funding from MDOT and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to implement motorized and nonmotorized transportation improvements within Atlas Township.
3. Ensure that proposed private roads are built to GCRC design standards and are effectively maintained over time.
4. Create a network of shared use pathways linking cultural resources, schools, parks, and activity centers throughout the Township and the Village of Goodrich.
5. Continue to build a strong partnership of public and private entities and residents to support regional trail initiatives, which may include entities such as Genesee County and Atlas Township Walk, Bike, Run.
6. Recognize that the paving of existing gravel roads could have a negative impact on existing rural areas and overall community character and consider alternative road improvement options.

## Community Services

### **Goal**









Efficiently and effectively provide and maintain public facilities and services commensurate with the needs of residents and visitors.

### **Objectives**





1. Coordinate with and seek financial assistance from federal, state, regional and county entities in the improvement of local public services and infrastructure.
2. Ensure that major public service and infrastructure improvements consider existing and planned development patterns in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan.
3. Enhance coordination and cooperation between municipalities and the Goodrich Area School District to support the District in providing first-class educational opportunities to residents.
4. Work cooperatively with federal, state and county governments to provide and improve wireless and broadband services within Atlas Township.

# MAP 7 Future Land Use







## Future Land Use:

-  Residential Agricultural  
5 Acre Min. Lot Size for Agricultural and Non-Residential  
3 Acre Min. Lot Size for Residential (0.33 Dwelling Units Per Acre)
-  Residential Suburban Agricultural  
3 Acre Min. Lot Size (0.33 DU Per Acre)
-  Historic Atlas Village  
1 Acre Min. Lot Size without Public Sewer (1 DU Per Acre)  
20,000 Sq. Ft. Min. Lot Size with Public Sewer (2.18 DU Per Acre)
-  Residential Urban  
1 Acre Min. Lot Size without Public Sewer (1 DU Per Acre)  
20,000 Sq. Ft. Min. Lot Size with Public Sewer (2.18 DU Per Acre)
-  Residential Urban Multi-Family
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Public/Recreation

## Circulation Plan:

-  Major Roads (Arterials and Collectors)
-  Local Roads
-  Existing Shared Use Pathway
-  Proposed Shared Use Pathways

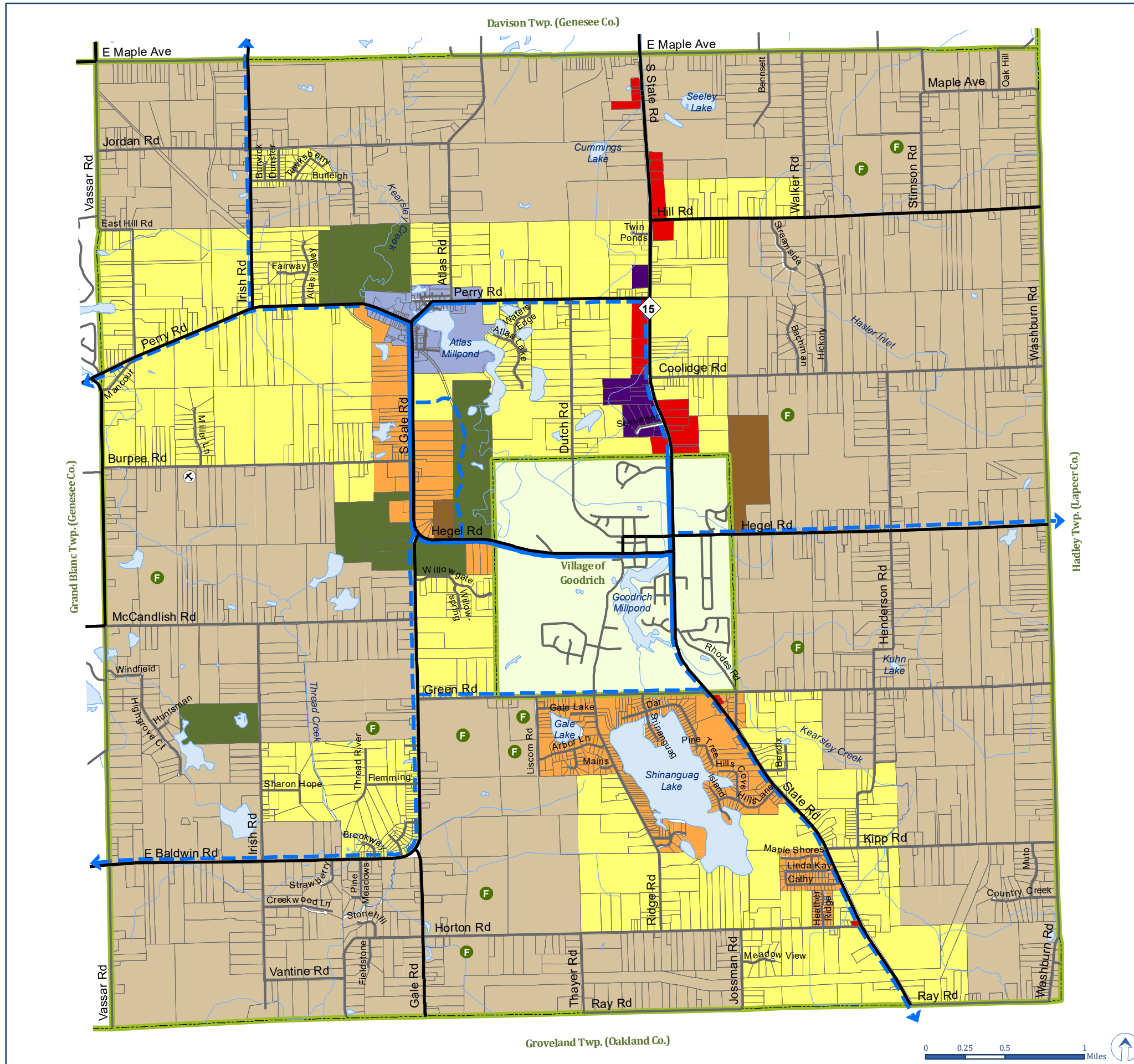
## Base Layers:

