

**OSCEOLA COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN  
NOVEMBER, 2002**

PREPARED BY THE OSCEOLA COUNTY PLANNING  
COMMISSION AND THE WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL  
PLANNING COMMISSION WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE  
CITIES, VILLAGES, TOWNSHIPS AND RESIDENTS OF  
OSCEOLA COUNTY

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2002 Osceola County Land Use Plan is a planning tool developed by the Osceola County Planning Commission and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission between 2000 and 2002. The planning process sought to include as many participants as possible and included seeking input from each of the communities within the County as well as from organizations, schools, individuals, elected officials, and many others.

Public input was solicited in a variety of ways including face-to-face interviews, a countywide survey, and a series of workshops.

Mapping was performed by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission using a variety of sources of information and through creating a Geographic Information System (GIS) appropriate for a countywide planning process. The Existing Land Use Inventory includes information from the Michigan Resource Information System (MiRIS) as well as updates from more recent aerial photographs. The Future Land Use Plan follows information from individual communities' plans as well as input from the Osceola County Planning Commission.

The latest Census information (2000) was included in the planning process, as it became available to the Regional Planning Commission. It was the County's intent to develop a plan using the latest information available.

The 2002 Osceola County Land Use Plan is intended to act as a guide for the County and individual communities. At the time of its creation, many communities in Osceola County did not have plans of their own, or zoning to guide the types of development that can occur. The intent of this plan is to provide general guidelines that will provide the framework for other community plans and zoning tools to help insure that communities develop as residents desire.

## VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement is meant to provide an overriding view of Osceola County's preferred future. Since this plan extends to 2020, the Vision Statement provides a look at the County, its residents, and other features in 2020. The Vision Statement follows.

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### Vision for 2020

Osceola County is a rural county with a population of 31,500 residents. The County's efficient government provides an appropriate level of services to its residents and businesses. The County's network of well-maintained roads serve the varied needs of residents, businesses and visitors. Schools provide a quality education to students that include job-training programs designed by the schools, students, and local businesses.

The County has an abundance of open space including working agricultural lands, forested areas, State recreation areas, County and local recreation areas, and linear parks. Osceola County's water resources include its many clean lakes, rivers, and streams as well as its well-protected supply of quality groundwater. Balanced growth has protected the other natural resources including the forested areas, wetlands, prime agricultural lands, wildlife, and fishing opportunities. Osceola County has an active program to promote the area's beauty by insuring issues related to trash, junk and other unsightly detractors are quickly addressed.

Osceola County has a variety of types of well-maintained housing to meet the varied housing needs of the population. Year-round homes include single family homes built on a variety of sizes of lots, apartments in the cities and villages, and modular housing. The County also has a balanced supply of second homes to meet the needs of Osceola County's large part-time population.

Industry and commercial uses are centered in the County's cities and villages and provide convenient employment and retail opportunities to local residents. The employment centers provide a wide variety of good paying jobs and decrease the commute time of residents that formerly commuted to surrounding areas for employment. The retail centers promote local businesses, provide convenient shopping opportunities, and help keep local dollars from leaving Osceola County.

**OSCEOLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

- Ms. Donna Denslow
- Mr. Larry Emig
- Mr. Glen Hare
- Mr. Gerald Lindquist
- Mr. Ed Rivard
- Mr. Paul Thibodeau (Chair)
- Ms. Joan Dewitt
- Mr. Peter Ermatinger
- Mr. Rich Jacobs
- Mr. Dan Massy
- Mr. Erwin Sengelaub
- Mr. Fay Wilson

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) worked with Osceola County's Planning Commission, County Board of Commissioners, individual townships, cities and villages, County Staff and residents to develop this Master Plan.

The Plan includes an inventory and analysis of Osceola County's existing land uses, public facilities, public services and housing units. The Plan also describes the County's population characteristics (by individual government units) and compares the County to Region 8 and Michigan. WMRPC developed population and housing projections using past trends and goals established during the planning process. The Plan includes a Vision Statement, Goals and goal-specific Actions. WMRPC used public participation to identify issues and develop the Vision Statement, Goals and Actions. The WMRPC expanded on the County's existing digital base map to create a series of maps suitable for use in the Master Plan. During the planning process WMRPC created a variety of maps including an existing land use map and a future land use map.

The primary goal of this planning process was to provide Osceola County with a vision of its preferred future.

### **Action 1 – Introduction**

In this action, The WMRPC reviewed the work program with the Osceola County Planning Commission to insure everyone agreed to the established planning process. During this action we also established, with the assistance of the Planning Commission, a list of 25-35 key people to interview (as outlined in Action 4 below). WMRPC also worked with the Planning Commission to set tentative dates for workshops, surveys and meetings with the Planning Commission.

### **Action 2 – Orientation and Inventory**

Staff from the WMRPC spent two consecutive days in Osceola County during this action to meet the County's residents and gain an understanding that only time provides. During the period the WMRPC performed a variety of tasks, but the majority of time was spent performing key person interviews.

### **Action 3 – Community Description**

This action describes the County's physical features, population, community facilities and housing. The WMRPC used the Michigan Resource Information System (MiRIS) as a base and added information to create a graphic description of Osceola County. Once our planners developed the digital base map, they collected information to add to the base

map. Information includes soils, existing land use, street and transportation systems and natural features.

This portion of the plan describes the County's physical features. These features include location, climate, soils, natural features, sites of environmental contamination, historic sites, and a description of the area's transportation network. Sources include existing plans, Osceola County's Soil Survey, Michigan's Department of Natural Resources, Michigan's Department of Transportation, Michigan's Bureau of History and a variety of other sources.

The land use inventory also describes Community Facilities such as parks, county offices, county facilities, schools and other public facilities.

The next major portion of this action describes Osceola County's social features. This section describes the County's existing population and provides information about the county, each of the individual townships, villages and cities, Region 8 and Michigan for comparison. The plan includes population features including age and sex distribution; racial distribution; people with physical disabilities; types of households; employment; and income information. The Plan also describes the County's housing based on census information. We will include information from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population (as information is released). This portion of the plan, while typically one of the first steps when developing a plan, will not be finalized until the end of the planning process, when the most up-to-date information will become available.

#### **Action 4 – Public Participation**

First, WMRPC conducted Key Person surveys. The one-on-one surveys in Osceola County's Offices gave people between 15 and 20 minutes to discuss the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Planning Commission provided the list of Key People to interview.

The next level of participation was a series of four issue identification workshops, or "Town Meetings." Each workshop took three hours and occurred in Marion, Reed City, Evart, and Tustin.

The workshops helped establish and rank the County's issues. The workshop participants also created a series of general actions to address each of the issues.

Finally, WMRPC developed a community survey that was mailed to 2,000 households. We based the survey on issues identified during the key person surveys and the issue identification workshops. The intent of the survey was to reinforce information obtained to this point and to determine the types of development and the levels of services people desire in Osceola County.

### **Action 5 – Issues, Goals, Actions and Projections**

WMRPC used the information gathered in the first four actions to develop a vision statement and set of issues, goals and actions. The Vision Statement presents a brief picture of the “ideal” future for Osceola County in the year 2020. The statement identifies target population, housing, employment, recreation, services and other details of the County’s future. The section also identifies a complete list of issues developed by WMRPC with the assistance of Key Person Interviews, Issue Identification Workshops and the Community Opinion Survey. Next, we presented the County’s Planning Commission with a set of goals for review and revision. Finally, we developed a series of Actions designed to guide Osceola County towards each Goal and the Vision Statement.

The WMRPC also developed population and housing projections during this Action. Our planners based projections on past trends and the County’s goals (since the goals will influence the future population and housing distribution). Projections include overall population projections, household distribution, age distribution, overall housing numbers and housing type distribution for each individual unit of government.

### **Action 6 – Future Land Use Plan**

WMRPC developed a future land use plan based on the issues and goals established in Action 5 and generally accepted planning principles. The Future Land Use Plan consists of maps and text describing the rationale behind the decisions. The same level of detail and categories used in the existing land use inventory was used to develop this portion of the plan.

### **Action 7 – Planning Commission Review**

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft of the plan to this point and revised the Draft at special work sessions.

### **Action 8 – Implementation Schedule**

Once the Planning Commission reviewed the plan, the WMRPC worked with the Planning Commission to develop an Implementation Schedule based on the Actions identified in Action 5. The Implementation Schedule identifies each goal and action. The schedule identifies who will perform each action, when to perform each action and potential funding sources for each of the actions. The schedule provides a clear and concise measure for Osceola County to use during the Master Plan’s implementation period.

**Action 9 – Finalize Plan Document**

WMRPC developed a Final Draft of the Plan based on the Planning Commission's comments in Action 7. The Final Draft of the Plan contained an up to date Future Land Use Map, a complete list of Goals, an Implementation Schedule and a variety of text, tables and maps supporting the Plan. The County received 25 copies of the plan for community review.

**Action 10 – Community Adoption**

The WMRPC attended a public presentation meeting to accept comments and address any concerns of County residents. After comments were incorporated in the Plan, the WMRPC attended a Public Hearing on October 15, 2002. The Osceola County Board of Commissioners adopted the Plan November 12, 2002.

**Action 11 – Plan Preparation**

After the public hearing and adoption of the Plan, the WMRPC printed the final plan. The Plan contains text, tables, and maps. Maps include a variety of informational maps plus an Existing Land Use Inventory and a Future Land Use Map.

**Schedule**

All of these actions occurred between September 2000 and November 2002.



### **Osceola County History**

- 1836 – Land now known as Osceola County acquired through treaty with Native Americans
- 1838 – County surveyed
- 1850 – Land acquired for lumber, which was an important influence in the County's development
- 1855 – Richmond Township created (it comprised all of what is now Osceola County)
- 1860 – Census shows only 27 residents
- Delos A. Blodgett, involved in business and lumber, settled in Hersey and began farming and raising horses
- 1869 – Village of Hersey formed as the county seat
- 1870 – Reed City formed
- 1870 – Census shows 2,200 increases to 6,216 by 1874
- 1871 – Village of Evart founded
- 1871 – Village of Tustin founded
- 1878 – First rail service built to transport lumber
- 1883 – Village of LeRoy founded
- 1889 – Village of Marion founded
- 1927 – County seat moved to Reed City (site of the County's only rail junction) after a long dispute with Hersey (originally considered in 1891)

### **Individual Communities**

While this plan represents the goals of Osceola County as-a-whole, it also recognizes that the County is made up of the two cities, four villages, and 16 townships. The following provides a brief description of the County's individual communities.

#### **Cities**

**Evart** – Evart is located on US-10 in south central Osceola County, within the townships of Evart and Osceola. The 2000 population was 1,738. Evart has an up-to-date land use plan and is governed by a mayor/council/manager. The City has 16 municipal employees.

Evart's public library is located at 104 North Main Street and is staffed by six people and has an average annual circulation of 38,000. The City's current water system has a capacity of 3.5 million Gallons Per Day (GPD) and a current usage of 2.2 million GPD. The current capacity of Evart's wastewater system is 500,000 GPD of which 420,000 GPD is currently used. The construction of a new police station is the only major development within the community. The City sponsors five festivals each year including an annual car show, the Dulcimer Festival, the Woodcarver's Roundup, the Osceola County Fair, and the Summer Musical Series. Evart has several major employers. The top five issues that face the community are the development of a new Land Use Plan, a housing assessment, development of a new police building, downtown development, and plans for an infrastructure development plan and assessment.

**Reed City** – Reed City is located at the intersection of US-131 and US-10 in the southwest corner of Osceola County within Richmond Township. The 2000 population of the County's most populous community was 2,430. Reed City has an up-to-date land use plan and recreation plan. The City is the county seat and is governed by a mayor/council/manager. The City has 26 municipal employees.

The Reed City Public Library, located at 410 West Upton Street, has an average annual circulation of 30,000 and is staffed by seven people. The city's water system capacity is 1 million GPD, of which 700,000 GPD is currently used. The current capacity of the wastewater system is 900,000 GPD of which 519,000 GPD is currently used. The wastewater system is soon to be updated to 1.35 million GPD. Major development in the community includes a new Michigan State Police Post, and plans for a new fire station, and a new mobile home park. A Lake-Osceola State Bank building was recently completed. The City sponsors two major festivals: the Evergreen Festival, which takes place on Thanksgiving weekend and the Great American Crossroads Celebration, which takes place in August. The City has several major employers. Issues that the community is facing include limited area for new residential and industrial development, an aging housing stock, keeping up with industrial expansion, and working with Richmond Township.

### Villages

**Hersey** – Hersey is located in the southwest corner of Osceola County, within the townships of Richmond and Hersey. The 2000 population was 374. Hersey does not have a current land use plan, but has an older plan. The Village has an up-to-date recreation plan. The Village is a general law village with no municipal employees.

Hersey also has a library. The most recent plans for new developments are for a family multi-use park with camping, fishing, hiking, and picnic sites. Hersey sponsors the Hersey Heritage Days festival. There are several small employers in the Village. The top five issues facing the community are dam removal, removal of 2 buildings, a park project, sidewalks, and roads.

**LeRoy** – LeRoy is located off US-131 in western Osceola County, within LeRoy Township. The 2000 population was 267. The Village is a general law village with no municipal employees. LeRoy's library is located at 104 West Gilbert Street and is staffed by two people. The Village has several manufacturing-based employers. The Village has a current land use plan.

**Marion** – Marion is located north of M-115 in the northeast corner of Osceola County, within Marion Township. The 2000 population was 836. The Village has a current land use plan and recreation plan. Marion is a general law village with five municipal employees.

Marion's library is located at 120 East Main Street and is staffed by three people (one full-time). The current capacity of the water system is 180,000 GPD and the average daily use is 80,000 GPD. The major festivals sponsored by Marion are the Marion Fair and Old Fashion Days. The Village has a variety of employers. Issues facing the community include improving the water system, employment opportunities, and improving recreation.

**Tustin** – Tustin is located near US-131 in the northwest corner of Osceola County, within Burdell Township. The Village's 2000 population was 237, making it the least populous community in Osceola County. The Village does not have a current land use plan or recreation plan. Tustin is a general law village with no municipal employees. Tustin's library is at 310 Nelson Street and is staffed by one person. The top 5 issues facing the Village include lack of funding for village upkeep, street repair, sidewalk repair, ordinance enforcement, and lack of public involvement.

### **Townships**

**Burdell** – Burdell Township is located in the northwest corner of Osceola County. US-131 runs through the Township, which had a 2000 population of 1,004. The Village of Tustin is located within the Township. Burdell Township has a current land use plan.

**Cedar** – Cedar Township is in the central portion of Osceola County. The 2000 population was 406. Cedar Township has a current land use plan.

**Evart** – Evart Township is in southern Osceola County and surrounds a large portion of the City of Evart. US-10 passes through the northern portion of the Township. The Township's 2000 population was 1,533. The Township has an older land use plan.

**Hartwick** – Hartwick Township is located in central Osceola County. The 2000 population was 629. Hartwick Township has no current plans.

**Hersey** – Hersey Township is located in southern Osceola County and surrounds a portion of Hersey Village. US-10 passes through the northern portion of the Township. The township has several larger employers. The 2000 population was 1,472. Hersey Township has no current plans.

**Highland** – Highland Township is located in northern Osceola County and had a 2000 population of 1,207. Highland Township has a current land use plan.

**LeRoy** – LeRoy Township is located in western Osceola County and surrounds three sides of the Village of LeRoy. US-131 passes through the Township. The Township's 2000 population was 892. LeRoy Township has a current land use plan.

**Lincoln** – Lincoln Township is located in western Osceola County and is traversed by US-131. The Township's 2000 population was 1,629. Lincoln Township has no current plans.

**Marion** – Marion Township is located in the County's northeast corner and surrounds the Village of Marion. M-115 passes through the Township, which had a 2000 population of 744. Marion Township has no current plans.

**Middle Branch** – Middle Branch Township is in eastern Osceola County and had a 2000 population of 858. Middle Branch Township has no current plans.

**Orient** – Orient Township is located in the County's southeast corner. US-10 passes through the northern portion of the Township, which had a 2000 population of 803. The Township has no current plans.

**Osceola** – Osceola Township is located in the central portion of Osceola County and surrounds a portion of the City of Evart. The Township had a 2000 population of 1,118. Osceola Township has a current land use plan.

**Richmond** – Richmond Township is in the County’s southwest corner. US-131 and US-10 pass through the Township, which surrounds Reed City and a portion of the Village of Hersey. The Township had a 2000 population of 1,695 and has a current land use plan as well as a recreation plan. The township also has a diverse range of employers.

**Rose Lake** – Rose Lake Township is located in the central portion of Osceola County and had a 2000 population of 1,231. The Township has no current plans.

**Sherman** – Sherman Township is located in northern Osceola County and had a 2000 population of 1,081. The Township has a current land use plan.

**Sylvan** – Sylvan Township is located in eastern Osceola County and had a 2000 population of 1,033. The Township has no current plans.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

### Population Trends

Between 1960 and 2000, Osceola County's population increased by 9,602 (70.6 percent) to reach 23,197 residents. The growth rate was not constant over the 40 year period, with the population increasing by 9.1 percent between 1960 and 1970, 27.6 percent between 1970 and 1980, 6.4 percent between 1980 and 1990, and 15.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. Osceola County's growth rate was much greater than Michigan's rate of 27.0 percent, and slightly lower than Region 8's growth rate of 74.5 percent.

Communities within Osceola County experienced different rates of growth during the 40-year period between 1960 and 2000. Populations decreased in the City of Ewart, and the villages of Marion and Tustin. Marion had the largest numeric and percentage decrease, with a decrease of 62 people (6.9 percent). The City of Ewart decreased by 37 people (2.1 percent) and Tustin lost 11 people for a 4.4 percent decrease over the 40-year period.

During the 40-year period, Reed City's population increased by 11.3 percent to reach 2,430. Hersey's population increased by 52.0 percent to reach 374, and LeRoy's population was the same in 2000 as it was in 1960 (with increases and decreases occurring during the period).

All of the townships grew during the 40 years between 1960 and 2000. Ten of the townships grew by *at least* 100 percent (doubling in size). Rose Lake Township had the greatest growth rate with 321.6 percent, followed by Cedar with 298.0 percent and Hersey Township with 268.9 percent. Numerically, Hersey Township grew the most with an increase of 1,073 people. Ewart Township follows closely with an increase of 987 people, and Rose Lake Township is next with an increase of 939. As with the County, growth was not uniform in any of the communities, with each experiencing different growth rates over the 40-year period.

Table 1: Population Trends in Osceola County

COMMUNITY	POPULATION					CHANGE 1960-2000	
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	#	%
State							
Michigan	7,823,194	8,871,722	9,262,078	9,295,277	9,938,444	2,115,250	27.0
Region							
Region 8	633,208	734,155	837,655	948,502	1,104,848	471,640	74.5
Countywide							
Osceola County	13,595	14,838	18,928	20,146	23,197	9,602	70.6
Cities							
Evart City	1,775	1,707	1,945	1,744	1,738	(37)	(2.1)
Reed City (City)	2,184	2,286	2,221	2,379	2,430	246	11.3
Villages							
Hersey Village	246	276	364	409	374	128	52.0
LeRoy Village	267	248	293	257	267	0	0.0
Marion Village	898	891	816	801	836	(62)	(6.9)
Tustin Village	248	230	264	230	237	(11)	(4.4)
Townships (excluding city and village populations)							
Burdell	437	507	803	917	1,004	567	129.7
Cedar	102	103	235	298	406	304	298.0
Evart	526	582	1,029	1,229	1,513	987	187.6
Hartwick	368	406	420	504	629	261	70.9
Hersey	399	539	865	1,046	1,472	1,073	268.9
Highland	659	712	1,063	1,018	1,207	548	83.2
LeRoy	350	396	565	706	892	542	155.0
Lincoln	889	910	1,173	1,228	1,629	740	83.2
Marion	519	536	675	644	744	225	43.4
Middle Branch	403	541	642	695	858	455	112.9
Orient	382	552	635	686	803	421	110.2
Osceola	519	623	920	889	1,118	599	115.4
Richmond	1,135	1,318	1,649	1,722	1,695	560	49.3
Rose Lake	292	380	847	937	1,231	939	321.6
Sherman	544	608	847	949	1,081	537	98.7
Sylvan	453	487	657	858	1,033	580	128.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Age Distribution

Osceola County's age distribution varies from Michigan's in a number of ways. In 1990, the County's median age was 33.4, which was nearly one full year older than Michigan's median of 32.6. In 1990, Osceola County had a higher percentage of people between 55 and 84, and a higher percentage of people between 5 and 17. Conversely, the County had a lower percentage of residents between 18 and 44. Other categories (under 5 and 45-54) were similar to Michigan.

