

Danby Township

Ionia County, Michigan

2024 Master Plan Update

Approved on April 25, 2024



Danby Township Ionia County, Michigan

2024 Master Plan Update

April 18, 2024, version approved
by the Township Board on
April 25, 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

2024 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

This Master Plan is an update of the 2008 Danby Township Master Plan and was developed under the Authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008. This document represents a vision for how Danby Township will preserve its character and serve as a guide for future decisions regarding land use. This document was developed through an investigation of demographic and land use trends and the vision of the Township residents and officials. The Master Plan will help ensure that Danby Township remains a highly desirable rural and agricultural community by serving as the base for policies and implementation actions.

This Master Plan consists of several components, including:

- Background research regarding housing, population, and other current conditions within the Township, including an Existing Land Use Map.
- Public input and Planning Commission input, which is an essential part of the planning process
- Development and review of goals, policies, and actions that define how the Township will address identified concerns, trends, and needs.
- A Land Use section that describes which types of development would be most appropriate within the community and the areas most important to preserve, along with a Future Land Use map, which is an illustration of the long-range land use pattern proposed for the Township.

When the above components are combined, a picture is created that will serve as a guide for the Township as it faces important decisions now and years from now. These decisions may include policy changes, budget allocations, and day-to-day issues such as site plan reviews, special land use approvals, and rezoning requests.

The original Danby Township Basic Zoning Plan was adopted by the Township Board in December 1999. This plan was the basis of the Township's first Zoning Ordinance, which was adopted in May 2001. The Zoning Plan was reviewed, fully revised, and updated in 2008 as a Township Master Plan. In 2013, 2014, and 2023 Township officials again reviewed the plan to comply with the State Planning Enabling Act.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires the Planning Commission to review the Master Plan at least every five years to determine if the plan should be amended or replaced by a new document. In 2023, the Danby Township Planning Commission began the process of reviewing the 2014 Master Plan and determined that certain revisions were needed and a full rewrite was not necessary as area conditions had not experienced significant change in the five-year time period. However, needed revisions included updated demographics, changes to existing and future land use mapping, and general edits to content.

TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

Policy: The most significant change in land use policy in Danby Township was the 2001 adoption of the Township's first Zoning Ordinance. Since adoption, the Township hired its first Zoning Administrator and began regular enforcement of the ordinance requirements. Township residents have become accustomed to zoning, and the enforcement process has been generally successful. The Township has formally amended the Zoning Ordinance on several occasions to address new trends, developments in case law, changes to statute, and changing priorities and perspectives.

Private Development: Two large-lot subdivisions, between Kent Street and the Grand River were approved and/or developed in the years prior to the 1999 Master Plan and the 2001 Zoning Ordinance. These are high-quality developments of custom homes with easy access to Portland via the new Kent Street Bridge. Because of its proximity to the City and its location near the Grand River, this area will likely remain a popular location for new, high-end residential development. No other new subdivisions or site condominiums have been approved after the 1999 plan, aside from minor land divisions on private roads. In terms of commercial development, the Portland Federal Credit Union was recently established in the Township.



Infrastructure: New, two-lane concrete bridges at both Charlotte Highway and Kent Street were built, replacing old, single-lane truss bridges (the old Kent Street Bridge was moved a few hundred yards upstream and now serves the Portland Riverwalk). This not only made the Kent Street area more accessible to new development, as noted earlier but also made the area south of the Grand River much more accessible via Charlotte Highway.

Annexation and Future Development: In 2007, the City of Portland and the Township entered into an Act 425 Agreement to annex the vacant property that the City purchased at Cutler Road and Grand River Avenue, as well as the adjacent church on Cutler, to the City (a total of 68 acres). Via the agreement, the City has jurisdiction over the property and can extend City utilities to it, while the Township will continue to receive tax revenues. The surrounding area will likely be developed more intensely than anticipated under the previous Agricultural/Residential land use designation, as shown on the 1999 Basic Zoning Plan.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – 2008 UPDATE

The Vision, Goals and Policies of the 1999 Plan were reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2007, 2013, and 2023, to determine which goals have been met, which are in the process of being met, which were still awaiting action, and which are no longer necessary. In 2007, the Planning Commission generally found that the Vision, Goals, and Policies from 1999 were still valid, and nearly all of them are included in this update. Again, in 2023-2024, the same general recommendations remained valid, and the visions and goals still applied.



On October 17, 2007, a Focus Group Workshop was held at the Township Hall. Each member of the Planning Commission was encouraged to invite at least two acquaintances who would contribute to the master planning process. About 22 citizens attended (only 19 signed in; a list of their names is in the Appendix). After a brief overview of the planning process, the participants were split into groups to discuss three topics: Agriculture and Rural Character; Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development; and Development near Portland. Participants were rotated among the three topics so that each participant could comment on each topic area.

The comments of the Focus Group participants are summarized for each topic area in the Appendix. Generally, the Focus Group agreed that agricultural and rural character is important in the Township, that commercial and industrial development is desirable so long as it is low in intensity and in appropriate locations, and that cooperation with the City of Portland is important related to development in and near the City.

On April 19, 2008, the Danby Township Planning Commission held a joint meeting with the City of Portland Planning Commission in the Portland City Hall. At this meeting, the City provided an update to their planning efforts, including their own update of the Portland Master Plan. The intended land use designation for the area south of Cutler Road that was annexed to the City in 2007 was the focus of the discussion. The City Planning Commission informed the Township that the intended character of development on that property was educational or high technology. Although consideration of a chain, sit-down style of restaurant is under consideration, other highway-oriented uses and “big-box” stores are not being considered. In turn, the Township Planning Commission informed the City about the plan (as drafted by that date) for the area surrounding the annexed land.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE 2008 UPDATE

The review of existing conditions, the Vision, Goals, and Policies, and the opinions of the Focus Group were the basis of the Future Land Use Plan in Chapter 5. The Future Land Use Plan and Map were reviewed by the Planning Commission and refined in a series of meetings. Upon completion of the draft, the Township Board released the draft Plan for review by the adjoining municipalities and the Ionia County Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Township Planning Act. After the mandatory review period, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on August 20, 2008. The Township Board subsequently adopted the Plan on September 25, 2008.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE 2014 UPDATE

The 2008 Master Plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission at public meetings in September, October, and November of 2013. Upon completion of the draft, the Township Board released the draft Plan in January 2014 for review by the adjoining municipalities and the Ionia County Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. After the mandatory review period, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on March 19, 2014. The Township Board subsequently adopted the Plan on March 20, 2014.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE 2024 UPDATE

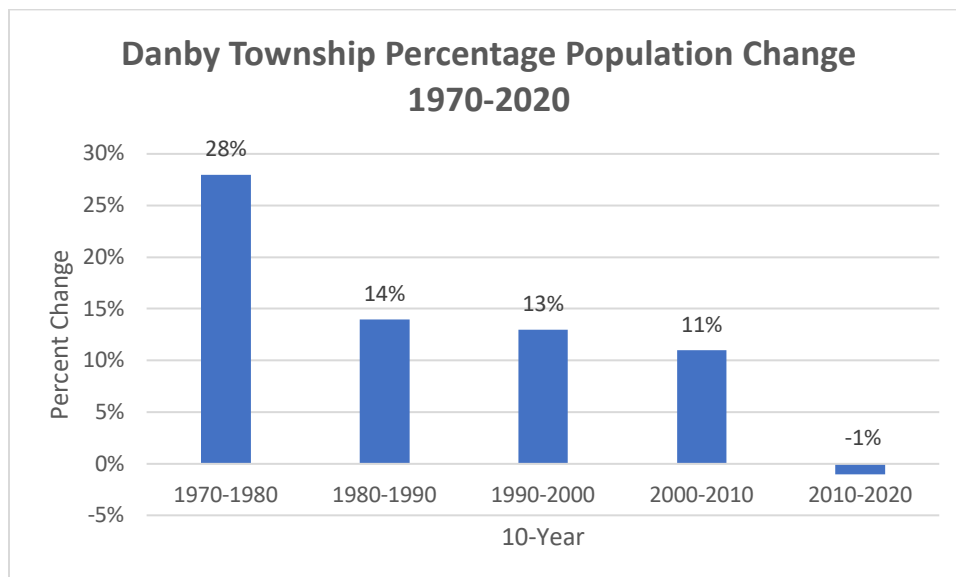
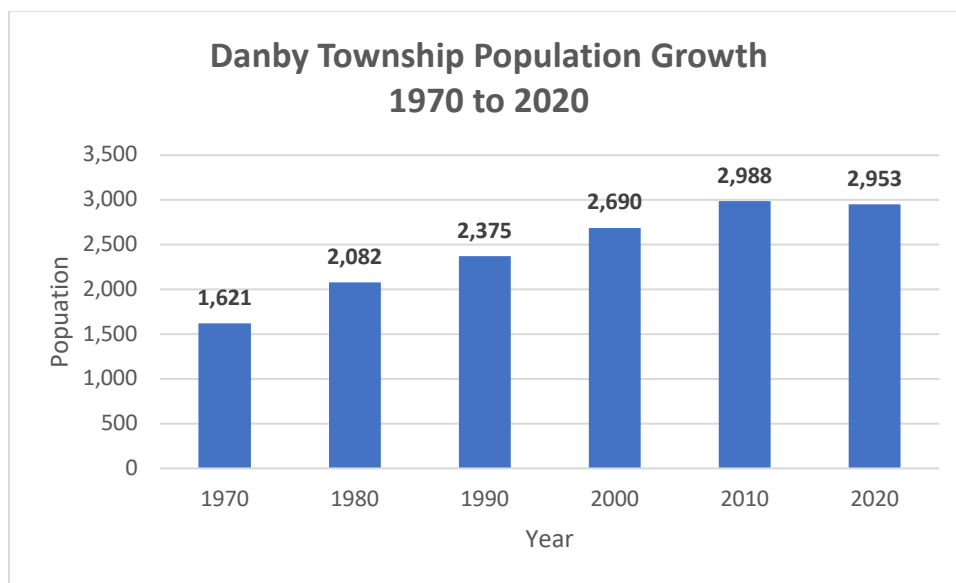
The 2024 Master Plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission at public meetings in late 2023 and early 2024. Upon completion of the draft, the Township Board released the draft plan on February 29, 2024 for review by the adjoining municipalities and the Ionia County Planning Commission, in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. After the mandatory review period, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on April 17, 2024. The Township Board subsequently adopted the plan on April 25, 2024.

II. DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2020, Danby Township had a population of 2,953 residents. The 2024 Master Plan update primarily compares US Census data between 2010 and 2020.

POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS, AND AGE DISTRIBUTION

Population: Danby Township experienced the greatest growth rate between 1970 and 1980 (28%). From 1980 to 2010, the growth rate was slower but increased steadily between 11% and 14% for each decade. However, between 2010 and 2020, the population declined by 35 residents, the first decrease in several decades.



As the Township area remains constant, population density also increases with new residents. From 1980 to 2010, density increased from approximately 58 to 83 persons per square mile, then dropped slightly in 2020 to just over 82.

Population Density			
Year	Population	Area	Density (persons per square mile)
1980	2,082	35.9 square miles	57.99
2000	2,690		74.90
2010	2,988		83.21
2020	2,953		82.26

Source: US Census Bureau

While gender proportions can impact planning efforts in some cases, the proportion of males to females in the Township was fairly close in 2020.