-  Active PA 116 Farmland Development Agreement
-  Private Airstrip
-  Streams and Creeks
-  Water Bodies
-  Municipal Limits
-  Parcel Lines

Parcel Source: Genesee County Equalization, 2022.

**2040 Master Plan**  
**Atlas Township**  
Genesee County, Michigan

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## **Plan Recommendations**

Nine future land use classifications are proposed for Atlas Township. The various land uses have been portrayed on the Future Land Use Map. A discussion of each land use category is presented below.

### **Residential Agricultural**

The Residential Agricultural future land use classification is designed to preserve productive farmland within Atlas Township and promote a vibrant community-based agricultural economy. Approximately 65 percent of the land area of the Township has been designated into this category. This category includes highly productive farmland within the Township as well as all existing properties currently participating in the Michigan PA 116 farmland program.

The justification for this category and its significant extent within the Township is rooted in the following factors:

- Atlas Township honors its agricultural legacy and seeks to protect its existing character.
- Atlas Township has an abundant supply of prime farmland.
- Atlas Township desires to reduce the conversion of farmland to urban use.
- Locally operated farms provide significant investments into the local economy.
- Atlas Township has a unique opportunity to both produce and sell local food products to local residents and those within the Flint and Detroit metropolitan areas.

The Residential Agricultural classification supports agriculturally related land uses including farmer's markets, roadside stands, equestrian activities, and agricultural tourism as a means to promote Atlas Township's agricultural heritage and give farmers opportunities to generate supplemental income. The classification seeks to exclude uses that are not compatible with farming activities, including proliferation of residential subdivisions and suburban sprawl. In addition to agricultural activities, the category would permit very low-density single-family housing. Streets are likely to be narrow and unpaved with an overall rustic appearance. Since the Residential Agricultural category maintains an exclusively rural character, public sanitary sewer and water are not provided nor planned for.

A minimum lot area of 3 acres is recommended for residential development where consistent with rural character. For these purposes, rural character is defined to mean:

*Areas perceived as having a low-density pattern of development, being generally void of man-made improvements such as paved roadways, and exhibiting open fields, farmland or woodlands as common elements of the visual landscape.*

A minimum lot size of 5 acres is encouraged for agricultural land use to include all types of farming activities, the keeping of livestock, and smaller-scale specialty farms. This 5-acre minimum lot size for agricultural uses is consistent with the Michigan PA 116 farmland program, which defines farmland to mean:

*A farm of 40 acres or more in one ownership, with 51 percent or more of the land devoted to an agricultural use; or, a farm of 5 acres or more in one ownership, but less than 40 acres, with 51 percent or more of the land devoted to an agricultural use that has produced a gross annual income*

*from agriculture for \$200 per year or more per acre; or, a specialty farm (an enterprise of 15 or more acres) that has produced a gross annual income from an agricultural use of \$2,000 or more.*

A minimum lot size of 5 acres is encouraged for compatible non-residential uses such as parks and other outdoor recreation, schools, public facilities, kennels and other similar uses.

Appropriate development standards and design requirements are encouraged to achieve the intent of the Residential Agricultural category to protect rural character. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The establishment of large setbacks along the perimeter of a site where open space and/or native vegetation predominates.
- A transitional arrangement of land uses ordered by their intensity of use.
- A transitional arrangement of buildings and structures ordered by their scale and bulk.
- The preservation or restoration of the natural pre-development pattern of surface water flows, ground water recharge areas, and wildlife habitat corridors.
- The preservation or restoration of historic resources.