In 2000 the difference between the County and State grew. Osceola County's median age of 37.6 was more than two years greater than Michigan's median of 35.5. In 2000, Osceola County had a higher percentage of people between 55 and 84, and a higher percentage of people between 5 and 17. Conversely, the County had a lower percentage of residents between 18 and 44. Other categories (under 5 and 45-54) were similar to Michigan. These differences are identical to the 1990 ratios.

The primary changes that occurred in the County between 1990 and 2000 include the overall aging of the population, with the median age increasing from 33.4 to 37.6 years of age. The percentage of those in the 5-17, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 85+ age groups increased during the ten-year period, while all others decreased as a percentage. Several groups decreased numerically as well, which is significant since the overall population increased. Those age groups that decreased numerically include under 5, 18-24, and 25-34.

Table 2: Age Distribution

	OSCEOLA COUNTY				MICHIGAN	
	1990		2000		1990	2000
	#	%	#	%	%	%
Under 5	1,525	7.6	1,428	6.2	7.5	6.8
5-17	4,475	22.2	5,514	23.7	18.9	22.2
18-24	1,655	8.2	1,207	5.2	10.7	7.2
25-34	2,866	14.2	2,603	11.2	17.1	13.7
35-44	2,705	13.4	3,545	15.3	15.2	16.1
45-54	2,120	10.5	3,114	13.4	10.2	13.8
55-64	1,986	9.9	2,502	10.8	8.5	8.7
65-84	2,595	12.9	2,964	12.7	10.8	10.9
85+	219	1.1	320	1.4	1.1	1.4
Total	20,146	100.0	23,197	100.0	100.0	100.0
Median	33.4	---	37.6	---	32.6	35.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population



### Gender Distribution

In 1990 Osceola County's male-female distribution was almost even, with males accounting for 49.5 percent of the population and females accounting for 50.5 percent. This is a full percentage point more males than in Michigan as-a-whole. The fact that there are more females (in both the County and Michigan) is normal since women have a longer life expectancy. In 2000, Osceola County's male-female distribution was closer to Michigan's. The County's ratio did not change a great deal, but Michigan's male-female ratio narrowed.

Table 3: Gender Distribution

	OSCEOLA COUNTY				MICHIGAN	
	1990		2000		1990	2000
	#	%	#	%	%	%
Male	9,981	49.5	11,461	49.4	48.5	49.0
Female	10,165	50.5	11,736	50.6	51.5	51.0
Total	20,146	100.0	23,197	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Household Distribution

In 1990, Osceola County had 7,368 households. The County had a higher percentage of family households (75.9 percent of households) than Michigan. Within the County's family households, there were a higher percentage of married couple families than in Michigan. The percentage of single female parents was lower than in Michigan, and the percentage of single male parents was about the same. Since the percentage of Osceola County's family households was higher, it follows that the percentage of nonfamily households was lower. While the overall percentage was lower (24.1 percent), the percentage of single householders 65 and over was higher in 1990. Osceola County and Michigan had identical average household sizes in 1990, with 2.7 persons per household.

In 2000, Osceola County had 8,861 households. With family households accounting for 72.4 percent of households, the County had a higher percentage of family households than Michigan. Within the County's family households, there were a higher percentage of married couple families. Osceola County's percentage of single female parents was lower than in Michigan, and the percentage of single male parents was higher. As in 1990, the percentage of nonfamily households was lower. While the overall percentage was lower (27.6 percent), the percentage of single householders 65 and over was slightly higher. Osceola County and Michigan had identical average household sizes in 2000, with 2.6 persons per household.

Several changes occurred in Osceola County between 1990 and 2000. The number of households increased, the percentage of family households decreased, the percentage of single parent households increased, the percentage of non-family households increased, and the proportion of one-person households increased. The percentage of one-person householders 65 and over decreased and the average household size decreased to 2.6 persons.

Table 4: Household Distribution

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS				NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS			PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	PERSONS IN GROUP QUARTERS
		Total	Married Couple Family	Female Householder with no Spouse	Male Householder with no Spouse	Total	Householder Living Alone	Householder 65 & Over Living Alone		
1990										
Osceola Co.	7,368	5,595	4,689	639	267	1,774	1,582	845	2.7	244
%	100.0	75.9	63.6	8.7	3.6	24.1	21.5	11.5	---	---
Michigan (%)	100.0	71.3	55.1	12.9	3.3	28.7	23.7	9.3	2.7	---
2000										
Osceola Co.	8,861	6,413	5,152	859	402	2,448	2,004	865	2.6	360
%	100.0	72.4	58.1	9.7	6.3	27.6	22.6	9.8	---	---
Michigan (%)	100.0	68.0	51.4	12.5	4.1	32.0	26.2	9.4	2.6	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population

During the five-year period between 1997 and 2001, the County's labor force remained fairly constant, hovering around 11,000 people. During the same period the number of employed also remained fairly constant. The unemployment rate steadily decreased between 1997 and 2000, but experienced a sharp increase in 2001 with the number of unemployed peaking at 850. Michigan's unemployment rate also steadily declined between 1997 and 2000, but increased in 2001. Osceola County's unemployment rate is consistently over two percentage points higher than Michigan's.

Table 5: Employment Trends

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Osceola County					
Labor Force	11,000	11,075	10,850	10,750	11,000
Employment	10,275	10,425	10,225	10,150	10,150
Unemployment	725	675	625	600	850
Unemployment Rate	6.6	6.0	5.7	5.5	7.8
Michigan					
Labor Force	4,962,000	5,031,000	5,144,000	5,201,000	5,241,000
Employment	4,753,000	4,837,000	4,950,000	5,016,000	4,982,000
Unemployment	209,000	194,000	194,000	185,000	259,000
Unemployment Rate	4.2	3.9	3.8	3.6	4.9

Source: MESA Labor Market Analysis

### Employment Distribution

Between 1990 and 2000 the Census changed the employment categories enough to make comparisons difficult, so only 2000 information is provided. There are several similarities and differences between Osceola County's and Michigan's employment distribution. First, both the County and Michigan have the same three top categories. In both areas, "Manufacturing" is the largest category, followed by "Education, health and social services," and "Retail trade." While manufacturing is the largest category, it makes up a

much larger percentage of the County's workers (31.7 percent) than the category does in Michigan (22.5 percent). The other two categories have similar proportions for both Osceola County and Michigan, with Education, health, and social services accounting for 18.4 percent of the county's employees; and Retail accounting for 11.6 percent. Osceola County has a higher percentage of people involved in Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining. The County has a lower proportion of people employed in Finance and Professional services.

Table 6: 2000 Employment Distribution

	OSCEOLA COUNTY		MICHIGAN
	#	%	%
Employed Persons 16 and Over	10,012	100.0	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	380	3.8	1.1
Construction	607	6.1	6.0
Manufacturing	3,176	31.7	22.5
Wholesale Trade	196	2.0	3.3
Retail Trade	1,166	11.6	11.9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	424	4.2	4.1
Information	132	1.3	2.1
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing	254	2.5	5.3
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	340	3.4	8.0
Education, health and social services	1,845	18.4	19.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	712	7.1	7.6
Other services (except public administration)	415	4.1	4.6
Public Administration	365	3.6	3.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Income and Poverty

Osceola County's residents tend to have lower incomes than Michigan as-a-whole. In 1990 the County's median household income was \$20,880, which was considerably lower than Michigan's median of \$31,030 for the same year. By 2000, the County's median household income grew by 63.3 percent to reach \$34,102. Michigan's median household income increased by 43.9 percent to reach \$44,667 – indicating the County's incomes are “catching up” to Michigan's. The per capita levels in the County were also lower in 1990 and 2000 than in Michigan, but the County's grew by 68.8 percent to reach \$15,632 while Michigan's grew by 56.6 percent to reach \$22,168. The percentage of people below the poverty level in 1990 (which is based more on County income levels) was higher in Osceola County (18.5 percent) than in Michigan (13.1 percent), which is a difference of 5.4 percentage points. The figures decreased dramatically in the County to reach 12.5 percent in 2000 – only 2.2 percentage points higher than Michigan's rate of 10.3 percent.

Table 7: Income and Poverty

	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME		PER CAPITA INCOME		PERCENT OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Osceola County	\$20,880	\$34,102	\$9,258	\$15,632	18.5	12.5
Michigan	\$31,030	\$44,667	\$14,154	\$22,168	13.1	10.3

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Housing Tenure

Housing tenure in Osceola County is very different than the State as-a-whole. In 1990, the County's 7,347 occupied housing units accounted for 64.2 percent of the County's 11,444 units; and in 2000, the County's 8,861 occupied units accounted for 68.9 percent of the County's 12,853 units. In Michigan occupied housing accounted for 88.9 percent of the housing units in 1990 and 89.4 percent in 2000. This difference can be attributed to the large number of seasonal housing units (cottages) within Osceola County – although it appears more people are making Osceola County their year-round residence in 2000 than in the past. When the number of owner-occupied housing units is compared to the total number of housing units, Osceola County had a much lower percentage (51.3 percent) than Michigan (63.1 percent) in 1990. This was also the trend in 2000, although the percentage of owner occupied units increased to 56.1 percent in the County and 66.0 percent in Michigan. But, when the number of owner-occupied units is compared to occupied units, Osceola County had a much higher percentage (79.9 percent) than Michigan (71.0 percent) in 1990. In 2000, the County also had a higher percentage of its occupied units occupied by owners (81.3 percent) than Michigan (73.8 percent). Usually, a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing units is a good sign since homeownership encourages pride in the housing units and community. Also, the lower percentage of renter-occupied units can be attributed to the low proportion of apartments (see next section) in Osceola County.

Table 8: Housing Tenure

	OSCEOLA COUNTY				MICHIGAN	
	1990		2000		1990	2000
	#	%	#	%	%	%
Total Housing Units	11,444	100.0	12,853	100.0	100.0	100.0
Occupied	7,347	64.2	8,861	68.9	88.9	89.4
Owner Occupied	5,870	51.3 (79.9)	7,206	56.1 (81.3)	63.1 (71.0)	66.0 (73.8)
Renter Occupied	1,477	12.9 (20.1)	1,655	12.9 (18.7)	25.8 (29.0)	23.4 (26.2)
Vacant	4,097	35.8	3,992	31.1	11.1	10.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population

## Housing Types

The types of housing units in Osceola County are very different than in Michigan. In 2000, 8,911 (69.3 percent) of the County's 12,853 housing units are traditional single family homes. This proportion is lower than Michigan's figure of 74.5 percent. Osceola County also has fewer duplexes (1.3 percent) than Michigan (3.5 percent). The County also has a much lower proportion of multiple-family homes (4.1 percent) than Michigan (15.3 percent). While Osceola County had a lower proportion of traditional homes, duplexes, and apartments in 2000, it had a much higher proportion of mobile homes, trailers, and other types of units (25.3 percent) than Michigan (6.7 percent). Osceola County's ratios of housing type distribution did not change a great deal between 1990 and 2000.

Table 9: Housing Type Distribution

TYPE OF UNIT	OSCEOLA COUNTY				MICHIGAN	
	1990		2000		1990	2000
	#	%	#	%	%	%
1 unit	7,861	68.7	8,911	69.3	72.8	74.5
2 unit	127	1.1	162	1.3	4.2	3.5
3 or more	500	4.4	522	4.1	15.6	15.3
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	2,956	25.8	3,258	25.3	7.5	6.7
Total Units	11,444	100.0	12,853	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

## Age of Housing

Osceola County's housing stock is newer than Michigan's with a median year built of 1972 for the County and 1965 for Michigan. The County does have a higher proportion of housing units built before 1940, but Michigan has a higher proportion built between 1940 and 1970. Osceola County has a higher proportion built since 1970.

Table 10: Age of Housing

YEAR BUILT	OSCEOLA COUNTY		MICHIGAN
	#	%	%
1939 or earlier	2,429	18.9	16.9
1940-1959	1,692	13.2	26.5
1960-1969	1,729	13.5	14.2
1970-1979	2,803	21.8	17.1
1980-1989	1,947	15.1	10.5
1990-March 2000	2,253	17.5	14.8
Total	12,853	100.0	100.0
Median Year Built	1972	---	1965

Source: U.S. Census of Population

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

### Population Projections

Between 2000 and 2020, Osceola County's population is projected to increase by 8,366 (36.1 percent) to reach 31,563 residents. These projections are based on adding together trend-based projections for each community in Osceola County. Osceola County's projected growth rate is lower than Region 8's growth rate of 46.1 percent during the 20-year period.

Since the individual communities experienced different rates of growth during the 40-year period between 1960 and 2000, it follows that the trend-based projections are different for each community. Projections indicate two communities will decrease slightly, with the City of Evart decreasing by 3.5 percent and the Village of Tustin decreasing by 0.8 percent. The remaining cities and villages have very moderate projected growth rates between 1.1 percent (the Village of LeRoy) and 5.8 percent (the City of Reed City). Hersey and Marion have similar growth projections of 2.4 and 2.3 percent respectively.

All of the County's townships are projected to grow. Numerically, the top five growth townships are projected to be Hersey (1,270), Rose Lake (1,053), Evart (955), Lincoln (811), and Sylvan (555). The top five growth townships, based on percentage of projected growth include Cedar (121.4 percent), Hersey (86.3 percent), Rose Lake (85.5 percent), Evart (63.1 percent), and LeRoy (60.8 percent).

These population projections are entirely based on trends. Many things can influence the trends including planning, community goals, the economy, marketing, economic development, and others.

These same projections are used in this plan to project the age/gender distribution and housing needs.

Table 11: Population Projections in Osceola County

COMMUNITY	POPULATION					CHANGE 2000-2020	
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	#	%
State							
Michigan	9,938,444	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Region							
Region 8	1,104,848	1,199,029	1,304,955	1,425,607	1,564,894	460,046	41.6
Countywide							
Osceola County	23,197	24,950	26,896	29,081	31,563	8,366	36.1
Cities							
Ewart City	1,738	1,722	1,707	1,692	1,677	(61)	(3.5)
Reed City (City)	2,430	2,465	2,500	2,536	2,572	142	5.8
Villages							
Hersey Village	374	376	378	380	383	9	2.4
LeRoy Village	267	268	268	269	270	3	1.1
Marion Village	836	841	845	850	855	19	2.3
Tustin Village	237	236	236	235	235	(2)	(0.8)
Townships (excluding city and village populations)							
Burdell	1,004	1,079	1,160	1,247	1,341	337	33.6
Cedar	406	488	591	724	899	493	121.4
Ewart	1,513	1,709	1,929	2,180	2,468	955	63.1
Hartwick	629	690	755	825	899	270	42.9
Hersey	1,472	1,722	2,011	2,347	2,742	1,270	86.3
Highland	1,207	1,291	1,380	1,474	1,574	367	30.4
LeRoy	892	1,007	1,134	1,276	1,434	542	60.8
Lincoln	1,629	1,808	2,001	2,211	2,440	811	49.8
Marion	744	782	821	862	904	160	21.5
Middle Branch	858	929	1,004	1,083	1,168	310	36.1
Orient	803	857	914	973	1,034	231	28.8
Osceola	1,118	1,218	1,324	1,439	1,562	444	39.7
Richmond	1,695	1,718	1,742	1,767	1,793	98	5.8
Rose Lake	1,231	1,427	1,660	1,940	2,284	1,053	85.5
Sherman	1,081	1,163	1,250	1,342	1,441	360	33.3
Sylvan	1,033	1,153	1,284	1,428	1,588	555	53.7

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Age Distribution

If the trends in age distribution continue as between 1990 and 2000, the median age of Osceola County will continue to rise. In 2000, the median age was 37.6. By 2010 the median age will reach 39.9 and by 2020 it will reach 41.6. As with the overall projections, these numbers are based entirely on past trends and do not indicate actual figures, but general ideas of what can be expected. Table 12 also contains projections for each age group, based on change rates for each of the groups. Overall, trends indicate there will be fewer children under five, but there will be more school age children. Also, there will be few college-age residents. The trends also indicate there will be a smaller percentage of residents between 25 and 34, but more between 35 and 44, 45 and 54, and 55 and 64. The percentage of people between the ages of 65 and 84 will continue to rise, but will continue to make up a similar proportion of the population. The percentage of residents over 85 will continue to grow.

Table 12: Age Distribution Projections

	OSCEOLA COUNTY					
	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	1,428	6.2	1,364	5.1	1,329	4.2
5-17	5,514	23.7	6,715	25.0	8,179	25.9
18-24	1,207	5.2	778	2.9	335	1.1
25-34	2,603	11.2	2,398	8.9	2,237	7.1
35-44	3,545	15.3	4,493	16.7	5,629	17.8
45-54	3,114	13.4	4,209	15.6	5,496	17.4
55-64	2,502	10.8	3,093	11.5	3,807	12.1
65-84	2,964	12.7	3,415	12.7	3,988	12.6
85+	320	1.4	431	1.6	562	1.8
Total	23,197	100.0	26,896	100.0	31,563	100.0
Median	37.6	---	39.9	---	41.6	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Gender Distribution

The proportion of males and females in Osceola County is not projected to change a great deal, with women continuing to outnumber men by less than two percentage points.



Table 13: Gender Distribution Projections

	OSCEOLA COUNTY					
	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Male	11,461	49.4	13,260	49.3	15,535	49.2
Female	11,736	50.6	13,636	50.7	16,028	50.8
Total	23,197	100.0	26,896	100.0	31,563	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Household Distribution

The projected number of households is expected to grow at a greater rate than the population due to the fact that household sizes continue to decrease. By 2020, projections indicate there will be 12,905 households within Osceola County. This represents an increase of 45.6 percent, while the population is projected to increase by 36.1 percent. Within the household types, the percentage of family households is projected to decrease; and within the family households category, the percentage of married family households is expected to decrease, while the percentage of single parent families is expected to increase. Conversely, the percentage of non-family households is expected to increase; and within the non-family households category, the percentage of one-person households is expected to increase, while the percentage of one-person households (65 and over) is projected to decrease. Overall, the average household size is projected to decrease from 2.6 persons per household in 2000, to 2.4 in 2020.