Population by Gender (2020)	
Male	52%
Female	48%

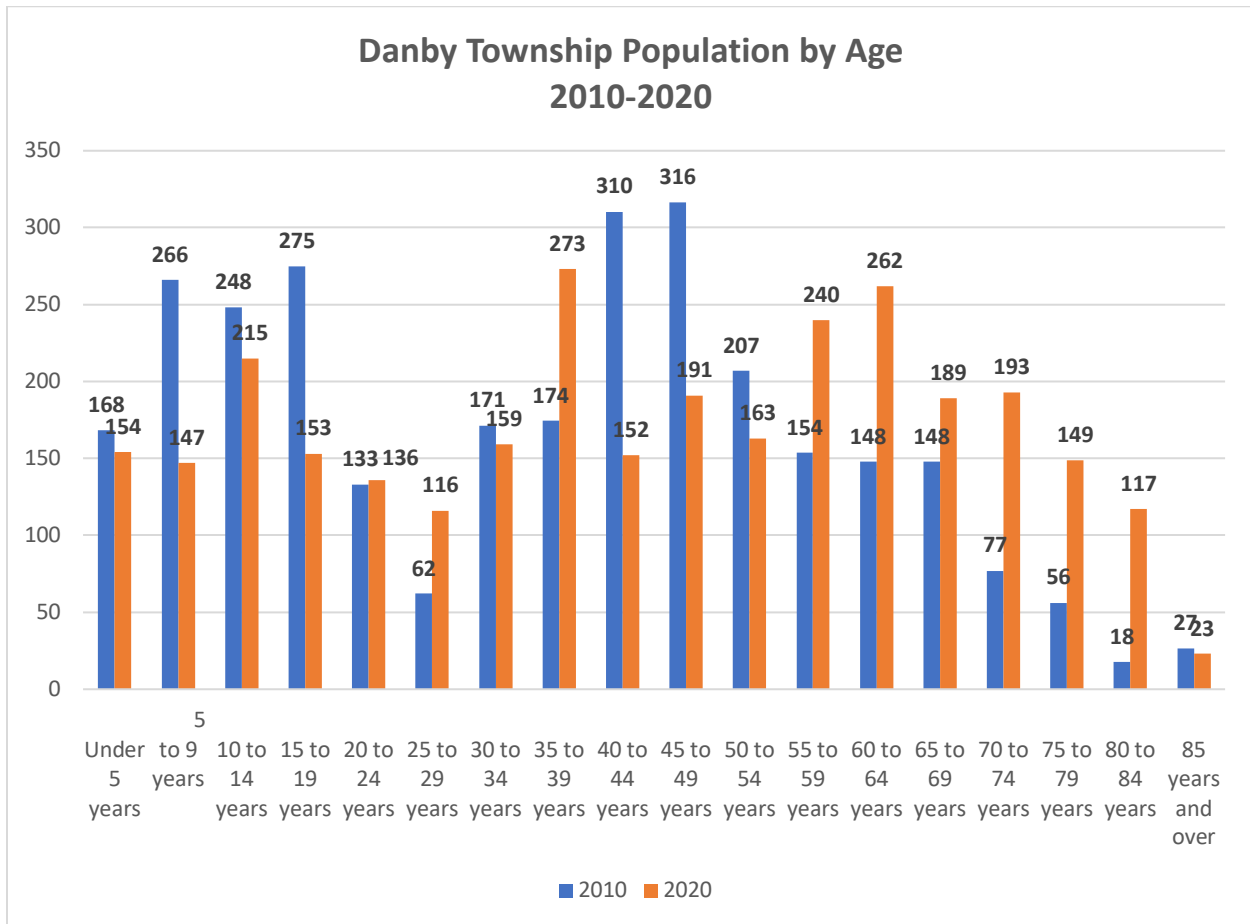
Of the eight Townships nearby Townships, Danby ranked third in rate of growth from 2000-2010. However, five townships experienced positive growth rates from 2010 to 2020, but Danby, Sebewa, and Roxand Townships experienced population declines. The following table compares the population of Danby Township to the population of its surrounding Townships.

Population of Danby Township and Nearby Townships 1970-2020							
Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2010-2020 Growth Rate
Danby Township	1,621	2,082	2,375	2,690	2,988	2,953	-1.17%
Portland Township (Ionia County)	1,715	2,245	2,383	2,436	3,404	3,881	14.01%
Sebewa Township (Ionia County)	944	1,105	1,160	1,202	1,171	1,124	-4.01%
Orange Township (Ionia County)	866	994	1,047	1,040	987	1,012	2.53%
Roxand Township (Eaton County)	1,671	1,975	1,903	1,903	1,848	1,748	-5.41%
Sunfield Township (Eaton County)	1,710	1,998	2,086	2,177	1,997	2,050	2.65%
Eagle Township (Clinton County)	1,594	2,060	2,151	2,332	2,671	2,776	3.93%
Westphalia Township (Clinton County)	n/a*	n/a*	2,099	2,257	2,365	2,444	3.34%

Families and Households: In 2020, there were 896 families living in the Township, with an average family size of 2.99 people. The total number of households, which also includes unrelated persons or single occupants, was 1,174, with an average household size of 2.57 people.

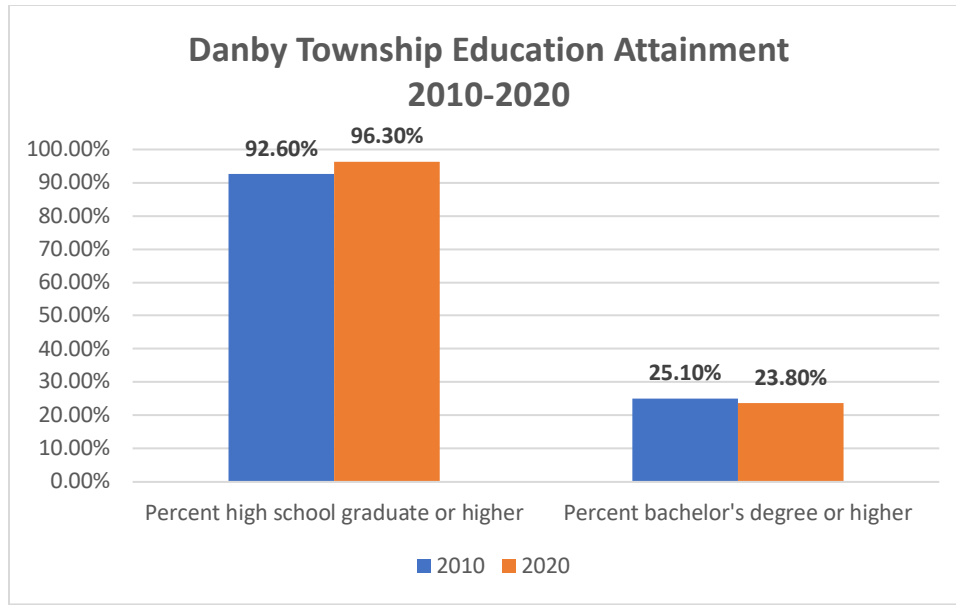
Age: The Census estimates for 2020 show that the median age in Danby Township was 45.3 years. The median age increased from 39.10 in 2010 and 35.9 in 2000. The median age for the entire State of Michigan is 39.6 years.

Concerning age groups, the overall trend lines between 2010 and 2020 are fairly similar. However, acknowledging the significant increase in median age, the younger age groups in 2020 make up less of the population than in 2010, and the older age groups in 2020 make up more of the population than in 2010.



EDUCATION

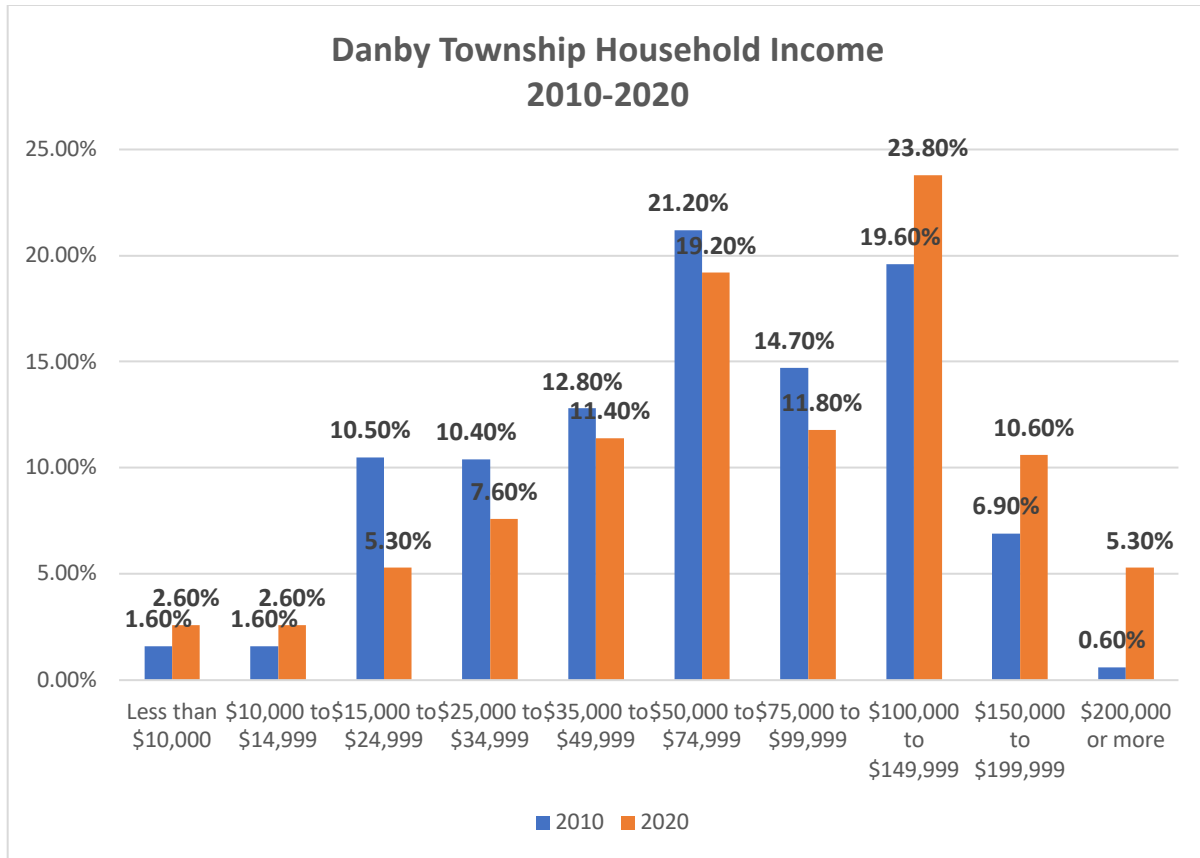
The overall education attainment figures remained similar between 2010 and 2020 for residents 25 years and older. The percentage of residents with a high school diploma rose from 92.60% to 96.30%, and the percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree slightly decreased from 25.10% to 23.80%.



INCOME

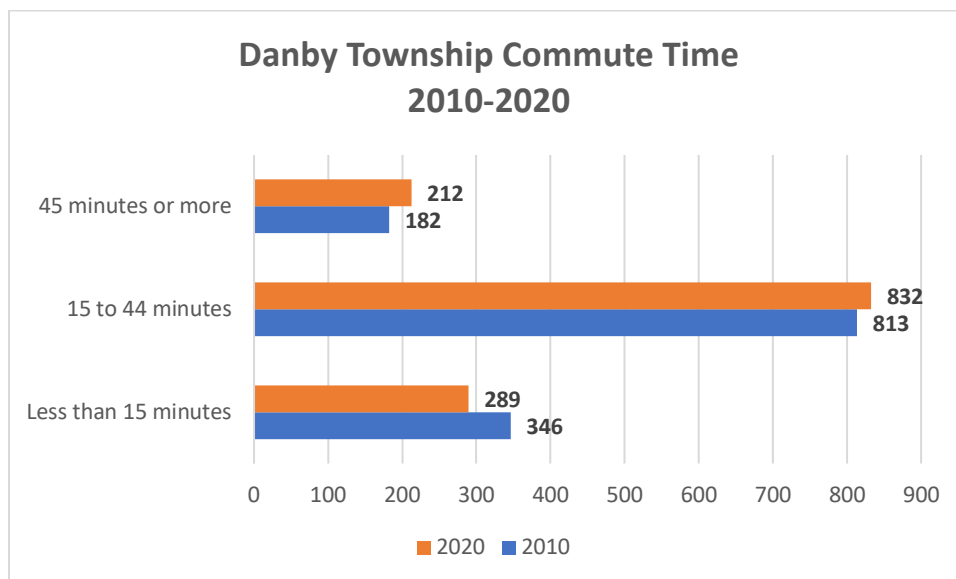
In 2020, the median and mean household income in Danby Township increased to \$84,722 and \$92,660, respectively. The increase in income exceeded the national inflation rate in the same period.

Danby Township Income 2010-2020		
Income	2010	2020
Median	\$64,837	\$84,722
Mean	\$72,914	\$92,660



COMMUTING AND EMPLOYERS

The majority of Danby Township residents work between 15-45 minutes of their home. The proximity of Lansing and Grand Rapids, their nearby employment opportunities, and available access from I-96 make them likely employment centers for many Danby Township residents.



Similar to 2010, management, business, science, and arts occupations employed the most residents in 2020, while sales and office occupations followed close behind.