## Residential Suburban Agricultural

The Residential Suburban Agricultural category seeks to incorporate important agricultural activities in conjunction with a slighter higher intensity and concentration of residential use as compared to the Residential Agricultural category. The category provides for rural, estate-style residential development in farming, open space and woodland areas where prime agricultural soils and environmentally sensitive areas are not generally found. Its purpose is to provide accommodation for such residential lifestyles in an open space atmosphere that permits continuation of farming and other open space uses.

The Residential Suburban Agricultural category maintains a predominantly rural character and seeks to exclude the proliferation of residential subdivisions and suburban sprawl. Single-family uses are encouraged to be designed using clustering techniques to preserve agricultural lands, environmentally significant lands, and other open spaces. In addition to agricultural and single-family residential uses, a limited amount of support services, such as parks, churches, and schools, may be appropriate but will be limited by the lack of public water and sanitary sewer services within the category. A minimum lot area of 3 acres is recommended for the Residential Suburban Agricultural classification.

This classification is the second largest in Atlas Township, encompassing approximately 25 percent of the Township. Lands in this classification are typically located between agricultural dominated areas and more concentrated residential areas.

## Residential Urban

The Residential Urban future land use category is primarily designed to accommodate single-family detached homes of a greater density than the Residential Suburban Agricultural category. The category may also accommodate varieties of clustered and/or attached residential development, where appropriate, to preserve environmentally significant lands and other open spaces. High quality and diversity in physical design and the integration of natural amenities into site design is encouraged to uphold the rural character of the community. Institutional uses such schools, churches, parks and daycare centers would also be appropriate.

As shown on the Future Land Use Map, this classification includes existing small-lot residential neighborhoods southeast of the Village of Goodrich including the lakefront residential development around Shinanguag Lake and Gale Lake. This classification also includes lands along Hegel and Gale Roads to the west

of the Village. These areas are either presently served by public sanitary sewer lines or are planned to accommodate public sanitary sewer in the future.

The minimum residential lot size for areas without public sanitary sewer is one acre, while a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet is permitted with public sanitary sewer. Where public sanitary sewer is not available and a non-conventional (engineered) septic system must be utilized, a minimum lot size of two acres is required.

### Residential Urban Multi-Family

The Residential Urban Multi-Family future land use classification is intended to permit the development of higher density residential development that can be appropriately integrated into the rural context of the Township, including condominiums, attached townhomes, stacked ranches, and garden apartments. Senior housing and residential care facilities would also be appropriate within this future land use category. The establishment of this category supports the Township's goal to encourage a range of high-quality housing opportunities and choices compatible with the rural character of Atlas Township and to further the following specific objectives:

- Encourage senior housing and residential care facilities to support the needs of the Township's aging population and allow citizens to "age in place" within the Township.
- Encourage the development of affordable housing which blends harmoniously with the existing housing stock.

The Residential Urban Multi-Family is intended to serve as a zone of transition between the nonresidential areas and the lower density, residential areas of the Township. High quality and diversity in physical design and the integration of natural amenities into site design is encouraged to uphold the rural character of the community. Institutional uses such schools, churches, parks and daycare centers would also be appropriate.

A minimum lot size of 5 acres is required for this classification. The maximum density for multi-family residential development shall be as dictated by the Atlas Township Zoning Ordinance.

Two small areas have been designated on the Future Land Use Map for Residential Urban Multi-Family use. Both locations are along major roads in close proximity to the Village of Goodrich. In evaluating any future request for a Residential Urban Multi-Family zoning change or proposed development, the following criteria must be considered:

- Access to a major road capable of handling the expected amount of traffic to be generated.
- Availability of existing or proposed public sanitary sewers, community facilities and services.
- Substantial, effective pre-existing or planned buffering from incompatible adjoining land uses.
- Non-buildable sites such as tracts substantially located in a floodplain or wetland are excluded from consideration.
- Suitable location within a transitional area between less intensive residential uses and more intensive non-residential uses.

### Mobile/Manufactured Home Park

Due to the absence of a demonstrated need at this time, no land is currently designated on the Future Land Use Map for mobile or manufactured home park development. In the event that there is demonstrated need for a new mobile or manufactured home park, several criteria must be considered in the selection of a location for this exceptionally intensive residential use.

- Access to two public roads, one of which is designated a major road on the Future Land Use Map, capable of handling the traffic generated.
- Availability of existing or proposed public sewers, community facilities and services.

- Substantial, effective pre-existing buffering from incompatible adjoining land uses.
- Non-buildable sites such as tracts substantially located in a floodplain or wetland are excluded from consideration.
- Suitable location within a transitional area between less intensive residential uses and more intensive non-residential uses.