Table 14: Household Distribution Projections

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS				NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS			PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	PERSONS IN GROUP QUARTERS
		Total	Married Couple Family	Female Householder with no Spouse	Male Householder with no Spouse	Total	Householder Living Alone	Householder 65 & Over Living Alone		
2000										
Osceola Co.	8,861	6,413	5,152	859	402	2,448	2,004	865	2.6	360
%	100.0	72.4	58.1	9.7	6.3	27.6	22.6	9.8	---	---
2010										
Osceola Co.	10,568	7,272	5,564	1,132	576	3,295	2,511	851	2.5	476
%	100.0	68.8	52.6	10.7	5.4	31.2	23.8	8.1	---	---
2020										
Osceola Co.	12,905	8,420	6,084	1,515	821	4,481	3,214	819	2.4	592
%	100.0	65.2	47.1	11.7	6.4	34.7	24.9	6.3	---	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population

### Employment and Income

Between 2000 and 2020 the labor force is projected to grow (based on trends) by a rate greater than the projected rate of population growth. By 2020 the labor force is projected to be 16,886, which is a 55.3 percent rate of growth over the twenty-year period. Typically, the unemployment rate has risen and fallen and has traditionally been higher than Michigan as-a-whole. If a 7.0 percent average is used for an unemployment rate, the number of employed persons will reach 15,704 by 2020.

Table 15: Employment and Income Projections in Osceola County

	2000	2010	2020
Labor Force	10,875	13,502	16,886
Employment	10,275	12,557	15,704
Unemployment	600	945	1,182
Unemployment Rate	5.5	7.0	7.0
Median Household Income	\$34,102	\$54,845	\$87,278
Per Capita Income	\$15,632	\$26,248	\$43,883
Percent of Population Below Poverty Level	12.5	9.1	5.7

Source: Michigan Labor Market Information; ; U.S. Census of Population; WMRPC

Table 15 also shows that the County's incomes are projected to continue growing. The projections are based on Michigan's trends and the County's changing relationship to those trends. While Osceola County's median household incomes and per capita income levels will remain lower than Michigan's, there will not be as great of separation. Projections indicate the County's household incomes will reach \$87,278 by 2020 and per capita incomes will reach \$43,883. Based on past trends, the percent of people below the poverty level will continue to decrease into the future.

### Employment Distribution

Due to the lack of continuity between the 1990 and 2000 categories, and the changing types of jobs, it is difficult to project employment distribution. If trends are used to predict employment in Osceola County, a higher percentage of the population will be in the work force, which indicates jobs will need to grow at a faster rate than the population growth. Table 16 shows the number of jobs required to meet the past trends, but uses the 2000 distribution figures throughout (due to lack of trend information). These numbers may not show the actual distribution for future employment growth, but they do demonstrate the need to plan for economic development as well as growth in public sector employment to meet the demands of a growing population.

Table 16: Employment Distribution Trends

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Employed Persons 16 and Over	10,012	100.0	12,557	100.0	15,704	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	380	3.8	477	3.8	597	3.8
Construction	607	6.1	766	6.1	958	6.1
Manufacturing	3,176	31.7	3,981	31.7	4,978	31.7
Wholesale Trade	196	2.0	251	2.0	314	2.0
Retail Trade	1,166	11.6	1,457	11.6	1,822	11.6
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	424	4.2	527	4.2	660	4.2
Information	132	1.3	163	1.3	204	1.3
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing	254	2.5	314	2.5	393	2.5
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	340	3.4	427	3.4	534	3.4
Education, health and social services	1,845	18.4	2,310	18.4	2,890	18.4
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	712	7.1	892	7.1	1,115	7.1
Other services (except public administration)	415	4.1	515	4.1	644	4.1
Public Administration	365	3.6	452	3.6	565	3.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population; WMRPC

### Housing Projections

The housing projections are based on household growth and the trend of less vacant (seasonal) housing in Osceola County. Housing needs are expected to increase at a rate greater than the population due to the trend of smaller households. The number of housing units projected for 2020 is 16,131. This represents an increase of 25.5 percent over the 20-year period. Additionally, occupied units are projected to reach 12,631, which is an increase of 42.5 percent during the same period.

Table 17: Housing Projections

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Housing Units	12,853	100.0	14,266	100.0	16,131	100.0
Occupied	8,861	68.9	10,500	73.6	12,631	78.3
Vacant	3,992	31.1	3,766	26.4	3,500	21.7

Source: U.S. Census of Population: WMRPC

### Housing Type Projections

Recent trends have shown an increase in single-family housing and duplexes in Osceola County; and a decreased proportion of multiple family housing and mobile homes – although the numbers for all four categories increased between 1990 and 2000. Single family homes and duplexes simply increased at a greater rate. Projections indicate, based on trends, that by 2020 there will be 11,372 single-family units in Osceola County, accounting

for over 70 percent of housing units. Duplexes will account for only 1.7 percent of the housing units and apartments will account for 3.5 percent. Mobile homes, trailers and other forms of housing will account for 24.3 percent of the County's housing.

Table 18: Housing Type Projections

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit	8,911	69.3	9,972	69.9	11,372	70.5
2 unit	162	1.3	214	1.5	274	1.7
3 or more	522	4.1	542	3.8	565	3.5
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	3,258	25.3	3,538	24.8	3,920	24.3
Total Units	12,853	100.0	14,266	100.0	16,131	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population: WMRPC

### Summary

Overall, projections indicate that the County's population will increase by 36.1 percent between 2000 and 2020 to reach 31,563. Everything else is expected to outpace the population growth including the need for jobs, the number of households, and housing. Additionally, the population's median age will continue to rise, as people live longer and as baby-boomers age. Projections indicate that the County's incomes will be more in-line with the rest of Michigan. Housing will consist of a larger percentage of single-family homes and there will be a higher percentage of occupied units.

## PHYSICAL FEATURES

The following section describes many of the area's natural and man-made features.

### Location

Osceola County is in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The County is north of Michigan's more developed areas, but is within an hours drive from some of the State's larger cities including Grand Rapids (directly south), Muskegon (southwest) and Midland (southeast). Osceola County is surrounded by Mecosta County to the south, Clare County to the east, Wexford and Missaukee counties to the north, and Lake County to the west. Osceola County is 60 miles east of Lake Michigan, 175 miles north of the Michigan/Indiana border, 120 miles southwest of the Straits of Mackinac, and 90 miles west of Saginaw Bay/Lake Huron. Figure 1 identifies the County's location in Michigan.



Figure 1: Osceola County Location

### Climate

Osceola County's weather, like all of Michigan's, has a strong influence on the way of life, agriculture, housing, recreation, transportation and other facilities and activities. Table 19 identifies information related to the area's climate. Generally, January is the coldest month (29.2 average daily maximum temperature). August is generally the warmest month in the County (80.8 average daily maximum temperature). June usually has the highest average precipitation (3.58 inches) and February generally has the lowest average (1.56 inches) but the greatest average depth of snow. Prevailing winds are from the west.

TABLE 19: CLIMATE IN OSCEOLA COUNTY

MONTH	TEMPERATURE (F)		PRECIPITATION (INCHES)	
	Average Daily Maximum	Average Daily Minimum	Average	Average Depth of Snow on Days with Snow Cover
January	29.2	12.9	1.81	6.1
February	31.1	12.6	1.56	8.3
March	40.2	20.1	1.76	8.0
April	55.5	31.4	2.06	1.4
May	68.4	42.2	3.05	0
June	77.6	51.9	3.58	0
July	77.0	54.9	2.39	0
August	80.8	54.0	3.43	0
September	71.7	46.2	3.37	0
October	59.9	36.4	2.29	0
November	43.9	26.9	2.59	2.4
December	32.6	18.6	1.71	3.8
Year	55.7	34.0	29.60	---

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

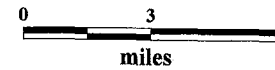
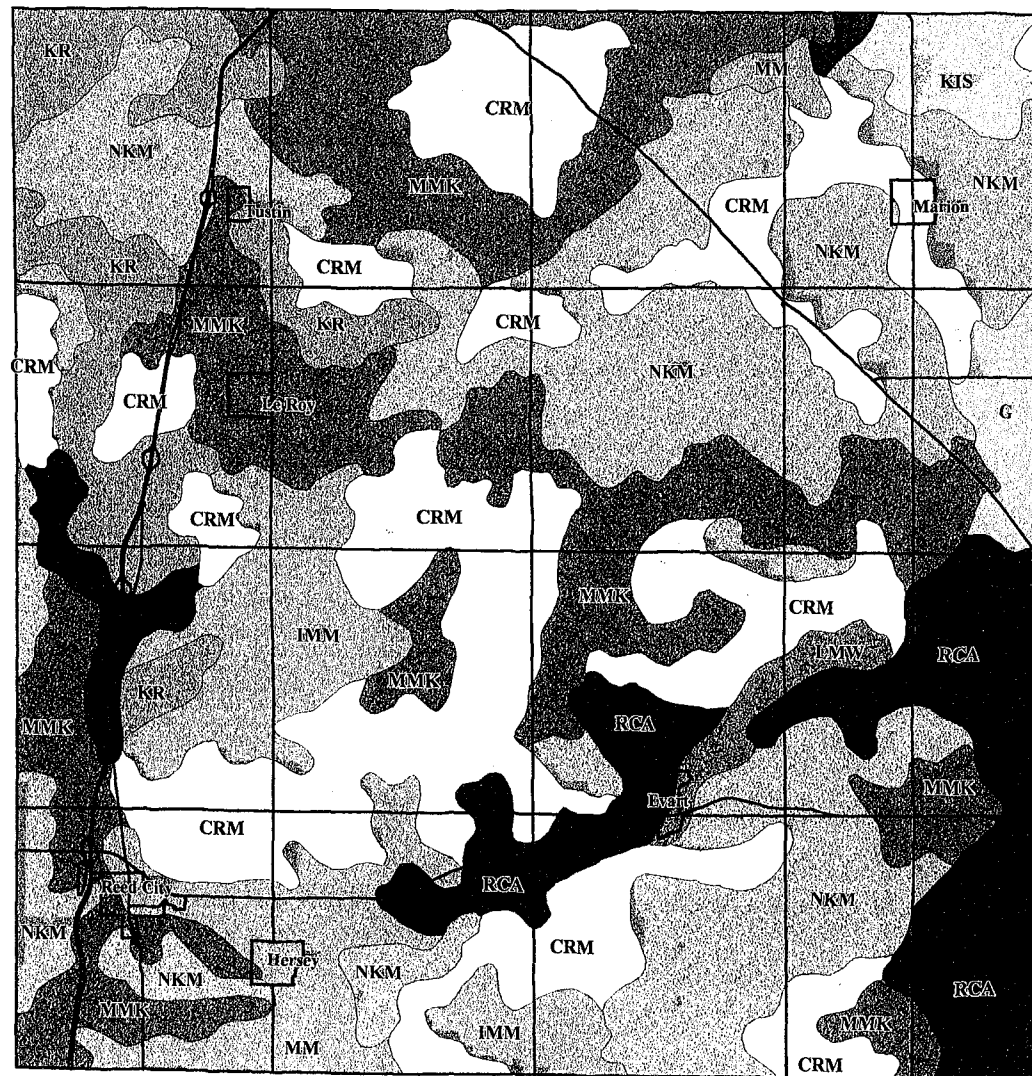
### Soils

Map 1 identifies the general soil associations in Osceola County. The map identifies the associations described below. The following information is taken from the Soil Survey of Osceola County, Michigan.

1. Kalkaska-Rubicon Association – Well-drained sandy soils on level plains and steep moraines
2. Chelsea-Rubicon-Montcalm Association – Well-drained and moderately well-drained sandy soils on rolling to steep moraines
3. McBride-Montcalm-Kalkaska Association – Well-drained and moderately well-drained sandy and loamy soils on undulating and rolling moraines
4. Isabella-McBride-Montcalm Association – Well-drained and moderately well-drained loamy and sandy soils on undulating to hilly uplands
5. Nester-Kawkawlin-Sims Association – Well-drained to very poorly drained loamy soils on level to undulating uplands
6. Nester-Kalkaska-Menominee Association – Well-drained and moderately well-drained loamy and sandy soils on undulating to hilly uplands
7. Rubicon-Croswell-Au Gres Association – Well-drained to somewhat poorly drained sandy soils on level to undulating plains

8. Grayling Association – Well-drained, droughty, sandy soils on level to sloping plains
9. Mancelona-Montcalm Association – Well-drained and moderately well-drained sandy soils on plains along streams
10. Lupton-Markey-Wheatley Association – Poorly drained and very poorly drained muck and sand soils in stream valleys

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## General Soils

### Legend

#### Soil Associations

- Chelsea-Rubicon-Montcalm (CRM)
- Grayling (G)
- Isabella-McBride-Montcalm (IMM)
- Kalkaska-Rubicon (KR)
- Kawkawlin-Iocso-Sims (KIS)
- Lupton-Markey-Wheatley (LMW)
- Mancelona-Montcalm (MM)
- McBride-Montcalm-Kalkaska (MMK)
- Nester-Kawkawlin-Menominee (NKM)
- Rubicon-Croswell-Au Gres (RCA)

#### Cities

- Evart
- Hersey
- LeRoy
- Marion
- Reed City
- Tustin

#### Township Boundaries



#### Highways



Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission;  
Natural Resource Conservation Service



## **Topography**

While it is difficult to produce a map of an entire county that identifies topography, the Topography Map strives to provide enough information to provide general information. The map shows each township's highest and lowest elevations. Generally, elevations range from around 1,000 feet above mean sea level to around 1,300 feet. The County's highest elevation, located in Sherman Township, is 1,690 feet above mean sea level and is the highest elevation in Michigan's lower peninsula. The lowest elevation in Sherman Township (1,266 feet) is higher than most other townships' highest points. The lowest elevation is 988 feet above mean sea level in Hersey Township, along the Muskegon River.

## **Water Features and Wetlands**

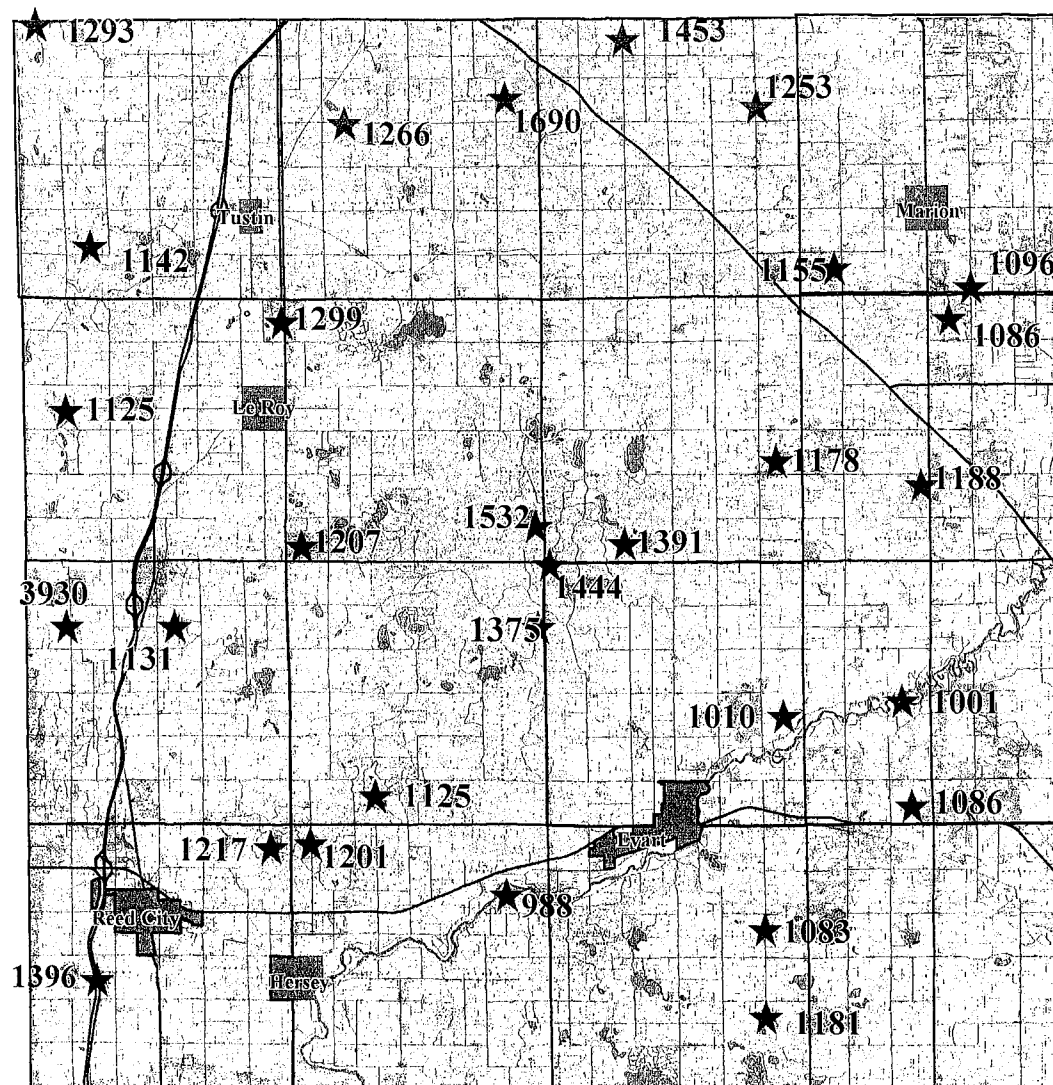
Osceola County has a variety of water features including streams, lakes, and wetlands. The major features include the Muskegon River, which enters the County on the east side (Sylvan Township) and travels west through Evart and exits the County on the southern border (Hersey Township). The Hersey River flows south through Reed City and the Village of Hersey before flowing into the Muskegon River. Many other streams and creeks flow into the Muskegon River in Osceola County. The Muskegon River eventually flows through Big Rapids and into Lake Michigan at Muskegon.

In addition to the Muskegon River, the Hersey River, and the many streams and creeks that flow into the Muskegon River, there are several other smaller rivers and streams in Osceola County. The Middle Branch River is one of the larger rivers and flows through the County's northeast quadrant. In the northwest quadrant, several streams including North Branch, East Branch, Beaver Creek, and Sprague Creek, make up a portion of the Pine River Watershed. The Pine River forms near the Osceola/Lake County border and flows north into the Manistee River.

Osceola County, like most counties in Michigan, has many lakes. None of the lakes are very large like lakes in surrounding counties (Lake Mitchell, Lake Cadillac, Lake Missaukee, Houghton Lake, Higgins Lake, Portage Lake, Bear Lake, Hardy Dam Pond and others) but the many smaller lakes provide recreation opportunities and are popular for residential development. Some of the County's larger lakes include Rose Lake, Hogback Lake, Wells Lake, and Silver Lake (Rose Lake Township); Diamond Lake (Burdell Township); Sunrise Lake and Hicks Lake (Hartwick Township); Big Lake (Orient Township); Big Stone Lake, Tiff Lake, and Saddlebag Lake (Evart Township); Todd Lake in Lincoln Township; and Center Lake in Sherman Township.

Table 20, titled Water and Wetland Acreage, and the accompanying maps were generated using a Geographic Information System (GIS). The first column in Table 20 specifies areas by quadrant, township (includes cities and villages within township area) and the total county. The second column identifies the number of acres within each specified area covered by a body of water. The third column identifies the number of acres within each specified area covered by wetlands. The fourth column combines water and wetlands. The last column identifies the percentage of each specified area that is covered by water and wetlands.

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## Topography

### Legend

#### Elevation

- ★ Elevation Points-shown in feet above mean sea level (Highest and Lowest points by Township)

- Township Boundaries

#### Water Features

- ▨ Lakes and Rivers

#### Cities

- Evart
- Hersey
- Le Roy
- Marion
- Reed City
- Tustin

#### Highways

- US-131
- US-10
- M-115
- M-61
- M-66

#### Roads

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

Table 20 identifies that the SE Quadrant of the County contains the highest concentration of lakes, with 1,373 acres. The NW Quadrant follows with a total of 1,149 acres. The other two quadrants contain significantly lower concentrations of lakes and ponds, with the SW Quad's surface water occupying 665 acres and the NE Quad covering 384 acres.