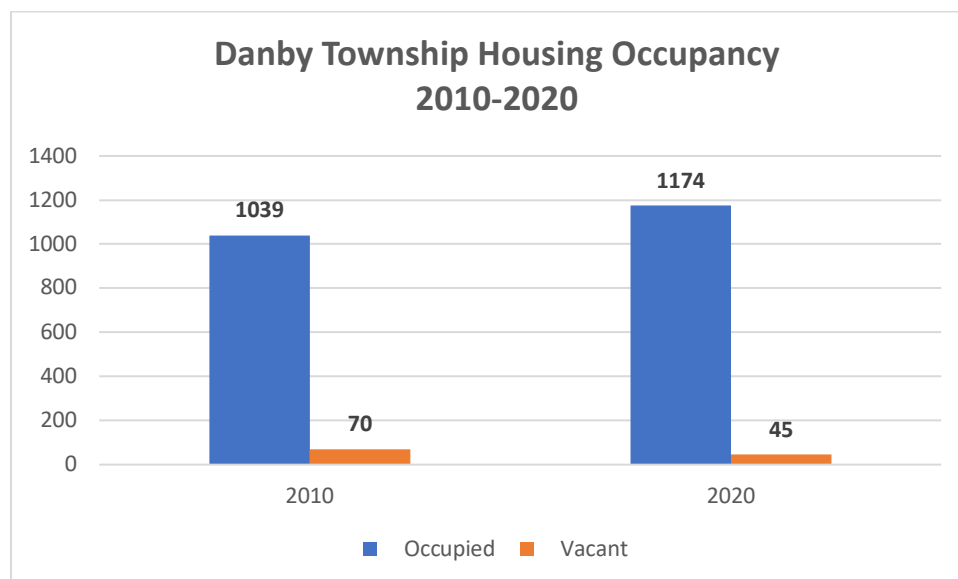
Danby Township Occupations 2010-2020				
Sector	2010	2010	2020	2020
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	431	31%	509	35%
Sales and Office Occupations	373	27%	351	24%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	250	18%	240	16%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	176	13%	241	16%
Service Occupations	168	12%	129	9%
Total	1,398		1,470	

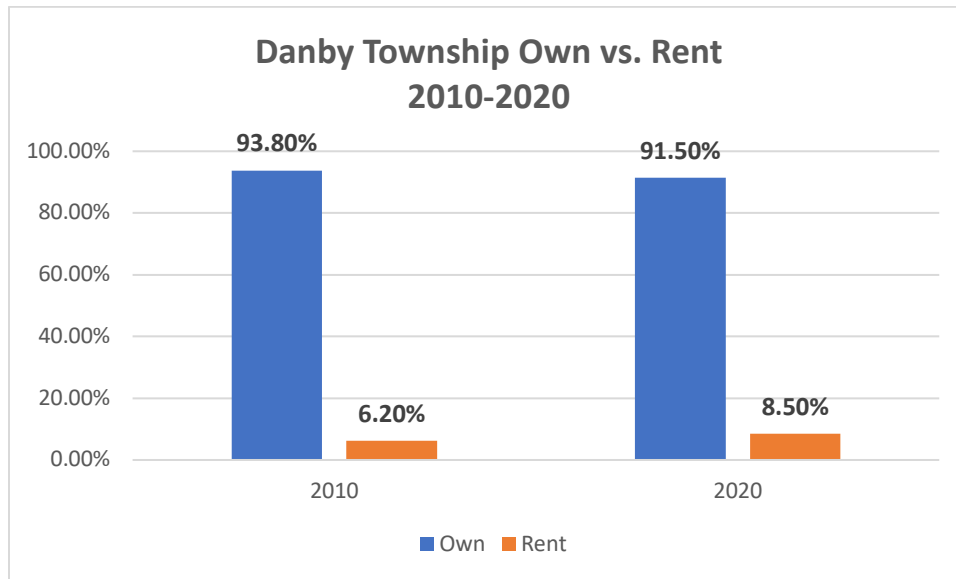
HOUSING

Similar to 2010, the predominant housing type in Danby Township is the detached single-family home. However, ten two-family units were reported to be constructed in the following decade. During this time, the number of mobile homes decreased.

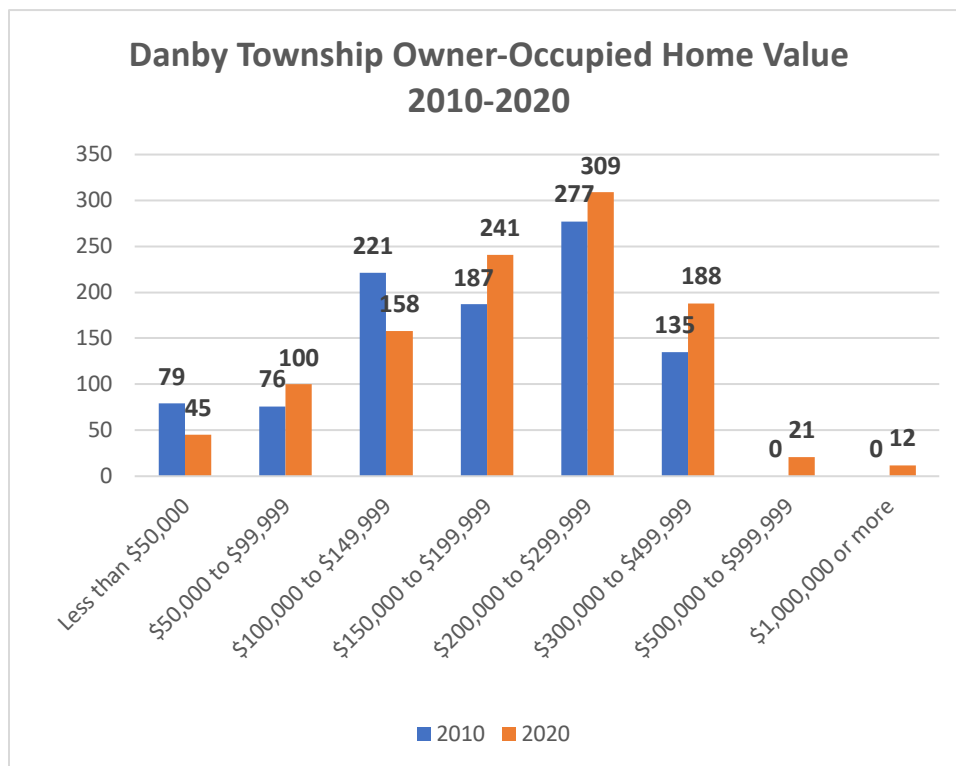
Danby Township Housing Types 2010-2020		
Type	2010	2020
Single-Family	959	1,139
Two-Family	0	10
Mobile Home	150	70
Total	1,109	1,219

In 2020, 1,174 homes were occupied (96%), up from 1039 (94%) in 2010. Of these occupied homes, the proportion of renters rose slightly from 6.20% to 8.50% between 2010 and 2020.

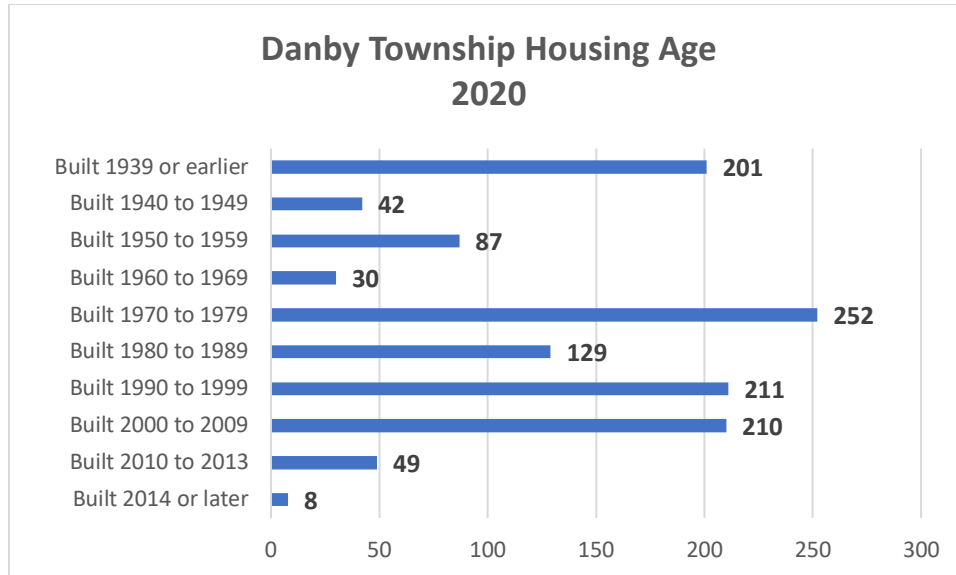




Between 2010 and 2020, the median home value in Danby Township rose from \$174,700 to \$198,600. Several newer subdivisions of custom homes have been constructed during this timeframe, which would indicate that overall housing values are rising. As seen in the following chart, there are many more higher-value homes in 2020 than in 2010. However, this statistic experiences the most fluctuation, depending on the housing market.



In earlier decades, an average of 20 or more homes were built each year (1990 to 2010). Based on the population decline, it is not surprising that new home builds have slowed considerably in recent years.



III. EXISTING CONDITIONS

LAND USE

Although there have been few significant changes to the Township since 1999, it is important to review current conditions to see if there are discernible land use patterns and portents of change on the horizon. The most significant change (which is a pattern that was identified in the 1999 Plan) is the increase in single-family residential development. Several site condominium and single-family developments have been built which were not on the Existing Land Use/Cover Map in the 1999 and 2008 Plan.



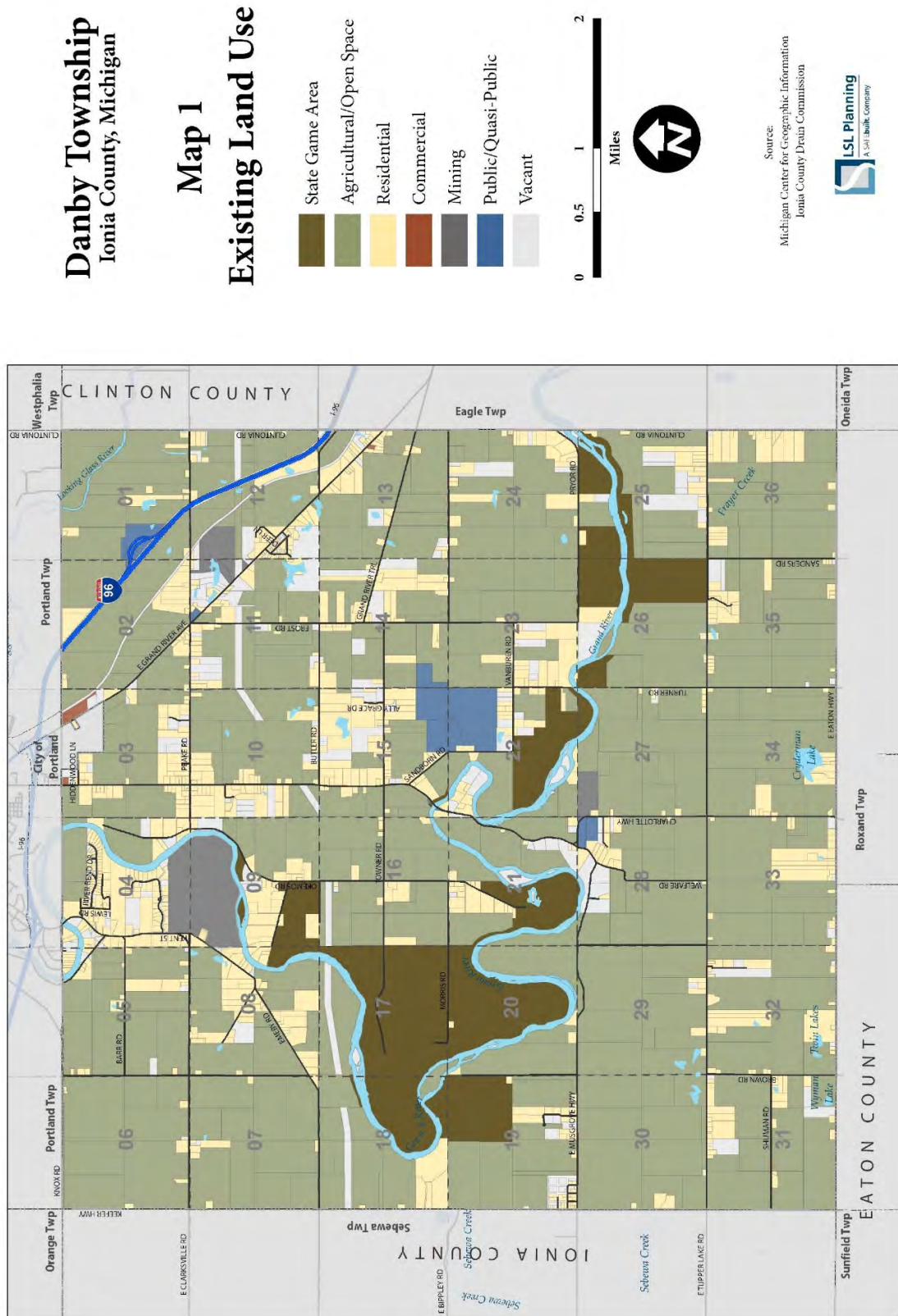
The current Existing Land Use Map (**Map 1**) shows that the Township is still characterized by agriculture, woodlands, and open spaces. A few single-street developments (with a private cul-de-sac branched off a public road) have been built off East Tupper Lake Road, East Musgrove Highway, Towner Road, Peake Road, and Charlotte Highway. Other development has occurred along Township roads, with residential lots split off from agricultural tracts, forming “strips” of lots along the roadways. This pattern can be seen along long stretches of Charlotte Highway, Grand River Avenue, Peake Road, and Butler Road, and sections of Eaton Highway, Emery Road, and Towner Road. These residential developments and lot splits have reduced the overall agricultural acreage in the Township and have replaced open vistas along some roads with continuous residential development.