In the interest of avoiding future spot zoning contrary to the Master Plan, there shall be no infringement into the planned future Commercial, Industrial, or Residential Agricultural categories. Nothing shall preclude the location of a mobile or manufactured home park adjacent to a Commercial, Industrial, or Residential Agricultural category.

A marketing study, submitted at the time of application, will be required to justify the amount of land needed. The total number of mobile or manufactured home units in Atlas Township shall not exceed twenty percent of the total year-round dwelling units in the Township, as determined at the time of application.

### Historic Atlas Village

The unincorporated community of Atlas, located at Gale and Perry Roads, is the historic center of Atlas Township and has been designated as the Historic Atlas Village future land use category. At present, a mixture of residential, service and institutional uses are found in a concentrated setting along the shore of the Atlas Millpond. Additionally, the community contains a number of historic and architecturally significant buildings that merit preservation, including sites formerly used as a saw mill and grist mill.

The Historic Atlas Village future land use category is designed to allow new development of a similar use, design and scale to existing development, while reflecting the district's pedestrian orientation and role as a Township gathering place. This would include the development of new housing consistent with the traditional and affordable housing styles currently located in the district. The Historic Atlas Village category would be an appropriate area for a variety of new retail uses, limited to those that serve the local community. To support the local farming economy, the Historic Atlas Village category would also allow agriculturally-related service and commercial uses such as nurseries, feed supply and farmers markets.

The minimum residential lot size for areas without public sanitary sewer is one acre, while a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet is permitted with public sanitary sewer. Where public sanitary sewer is not available and a non-conventional (engineered) septic system must be utilized, a minimum lot size of two acres is required.

### Commercial

This future land use category includes the land area occupied by retail uses offering commodities which attract a more regional clientele and are traditionally dependent on major thoroughfare traffic. Commercial uses may include markets, florists, personal service establishments, retail stores, restaurants, automobile related service establishments, commercial recreation, self-storage facilities, nursery and landscape supply sales, and similar business and commercial activities generally conducted within enclosed buildings. Professional office establishments are also appropriate. Lands in this category are located in four small concentrations along M-15, north of the Village of Goodrich. This category also accommodates two small properties along M-15 south of the Village which are currently occupied by commercial buildings.

No minimum site size is recommended for commercial uses. Rather, site size should be based upon several variables. Development should occur on sites that are proportional (not too narrow and deep or too wide and shallow) to provide adequate space for parking, setbacks, and loading/unloading operations. Commercial sites should also contain sufficient open space areas to not only provide opportunities for landscaping which

improves site aesthetics, but also to accommodate infrastructure needs (ground water recharge areas, on-site storage of storm water, septic field areas, etc.). Similarly, sites must contain sufficient frontage to address sound access management principles, such as driveway spacing standards. A minimum parcel size of 5 acres is, however, recommended for planned shopping centers.

The character of commercial development is also created through building scale and the use of construction materials. Commercial development should be compatible with neighboring structures in terms of these design characteristics, including the continuation of any design theme that may exist and the use of harmonious building materials defined by their type and color.

## Industrial

The Future Land Use Plan allows limited space within the Township for industrial development through the identification of an Industrial category. The land designated in the Industrial category is reflective of existing uses on the west side of M-15, north of Goodrich. The proposed category is adjacent to both residential and commercial categories. Due to this relationship, this category has been established to provide for those uses which are generally compatible with, or, which under the imposition of certain reasonable standards, may be safely and aesthetically located in close proximity to commercial or residential uses.

Light industrial uses are recommended. Light industrial uses include operations which are generally confined within enclosed structures. Compliance with reasonable performance standards is required in an effort to reduce adverse affects on neighboring properties. Typical light industrial uses may include the manufacturing of products for component parts, parts assembly, food packaging, warehousing, tool and die shops, contractors establishments, materials storage, freight terminals, and industrial parks. In addition, certain commercial uses may also be allowed assuming their building size and architecture is similar with industrial uses. Examples may include self-storage facilities, sales yards, indoor tennis clubs, ice rinks, shooting galleries, and bowling alleys.

## Public/Recreation

The Public/Recreation future land use category was established to embrace large, existing facilities operated by various governmental and public agencies, including public and private recreational facilities. Included within this category is the Atlas Township Hall, Goodrich school facilities, Atlas County Park, Atlas Valley Country Club, and Grand Blanc Hunt Club.

No areas slated for future public, semi-public or recreational use are included in the Future Land Use Plan. Rather, any new facilities could be accommodated throughout the Township, where appropriate and consistent with the requirements of the Atlas Township Zoning Ordinance and sound planning and design principles.