Three of the County's Quadrants have over 5,000 acres of wetlands, as identified by the Michigan Resource Information System (MiRIS). With 5,372 acres, the SE Quad has the highest concentration of wetlands, followed by the NW Quad with 5,128 acres, and the NE Quad with 5,008 acres. The SW Quad, which is also the most developed of the County's four quadrants, has the lowest concentration of wetlands with 2,845 acres.

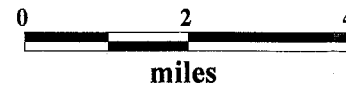
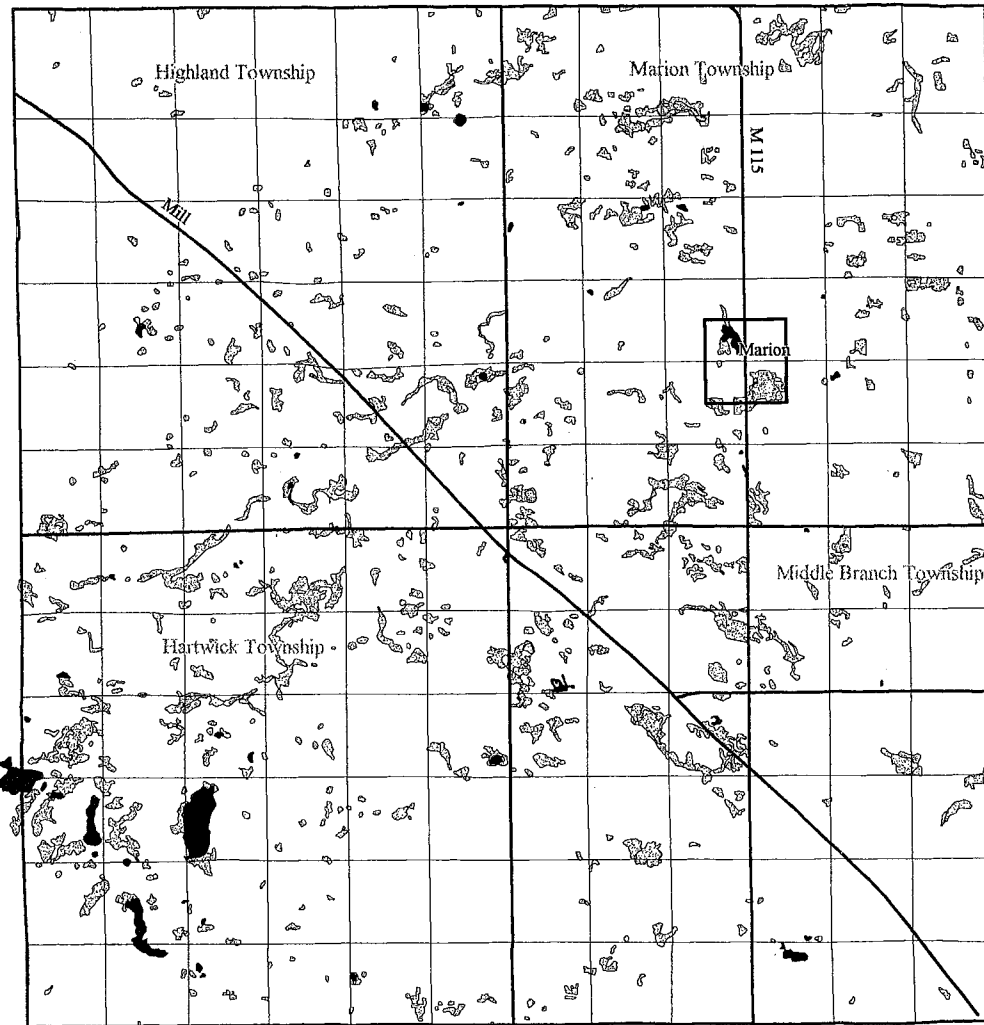
When water and wetlands are combined, the SE Quadrant has the highest concentration with a total of 6,745 acres, which occupies 7.5 percent of the Quadrant's total acreage. The NW Quad follows with a total of 6,277 acres, or 6.8 percent of the Quad's area. The NE Quad's water and wetlands covers 5,392 acres, or 5.8 percent of the area, and the SW Quad contains 3,510 acres of water and wetlands, covering 3.9 percent of the Quad's total acreage.

Table 20 -- Water and Wetland Acreage

	Acreage			% of Specified Area Covered by Water and Wetlands
	Water	Wetlands	Total	
<b>NE Quad</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>5,009</b>	<b>5,393</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Highland	26	833	859	3.6
Marion	25	1,487	1,512	6.4
Hartwick	317	1,564	1,881	8.3
Middle Branch	16	1,125	1,141	5.0
<b>NW Quad</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>5,128</b>	<b>6,277</b>	<b>6.8</b>
Burdell	133	1,430	1,563	6.6
LeRoy	104	1,147	1,251	5.6
Rose Lake	782	1,498	2,280	10.2
Sherman	130	1,053	1,183	5.2
<b>SW Quad</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>2,845</b>	<b>3,510</b>	<b>3.9</b>
Lincoln	244	1,363	1,607	7.1
Richmond	60	779	839	3.7
Cedar	351	374	725	3.2
Hersey	10	329	339	1.5
<b>SE Quad</b>	<b>1,373</b>	<b>5,372</b>	<b>6,745</b>	<b>7.5</b>
Osceola	51	596	647	2.9
Evart	811	1,364	2,175	9.6
Orient	391	1,459	1,850	8.2
Sylvan	120	1,953	2,073	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,571</b>	<b>18,354</b>	<b>21,925</b>	<b>6.0</b>

Source: Michigan Resource Information System; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## Water and Wetlands

### Legend

#### Water and Wetlands

- Water
- ▨ Wetlands

#### Cities

- Marion

#### Township Boundaries



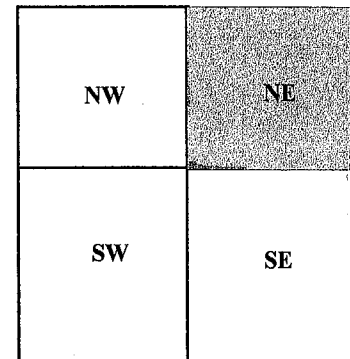
#### Section Boundaries



#### Highways

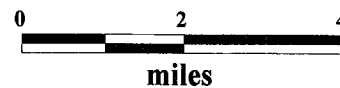
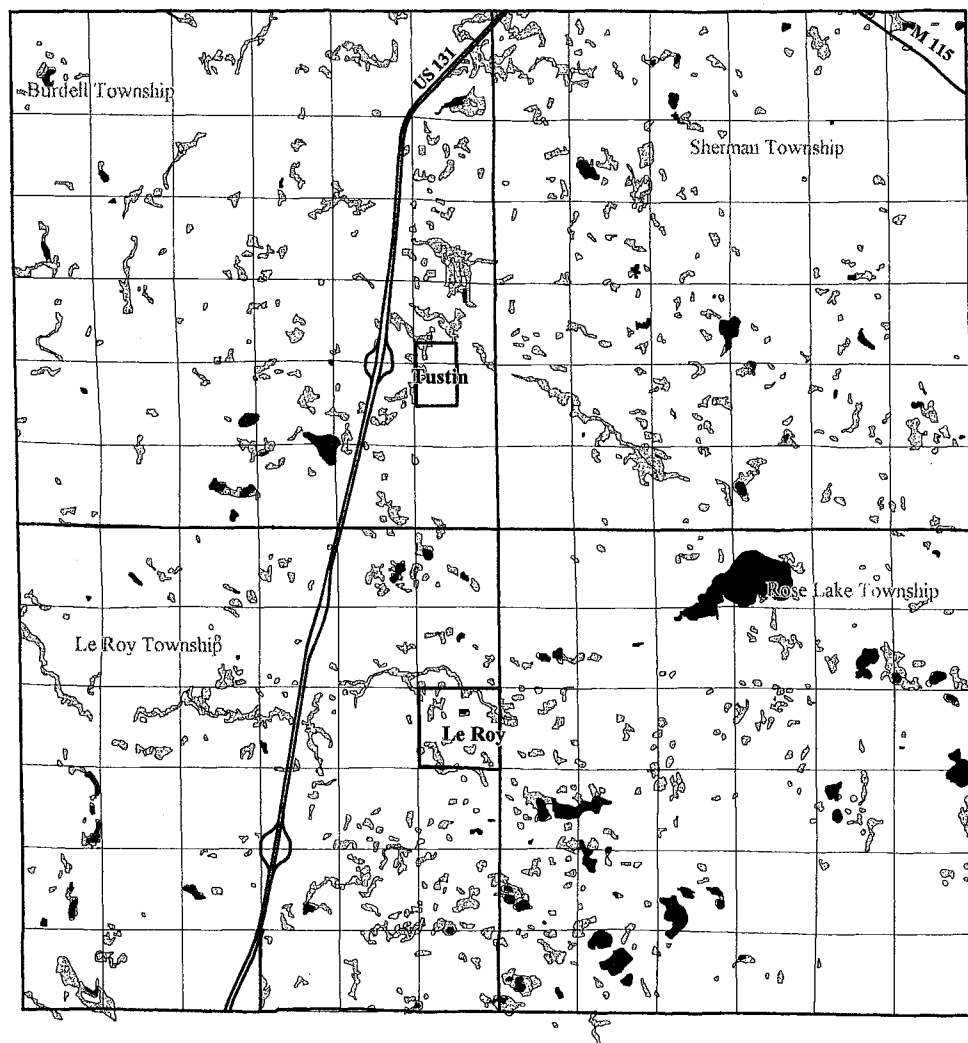
- US-10
- M-61
- M-66
- M-115

### Quadrant Locator



Sources: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## Water and Wetlands

### Legend

#### Water and Wetlands

- Water
- Wetlands

#### Cities

- Le Roy
- Tustin

#### Township Boundaries



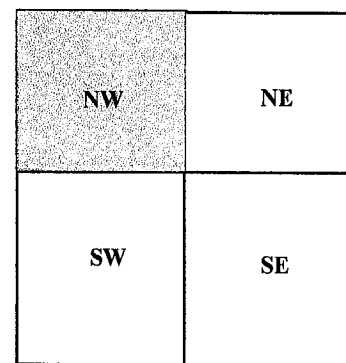
#### Section Boundaries



#### Highways

- US-131
- M-115

### Quadrant Locator

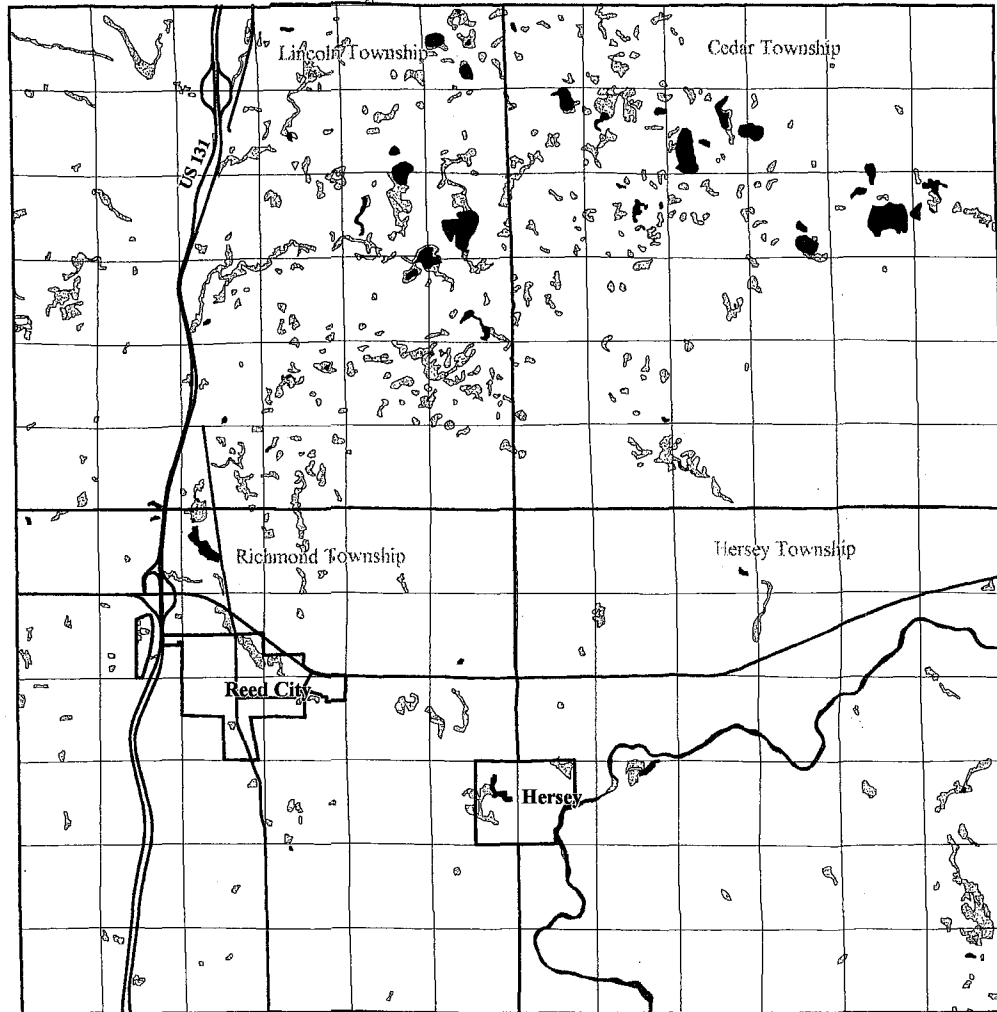
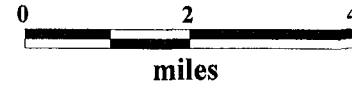


Sources: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

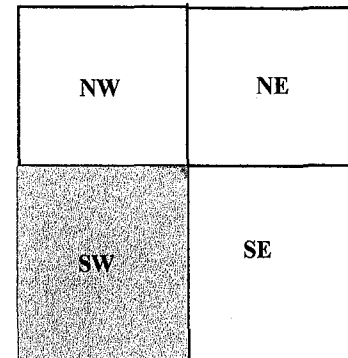
# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## Water and Wetlands



### Quadrant Locator



### Legend

#### Water and Wetlands

- Water
- Wetlands

#### Cities

- Hersey
- Reed City

#### Township Boundaries

- 

#### Section Boundaries

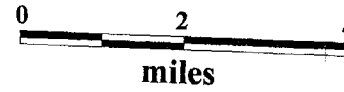
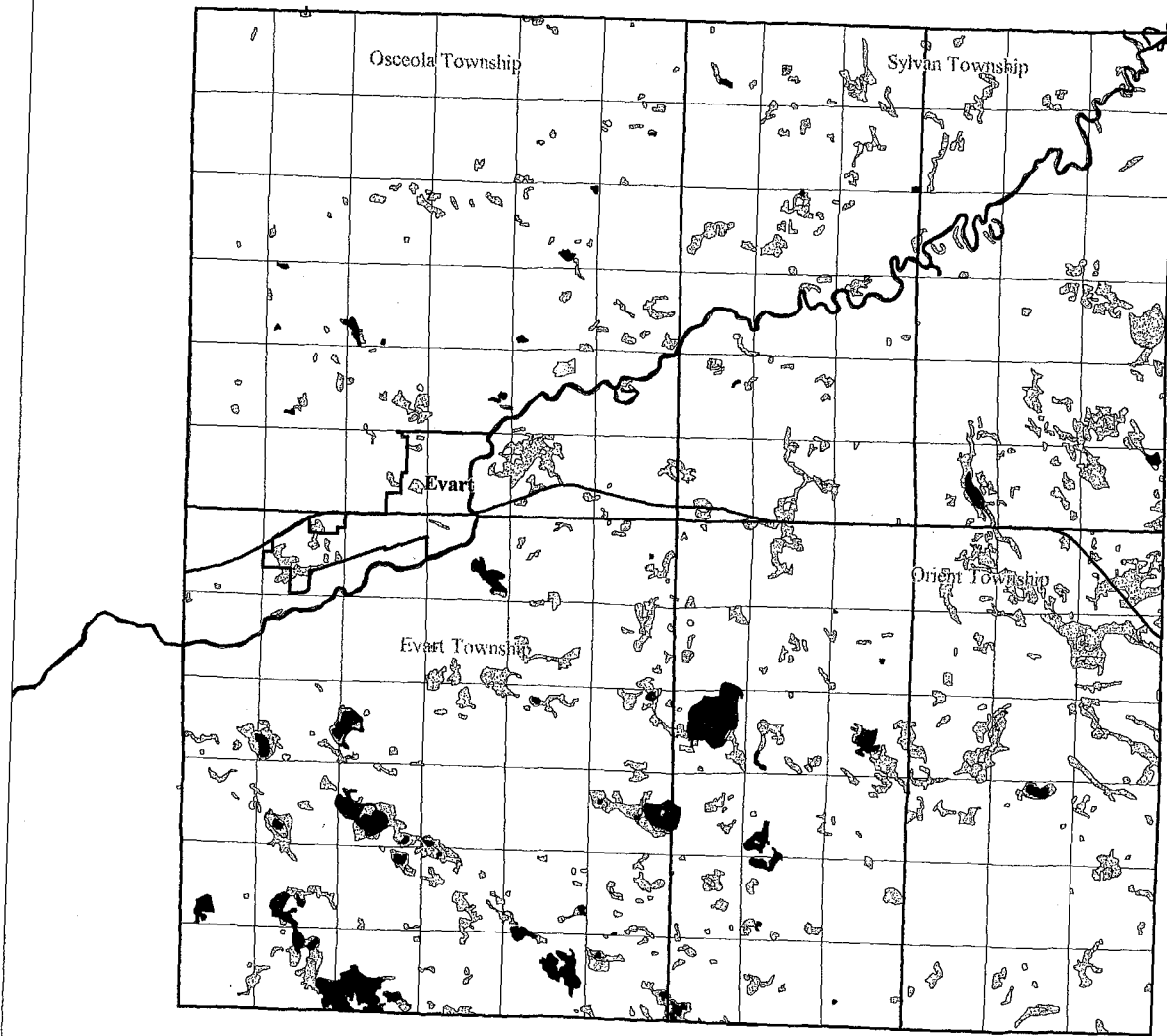
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#### Highways

- US-131
- US-10

Sources: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## Water and Wetlands

### Legend

#### Water and Wetlands

- Water
- ▨ Wetlands

#### Cities

- Evert

#### Township Boundaries

- 

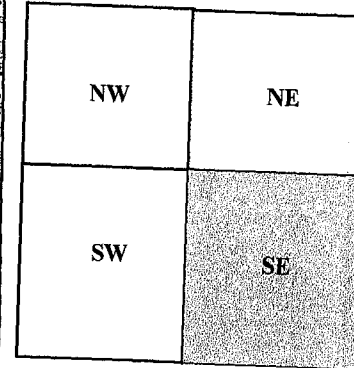
#### Section Boundaries

- 

#### Highways

- US-10
- M-66

### Quadrant Locator



Sources: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

## **Farmland Preservation**

Michigan offers landowners an opportunity to enroll in an incentive program to help preserve farmland. PA 116 allows the landowner to enroll for a set period of time, in which land is set aside for agriculture purposes and the landowner is financially compensated for participation.

At the time of this report, there were 252 parcels in Osceola County. Of these parcels, 12 contracts have expired. Most of the parcels' contracts expire before 2020, although a few go well into the future.