As to other land uses, the only other predominant use is the Portland State Game Area. This area consists of 1,715 acres on both sides of the Grand River. The largest portion is in the eastern portion of the oxbow bends of the river in Sections 17, 18, and 20. The State Game Area maintains a significant portion of the Township in a natural state and is, therefore a major asset.

The few existing commercial uses are scattered, generally as home-based businesses, such as automobile repair services and the Lazy Days Getawayz Retreat, a cabin and crafting room. There are a few businesses concentrated on Grand River Avenue near the I-96 interchange. The new Portland Federal Credit Union, at the southeast corner of Cutler Road and Charlotte Highway, was recently completed and is the first new business development in several years. Other businesses on Grand River Avenue by I-96 include a veterinary office, an HVAC business, and a chiropractic office.

There are few existing industrial uses in the Township. Several extractive mining operations are active and can be observed on the Existing Land Use Map.

Besides the Township Hall and Cemetery, the only Public/Quasi-Public uses are the Willow Wood Golf Club and the Portland Trail Riders Club, adjacent to one another off Sandborn Road. The Michigan Department of Transportation owns land on the northerly side of I-96, which is the site of a westbound rest area.



Danby Township Ionia County, Michigan

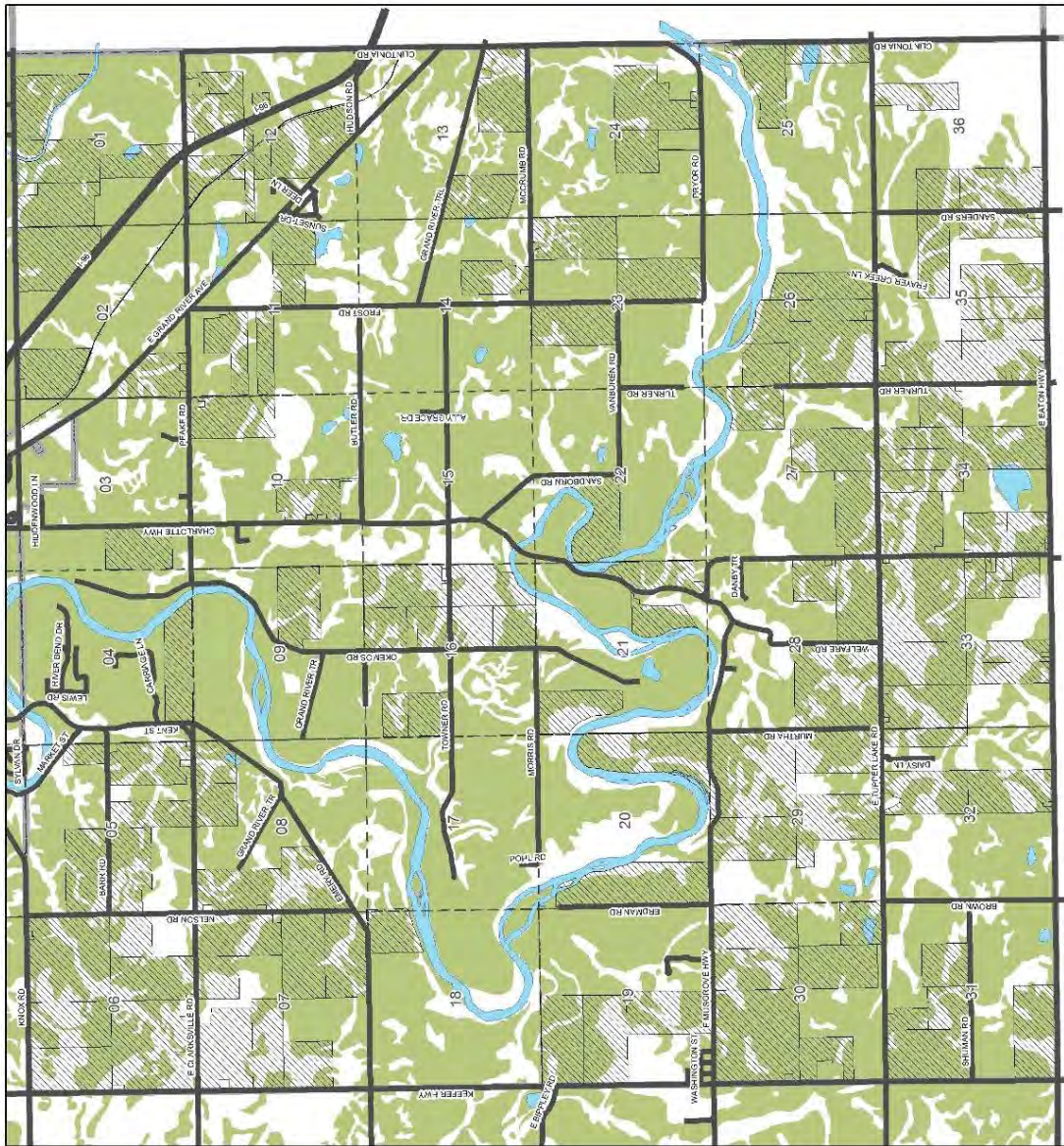
Adopted: September 25, 2008

Map 2 Agricultural Land

- Active Agricultural Land Over 40 Acres
- Prime Farmland or Farmland of Local Importance



Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information
Ionia County Drain Commission



The remaining land is agricultural. **Map 2** shows that there is a significant amount of land that is actively farmed and located upon prime soils or soils of local importance. The map highlights active farms on parcels that exceed 40 acres. These farms are best suited for long-term viability. The majority of these lands are south and west of the Grand River.

NATURAL FEATURES

The dominant natural feature in Danby Township is the Grand River. Because of its twists and bends, the Grand River traverses many miles through the Township. Much of the shoreline is protected within the Portland State Game Area. The river greatly influences the topography, with dramatic hills and valleys, particularly to the north and east of the river. The Looking Glass River also travels through the far northeast corner of the Township.



Besides the rivers, there are numerous wetland areas. Those in the southern third of the Township are in low-lying areas or follow the numerous county drains. Others are emergent marshes that provide filtering for stormwater and habitat for plants and animals.

Even outside the State Game Area there are significant wooded areas. While mostly concentrated near the river, there are still large stands of woods throughout the Township.

TRANSPORTATION

Map 3 shows the current road system. Grand River Avenue, Charlotte Highway, Keefer Road, and Clarksville Road/Kent Street are all paved Ionia County Primary roads. Musgrove Highway and Tupper Lake Road east of Charlotte Highway are both County Primary roads, but they are unpaved. Peake Road east of Grand River Avenue is an unpaved County Primary road, but there is a 1/2-mile portion that has been paved west of Interstate 96. Peake Road between Grand River Avenue and Charlotte Highway was resurfaced with limestone since the last Master Plan update. The intersection of Peake Road at Grand River Ave at Frost was also improved with asphalt paving to protect the intersection from the spread of dirt road debris.

In recent years, the bridge on Cutler Road over the freeway has been replaced, and the bridge over the Looking Glass River on Cutler Road has been replaced.

Interstate 96 cuts through the northeast corner of the Township, but there are no interchanges within the Township. The nearest interchanges are very close, however, on Kent Street and Grand River Avenue just north of the Township line.

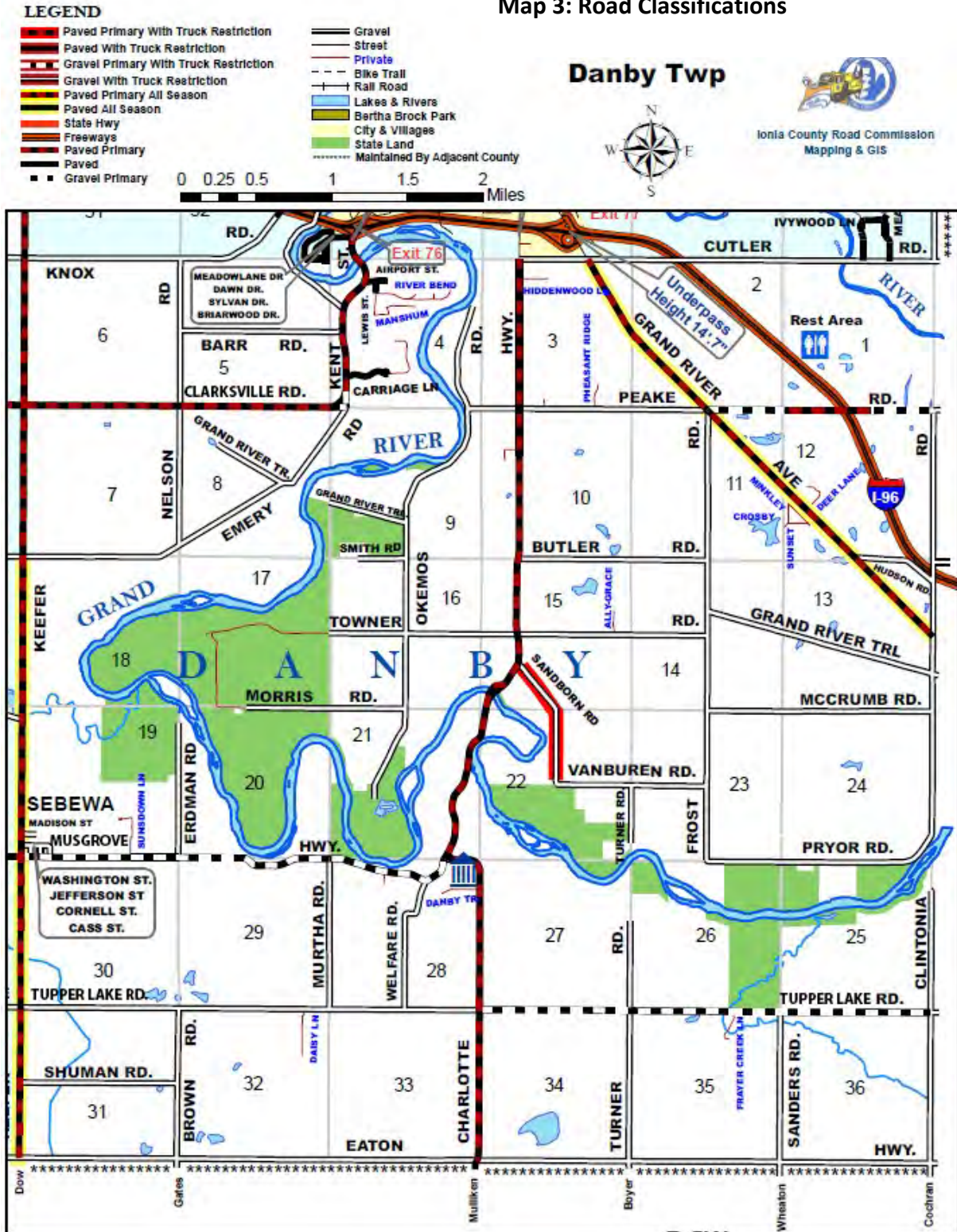
There are no active rail lines in the Township. An abandoned railroad right-of-way is located between I-96 and Grand River Avenue. Just north of the Township, in the City of Portland, there is a non-motorized trail following this right-of-way. For long-term planning purposes, the Township should continue to assess strategies to extend multi-use pathways and encourage non-motorized recreational opportunities.

Non-motorized opportunities are abundant in nearby Portland, with its extensive public trail system. In addition, the Grand River, with its many oxtail bends and adjacent State Game Area is a popular canoe and kayak excursion. A public access site is located on the south side of the Charlotte Highway Bridge.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

While there are no major installations to date, the Township believes that advancements in alternative energy should be balanced with robust regulations to ensure the well-being and safety of the community and the protection of farmland and natural resources.

Map 3: Road Classifications



IV. VISION, GOALS, AND POLICIES

Determining how Danby Township should be developed and what it will look like in ten or twenty years is not easy, but it is necessary to plan for its growth. The Basic Zoning Plan adopted in 1999 was meant to be the Township's guide into the 21st Century. However, changes have occurred since the adoption of the plan that makes it necessary to revisit the original plan, with its vision, goals, and policies.

As Danby Township grows, the Basic Zoning Plan/Master Plan, as updated, is intended to help direct land uses to appropriate locations while examining the potential effects that growth may have on the Township's character and infrastructure. As the 1999 Plan notes, development in the wrong place may cost the community more than is gained. The key is to balance the benefits with the costs while fulfilling the intent of the plan's Goals and Policies.

The Goals and corresponding Policies identified within this Chapter are the building blocks for Danby Township's future land use decisions. They state what the Township hopes to achieve in the future.