Table 21 describes the distribution of parcels across Osceola County. The 252 parcels cover 21,188 acres in Osceola County, which is 5.8 percent of the County's total area. The parcels are not distributed evenly across the County. The majority of PA 116 acreage is located in the County's NE Quadrant. The NE Quadrant has 170 parcels, covering 13,286 acres – which is an average of 78.2 acres per parcel. PA 116 land accounts for 14.3 percent of the NE Quad's total area – with even larger percentages in two townships in the Quadrant. Highland Township's PA 116 land accounts for 24.2 percent of the total area and Marion Township's accounts for 22.5 percent. Hartwick Township's PA 116 land account for 7.0 percent of the township's total area and Middle Branch Township's accounts for 2.7 percent.

The NW Quadrant has 37 parcels covering 3,219 acres – which is an average of 87 acres per parcel and accounts for 3.5 percent of the NW Quadrant's acreage. Sherman Township's PA 116 land accounts for 7.3 percent of the total area; Rose Lake Township's accounts for 4.9 percent; Burdell Township's accounts for 1.0 percent; and LeRoy Township's accounts for 0.6 percent.

The SW Quadrant has the least amount of land set aside in the PA 116 program. The Quadrant has five parcels totaling 358 acres for an average parcel size of 71.6 acres. The PA 116 land accounts for 0.4 percent of the Quadrant's total area. Lincoln Township's PA 116 land accounts for 0.4 percent of the total area; Richmond Township's accounts for 0.5 percent; Cedar Township has no parcels; and Hersey Township's accounts for 0.7 percent.

The SE Quadrant is closest to the County's distribution, with 40 parcels covering 4,325 acres (average parcel size of 108.1 acres). This accounts for 4.8 percent of the Quadrant's total area. Osceola Township's PA 116 land accounts for 3.1 percent of the total area; Evart Township's accounts for 7.3 percent; Orient Township's accounts for 7.9 percent; and Sylvan Township's accounts for 0.9 percent.

This information does not represent all of the farmland in Osceola County. There are many areas that are not enrolled in the PA 116 Program. The Existing Land Use inventory identifies a total of 151,624 acres of land used for agriculture in Osceola County. The land enrolled in PA 116 covers 21,188 acres, which is only 14 percent of the agricultural land.



Table 21: Farmland Preservation -- Land in PA 116

Location	# of Parcels	Total Acreage	Average Parcel Acreage	Total Acreage as % of Area
<b>NE Quad</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>13,286</b>	<b>78.2</b>	<b>14.3</b>
Highland	87	5,768	66.3	24.2
Marion	57	5,328	93.5	22.5
Hartwick	19	1,574	82.8	7.0
Middle Branch	7	616	88.0	2.7
<b>NW Quad</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3,219</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Burdell	2	232	116.0	1.0
LeRoy	2	143	71.5	0.6
Rose Lake	14	1,104	78.9	4.9
Sherman	19	1,740	91.6	7.3
<b>SW Quad</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>71.6</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Lincoln	1	80	80.0	0.4
Richmond	2	120	60.0	0.5
Cedar	0	0	0.0	0.0
Hersey	2	158	79.0	0.7
<b>SE Quad</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4,325</b>	<b>108.1</b>	<b>4.8</b>
Osceola	9	696	77.3	3.1
Evart	17	1,644	96.7	7.3
Orient	13	1,788	137.5	7.9
Sylvan	1	197	197	0.9
<b>County</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>21,188</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>5.8</b>

Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

### Commercial Forests

Land enrolled in Michigan's Commercial Forest Act (CFA) program covers 692.4 acres in Osceola County and makes up a very small percentage of the County's total area (0.2 percent). There are no parcels in the NE Quadrant. The NW Quadrant contains seven parcels covering 340.6 acres. The SW Quadrant has three parcels covering 307.5 acres and the SE Quadrant has one parcel covering 44.3 acres. Table 22 provides additional information related to commercial forests.

Table 22: Commercial Forest Acts Land

Location	# of Parcels	Total Acreage	Average Parcel Acreage	Total Acreage as % of Area
<b>NE Quad</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Highland	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marion	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hartwick	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Middle Branch	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>NW Quad</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>340.6</b>	<b>48.7</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Burdell	3	217.5	72.5	0.9
LeRoy	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rose Lake	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sherman	4	123.1	30.8	0.5
<b>SW Quad</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>307.5</b>	<b>102.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Lincoln	1	80.0	80.0	0.4
Richmond	1	160.0	160.0	0.7
Cedar	1	67.5	67.5	0.3
Hersey	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>SE Quad</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Osceola	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ewart	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Orient	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sylvan	1	44.3	44.3	0.2
<b>County</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>692.4</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>0.2</b>

Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

## Wildlife

The County's wildlife is typical of that found in most of lower Michigan. Common wildlife includes deer, raccoons, opossums, skunks, rabbits, badgers, muskrats, beavers, squirrels, rodents and other small mammals. There are also occasional observations of other animals such as bears, coyotes, and bobcats. The area is home to a variety of birds including owls, wild turkeys, pheasants and many others. The area is also a seasonal home to many migratory birds including ducks and Canada Geese.

## Native Vegetation

Originally, Osceola County was covered with a dense forest of deciduous and coniferous trees. As the area was cleared for farming and development, or the trees were removed for timber, the area's forests were replaced by farm fields, open field areas, orchards and smaller forested areas containing both deciduous and coniferous trees.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

### **Osceola County Schools**

There are seven school districts in Osceola County. Four of the districts are predominately within the County (Evert Public Schools, Marion Public Schools, Pine River Area Schools, and Reed City Area Schools). The remaining three are Cadillac Area Public Schools, Chippewa Hills School District, and McBain Rural Agricultural Schools.

The Evert Public Schools District has four different schools within its boundaries. Evert High School is located at 6221 95<sup>th</sup> Avenue and covers 23 acres. In 2001 it had a population of 329 students (grades 9 through 12), and 31 faculty. The school was built in 1995 and opened in 1997. Evert's indoor facilities include Technology, Industrial Arts, Life Skills, Science Facilities, a gymnasium with mezzanine, a media center, and a band room. It's outdoor facilities are located across the street from the main administrative building and includes an athletic complex, which houses a covered stadium, a football field, a rubberized track, and baseball/softball diamonds.

Evert Middle School is located at 321 N. Hemlock Street and covers one city block. It had 416 students (grades 5 though 8) and a faculty of 34. The school was built in 1923 and had additions built in 1959 and 1997. Within the building there is a technology facility, a gymnasium, a band room, a media center, and an industrial arts center.

The Evert Elementary School is located at 515 N. Cedar Street and covers 15 city lots. It had 489 students (grades kindergarten through 4) and a faculty of 54. The facility was built in 1965 with additions built in 1971. Indoor facilities include a multipurpose room, a media center, a music room, and an art room. Outdoor facilities include a community built playground.

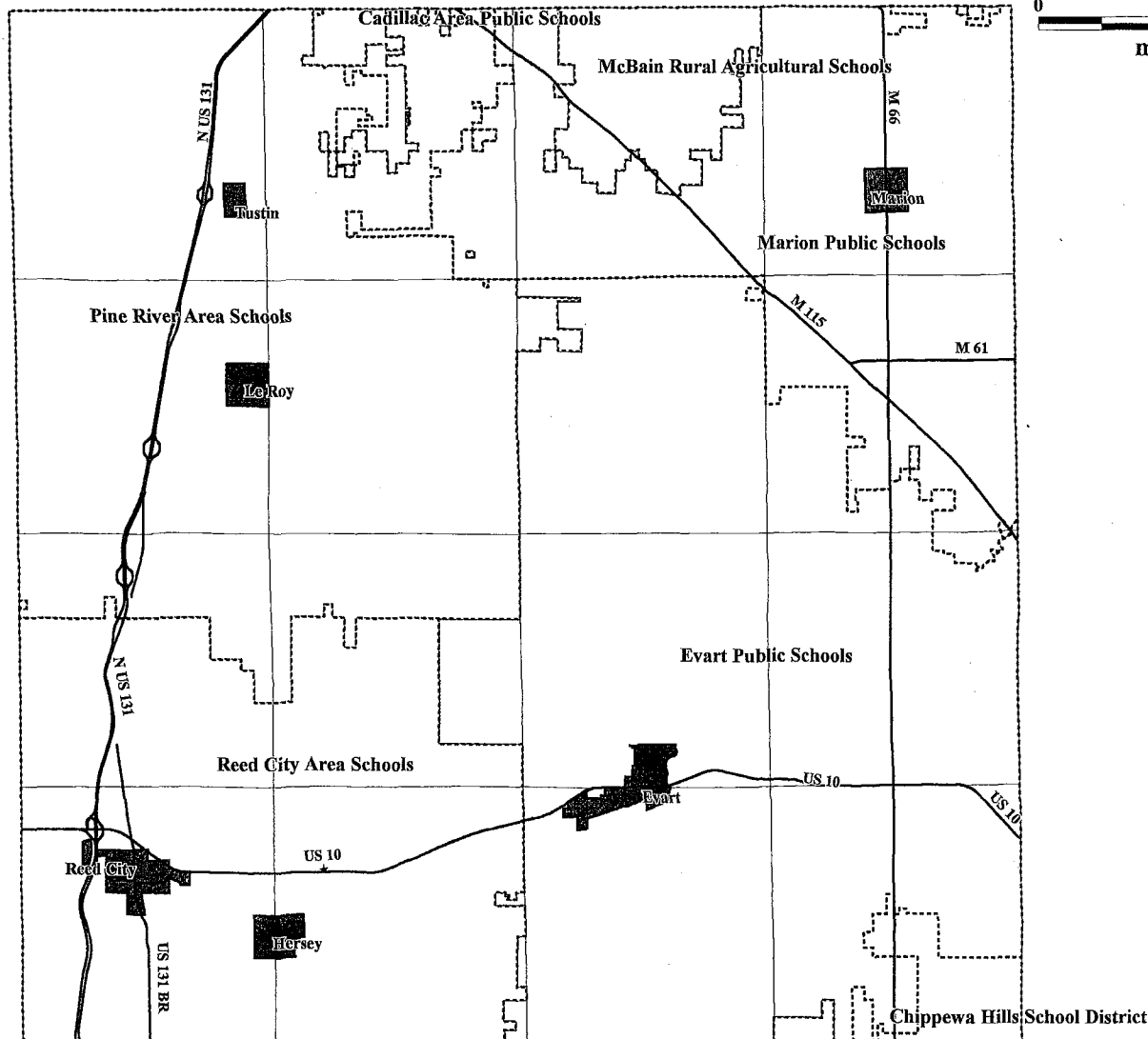
Finally, the Evert Community Education facility is located at 901 North Main Street and covers an area of two city lots. The school serves alternative and adult education. There were 29 alternative education students, nine adult education students, and five faculty in 2001. Indoor facilities include a technology facility.

Within the Evert Public Schools, there is a fleet of 15 buses. The district has no plans for new facilities in the near future. The top three issues that are currently facing the district are declining enrollment, a voucher proposal, and rising technology costs.

Marion Public Schools had 50 teachers and 850 students in 2001. The two schools are divided into an elementary school and a high school. The elementary school has 430 students and the high school and middle school has 420 students. Both the schools are located at 510 W. Main Street.

In 2001, the Pine River Area School District had 71 teachers and 1,402 students. The separate schools are divided into five different schools including three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Tustin Elementary School is located at 107

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



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miles



## Major School Districts

### Legend

#### School Districts

- Cadillac Area Public Schools
- Chippewa Hills School District
- Evart Public Schools
- Marion Public Schools
- McBain Rural Agricultural Schools
- Pine River Area Schools
- Reed City Area Schools

#### Cities

- Evart
- Hersey
- Le Roy
- Marion
- Reed City
- Tustin

#### Highways

- US-131
- US-10
- M-115
- M-61
- M-66

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System

Bremer Street in the Village of Tustin and includes grades kindergarten through 5. The 2001 student count was 460 children. Luther Elementary School is located at 924 State Street in the Village of Luther and had 146 students (grades kindergarten through 5). LeRoy Elementary School is located at 408 Gilbert Street in the Village of LeRoy. It includes grades kindergarten through 5 and had a 2001 student count of 252. The Pine River Middle School serves grades 6 through 8 and had a total student population of 339. The Pine River High School serves grades 9 through 12 and had a total student population of 460 in 2001.

The Reed City School District has five schools including three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. G.T. Norman Elementary School is located at 338 West Lincoln Avenue (grades 1 through 3) and was built in 1923. The school had a 2001 student count of 462 children, and a faculty of 50. Upper Elementary School is located at 238 W. Lincoln Ave and serves grades 4 through 5. It had 308 students and 32 faculty in 2001. The facility was built in 1955, with additions built in 1992. The final elementary school is the Hersey Kindergarten Center. It is located at 215 South Division in Hersey. It had 116 students and 12 faculty in 2001 and was built in 1959.

Reed City Middle School (grades 6 through 8) was built in 1993 and is located at 233 West Church Avenue in Reed City. In 2001 there were 454 students and 46 faculty.

Reed City High School is located at 255 W. Church Ave in Reed City and was built in 1957, with additions in 1963. It serves grades 9 through 12 and had a 2001 student population of 684 and a faculty of 57.

### **Osceola County Parks**

Osceola County maintains three parks. Table 23 provides a brief description of the County's parks.

Table 23 – County Parks

Park	Location	Picnic Facilities	Water Features	Active Play Areas	Other
Rose Lake Park	Rose Lake Twp.	X	X	X	Camping, Swimming
Crittenden Park	Orient Twp.	X	X	X	Camping, Swimming
Sunrise Lake Park	Rose Lake Twp./Hartwick Twp.	X	X	X	Camping, Swimming

Source: Osceola County Recreation Plan

### **State of Michigan Facilities**

- Pere Marquette State Forest
- State Wildlife Management Area
- White Pines Trail State Park

### **Access Sites**

Osceola County has 11 public Boat Launch sites maintained by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The list of sites follows.

- Rose Lake Co. Park
- Hicks Lake
- Big Lake
- Wells Lake
- Todd Lake
- Diamond Lake
- Pine River (2)
- Crawford Park
- McCoy Lake
- Middle Branch River

### **Campgrounds**

In addition to State and County Campgrounds there are several privately operated campgrounds in Osceola County. A description of these facilities follows.

- Hammarstead Lake, LeRoy Township
- Center Lake Bible Camp, Sherman Township
- Old Log Resort, Middle Branch Township
- Muskegon River Campgrounds, Sylvan Township
- Rambadt Tourist Park, Reed City
- Riverside Park, Evart

### **Golf Courses**

Osceola County has four golf courses.

- Spring Valley, north of Hersey on US-10
- Birch Valley, near Sears on M-66
- The Rose, near LeRoy on 18 Mile Road
- Tustin Trails, near Tustin on Mackinaw Trail

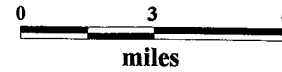
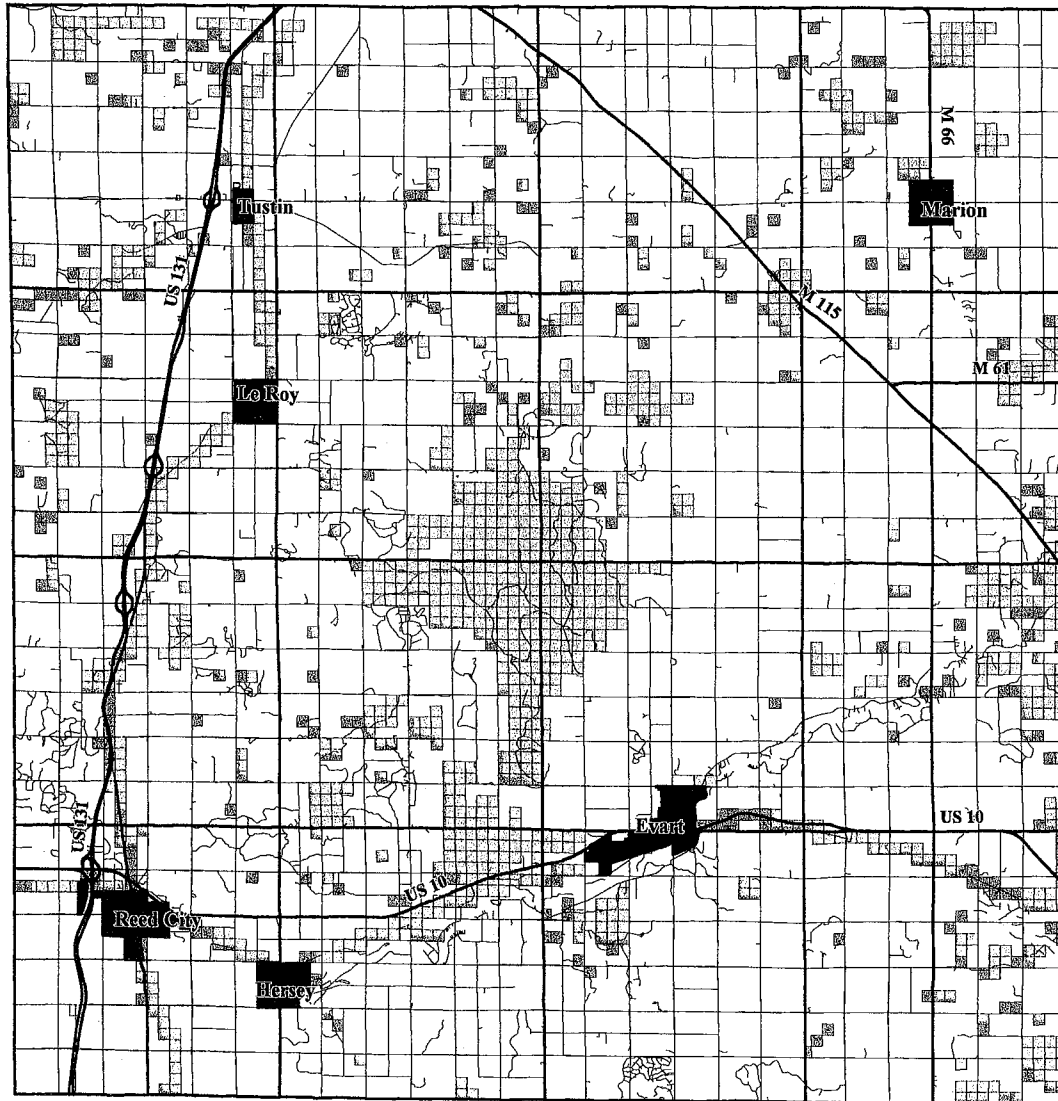
### **Public Land**

Osceola County has a large amount of public land insuring large areas will remain relatively undeveloped. The public land is primarily state-owned and includes a state wildlife management area north of Marion, and the Pere Marquette State Forest in the central portion of Osceola County. The Public Land Map identifies the location of state-owned land.