The 1999 planning process included opportunities to gather information from Danby citizens. A Focus Group made up of Township residents was invited to help the Zoning Board identify Township issues (since the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance in 2001, the former Zoning Board has been reformed as a Planning Commission). From these discussions, basic issues were identified, and goals were formulated to address those issues. In the text below, portions of the 1999 Plan that apply to the Goals and Policies and descriptions of the public process leading up to that plan are quoted when appropriate.



During the 2023-2024 update process, the Planning Commission and Township Board reviewed each of the 2014 goals and objectives and confirmed or revised them.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision adopted for the 1999 Basic Zoning Plan remains valid today and is the following:

Danby Township will continue to be an agricultural and rural residential community, with the understanding that commercial and higher density residential uses will develop, the Township will be prepared to accept such uses where appropriate, when consistent with the rural character of the Township, if environmentally sensitive to natural surroundings, if economically sustainable, and whenever there is a demonstrated need.

This vision continues to be valid and may still form the basis for the following goals and policies.

TOWNSHIP GOALS AND POLICIES

Community Character Goal

“Respondents at the Focus Group Workshop strongly emphasized their desire to maintain the Township as an agricultural, residential community. Those qualities that contribute to Danby Township’s rural character include the numerous and vast farm fields, the creeks and river, woodlands, wetlands, recreational opportunities, and the rolling topography.

Maintaining the integrity of any one of these resources can be a challenge for the Township. However, without measures to ensure their protection, these features could be easily lost and/or degraded.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER: *The character of Danby Township will be an agricultural community with residential development in a rural setting. Within this rural residential setting, small home based businesses of an appropriate density will be welcomed.*

“Although residents acknowledged the need to have a balance of other uses, the preservation of natural features, rural character, and agricultural lands dominated the opinions expressed at the Focus Group Workshop. New development in the Township was generally not opposed, so long as the growth was planned, environmentally sensitive, and did not adversely affect the operation of active farms in the Township.” (1999 Plan, p. 19)

Community Character Policies

1. The Township will continue to assess and evaluate its adopted Zoning Ordinance to ensure that new residential development maintains the rural character of the Township, protects its natural features, and preserves agricultural land. Amendments to the Master Plan, Future Land Use Map and Zoning Ordinance will reflect changing conditions and trends within the Township and shall ensure the desired character of the Township is preserved.
2. The Township recognizes the potential for conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and will support the needs of an agricultural community.
3. Through zoning, the location of land uses will be encouraged in appropriate locations so as to not disrupt or inhibit the continuation or growth of active farming operations.
4. Through zoning, site plan review, and education, the Township will encourage approaches to land development that take natural features, such as soils, topography, steep slopes, hydrology, and natural vegetation into account in the process of site and building design.
5. New homes or lot splits should be grouped together so that large areas of undeveloped land remain open and uninterrupted for the purposes of agricultural production and the preservation of habitat.
6. Before approval, applicants for larger-scale developments will be required to provide information that demonstrates utilities/septic or wells, roads, fire and police services, and other Township services are adequate to serve the proposed development.
7. Structures and/or uses that would substantially alter the character of the community should not be permitted. New commercial development should be designed to reflect the rural character of Danby Township. Commercial uses will be those necessary to serve the daily needs of Township residents, with limited building and parking area sizes. The Township should assess and evaluate an overlay district zoning or other zoning techniques that would allow for general architectural review of buildings or develop building material requirements.

8. The Zoning Ordinance shall be evaluated for its effectiveness in preserving agricultural land and activities. New requirements and land use tools in the Zoning Ordinance that preserve agricultural land and rural character should be considered.

Natural Resources Goal

“At the Focus Group Workshop (leading up to the 1999 Plan), residents discussed the natural resources of the Township. The discussion centered on the river, wetlands, forest areas, and agricultural land. As can be seen by the Prime Farmland Soils Map, the Township has large areas of excellent soil for agricultural production (**Map 2**).

NATURAL RESOURCES: *Danby Township’s natural resources, including its lakes, rivers, streams, ground water, and farmland will be protected to the greatest extent possible to maintain the rural way of life, and that environmental quality is sustained.*

“The natural resources are viewed as characteristics as much as they are viewed as resources. A driving force behind their preservation is to preserve the rural character and way of life in the Township. The Grand River flowing through the center of the Township is a water source for farm fields, as well as a recreation destination. The wetlands are a natural filtration system, and a habitat for birds and other wildlife. Finally, the land itself as a natural resource is where food is grown that sustains more than the 2,859 residents of Danby Township.” (1999 Plan, p. 20)

Natural Resources Policies

1. New development should only be permitted at a density where ground water resources will not be adversely affected. As public water and sewer are not available in Danby Township, proposed commercial and light industrial uses must demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects on groundwater resources. New commercial or industrial development should be permitted in areas where ground water resources will not be adversely affected. Development reviews will include information pertaining to the effects of the development on area groundwater sources.
2. New development should only be permitted in areas where nearby natural resources will not be infringed upon or destroyed, and areas of wildlife habitat should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.
3. Development reviews will include information pertaining to the effects of the development on area natural resources.
4. Zoning techniques and tools will be assessed and evaluated as to their effectiveness to achieve the goals of the Township. Zoning solutions, such as river buffers, habitat protection overlay districts, wellhead protection areas and aquifer recharge area protection will be considered.
5. Critical natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas will be mapped to determine natural constraints to development. Future land use planning and zoning map changes may be based on the results of this project.

Land Use Goals

“While Township residents appear to place great interest in the preservation of rural character, they also recognize that there will be a demand for new development; most of which is likely to be residential in nature. Residents also realize

LAND USE: *The Township will contain an appropriate mixture of residential and commercial uses to the extent that the rural residential and agricultural character of the community is retained.*

that land uses other than residential, such as commercial and industrial, are a possibility in the Township and should be planned for.”

(In preparing the 1999 Plan), “the comments from the Focus Group Workshop revealed that limits on the extent of new commercial and industrial development in the Township should be established and that such development should not be allowed to be located just anywhere. The most suitable locations for new development must be carefully considered to avoid or minimize any potential negative effects upon natural features, and especially on farmland. As with nearly every land use issue, the key for the Township is to establish a proper balance between the needs of the community for goods and services and the desire of its residents to maintain a rural, residential, and agricultural character.” (1999 Plan, pp. 21-22)



Land Use Policies

1. The Township will review site plans, land use, and zoning changes of proposed development projects to ensure that adjacent land uses, as well as the rural character, natural features, and agricultural lands of the Township are not adversely affected.
2. Buffer areas should be used to separate conflicting land uses, such as farm and non-farm uses, to limit potential land use conflicts.
3. Intensive development should be permitted in the Township only where rural character and environmental quality will not be compromised and only where there is a demonstrated need.
4. Mining and resource-extracting industries will adhere to state and local standards and will be subject to special conditions to best protect natural resources and the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Land Use: Agricultural Land Use Policies

1. Development adjacent to active farms should be considered carefully during any zoning review and approval.
2. Agricultural uses will be encouraged by adopting favorable zoning regulations applicable to farmland.

AGRICULTURAL LAND USE: Preserve and encourage agricultural land use on active farmland, and make every attempt to prevent conflicting land uses from hindering farm growth.

Land Use: Residential Land Use Policies

1. Residential development should be encouraged in areas where such development has already taken place.
2. The Township should assess and evaluate methods to incentivize and encourage the open space and clustering provisions adopted in the residential development regulations.
3. Residential development at a density of more than four dwelling units per acre should require at a minimum, a private community wastewater system.
4. Residential development at a density higher than ten (10) dwelling units per acre should only be where such growth will not adversely affect surrounding land uses, and where appropriate services are available.
5. Regulations to require Planned Unit Development review of any residential development over a minimum number of dwellings (for instance, exceeding twelve units) should be considered.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE: *Residential development will be provided in a rural setting as appropriate for the surrounding uses, without negatively impacting groundwater resources, and on the ability of local roads to safely carry new home traffic.*

Land Use: Commercial and Industrial Land Use Policies

1. Major commercial and light industrial development will be limited and located near the existing business area of Grand River Avenue and Cutler Road and directed to those areas where residential areas, natural features, and active agricultural lands will be unaffected.
2. Home based businesses will be permitted at an appropriate scale and density so as to not conflict with surrounding residential or agricultural uses.

Community Services Goal

“It is ironic that many of the people who move to a rural area like Danby Township bring with them an expectation of receiving services like those in the urban area. However, the Township's low density residential development, which they sought, cannot support those levels of services.

COMMUNITY SERVICES: *The Township will provide services that are appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.*

“The low density development pattern in the Township makes it difficult to provide public services in a cost effective manner. As a result, it is unlikely that wide-spread services will be available anytime soon. However, the residents of the Township have concerns about the impact of growth on water quality and other quality-of-life issues.

“Although residents are generally not opposed to new development, in those areas where environmental concerns exist, or where infrastructure is inadequate, many felt that new homes should be allowed only if adequate land is available for individual well and septic systems.” (1999 Plan, pp. 22-23)

Community Services Policies

1. Areas of residential development equal to or exceeding a density of four dwelling units per acre will be required to provide, at a minimum, a private community sewer system.

Transportation Goal

(During the public participation phase of the 1999 Plan), “the Focus Group Workshop revealed that there was support for improving the overall quality of the road system in Danby Township. Most residents felt that improving the condition of roads in the Township was important and should be considered by the Township in the years to come. The condition of unpaved roads was cited as a problem in Danby. Paving the gravel roads did not seem to be the consensus; however, proper maintenance of those roads was.” (1999 Plan, p. 23)



The biggest transportation problem raised by residents in 1999 was the two, one-lane bridges in the Township at that time. Since then, both the Kent Street and Charlotte Highway bridges have been replaced with concrete structures and now allow two-lane traffic and can handle trucks and heavy loads. This has especially affected the area around Kent Street, where most of the newer residential development has taken place.

TRANSPORTATION: *The Township will pursue land development policies that foster a safe and efficient transportation network appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.*

“An influx of new residential development will likely affect resident's perception of traffic when they begin to notice more cars and other vehicles along the major roadways. In addition, residents may start to ask that gravel roads be paved. The Township will have to balance the desires of residents for rural character (unpaved roads) with the need to provide a safe, high-quality roadway system.” (1999 Plan, pp. 23-24)

Transportation Policies

1. The Township, in cooperation with Ionia County, will develop and maintain a Priority Review System for the paving and maintaining roads, considering such factors as resident desires, traffic volumes, roadway function, land use, and other appropriate elements. The Township will strive to open a dialogue and regular process of coordination with the County to provide Township-specific recommendations on an annual basis.
2. Danby Township will work in conjunction with the County Road Commission to evaluate ways in which the rural character of the Township can be maintained along the road network through deeper setbacks, tree preservation, and basic road maintenance. The Township may assess and evaluate a roadway corridor overlay district to require deeper setbacks and protection of significant trees; however, it will balance preservation with issues of roadway safety and maintenance of roads and drainage ways.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review of the Planning Commission and an analysis of development since the adoption of the 1999 Plan and 2014 update, the Vision, Goals and Policies of the previous plans are still valid. Therefore, this update retains nearly all of them.

V. FUTURE LAND USE

Danby Township is a community based on agricultural and rural residential uses. It is a Township concerned about the loss of farmland and the rural atmosphere that first brought residents to the area. However, more than the loss of farmland, concern over the loss of the current way of life was evident at the Focus Group Workshop. Many farmers and non-farmers alike are concerned that new non-farm residential uses near active farms will create conflict. While the Right to Farm Act gives farmers some protection from nuisance complaints, the concern remains that the new residential uses will force farms to close because of land use conflicts.

Residents also understand that other people want to live in Danby to appreciate the same rural character enjoyed by current residents. To accommodate the desires of both groups, those who live here now and those who wish to in the future, the Township must be able to develop and maintain a sense of rural character, preserve farmland, protect its natural features, and provide the quality of life desired by its residents.

BACKGROUND

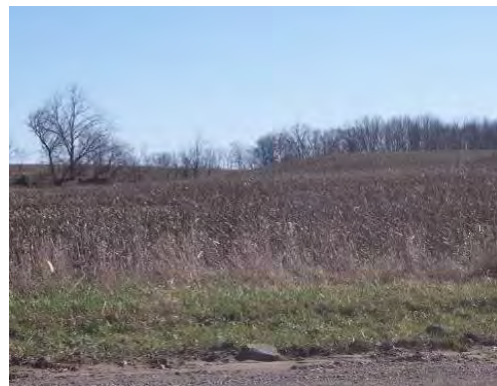
As stated in Chapter 4, the 1999 Basic Zoning Plan established a vision statement that sets the tone for development in the Township. That vision is:

Danby Township will continue to be an agricultural and rural residential community, with the understanding that commercial and higher density residential uses will develop, so the Township will be prepared to accept such uses where appropriate, when consistent with the rural character of the Township, if environmentally sensitive to natural surroundings, if economically sustainable, and whenever there is a demonstrated need.