### **Transportation**

Osceola County is served by a number of major transportation systems. US-131 crosses the western portion of the County in a north-south direction. The divided four-lane interstate highway has average daily traffic counts of nearly 14,000 near the County's southern border. These averages decrease north of US-10 to 10,500 and continue to decrease further north to a low of 9,200 near the Tustin Exit. Commercial averages range from 1,500 to 1,700. Access points in Osceola County currently exist at US-10 (Reed City), 11 Mile Road

# Osceola County Land Use Plan



## State Owned Land

### Legend


#### State Owned Land



#### Cities

Evert  
Hersey  
Le Roy  
Marion  
Reed City  
Tustin

#### Water Features

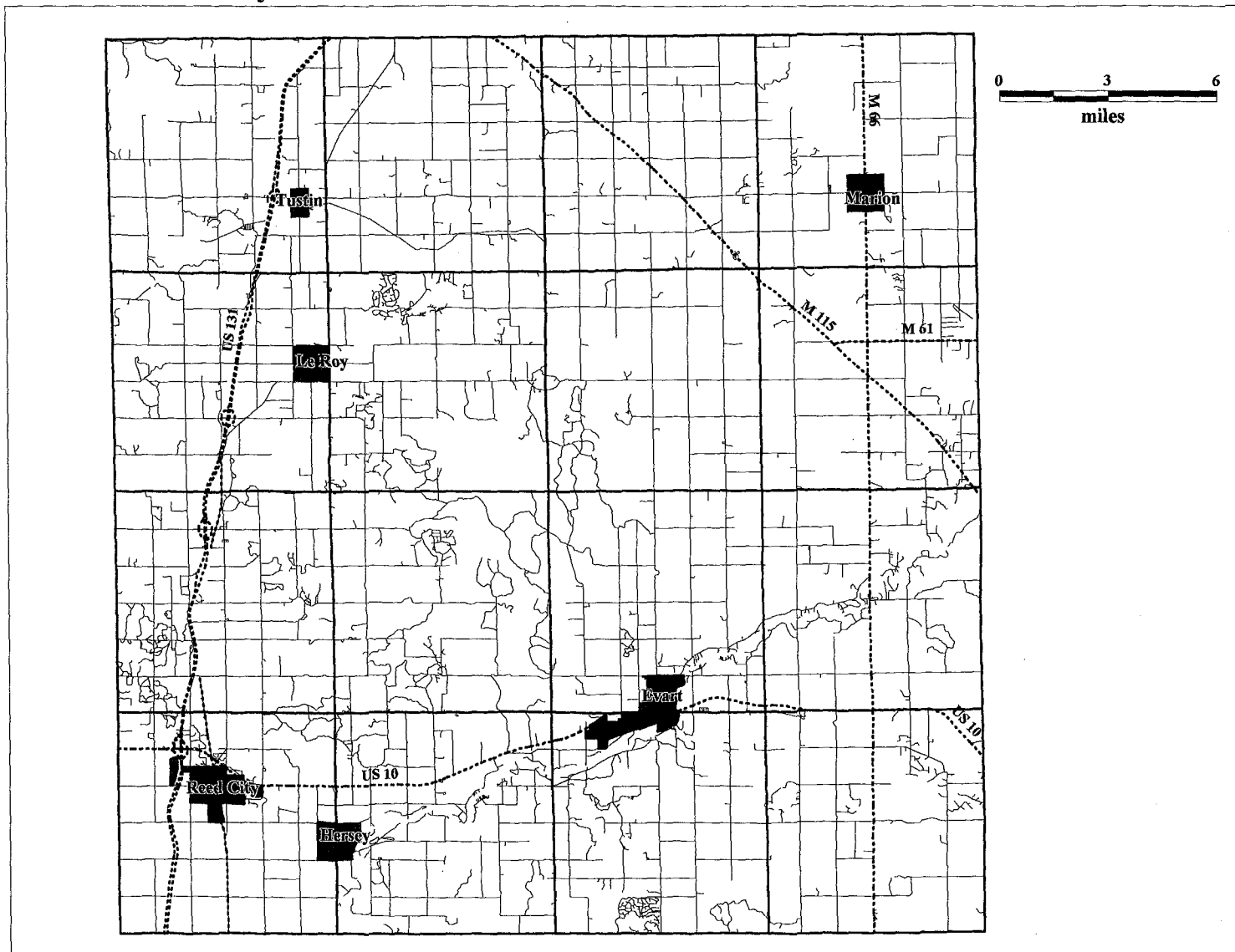
 Lakes and Rivers

#### Highways

US-131  
US-10  
M-115  
M-61  
M-66

#### Roads

# Osceola County Land Use Plan: 2001



## Transportation Network

### Legend

#### Cities

Evart  
Le Roy  
Marion  
Reed City  
Tustin

#### Township Boundaries



#### Highways

US-131  
US-10  
M-115  
M-61  
M-66

#### Roads

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System



(Ashton), 14 Mile Road (LeRoy), and 20 Mile Road (Tustin). US-131 links Osceola County to Big Rapids, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and other points to the south; and Cadillac to the north (as well as Traverse City and the Straits of Mackinac).

US-10 crosses the southern portion of Osceola County in an east-west orientation. The two-lane road has unlimited access. Average 24-hour traffic volumes range from 5,100 vehicles east of Evart to 8,300 vehicles east of Reed City. Commercial counts average 520 vehicles across the entire lengths of the County. US-10 widens to four lanes in portions around Reed City and Evart. US-10 links Osceola County to Baldwin and Ludington to the west and Midland to the east.

M-66 crosses the eastern portion of Osceola County in a north-south orientation. The two-lane road has unlimited access. Average 24-hour traffic volumes average 2,500 vehicles across the length of the County. Commercial volumes average 170 vehicles across the entire County. M-66 links Osceola County to many smaller communities to the south, eventually crossing I-96 at Ionia and I-94 at Battle Creek. To the north are Lake City and Kalkaska.

M-115 is a two-lane, full-access road that crosses Osceola County's northeast corner. Traffic counts range from 5,000 to 6,400 vehicles, with commercial 24-hour counts averaging 610 vehicles. M-115 links the County's northeast quadrant to Cadillac (to the north) and US-27 (to the southeast).

In addition to the state and federal routes, the County and individual communities maintain a complete local system of streets and roads.

There is one active railroad (Tuscola & Saginaw Bay) that passes through the northeast corner of the County. In the past there was a north-south rail and an east west rail that intersected in Reed City. These lines were removed and are currently used as rail-trails. The north-south trail is the White Pine Trail State Park and runs from Cadillac to Grand Rapids. Portions of the trail are paved. The east-west trail is the Pere Marquette Trail and runs from Clare to Baldwin.

There is a municipal airport in Evart that provides limited services.

Mass Transit Services are provided by the Mecosta-Osceola County Area Transit and consist of dial-a-ride services for the entire two-county area.

### **Utilities and Services**

DTE provides Natural Gas in some of the more developed areas of Osceola County, while many areas rely on the local distributors of bottled gas. Ameritech provides telephone service across the County and Consumers Energy and Great Lakes Energy provide electrical service. There is an inactive landfill in Osceola County. Trash removal/recycling is provided by a number of private companies and is taken outside of Osceola County. Some communities provide transfer stations for residents.

## EXISTING LAND USE

### Methodology

Since this Plan covers an entire County, it was important to establish an accurate Existing Land Use Inventory with an appropriate level of detail. The Inventory is not a parcel-by-parcel inventory, but shows the general land uses down to quarter sections, or sometimes quarter-quarter sections or smaller. First, the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) developed maps of the existing land uses with Michigan's Resource Information System (MiRIS). The WMRPC combined categories to reduce the number of land use categories to a manageable number.

While MiRIS information is good information, it is over 20 years old (1978). The WMRPC sent copies of the MiRIS maps to each of the townships and asked for their assistance in updating the information. When this did not work, we received recent aerial photographs from the Osceola Lake Conservation District. One WMRPC planner went through each of the 600 photographs to interpret the more recent land uses. This information was then entered into the WMRPC's Geographic Information System (GIS) for mapping and calculations.

Maps are shown as the County's four quadrants to provide legible maps. Each quadrant includes four townships and the cities and villages within the quadrant.

### Land Use Categories

Very general land use categories are used to create existing land use maps that provide enough information, but do not overwhelm people using the Plan. Each of the categories is described below.

**Agriculture** – This category includes a variety of uses including crops, orchards, Christmas trees, livestock, and other uses related to agriculture. Barns and other outbuildings are also included in this category, as are homes associated with the agricultural uses. Since the Existing Land Use Inventory is at a general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in areas identified as agriculture. Also, it is often difficult to determine (with aerial photos) if an area is actually used for agriculture, or if it is open space.

Agriculture covers 151,429 acres, or 41.5 percent of Osceola County. This is the second largest land use category.

**Commercial** – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and other related areas.

Commercial covers 610 acres, or 0.2 percent of Osceola County. This is one of the smallest land use categories.

**Industrial** – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities. This category also includes extraction sites, where oil, gas, gravel, sand, or other natural resources are removed.

Industrial covers 2,067 acres, or 0.6 percent of Osceola County. This is one of the smallest land use categories.

**Modular** – This category includes areas where mobile homes, trailers, modular housing, or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. Typically, since the categories are fairly general and must cover a certain area to be considered, this category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occurs, such as mobile home parks or modular home subdivisions. Modular covers 46 acres, or less than 0.1 percent of Osceola County. This is the smallest land use category, although there are a large number of individual modular homes dispersed throughout the County.

**Multiple Family** – This category includes attached housing with three or more units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses. Since the coverage of the inventory maps is limited to land uses of certain sizes, multiple family facilities may be identified in other land use categories. No major facilities were identified in Osceola County.

**Open Space** – This category consists primarily of undeveloped areas including forested areas and pastures that are not actively used for agriculture. Homes may be included in this category if the housing units make up a small portion of the area. Since the Existing Land Use Inventory is at a general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in areas identified as open space. Also, it is often difficult to determine (with aerial photos) if an area is actually open space or if it is used for some form of agricultural uses.

Open Space covers 198,070 acres, or 54.3 percent of Osceola County. This is the largest land use category.

**Public** – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, schools, libraries, parks, golf courses (public and private), cemeteries, maintenance facilities, and other areas funded by the general public. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas. Transportation is included in this category, but tends to be included in whatever categories the network crosses or borders. This category does not identify

public land as a land use, the many areas within Osceola County that are public land are listed in the Open Space or Agriculture categories.

Public covers 4,169 acres, or 1.1 percent of Osceola County. This is one of the smaller land use categories. This should not be confused with “public land” which denotes ownership versus a land use.

**Single Family** – This category includes unattached single-unit homes built on-site. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. Since the Land Use Inventory is fairly general, this category will often contain modular units, duplexes, and other housing that has characteristics similar to unattached, single-unit homes built on-site. Many single family units are included in other categories (primarily agriculture and open space) due to lack of compact development. This category does not distinguish between year-round residences and seasonal units (cottages).

Single-Family covers 8,518 acres, or 2.3 percent of Osceola County. This is the third largest land use category.

### **Land Use Distribution**

The Existing Land Use Distribution Table identifies general land use distribution in 2001. Distribution is shown for the entire County, each of the quadrants, and each of the County’s quadrants is further divided into the township designations (even though cities and villages are within some of the townships). The table corresponds with the existing land use inventory maps, which graphically show the land use distributions.

The NE Quadrant contains the townships of Highland, Hartwick, Marion, and Middle Branch, as well as the Village of Marion. Agriculture is the largest land use category, occupying 46,111 acres, or 49.7 percent of the area. Open Space follows with a total of 44,720 acres, or 48.2 percent. The remaining categories account for relatively small percentages of the land and include Single-Family with 1,499 acres (1.6 percent); Public with 310 acres (0.3 percent); Commercial with 89 acres (0.1 percent); and Industrial with 125 acres (0.1 percent). This distribution is not equal across the four township areas (and the Village of Marion). Highland and Marion townships have higher proportions of agriculture. Hartwick and Middle Branch townships have higher proportions of open space. Middle Branch Township has a large percentage of the Single-Family land use distribution, while Marion has a high percentage of the Commercial and Public land uses.

When compared to the other quadrants, the NE Quadrant has the highest concentration of agriculture, but the lowest proportion of open space, single family, public, and industrial uses. Only one quadrant (NW) had a lower concentration of commercial uses.

The Quadrant has 384 acres of surface water, accounting for 0.4 percent of the area, which is the smallest amount of water of the County’s four quadrants.

The NW Quadrant contains the townships of Burdell, LeRoy, Rose Lake, and Sherman. The quadrant also contains the villages of LeRoy and Tustin. Open Space is the largest land use category, occupying 55,122 acres, or 59.7 percent of the quadrant. Agriculture follows with 33,886 acres, or 36.7 percent. The remaining categories account for relatively small percentages of the land and include Single Family with 1,573 acres (1.7 percent); Public with 1,255 acres (1.4 percent); Industrial with 359 acres (0.4 percent); and Commercial with 67 acres (0.1 percent). This distribution is not equal across the four township areas (and the villages). LeRoy and Sherman townships have a higher proportion of agricultural uses, while Burdell and Rose Lake townships have more open space. Rose Lake Township has a large proportion of the single-family uses and LeRoy Township has a large percentage of public uses.

When compared to the other quadrants, the NW Quadrant is almost tied for the least amount of agriculture, but has the most open space. It also is nearly tied for the lowest amount of single-family land uses and it has the least commercial uses. The largest concentration of modular housing is located in the quadrant (in Burdell Township).

The Quadrant has 1,149 acres of surface water, accounting for 1.2 percent of the area, which is the second largest amount of water of the County's four quadrants.

The SW Quadrant contains the townships of Lincoln, Richmond, Cedar, and Hersey. The quadrant also contains the Village of Hersey and the City of Reed City. Open Space is the largest land use category, occupying 46,462 acres, or 51.7 percent of the quadrant. Agriculture follows with 37,284 acres, or 41.5 percent. The remaining categories account for relatively small percentages of the land and include Single-Family with 2,737 acres (3.0 percent); Public with 1,794 acres (2.0 percent); Industrial with 1322 acres (1.5 percent); and Commercial with 218 acres (0.2 percent). This distribution is not equal across the four township areas (and the village and city). Richmond Township has a higher proportion of agricultural uses, while Lincoln, Cedar and Hersey townships have more open space (especially Cedar Township). Richmond and Hersey townships have a large proportion of the single-family uses and Richmond and Lincoln townships have a large percentage of public uses. Hersey and Richmond townships have a larger portion of industrial than the other two townships and Richmond has the majority of commercial uses.

When compared to the other quadrants, the SW Quadrant falls in the middle related to open space and agriculture. The Quadrant has the highest percentage of single-family, public, industrial, and commercial land uses of the County, due to the facts that the quadrant contains Reed City (the County Seat), Hersey, and is at the intersection of US-131 and US-10.

The Quadrant has 665 acres of surface water, accounting for 0.7 percent of the area, which is the second smallest amount of water of the County's four quadrants.

The SE Quadrant contains the townships of Osceola, Evert, Orient, and Sylvan. The quadrant also contains the City of Evert. Open Space is the largest land use category, occupying 51,766 acres, or 57.6 percent of the quadrant. Agriculture follows with 34,148 acres, or 38.0 percent. The remaining categories account for relatively small percentages of the land and include Single-Family with 2,709 acres (3.0 percent); Public with 810 acres (0.9 percent); Industrial with 261 acres (0.3 percent); and Commercial with 236 acres (0.2 percent). This distribution is not equal across the four township areas (and the city). Agriculture is distributed evenly across the quadrant, but Evert Township has a smaller percentage of open space than the other townships. Evert Township has a larger proportion of the single-family and public uses.

When compared to the other quadrants, the SE Quadrant has the smallest percentage of agriculture, but has a larger proportion of open space than two of the other quadrants. The quadrant has almost as much single family space as the SW Quadrant and also has the second highest percentage of commercial uses.

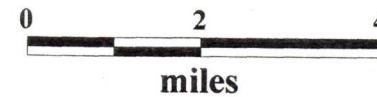
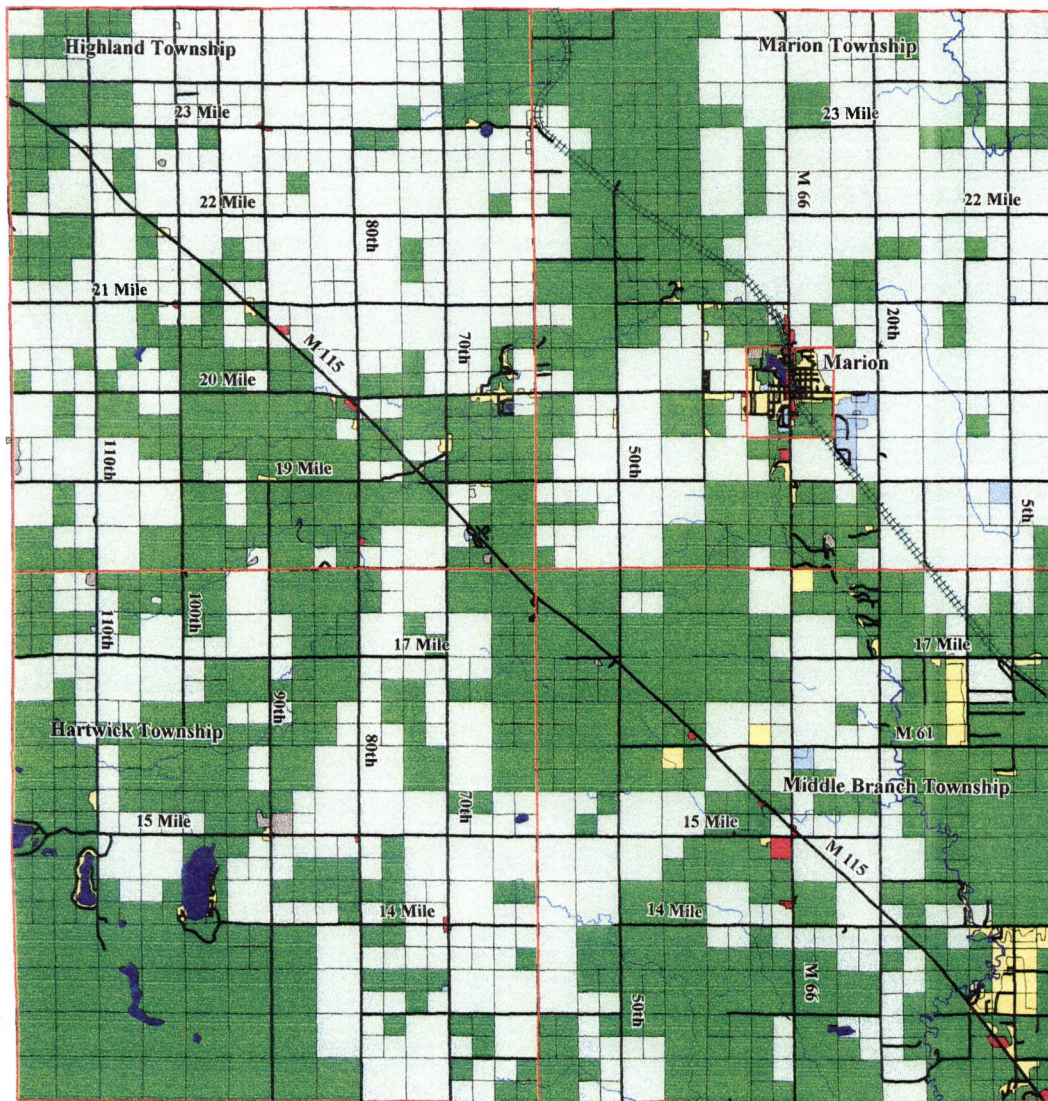
The Quadrant has 1,373 acres of surface water, accounting for 1.5 percent of the area, which is the largest amount of water of the County's four quadrants.

Table 24: Existing Land Use Distribution: 2001

Location	Total	Agri- cul- ture	Com- mer- cial	Indus- trial	Mod- ular	Multi- ple Fam- ily	Open Space	Public	Single Fam- ily	Water (not part of total)
<b>NE Quad</b>	<b>92,850</b>	<b>46,111</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44,720</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>1,499</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Highland	23,877	14,877	34	33	0	0	8,784	16	134	26
Marion	23,639	14,726	0	25	0	0	8,294	248	347	25
Hartwick	22,627	9,409	11	64	0	0	13,037	6	101	317
Middle Branch	22,707	7,099	44	3	0	0	14,605	40	917	16
<b>NW Quad</b>	<b>92,308</b>	<b>33,886</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55,122</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>1,149</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Burdell	23,835	7,223	21	52	46	0	15,883	352	256	133
LeRoy	22,411	9,119	20	172	0	0	12,425	502	174	104
Rose Lake	22,312	6,554	0	77	0	0	14,714	16	952	782
Sherman	23,750	10,990	26	58	0	0	12,100	385	191	130
<b>SW Quad</b>	<b>89,817</b>	<b>37,284</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>1,322</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>46,462</b>	<b>1,794</b>	<b>2,737</b>	<b>665</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>51.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Lincoln	22,628	9,802	20	191	0	0	11,660	602	351	244
Rich- mond	22,415	13,360	194	284	0	0	6,666	857	1,055	60
Cedar	22,417	4,619	0	0	0	0	17,491	3	304	351
Hersey	22,357	9,503	4	847	0	0	10,645	332	1,027	10
<b>SE Quad</b>	<b>89,930</b>	<b>34,148</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51,766</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>2,709</b>	<b>1,373</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Osceola	22,308	8,369	81	134	0	0	12,618	528	579	51
Evart	22,559	9,244	40	82	0	0	11,873	227	1,092	811
Orient	22,621	8,250	91	39	0	0	13,829	38	373	391
Sylvan	22,442	8,285	24	6	0	0	13,446	17	665	120
<b>County</b>	<b>364,905</b>	<b>151,429</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>198,070</b>	<b>4,169</b>	<b>8,518</b>	<b>3,571</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>54.3</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission





# OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Existing Land Use  
Inventory



## Legend

**Township and City Boundaries**



**Roads and Highways**

**Railroad**



**Water Features**



## Land uses

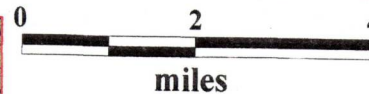
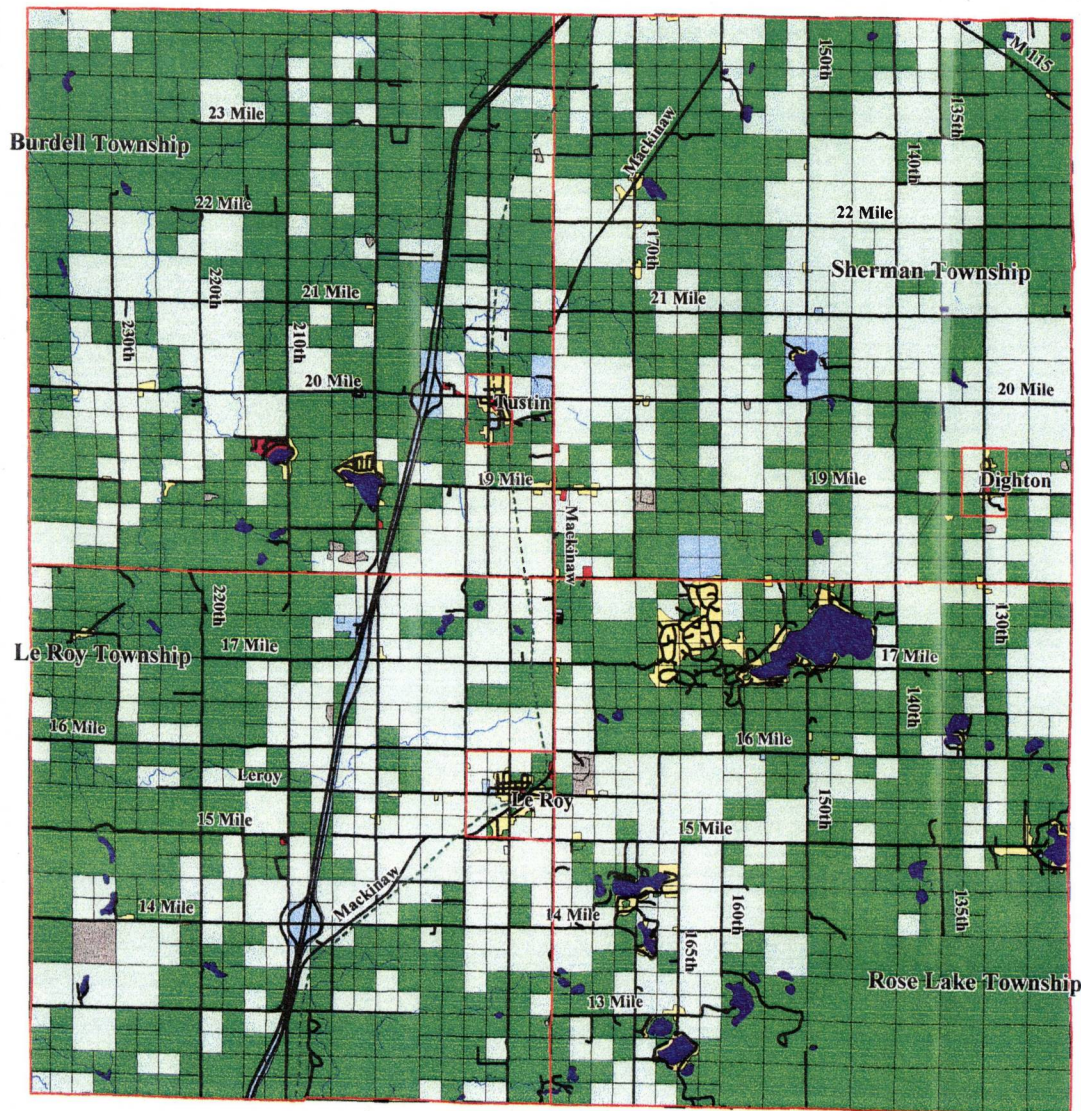
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

## Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





## OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Existing Land Use  
Inventory



### Legend

Township and City Boundaries



Roads and Highways

Recreation Trail

Water Features



### Land Uses

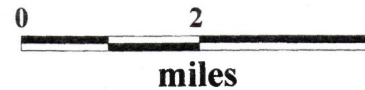
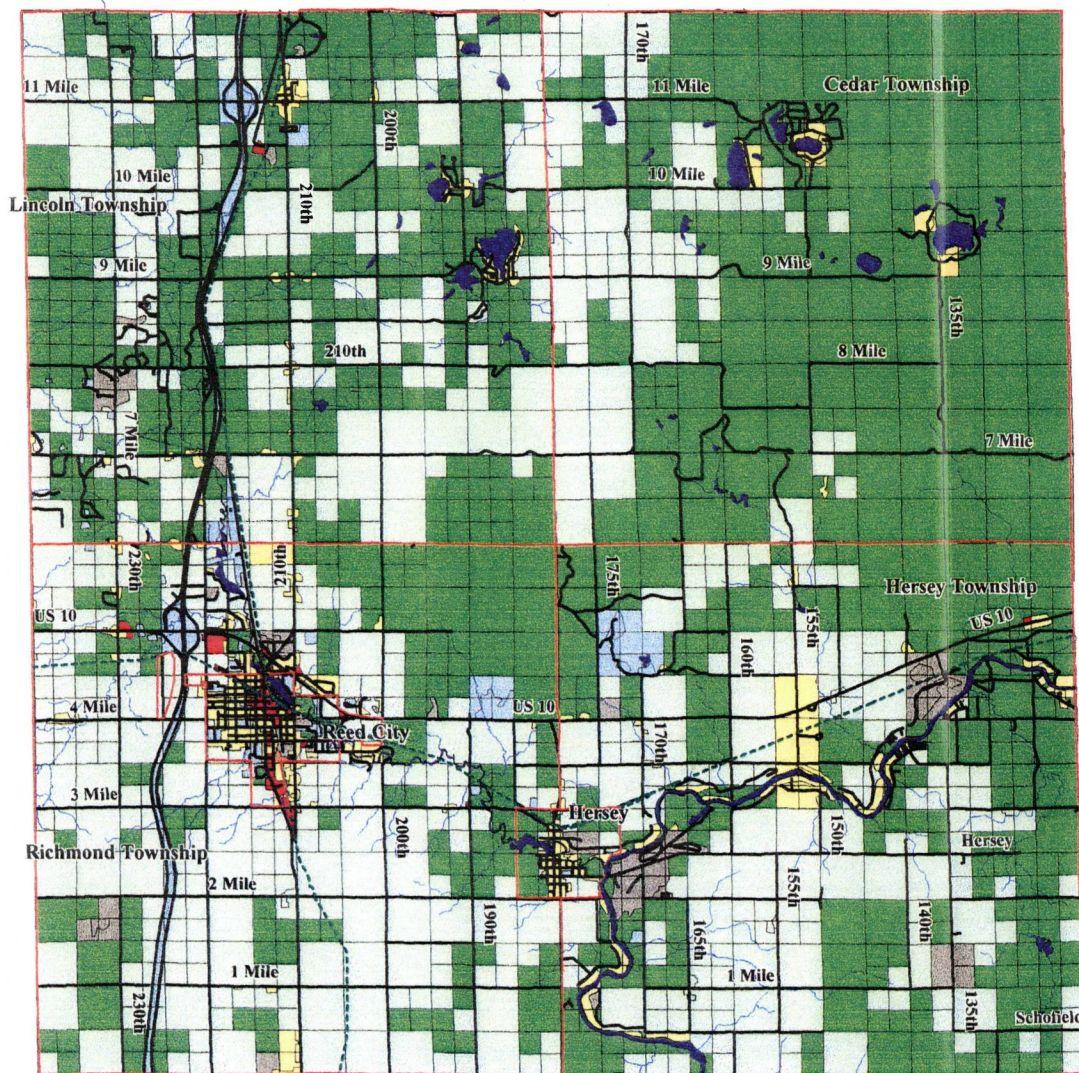
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- MODULAR
- OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





# OSCEOLA COUNTY

## Land Use Plan

Existing Land Use  
Inventory



### Legend

Township and City Boundaries

Roads and Highways

Recreation Trails

Water Features

### Land Uses

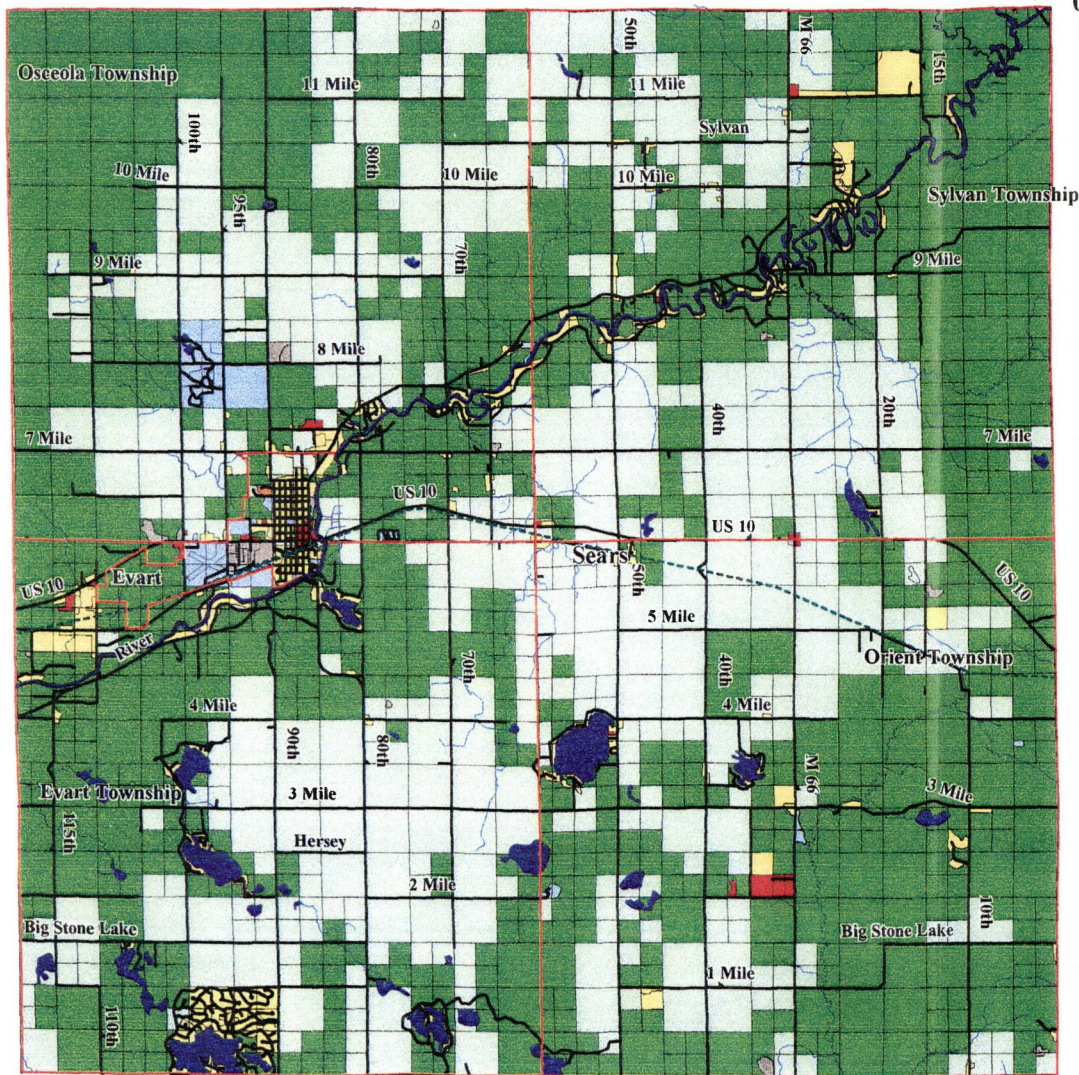
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- MULTIPLE FAMILY
- OPENSPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





## OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Existing Land Use  
Inventory



### Legend

Township and City Boundaries

Roads and Highways

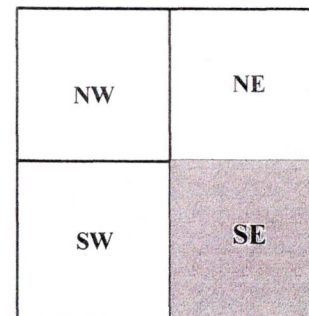
Recreation Trail

Water Features

### Land Uses

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- MULTIPLE FAMILY
- OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator



Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

### **Key Person Interviews and Surveys**

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission spent two days interviewing people from across Osceola County to gain a better understanding of the County's existing strengths and weaknesses; and to determine future opportunities and threats. In addition to interviews, some people chose to return a survey form. The results were compiled and condensed and follow.

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission appreciates the time the following people gave to participate in this survey.

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Darwin Booher         | 19. Don Marsh        |
| 2. Ed Day                | 20. Dan Massy        |
| 3. Donna Denslow         | 21. Ron Marek        |
| 4. Joan Dewitt           | 22. Jim Maturen      |
| 5. David Dickinson       | 23. Ed Morgan        |
| 6. Ben Eisenga           | 24. Art Moyses       |
| 7. Gloria Eisenga        | 25. Marilyn Ouwinga  |
| 8. Larry Emig            | 26. Jim Page         |
| 9. David Erler           | 27. Ann Pattee       |
| 10. Peter Ermatinger     | 28. Ken Richardson   |
| 11. George Freeman       | 29. Ed Rivard        |
| 12. Hersey Village Board | 30. Erwin Sengelaub  |
| 13. Larry Gingrich       | 31. Paul Thibodeau   |
| 14. Rich Jacobs          | 32. Alan Van Antwerp |
| 15. Wayne Johnson        | 33. Mark Watkins     |
| 16. Morris Langworthy    | 34. Ron Wemple       |
| 17. Jerry Lindquist      | 35. Fay Wilson       |
| 18. Roy Linenberg        | 36. Eldon Zimmerman  |

The following summary and analysis describes the perceived strengths and weaknesses as well as the perceived opportunities and threats to the County's future.

### **1. What do you feel are the strengths of Osceola County?**

#### **Natural Resources and Environment (45)**

- 21 - Natural features: wildlife, woodlands and water resources
- 10 - Rural environment
- 5 - Agricultural
- 5 - Potential for growth (available land)
- 4 - Unpolluted

Analysis: Respondents clearly feel the County's natural resources and environment are its primary strength. This category received more than twice as many as the next most

cited category. This strength should be promoted and protected since it is obviously a very important reason people chose to live in Osceola County. People listed the area's forests, animals, lakes, streams, air, and many other features. This category is closely related to many of the other strengths including location, quality of life, tourism and recreation as well as others.

**Location (22)**

- 12 - US-131 & US-10 & M-66
- 7 - Location in Michigan
- 2 - Proximity to Ferris State University
- 1 - Proximity to Cadillac and Big Rapids

Analysis: Respondents cited the location as a strength since Osceola County is rural, but is not too far from Michigan's larger cities and is conveniently served by US-131 and US-10. The County is also convenient to nearby Cadillac and Big Rapids. This strength is important for promoting the area for industry, tourism and residential development.

**Quality of life issues (17)**

- 8 - Quality of life
- 4 - Small population
- 2 - Poverty not too high/cost of living
- 2 - Safe
- 1 - Hazard resistant

Analysis: Quality of life is an important consideration for people choosing a location to live and is equally important for companies seeking a location for new facilities. Osceola County is perceived as a place with a good quality of life. This is a strength that should be built upon when planning the County's future.

**Tourism and Recreation (17)**

- 8 - Rails-to-trails
- 6 - Recreation/tourism opportunities
- 1 - Retirement area
- 1 - Parks
- 1 - Winter sports

Analysis: This strength is closely related to the natural resources category, and the location category. Tourism and recreation will be an important part of the County's future and the County should plan accordingly to promote and protect this strength.

**People (15)**

- 7 - Cooperative spirit
- 4 - Leadership
- 2 - Good resource people in area (retired and other)
- 1 - Hardworking people
- 1 - Seasonal people

Analysis: People are an area's most important resources and respondents frequently cited the County's residents as one of its many strengths.

**Employment (13)**

- 11 - Existing industrial base
- 1 - Marion's Industrial Park
- 1 - Support for economic development

Analysis: While many people may not consider Osceola County a major employment center, it has a very diverse range of employment opportunities related to manufacturing, agriculture and natural resources. While employment is identified as a strength, it is also listed as a weakness and should be addressed to ensure a proper balance is developed between the area's environment and its economy.

**Public Services (9)**

- 7 - Schools
- 1 - Support for ambulance services
- 1 - Full-time emergency management office

Analysis: This primarily relates to the area's public schools, which the plan describes in greater detail in the Community Description Section.

**Housing (2)**

- 1 - Support for low-income housing
- 1 - Low cost of housing

Analysis: Not enough people cited housing as a strength to consider it a strong positive for the County.

**2. What do you feel are the weaknesses of Osceola County?**

**Planning/Zoning/Regulations (24)**

- 14 - Inadequate planning and zoning
- 3 - Ordinances not enforced
- 1 - Reed City land locked
- 1 - Growth pressures
- 1 - Development along lakes and rivers, erosion
- 1 - Shifting from rural to urban
- 1 - State Forest in middle of County
- 1 - Businesses in homes
- 1 - Lack of growth in Marion

Analysis: Respondents perceive the lack of planning and zoning in many townships as a major threat to the County's well being. People also listed inadequate enforcement of existing ordinances as an issue as well as many other land use related issues.