The Goals and Policies that were developed revolve around this vision. This vision was re-affirmed by the Planning Commission for this Master Plan Update. Citizens of Danby Township continue to state that they live in the Township because of the rural and natural character and way of life of the area.

Clearly, there is recognition that there are areas that need to be preserved from extensive development in order to maintain the rural environment favored by Danby Township residents. At the same time, residents acknowledge that this is a desirable place to live and that it is likely that development pressures will continue to be created by people from Lansing and Grand Rapids in the future.

Therefore, it remains necessary to plan a land use pattern that balances the desire to maintain the Township's rural character and preserve valuable agricultural land against these growth pressures. The future land use classifications of this section address the need to establish a long-range direction that will achieve this balance.



FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

As noted above, the public process surrounding this update confirmed the majority of the conclusions reached during the public process to create the original 1999 Basic Zoning Plan. Therefore, the type of future land use classifications in this plan are mostly unchanged. However, the anticipated development of the land south of Cutler Avenue that was annexed into the City of Portland in 2007 changed the perspective of the Planning Commission and the citizens involved in the public process about the “Commercial and Industrial Center” identified as a red asterisk on the 1999 Plan. To this end, this updated plan contains a Cutler/Grand River Subarea Land Use Plan that provides a more detailed and focused plan for that area.

To accommodate the range of housing needed and to preserve the values held by Township residents, three classifications of residential/agricultural future land use have been identified. Each classification represents a separate land use pattern based on a density appropriate for the area in which it is shown. The allowed density is subject to the characteristics of lands within the classification, and each is tailored to conditions found within the area. Each will require separate zoning classifications and regulations.

As part of the 2024 Master Plan update, there were several Future Land Use Map revisions based on changing conditions, a new mining operation, and recent rezoning requests. The revised are listed below and an updated Future Land Use Plan is shown on **Map 4**.

1. Section 3: Changed a parcel west of Charlotte Highway from AR- Agricultural/Residential to RR- Rural Residential.
2. Section 4: Changed the northern portion of the mining operation from SR- Subdivision Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
3. Section 8: Changed parcels south of Emery Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
4. Section 13: Changed two parcels north of Grand River Trail from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
5. Section 25: Changed recently rezoned parcels north of East Tupper Lake Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
6. Section 26: Changed recently rezoned parcels west of Clintonia Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.

Agricultural/Residential

Prime Farmland is evident throughout the Township. However, the largest contiguous area of “active” farmland is in the Northwest corner and Southern parts of the Township. Although the loss of agricultural lands in Danby Township has not been rapid, many residents have witnessed the loss of farmland in communities all over Michigan. From their experiences, residents recognize that all too often, farmland losses result from wide-spread development with no apparent planning.



As a result of these observations, the preservation of agricultural lands was cited as being one of the most important tasks of Danby Township in the future. Ironically, in 1999 most of the residents participating in the Focus Group Workshop did not want to see the Township take an aggressive approach to restrict farmers from selling lot splits or from developing their land into non-farm uses. While in 2008 the citizens and the Planning Commission have shown a willingness to consider new land use and zoning techniques, there remains a strong feeling that farmers should retain their rights to sell land for development.

Not all of the land within the Agricultural - Residential classification will necessarily be Prime Farmland, consist of wetlands, or have active agricultural operations. There are pockets of property that are presently not being used for a specified purpose or that hold significant environmental value. However, the preservation of this land is just as important to nearby farming operations and the preservation of open space as if it were the highest-yielding prime farmland in the Township. The integrity of the area must be preserved by including a large area of contiguous property in this classification to ensure that larger parcels of land remain intact.

Scattered residential uses in areas that are actively farmed are often attractive locations for urban residents who move into the “country”. These residents are often unprepared for the ordinary effects of farming. Odors, tractors, and equipment along the roadways, crop spraying, and other necessary activities conflict with their expectations of rural living.

This classification should promote and encourage the rural lifestyle and agricultural land use. Splitting lots from larger parcels will continue to be permitted as long as ground water resources are not endangered. However, the splits should be made in such a manner so as to not infringe upon the continuation of the nearby active farms. Once the number of small splits becomes so numerous as to change the character of the area, a re-classification in this plan and an appropriate zoning change would be warranted.

The 1999 Plan suggested one method that allows the farmer to retain the ability to split off lots as they wish while giving the Township some review power. Large-scale residential development regulations can apply when an owner is requesting lot split approval rather than a subdivision or site condominium. Anytime more than, say, five new lots would be created, the Township could review and either approve or deny the proposal based on its consistency with this Basic Zoning Plan.

During discussions for the 2008 Update, another tool that was identified as a policy to guide, but not prohibit development is adoption of regulations to require Planned Unit Development review of any residential development over a minimum number of dwellings. This would allow the Township to review many (if not most) residential developments to ensure that they are consistent with this plan and contribute towards agricultural and rural character. This has been adopted as a policy to implement this plan (see Chapter 4).

This designation is implemented in the Zoning Ordinance through the Agricultural (AG) District. This district has a minimum lot area of one acre and a maximum lot coverage of 20 percent (except for buildings related to agricultural operations). As this plan is reviewed again (by 2013 at the latest), the Township should consider whether the 1-acre minimum meets the goals and policies of this plan. Use of more aggressive zoning tools (such as exclusive agriculture zoning, quarter/quarter zoning and sliding scale zoning) may be warranted if continued fragmentation of farmland continues, with a concurrent loss of rural character.

Rural Residential

Unlike the Agricultural - Residential classification, the Rural Residential classification is primarily intended to preserve the rural residential character of designated areas while permitting additional residential development, natural resource conservation, and continued agricultural activities.

In part, this designation recognizes that much of the land in this classification will eventually be converted from farm and vacant fields to residential use. Access to paved roadways such as Charlotte Highway, Kent Street, Grand River Avenue, and Eaton Highway, as well as the proximity to the City of Portland, makes these areas more attractive to residential development.

Although agricultural operations are presently located within this classification, there is less continuity in their order than elsewhere in the Township. Furthermore, the Grand River is likely to attract some interest in development. Other areas have environmental constraints, such as wetlands and floodplain areas, and are generally unbuildable.

The strong desire on the part of Township residents to preserve their privacy and the rural character for which they moved to the area dictates a need to limit density. Without access to public utilities, protecting the source of well water will be very important for the long-term welfare of all residents. Lower densities will help protect Danby Township residents from ground water contamination.

Another factor used to define the Rural Residential classification was the limited ability of the Township to provide utilities, paved roads, and other services to areas where development is likely to continue. If an instance of ground water contamination arose or a large fire broke out, the Township does not have the resources to effectively manage the situation. Lower development densities will permit the Township to provide an appropriate level of services to match the need.

Development in this designation should not exceed densities of one unit per acre, with a minimum of 110 feet of frontage along the road. The use of cluster development in this area should be encouraged to reduce development costs and to keep land available for the possibility of a private wastewater

treatment system, should groundwater contamination occur. Other techniques may be employed to help maintain the rural character of these areas.

Subdivision Residential

The purpose of the Subdivision Residential classification is to acknowledge the higher-density development pattern that has occurred within the Township. High-density development can lead to ground water contamination if unchecked. Therefore, it is recommended that development densities in this classification be limited to one residential unit for each acre.



Since the Township does not have the financial means to become involved in the development of public utilities, the establishment of private community utilities must be the responsibility of the developer or landowner who chooses to develop within this classification above the recommended density. Areas of residential development equal to or exceeding a density of one dwelling unit per acre will be required to provide sewer service in a private contained wastewater system serving the development.

To accomplish this policy, lands within this classification will be permitted to contain intensive development, including single-family subdivisions on lots of at least one acre and with 110 feet of public or private road frontage. If the lots are connected to a community private wastewater system, not an individual septic system, a higher density may be permitted.

The Subdivision Residential classification also accounts for higher-density residential uses such as manufactured home parks and apartment developments. Multiple-family complexes and other high density residential developments generally require a higher level of service. Therefore, this development should be served by a domestic water and sewer system. It is unlikely that higher-density developments can be served by traditional septic wastewater systems. As higher-density development may be allowed with a community wastewater system, it is important the Township closely monitor the quality of development to ensure public health and safety, traffic safety, and the protection of environmental resources.

Commercial and Industrial Center

Just as the citizens did in 1999, the residents who attended the October 2007 focus group workshop made it clear that they would only like to see commercial and industrial businesses located in the Township where natural resources and farmland will not be taken by such development. This classification was meant to designate specific locations for small, convenient commercial uses and for possible development areas for light industrial areas in the Township. The 1999 Basic Zoning Plan showed an asterisk in the area of Grand River Avenue and Cutler Road as the location of a Commercial and Industrial Center. There were no other locations designated on the 1999 Plan. It was agreed that the

Grand River Avenue location was the best and only area that would be appropriate for commercial development.

The annexation and potential development of the land owned by the City of Portland at Cutler and Grand River has changed the perception of commercial and industrial development. Rather than designating a general area on the map with an asterisk, this updated plan shows specific areas dedicated to this land use designation. A more detailed description of the Cutler/Grand River Subarea Plan is below.

The Portland Master Plan update, which was in production at the same time as this Updated Plan, is expected to show the annexed area as limited to educational uses (such as a community college branch or university extension center) or a high-technology business center. The plan also shows a preference for chain restaurants, but discourages drive-through restaurants or gas stations/convenience stores. These uses are already available in abundance north of I-96 in Portland.

The intent of the Commercial and Industrial Center classification is to limit the overall size and intensity of commercial areas. Development of land adjacent to the annexation area, therefore, should reflect the intensity planned for the Portland area. Businesses and services will be those that cater to residents of the Township and nearby areas. Highway-oriented development should be restricted to non-auto-oriented uses such as sit-down restaurants. The intensity of development should be limited to those uses that do not need domestic sewer and water services. Certain Light Industrial uses will be permitted without these utilities but should be restricted to those operations which do not require large-scale waste disposal or water use.

Should the City of Portland decide to allow more intensive development within the annexation area, adjacent Danby Township development should still adhere to the above guidelines. The 425 Agreement between the City and Township does not promise any extension of water or sanitary sewer service to the east side of Grand River Avenue. Therefore, development should remain low-intensity and focused on serving the Township and nearby areas.

Generally, the total square footage of buildings should be limited to 5,000 to 10,000 square feet or less for a use. Uses should be located on lots of at least two acres and a minimum of 200 feet of lot width on a public road. Generous setbacks, sign limitations, reduced lighting levels, and landscaping should be encouraged. Driveways should be located as far from a public street intersection as possible to minimize traffic conflicts. In most situations, only a single driveway will be permitted.

The 1999 Basic Zoning Plan also recognized the benefits of home based business. Certain businesses would be permitted under a residential classification, not limited to the Commercial and Industrial Center. The Zoning Ordinance allows home based businesses as Special Land Uses in the Agricultural and Rural Residential districts. Site elements such as parking areas, vehicle entrances and exits, loading/unloading areas, lighting, setbacks, and relationships to adjoining properties will be reviewed prior to the approval of these uses.

CUTLER/GRAND RIVER SUBAREA LAND USE PLAN

As noted above, the anticipation of development of the area annexed to the City of Portland led to the creation of a detailed subarea plan for the area surrounding the annexation. The Cutler/Grand River Subarea Land Use Plan (**Map 5**) shows how the land in this area should be developed.



Along the east side Grand River Avenue, the existing pattern of commercial/office and light industrial goes back to the former railroad right-of-way and continues south until Grand River Avenue intersects the section line between Sections 32 and 33 (this area includes the one parcel on the west side of Grand River Avenue that was not annexed to the City). The citizens at the October, 2007 focus group and the members of the Planning Commission stated that commercial uses should not continue beyond this point. This area allows for expansion of commercial and light industrial uses that meet the guidelines for the Commercial and Industrial Center land use designation, without too much encroachment into less-intensive neighborhoods.

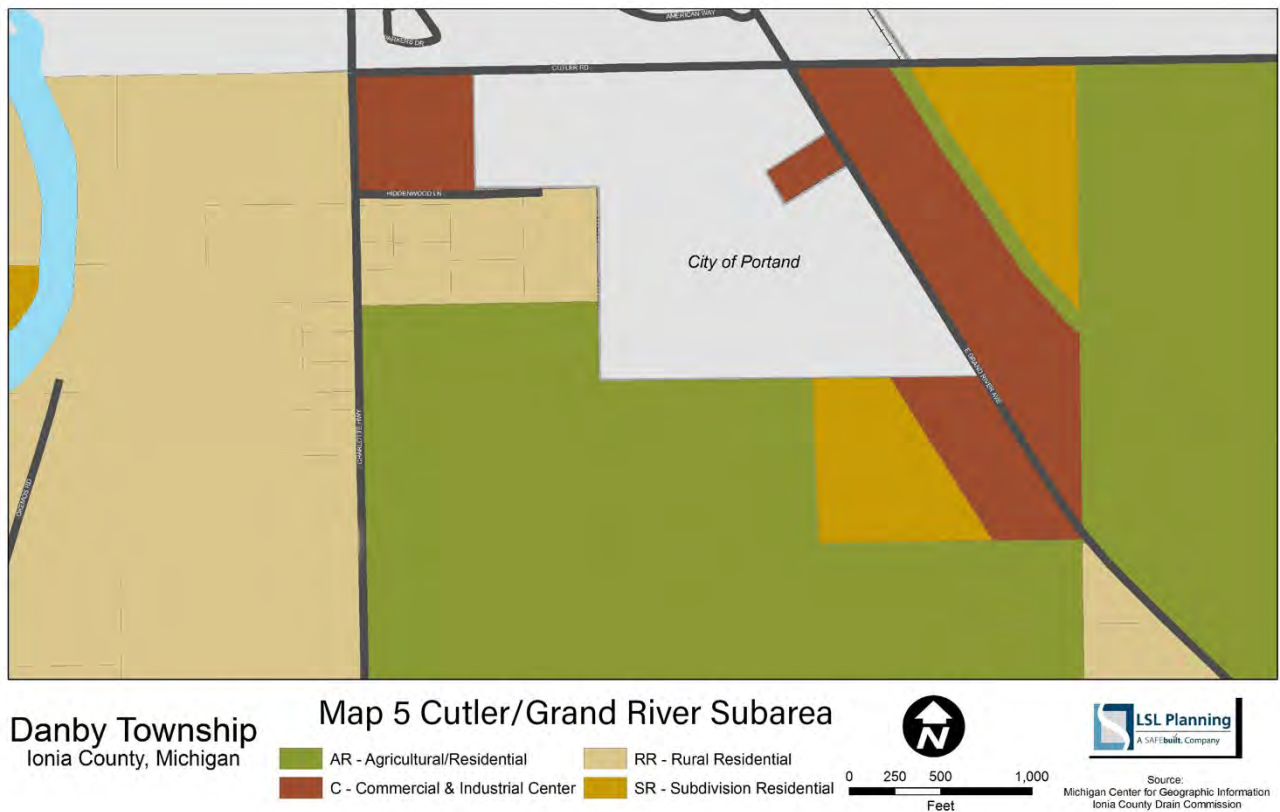
On the west side of Grand River Avenue, south of the annexed land, the Commercial and Industrial Center designation extends for 500 feet beyond the roadway. This depth allows for flexibility in design for commercial and light industrial development, permits generous setbacks, and helps keep lighting and storage areas away from the street. Wherever land in the Commercial and Industrial Center designation abuts land allowing for residential development, additional setbacks and landscaped buffers should be required. In addition, landscaping along Grand River Avenue should be required, to maintain the area as a more rural transition from the intensive development at the Grand River Avenue/I-96 interchange.

The area at Cutler Road and Charlotte Highway is also shown as Commercial and Industrial Center. This reflects the existing development of the Portland Area Federal Credit Union.

Because of the proximity of existing single-family development and natural/open space areas, future development in this area should be similar to the Credit Union and limited to offices and lower-intensity retail and service uses. Drive-through restaurants and similar auto-oriented uses should be discouraged or prohibited.

The property adjacent to the Commercial and Industrial Center land on the west side of Grand River Avenue is shown as Subdivision Residential. The land on the east side of the former railroad right-of-way on the south side of Cutler Road is also Subdivision Residential. These areas provide a transition from the more intensive commercial and light industrial uses to the less intensive Rural Residential and Agricultural/Residential designations. Suburban Residential developments in these areas could take the form of clustered single-family developments or townhomes, provided that they can be adequately served by on-site wastewater disposal systems.

The remaining areas within the Subarea are either Agricultural/Residential or Rural Residential. The Agricultural/Residential designation either reflects the existing agricultural use or recognizes areas of open space or natural features. If development occurs in these areas, it should occur in clusters or other compact means of preserving farming and/or open space. The Rural Residential designation reflects existing large-lot single-family development. Further fragmentation of the existing lots into smaller lots (unless clustering and preservation of open space can be achieved) should be discouraged.



ZONING PLAN

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008) requires that a master plan include a “zoning plan” with an “explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map (MCL 125.3833).”

The Township is divided into seven unique and identifiable zoning districts. The 7 districts include agricultural, industrial, residential (three districts), and one planned unit development district. The following table summarizes the future land use designations and indicates how they relate to each of the zoning districts.

Future Land Use Categories	Corresponding Zoning District
<p>AR- Agricultural/ Residential</p>	<p>Chapter 5: Agricultural (AG) District This District is intended to provide for the continuation and preservation of the existing general farming and related activities in the Township. The regulations for this District recognize the need to conserve and protect existing farms, and to provide areas where agriculture is best suited. Further, the regulations of this Chapter shall be used to discourage untimely and scattered residential and commercial development in areas where food production is taking place.</p>
<p>RR- Rural Residential</p>	<p>Chapter 6: Rural Residential (RR) District This District is intended to provide for single family residential living environment and to foster stable, high quality neighborhoods free from other uses that are incompatible with residential uses. The regulations for this district provide large enough parcels to sustain a healthy on-site water supply and liquid wastewater disposal. Through this District, low density residential development will be permitted through the construction and occupancy of single family dwellings on large urban lots.</p>
<p>SR- Subdivision Residential</p>	<p>Chapter 7: Low Density Residential (R-1) District This District is intended to provide areas for the preservation and establishment of residential neighborhoods. Lot sizes are small, and may eventually allow for public sewer and water service. The district will promote a higher density residential environment, at the same time preserving those natural features that are important to the character of the Township.</p> <p>Chapter 8: Manufactured Home Community (MHP) District To provide for manufactured home park development, of long-term duration of stay, in areas that are appropriate by means of traffic access and public utilities and services. Public water and sewer facilities, or a suitable alternative method shall be provided for each development. Any such development is to be located near essential community services and abutting public roads. All manufactured home parks shall comply with the applicable</p>

Future Land Use Categories	Corresponding Zoning District
	<p>requirements of Public Act 419 of 1976, as amended, and Public Act 96 of 1987, as amended.</p> <p>Chapter 10A: PUD - Planned Unit Development It is the intent of this District to provide for flexibility in the regulation of land development; to encourage innovation in land use and variety in design, layout, and type of structures; to achieve economy and efficiency in the use of land, natural resources, energy, and the provision of public services and utilities; to encourage useful open space; and to create better living, working, and shopping environments. In order to accomplish these objectives, this Chapter permits the relaxation of the conventional requirements found in other zoning districts.</p>
<p>C- Commercial</p>	<p>Chapter 9: General Commercial (C-1) District This District is intended to provide areas for the establishment of retail sales and personal service uses, catering to the general public, as well as the residents of Danby Township. The uses in the District will remain small in scale to be well integrated into a rural setting, and possess appropriate traffic safety components that will limit potential negative impacts resulting from adjacent non-residential uses. These areas will be generally located near Interstate 96.</p> <p>Chapter 10: Light Industrial (I-1) District This District is intended primarily for light industrial uses and the processing, fabrication, and assembly of goods or products to be sold to the general public generally at a different location. These areas will provide manufacturers with sites close to primary roads for ease of transportation and away from residential areas to minimize potential incompatibilities. Due to the lack of potential for the Township to provide public utilities like water and sanitary sewer, the uses that locate in this District should be limited to low density industrial uses that would not depend heavily on extensive public services.</p> <p>Chapter 10A: PUD - Planned Unit Development It is the intent of this District to provide for flexibility in the regulation of land development; to encourage innovation in land use and variety in design, layout, and type of structures; to achieve economy and efficiency in the use of land, natural resources, energy, and the provision of public services and utilities; to encourage useful open space; and to create better living, working, and shopping environments. In order to accomplish these objectives, this Chapter permits the relaxation of the conventional requirements found in other zoning districts.</p>

One of the primary benefits of having an adopted Master Plan is the foundation it provides for zoning decisions. While the Master Plan is the policy guide for land use, zoning is the principal legal enforcement tool. While the two should work in conjunction with one another, the Master Plan is not an ordinance meant to replace zoning.

The future land use map should not look like the existing land use map or zoning map, nor should they be used in the same manner. The future land use map is an illustration of long-range land use patterns of the Township based on the goals and strategies outlined in the plan. Zoning districts should ideally implement the goals and strategies of the plan to create the Township's desired objectives.

As the Planning Commission and Board are faced with making zoning and land development decisions (e.g., rezoning, site plan review, special use permit, planned unit development, plat reviews, etc.) the relationship of those requests to the Master Plan recommendations should be a primary consideration. A request to construct a commercial use in an area planned for residential development, for example, would be contrary to the plan and should not be approved unless conditions have changed significantly since the plan was adopted. It is essential to keep the plan up-to-date and relevant to current conditions by reviewing the plan frequently. If so, the Master Plan can remain a reliable planning tool.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This 2024 Master Plan Update validates the observations of the Planning Commission during the review of the 1999 Basic Plan and 2008 update: conditions have remained generally unchanged over the last 15 years. However, the annexation of the Cutler Road/Grand River Avenue property could mean changes for development in that area. This updated plan recognizes the potential impacts of different types of development and proposes a subarea plan that responds to changing conditions in the area near the City of Portland.

Of course, no one can accurately predict the future, and changes may occur at a much more rapid pace in the near future, particularly if the Michigan economy turns the corner and development activity starts to increase. Therefore, it is important the Township regularly revisit the Master Plan, perhaps even more often than the State-mandated five-year intervals. Should a development be proposed that would lead to an amendment to this Plan, the Planning Commission and Township Board should consider the following before amending the plan or approving a rezoning that is not consistent with the plan:

Future Land Use Evaluation Factors		
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Does the proposed new land use meet the qualifications for the land use designations, as noted in the appropriate section of the Master Plan?
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are the zoning districts and their uses which may apply to the new classification compatible and appropriate in the vicinity of the property under consideration?
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Have any conditions changed in the area since the plan was adopted which may justify this change?
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will there be any community impacts which should be considered, such as increased traffic, or others that might create a need for additional services or improvements?
5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are there any environmental considerations that may be contrary to the intent of the existing or proposed classification of that land use?
6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Was the property improperly classified when the plan was adopted or amended? Are the qualities of the property or area different than those that are described in the plan?
7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will there be any adverse effects on adjacent properties as a result of the proposed land use change?
8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will there be any impacts on public health, safety, and welfare?

If the Township is diligent in applying this plan when making land use decisions, the Township's vision is protected, and the goals and policies outlined can be met. Therefore, this plan should not be allowed to sit on a shelf but should be consulted whenever land use decisions are made.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Based on the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, an action plan and implementation strategy has been developed. This strategy includes the specific tasks that should be completed to implement the recommendations of the plan. The objectives of the plan include both policy and action-oriented items:

Policies: Protocol to guide decisions and achieve desired outcomes. Description of the intent of the Township regarding land use related issues.

Actions: A statement of a specific task or series of tasks that must be accomplished.

While the Township will rely on policies to guide future decision-making, the following table includes the actions that must be accomplished to achieve the goals of the Master Plan. Therefore, the table below serves as a prioritized “work plan” for the next five-year timeframe and should be included in the Master Plan. Prioritization as it relates to timing is presented below:

Priority 1: Projects are those that should be given an immediate and concentrated effort within a year of adoption.

Priority 2: Projects are those that are necessary to implement the plan but depend upon commencement or completion of Priority 1 projects or do not have the same urgency as those projects (years 2-3).

Priority 3: Projects are those that implement elements of this plan but are not urgent and can be delayed for a longer period of time. These projects are more susceptible to budgetary constraints (years 4-5).

The following table includes the action plan and implementation strategy for the 2024 Master Plan updates.

Action and Goal Addressed	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
1. Assess the Planned Unit Development provision in the Zoning Ordinance and amend it to allow density bonuses or other incentives for open space preservation and clustering of dwellings. Goal #1- Community Character, Goal #2- Natural Resources. Goal #5 Residential Land	Staff, Planning Commission	1	1
2. Assess the appropriateness of building and architectural requirements for the Commercial zoning district. Goal #1- Community Character	Staff, Planning Commission	2-3	2

Action and Goal Addressed	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
3. Map critical resources and environmentally sensitive areas to fully understand the resources present and potential constraints to development. Goal #2- Natural Resources	Staff, Planning Commission	1	1
4. Evaluate river (riparian), habitat, wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection overlays and buffers to provide development restrictions and standards for environmentally sensitive areas Goal #1- Community Character, Goal #2- Natural Resources	Staff, Planning Commission	1	1
5. Evaluate buffers between conflicting land uses such as between agriculture and residential uses and between commercial and residential uses. Goal #1- Community Character, Goal #3- Land Use	Staff, Planning Commission	4-5	3
6. Review zoning and land division ordinances to require private wastewater facilities for dense development and PUD review of larger subdivisions. Goal #5 Residential Land	Staff, Planning Commission	1	1
7. Initiate a formal dialogue with the County Road Commission and provide annual recommendations and road paving priorities. Goal #8 Transportation	Board	Ongoing	1

VII. APPENDIX

FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOP

The list of participants in the 10/17/07 Focus Group Workshop is below. Not all participants signed in; it is estimated that 22 persons attended.

Joan Austin	13263 Charlotte Highway
Carol S. Brown	8230 Tupper Lake Road
Louie Bullen	11852 Grand River Trail
Karen Cowdry	12997 Charlotte Highway
Karl Ginder	6944 E. Tupper Lake Road
Val Goodman	13161 Charlotte Highway
Gary A. Hodge	9758 East Grand River Avenue
Byron Kincaid	10674 East Grand River Avenue
Elizabeth Kolarik	10680 Charlotte Highway
Kevin Lay	9933 East Grand River Avenue
Kim Lay	9933 East Grand River Avenue
Mike McCormack	7877 Musgrove Highway
Kris Platte	10757 Peake Road
Dick Pohl	10424 Frost
Dorothy Pohl	10424 Frost
Gary Reisbig	10272 Peake Road
Patrick Springer	8856 Danby Trail
Jeanne Vandersloot	855 Whites Bridge, Lowell MI (Zoning Administrator)
Mike Weller	6310 Tupper Lake Road

The group discussions at each of the three Table Topics (Agriculture and Rural Character; Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development, and Development Near Portland) are summarized below:

Agriculture and Rural Character

Agriculture

- Preserving agricultural land is important to ensure local food protection
- The Township's heritage is tied to its farming
- Farming is the largest part of local economy
- Need agricultural land to ensure security of our food supply
- Randomness of residential uses makes farming inefficient to do
- Need to use tools such as PUD's to direct residential uses so it lessens loss of agricultural land and rural open spaces
- Need to provide areas for livestock production
- Need to encourage farmers to keep land in production and need programs that offer compensation for retention of farmland

- Can't keep farmers from selling off some of their land to provide retirement income
- Agriculture is source of local employment
- Local businesses, including implement dealerships, rely on local agriculture for business
- Farming pays its way for tax purposes (i.e. places less demands on public services)
- Agriculture is important for social interaction (way of life) and local heritage
- Need to recognize importance of farming to other parts of the economy
- Source of future energy (ethanol)
- Can't replace farmland once it has been converted to other uses
- Residential development leads to complaint about farming activities
- Proximity to Lansing and Portland makes Danby attractive place to live and leads to traffic
- Clustering of homes allows land preservation and wildlife habitat
- Some farmers leave land to siblings who then split property
- Need to make sure that planning isn't too strict; public will oppose
- Farmers need to be able to sell off land when they retire
- Need to protect a farmer's ability to move equipment between properties
- Need to protect agriculture as a source of local food
- Need to protect most significant farmland
- Allowing residential lots helps tax base
- PUD's should be used to direct non-farm growth and clustering of dwellings will reduce the number of driveways
- Agriculture is part of local heritage
- Township residents respect farming
- Scatter residential development makes it difficult for farmers to spray crops
- Conflicts between non-farm and farm traffic

Rural Character

- 30 years ago Danby Township was mostly scattered farms, forests and open space
- Some areas no longer seem rural because of residential development
- Farms are being lost
- Tree lines, rivers and tree canopies over roads add to Township's rural character and should be protected
- Need to remove some trees to allow efficient farming (otherwise, trees are obstacles in farm field)
- Need to limit lighting to reduce illuminating of night sky
- Proximity of Lansing and Grand Rapids makes Township attractive to development of residential uses
- Need to protect the Grand River from having too much residential development (keep it enjoyable for canoeing)
- Dirt roads add to character; paving them leads to speeding traffic
- Lack of infrastructure (public water and sewers) will keep development at bay
- Ability to enjoy walking, riding horses along roads and without lots of traffic adds to rural character
- Rural character made up of woodlands, State land, Grand River and dirt roads
- Farms add to character
- Open land, forests and Grand River
- Need to preserve character of Grand River for canoeists
- Need to preserve wildlife habitat, as residents want ability to see wildlife

- More dirt roads should be paved, especially those that have higher traffic volumes
- Paving roads will help direct where traffic goes and will therefore help keep traffic away from agricultural areas
- Open space important for certain recreational activities
- Allow more intensive development on less productive land; have different development opportunities based on quality of the agricultural land
- Keep Tupper Lake and Charlotte Highway as the only roads that cross Township; keep it inconvenient to travel in other areas so that development is less likely to be scattered throughout Township

Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development

General Comments

- Development in the Township has been positive
- Non-residential development belongs on primary roads
- Peak hours carry a lot of traffic
- Requiring PUD for development over 12 units is a good idea, it's good to have a say, can help in preserving agricultural land
- Maintain green space along the river
- How can development be controlled to protect farmland?
- Need to post the State Game Area along the river to keep canoes, boaters, etc. off private property
- Need to provide more public access to the river
- The Township cannot stand in the way of Portland's growth; we need to work with them
- Keep development on paved roads
- Need good controls for private roads
- Most Charlotte Highway development should be north of the river; limit development south of the river
- Follow-up during development phase to ensure that developers are meeting all commitments

Residential Development

- 1 acre development is adequate. Smaller lots cause problems for septic, etc.
- Lots of new residential development along Tupper Lake Road
- There should be a relationship between the number of units allowed and the capacity of the road serving the development
- Home based businesses are needed in this economy, but need to have controls such as fencing, control outdoor storage, etc.
- Development should not be on prime farm land or poor soils
- Consider a PUD with smaller lots on the east side of Charlotte Highway, north of Butler
- The mandatory PUD idea shouldn't be a hindrance to development. It allows for sensitive development, can include density bonuses; must provide for adequate septic land
- Home based business is good, but the number of employees, type of equipment, etc. should be limited-should be a special land use
- Encourage cluster development on Charlotte Highway, limit the number of road accesses
- The Township should have some control over the character of residential development; a mandatory PUD may be a good tool for this

- Use tools such as clustering, sliding scale, etc. to allow for development and to keep farming viable
- Prevent strip lots along primary roads
- Concentrate new residential development in the northern part of the Township, between Kent Street and Grand River Avenue
- Keep residential development near Portland and protect agriculture elsewhere

Commercial Development

- Keep commercial on Grand River Avenue or Cutler
- Could be on Charlotte Highway, no more than one mile from Cutler, maybe to Peake Road
- No adult uses!
- Clinics, golf courses, body shops, offices, river-oriented businesses (canoe livery, etc.) are OK
- Commercial may be OK on south end of Charlotte Highway, near Mulliken
- Agricultural retail OK
- Commercial should not extend very far south of the land recently annexed to Portland
- The dirt racing track is a good neighbor, people are used to it, but probably would not want any more or any similar uses
- Keep commercial uses closer to the interstate and the City, along Grand River
- Stop development at the curve between Cutler and Peake
- No strip malls!
- Small scale stores; lack of domestic sewer will limit the scale of development
- Perhaps a small restaurant and canoe livery on the river?

Industrial Development

- Light, low scale industrial uses are OK
- Should be located on Grand River, maybe on Keefer (but probably not)
- Limit overall gross floor area
- No polluting industries
- No 24-hour operations
- Must be light enough to not need City sewer or water
- Fertilizer plant?
- Grand River Ave. is only good place for industrial development; no further than Peake Road
- No noisy uses
- Uses must not harm roads; need to be considerate of road conditions
- Industrial development is not appropriate in the Township
- Cutler, east of Grand River Ave., may be a good spot for agri-business
- Some light industrial development is good, will provide local jobs
- The lack of utilities will limit the scale of industrial development

Development Near Portland

- Portland is infringing on the Township in the north
- Want to guard against City expanding into Township more
- Concerned about “island” properties
- Property is in close proximity to I-96 interchange

- Concerned with population increase
- Concerned with traffic along Grand River Avenue if commercial development increases
- Don't want to see commercial uses continue along Grand River Avenue, can't provide water and sewer services here
- Concerned with drive spacing on Charlotte Highway
- Concerned with a possible conflict between housing and agricultural uses
- Want to keep denser housing located near the City
- Keeping dirt roads preserves rural heritage and character
- Preserve farmland
- Concerned with traffic and farm equipment on roadways
- Keep development close to Portland
- Development is inevitable
- Provide an environment that is accessible to Portland
- Maintain spirit of cooperation between Township and City
- I-96 helped facilitate annexation
- Grand River Avenue is ripe for development
- Work in conjunction with the City on a plan for the property
- Look into PDR or other right-to-farm activities and programs for agricultural preservation
- Keep lines of communication between City and Township open
- Encourage a joint meeting between the City and Township planning commissions

ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS

DANBY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

IONIA COUNTY MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-1

At a regular meeting of the Danby Township Planning Commission, held at the Danby Township Hall on April 17, 2024, at 7:08 p.m.

PRESENT: Bahr, Russman, Schafer, Schroeder

ABSENT: Brown, Dean, Lufkin

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Bahr and supported by Member Schafer.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE 2024 DANBY TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND TO RECOMMEND FINAL APPROVAL BY THE DANBY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WHEREAS, the Danby Township Planning Commission has prepared the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update, being an update to the version last revised and adopted on March 20, 2014; and

WHEREAS, on January 17, 2024, the Planning Commission conditionally approved the tentative text of the Master Plan and requested that the Danby Township Board of Trustees authorize the distribution of the draft Master Plan to the contiguous municipalities and the governmental and other agencies entitled to receive the draft for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2024, the Danby Township Board of Trustees approved the distribution of the draft Master Plan and asserted its right to give final approval or rejection of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the required 42-day period for contiguous municipalities and the governmental and other agencies entitled to receive the draft Master Plan has expired; and

WHEREAS, the Danby Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on April 17, 2024, with the required notice, on the proposed Master Plan update.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Danby Township Planning Commission approves the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update, dated February 14, 2024, contingent upon providing an update on Page 28 summarizing the primary changes to the Future Land Use Map:

- a. Section 3: Changed a parcel west of Charlotte Highway from AR- Agricultural/Residential to RR- Rural Residential.
- b. Section 4: Changed the northern portion of the mining operation from SR- Subdivision Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
- c. Section 8: Changed parcels south of Emery Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
- d. Section 13: Changed two parcels north of Grand River Trail from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
- e. Section 25: Changed recently rezoned parcels north of East Tupper Lake Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.
- f. Section 26: Changed recently rezoned parcels west of Clintonia Road from RR- Rural Residential to AR- Agricultural/Residential.

2. The Danby Township Planning Commission recommends that the Danby Township Board of Trustees give final approval of the Master Plan; and

3. The Secretary of the Planning Commission is requested to forward this resolution and the approved draft of the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update to the Township Clerk for submission to the Danby Township Board of Trustees.

AYES: 4

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.



 Secretary, Planning Commission

DANBY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

IONIA COUNTY MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-04

At a regular meeting of the Danby Township Planning Board of Trustees held at the Danby Township Hall on April 25th, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: D. Platte, Schafer, Nurnberg, K. Platte

ABSENT: Happes

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member K. Platte and supported by Member D. Platte.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
2024 DANBY TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides for the preparation and adoption of a master plan to guide the use, development, and preservation of lands in the Township;

WHEREAS, the Danby Township Planning Commission has prepared the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update, being an update to the version last revised and adopted on March 20, 2014; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2024, the Danby Township Board of Trustees approved the distribution of the draft Master Plan for a 42-day review by contiguous municipalities and outside agencies and asserted its right to give final approval or rejection of the plan; and

WHEREAS, on April 17, 2024, the Danby Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed Master Plan following public notice as required by law; and

WHEREAS, on April 17, 2024, the Danby Township Planning Commission adopted a resolution conditionally approving the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update and recommending that the Danby Township Board of Trustees grant final approval; and

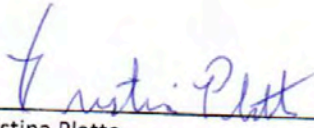
WHEREAS, on April 18, 2024, the draft plan was updated to reflect the Planning Commission's conditions and was forwarded to the Township Board of Trustees.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Danby Township Board of Trustees hereby approves the 2024 Danby Township Master Plan Update prepared by the Danby Township Planning Commission, dated April 18, 2024.
2. The Township Clerk is requested to inform the contiguous municipalities and the other governmental bodies and planning agencies entitled by law to receive copies of the approved Master Plan of the availability of the final approved plan.

AYES: Nurenberg, Schafer, K. Platte, D. Platte
NAYS: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.



Kristina Platte
Danby Township Clerk