#### **Infrastructure (15)**

- 6 - County roads
- 1 - East-west highway system is inadequate
- 1 - US 10 should be four lanes
- 1 - Lack of air travel, hanger space
- 1 - Reed City sewer plant
- 1 - Road construction
- 1 - No sidewalks to schools outside Marion
- 1 - Lack of sewers in smaller communities
- 1 - No good computer system
- 1 - 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 20 Mile Road in poor condition

Analysis: While this is listed as the second most cited issue, it really is not a consistent issue and relates to several issues including (primarily) maintenance of county roads.

#### **Economic Development/Employment (15)**

- 5 - Lack of retail services/employment
- 2 - Education levels not adequate for many businesses
- 2 - Not enough industry
- 1 - Limited electrical power for industry
- 1 - Lack of employment opportunities
- 1 - Lack of service employment
- 1 - Lack of employment in Marion
- 1 - Lack of high-tech industries
- 1 - Lack of skilled labor force

Analysis: Respondents listed many issues related to inadequate employment opportunities across Osceola County. In addition to the lack of jobs, the weakness also relates to the lack of suitable employees to match the existing jobs. It seems that there are adequate jobs that require a certain skill level, but not enough lower skill-level jobs for people seeking part-time or entry-level positions. A portion of these responses also relates to the lack of retail services, versus the jobs created by the services.

#### **Blight (10)**

- 7 - Blight, junk
- 2 - Mobile home junkyards
- 1 - Poorly maintained mobile homes

Analysis: This weakness can be included with the planning/zoning/ordinances issue, but was cited often enough to merit its own category. Many people are concerned with establishments that recycle mobile homes. The sites are in very conspicuous locations

and present a very negative visual image to residents, tourists, businesses and others. People are also worried about the safety of such operations. In addition to the recycling sites, people are also concerned with poorly maintained mobile homes and junk in yards, such as old cars.

#### **Environmental Concerns (10)**

- 4- Tire piles/fires (three large sites)
- 4 - Environmental contamination/issues
- 1 - Hersey River pollution
- 1 - Septic fields

Analysis: Environmental concerns are always an issue – especially when people live in an area they perceive to be free of environmental issues. The large tire piles are a primary concern since they can create problems related to mosquitoes, ground water contamination and fires that pollute the air and cost a considerable amount to extinguish. Respondents also identified concerns with local manufacturers, past problems in the Hersey River related to creosote, and the effects of poorly maintained septic fields or excessive septic fields (especially around bodies of water.) The plan should address these issues.

#### **Recreation & Tourism (10)**

- 3 - Lack of lodging
- 2 - Lack of adequate recreation
- 2 - Limited campgrounds
- 1 - Inadequate lake and river access
- 1 - No cultural events
- 1 - Relationship between County and State related to Rail-Trail

Analysis: This may become a more prevalent issue as tourism is more closely linked to economic development. The issue also relates to expanding the types of recreation offered to include opportunities for a variety of people.

#### **Public Services (9)**

- 2 - School systems
- 1 - Conflict between requested services and available funds
- 1 - Lack of higher level education opportunities
- 1 - Inadequate funding for Sheriff
- 1 - Road Commission offices not centrally located in county
- 1 - Not a lot of emergency response resources
- 1 - County seat not centrally located
- 1 - Inadequate transit

Analysis: The responses vary widely and do not present a clear picture of any major problems. Since many of the key people interviewed are involved in government and



understand the availability of services is based on available funding, there are fewer weaknesses identified than if the general population were surveyed.

**Economy (8)**

- 3 - Income and poverty levels
- 2 - Difficult time for farmers
- 1 - Low housing values
- 1 - Capital gains distorting local economy (costs increasing dramatically)
- 1 - Lack of tax base

Analysis: The County does have lower income levels and housing values, and higher poverty levels, than the state as-a-whole. The major conflict seems to relate to another conflict that exists between long and short-term residents.

**Leadership (8)**

- 5 - Conflict between Richmond Township and Reed City
- 2 - County Leadership
- 1 - Sheriff controversy

Analysis: While a few people had some issues with county leadership, many recognized the long-time dispute between Reed City and Richmond Township.

**People (6)**

- 2 - Young people leaving area
- 2 - Fear of change
- 1 - Conflicting work ethics
- 1 - People move more often

Analysis: People's thoughts and trends are one of the primary reasons a land use plan is developed. People identified all of the weaknesses and all of the issues are somehow related to people.

**3. What opportunities do you see for Osceola County's future?**

**Tourism and Recreation (31)**

- 10 - Tourism
- 8 - Recreation/outdoor activities
- 5 - Rails to Trails
- 3 - Retirement community
- 1 - Increase day visitors
- 1 - Agri-tourism
- 1 - Private campgrounds needed
- 1 - Lodging needed
- 1 - Parks in Marion

Analysis: It should not come as a surprise that the area's key people see tourism and recreation as a major opportunity. People seek out pleasant areas within Michigan and the County's natural features and strategic location combine to make Osceola County a prime tourism and recreation center. Add to this the location of two major rail-trails and a growing retirement population and the opportunity becomes even more obvious. The Plan should recognize this as a major community goal.

#### **Economic Development (25)**

- 8 - More industry/economic development
- 5 - Perrier project
- 3 - Small businesses
- 2 - Service and retail job opportunities
- 2 - Renaissance Zone
- 1 - Land around Hersey good for manufacturing
- 1 - Evart needs industrial park
- 1 - Good labor force
- 1 - Not a strong union area
- 1 - Employment that won't ruin environment

Analysis: Many respondents feel the area's existing businesses and the potential to attract additional jobs with industrial parks, renaissance zones and other incentives are major opportunities. There was also a general tone that a balance must exist between industry and the area's natural features. The Plan is the ideal place to create this balance.

#### **Planning and Zoning Related (19)**

- 7 - Townships and county planning efforts
- 4 - Need for realistic regulations/ordinances
- 2 - Land available for development
- 2 - More joint development between Richmond Township and Reed City
- 1 - Need to work with County Planning to address emergency mitigation needs
- 1 - Development in outlying areas
- 1 - Better transportation in outlying areas
- 1 - Land values increasing

Analysis: People are pleased that the County is undertaking a plan and they are also pleased that many townships are looking to the future. Again, the need for balance was emphasized with people recognizing that many residents choose to live in an area where there are fewer regulations. Other opportunities relate to the availability of land and the opportunity to extend into less-developed areas.

#### **Natural Resources and Environment (16)**

- 10 - Natural resources, clean environment, open space
- 2 - Agriculture
- 2 - Gas and oil area
- 1 - Joint clean-up effort (townships and county)
- 1 - Farmers/large land owners

Analysis: Respondents frequently mentioned the County's natural resources as an opportunity. Again, the Plan is the ideal place to begin emphasizing these features.

**Location (5)**

- 4 - Highways
- 1 - Employment within driving distance

Analysis: The County's location is generally seen as an opportunity, with it being a reasonable distance from Michigan's major cities.

**Housing (5)**

- 3 - Variety of housing needed
- 2 - Cluster housing needed

Analysis: Respondents expressed the need to provide a wide range of housing. Affordable, mid-range and "high-end" housing to meet the varied needs of people choosing to live in Osceola County. People also expressed the desire to allow for cluster housing developments to provide smaller lot homes with the surrounding open space preserved.

**Other**

- 2 - Quality of life
- 1 - New State Police post

**4. What threats do you see in Osceola County's future?**

**Planning/Zoning/Regulations (29)**

- 10 - Lack of planning and zoning
- 9 - Uncontrolled growth
- 3 - Conflicts between agriculture and residential
- 2 - Running out of buildable lots with road frontage/starting to feel crowded
- 1 - Regulations restrict business growth
- 1 - Houses built in middle of fields
- 1 - Increasing land prices
- 1 - Communication towers
- 1 - Zoning Changes made for Perrier, but may allow undesirable development

Analysis: Respondents recognize that the lack of planning and zoning does not promote community goals (or the creation of goals) and can promote undesirable development that can adversely influence the County's future. Uncontrolled growth, conflicts between land uses and other related issues were frequently mentioned.

**Environmental Concerns (28)**

- 9 - Potential for pollution of air, lakes and streams by industry, people and livestock
- 7 - Fragmentation/loss of agricultural/forest land
- 2 - Tire piles (three big areas)
- 2 - TB cows and deer – not as big a deal as made out to be
- 1 - Groundwater concerns
- 1 - Wildfires, tornadoes and snowstorms
- 1 - Landfill – old city landfill
- 1 - Health-related issues
- 1 - Depletion of natural resources
- 1 - Zero tolerance environmental regulations
- 1 - Need recycling/household hazardous waste disposal
- 1 - No landfills within county – waste removal expensive

Analysis: This threat was actually tied with the lack of planning and zoning although there is a wider range of concerns in this category. Respondents fear losing many of the area's strengths thorough misuse. While pollution and environmental concerns are primary concerns people also feel the loss of agriculture is a major threat.

**People (13)**

- 5 - Conflicts between long-time and short-time residents
- 4 - Young people moving out of county
- 2 - People that do not want change
- 1 - "Last one in" syndrome
- 1 - Hard to find volunteers

Analysis: Again, people are the reasons plans are performed and there are many threats that relate specifically to people such as conflicts between residents, people moving away for other opportunities.

**Blight (7)**

- 4 - Old mobile homes coming into county
- 3 - Potential for blight

Analysis: This category could easily be placed with planning zoning and regulations. If people were asked to rank the importance of this threat, they would most likely place it higher than many of the other identified threats.

**Economic Development/Employment (6)**

- 3 - Lack of additional industrial development
- 2 - Lack of retail in Osceola County (between Big Rapids and Cadillac market areas)
- 1 - Long way from markets for manufacturers

Analysis: Some respondents feel the lack of additional industries locating within Osceola County would be a threat. The fact that Osceola County is located between two larger

market areas (Big Rapids and Cadillac) may limit the amount of commercial growth in the area.

**Public Services (4)**

- 1 - County facilities located in Reed City
- 1 - Lack of funding
- 1 - Cost of juvenile detention
- 1 - Need for better law enforcement

Analysis: These threats are varied enough to not cause a great deal of concern, but they all provide interesting issues to consider.

**Other (7)**

- 3 - Lack of water and sewer capabilities
- 1 - High poverty level
- 1 - Depressed milk prices
- 1 - Board not as insightful as could be
- 1 - Inadequate housing

**Issue Identification Workshops**

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) held four Issue Identification Workshops across Osceola County. The first workshop was held March 27, 2001 in Reed City. The second workshop was held March 28, 2001 in Marion. The third workshop was held April 10, 2001 in Tustin. The fourth workshop was held April 17, 2001 in Evart. All workshops began at 6:30 p.m. The format of each workshop was different based on the number of attendees. Formats ranged from sitting around a table discussing issues to dividing into groups and performing Nominal Group Technique sessions.

The WMRPC appreciates the following people's participation in the workshops.

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Joe Mateja     | 12. Jackie Miller     |
| 2. Dorothy Mateja | 13. Jim Maturen       |
| 3. Joan Dewitt    | 14. Gerald Nichols    |
| 4. Marilyn Owinga | 15. Sandra Harris     |
| 5. Sandie Robell  | 16. Brian Cool        |
| 6. Bill Logan     | 17. Elise Schlaikjer  |
| 7. Dean Smallegan | 18. Julie Keefer      |
| 8. Jim Belcher    | 19. Noel Senecal      |
| 9. Art Robell     | 20. Stephanie Senecal |
| 10. Amy Gregory   | 21. Ann Pattee        |
| 11. Rick Jordan   |                       |

March 27, 2001 Issue Identification Workshop Summary

This meeting was held in Reed City at the County offices and was informal with participants describing issues to the facilitators from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

The first issue related to junk and blight across the County and contained several sub-issues. Participants felt that dilapidated mobile homes, junk cars, appliances and other junk seriously detract from the beauty of the area. Participants also felt such features detract from property values, and give visitors a poor image of Osceola County. Participants felt that part of this problem relates to the lack of affordable opportunities to dispose of large junk, as well as normal household waste. The County does not have a landfill and does not offer transfer stations to its residents. Another related problem relates to the lack of ability to prosecute offenders and enforce ordinances.

Another issue directly related to blight relates to the "Trailer Grave Yards" that receive old trailers and strip them down for parts and materials. This issue occurs in plain view of major traffic corridors and is one of the most frequently cited issues in the County. Residents are ashamed of the operations and feel helpless to correct the situation.

"Miniature Trailer Parks" with a few dilapidated units (three or four) clustered on a single lot present a serious issue related not only to aesthetics, but participants also wondered about the habitability of older units with appliances, such as refrigerators, exposed to the elements. Such an issue presents the need to address the safety, health, and welfare of the County's residents.

Some of the area's flea markets also present a blighted image of the County. Standards should be established to control the appearance of such businesses.

Participants wanted to make it clear that some properties should be allowed to maintain equipment in areas visible to the public. Farms are one example. The Workshop Participants do not wish to restrict farmers' needs to store equipment necessary for farming operations. Any regulations should consider farmers' needs.

Another issue identified by participants included the lack of retail shopping opportunities in Osceola County. Groceries were identified as a particular resource that is inadequate in Osceola County. Participants stated that the County's location between two larger markets (Cadillac and Big Rapids) limits the ability of stores to locate in Osceola County. Workshop Participants feel driving to the distant market areas presents difficulties and causes money to leave the County.

Workshop participants also discussed the need to provide County Residents with adequate recreation facilities and to base fees for parks on residency (with full-time residents receiving lower rates than visitors.) The need to limit or monitor the amount of time campers can remain on lots was also discussed, as was the need to improve Rose Lake Park.

An issue in the news at the time of the Workshops related to Perrier's desire to locate a bottling plant in either Osceola County or Mecosta County. In addition to constructing a bottling plant, Perrier also wishes to pump spring water for bottling and distribution across the Midwest.

Lack of Zoning in many townships was also discussed. While participants favored zoning, they emphasized the need for fair regulations that reflect the rural nature of Osceola County. Closely related to zoning, participants discussed problems associated with people building on their lot lines, buildings interfering with views, and lot line issues related to septic fields.

Participants also discussed the loss of farmland to residential uses. Part of the issue relates to how farmland is taxed and categorized and not necessarily to its potential. Oftentimes, if an area is not farmed for a period of time it is converted to residential. This issue also relates to people coming from outside the area and purchasing land at inflated rates – which tends to inflate the costs of all land.

“Keyhole” Development on the area's lakes was also discussed. This type of development can cause problems related to crowding, septic fields and water pollution. Keyhole development relates to one parcel on a lake providing access to several lots not directly located on the lake.

Participants also discussed the existing confusion related to street names around many lakes in Osceola County. This issue not only causes confusion, but also can detract from emergency services efficiently locating addresses.

The issue of septic fields on water quality was also discussed as a separate issue. Development should be limited by the capacity of the area's soils to effectively treat waste or sewer facilities should be developed to protect water quality and human health.

Another issue in the news relates to an electrical generating plant north of Osceola County. A plant in Wexford County was proposing to generate electricity by burning wood and tires. Originally, “scrubbers” (emission reduction equipment) were not going to be installed on the facility, but recent news indicates that scrubbers will be installed. Note: The facility was built, but was not permitted to burn tires. A similar plant is operating in Missaukee County that does burn tires.

Finally, participants in the first session discussed the County's Renaissance Zone and the need to attract industries with adequate wages to keep the area's younger population in the area and attract new people to the County.

#### March 28, 2001 Issue Identification Workshop Summary

This meeting was informal with participants describing issues to the facilitators from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. The meeting was held in Marion.

Participants had a detailed discussion related to the County's parks. People would like to see more facilities including camping sites without water access and parks without

camping. Long-term campers are seen as a problem since they use many of the area's services, but pay no local taxes. Alternate ways to finance the County's parks is also seen as a need.

Cellular Telephone Towers are seen as an issue and local communities would like for the County to develop an ordinance to ease townships' responsibilities. The issue of obsolete towers was also discussed.

Closely related to the issue of easing townships' responsibilities, it was brought up that many townships couldn't enforce zoning and/or other ordinances. Also, the rural nature of the county makes it difficult to provide adequate services for a variety of issues such as the Road Patrol.

Since the second workshop was held in Marion, the issue of the location of County Facilities was an issue. Most County facilities are located in Reed City, which is located in the southwest corner of Osceola County. Not only are the County Offices not centrally located, but EMT services are not conveniently located, the County Road Commission is out of the way and other facilities are inconvenient. Participants would like to see services distributed across the County.

Workshop participants also discussed right-of-way issues. Fiber-optic, telephone, gas and other utilities seek easements and do not adequately compensate property owners. Standard rates should be established to insure property owners are not taken advantage of by utilities.

Participants also discussed the loss of farmland due to reclassification. Part of the issue relates to how farmland is taxed and categorized and not necessarily to its potential. It seems that if an area is not farmed for several years it is converted to a non-agricultural category. Part of this issue relates to over regulation by the State of Michigan and the difficulty in working with some state agencies.

Another issue discussed at the second workshop related to mixed land uses – especially businesses located in residential areas. Home businesses are an issue since it establishes a precedent that may not benefit the area. Many residential areas now support light manufacturing industries, such as machine shops, that can detract from the area's residential nature.

Overall, several other issues arose that centered on the differences between new residents and long-time residents. The conflicts relate to differences in perceptions related to level of service, incomes, and general attitudes. Also, there is a need to balance the need for development with the area's rural nature.

#### April 10, 2001 Issue Identification Workshop Summary

The third workshop, held in Tustin at the Kettunen Center, was well attended and provided another set of issues. The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission



facilitated a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) session. Participants were randomly divided into three groups. Each of the groups discussed issues and listened to each of the participants' ideas. The small groups met for nearly an hour and then reassembled to present their issues to the entire group. Each group presented their issues. Next, the facilitator combined similar issues from the three groups and then each participant "voted" (using three stickers) on the issues. While all of the issues will eventually be addressed in the planning process, this provides an idea of the importance of each issue.

The results of the process follow.

Table 25: Workshop Results

"Votes"	Category
8	The need for economic expansion and development – including industrial parks and a land use plan
6	The need to consider local zoning and incorporate agricultural preservation and methods to control cellular towers
5	Junk and blight to our environment
4	The area's roads are not adequate
4	The need for affordable housing including low/moderate income housing, subdivisions, senior housing, townhouses, apartments and condominiums
2	The need to protect the environment – includes such issues as the Muskegon/Middle Branch watersheds, groundwater protection, Zebra Mussels and other pests
1	There is currently a need for additional law enforcement officers (local, county and state)
0	Inadequate mass transportation for children, seniors and physically disabled
0	Inadequate opportunities for proper waste management – including tires
0	The need for additional park and recreation opportunities
0	Lack of adequate retail stores
0	The need to improve county-township relationships through liaisons or other methods

After the participants voted on the issues, the small groups reassembled to clarify issues, develop some preliminary goals and identify some potential actions to reach each goal.

**Issue #1** – The need for economic expansion and development – including industrial parks and a land use plan

**Goal #1** – Use countywide planning to assist in expanding employment base with suitable employers

#### Actions

- Identify current trends to incorporate into the plan (such as those listed below)
- Identify areas within Osceola County suitable for industry, commercial, and other employment-based development

- Work with the Osceola Economic Alliance, individual communities, the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and others to promote Osceola County as a destination for new businesses.
- Work with existing businesses to determine their needs to succeed and prosper.
- Review and streamline the requirements that new and existing businesses must meet to develop or expand in Osceola County

**Issue #2** – The need to consider local zoning and incorporate agricultural preservation and methods to control cellular towers

**Goal #2** – Use planning and related efforts to identify and preserve the valuable characteristics of Osceola County, such as aesthetics and agriculture.

**Actions**

- Preserve aesthetic qualities by controlling the proliferation of communication towers and other built features
- Preserve agriculture by identifying prime agricultural land and working to enact legislation to encourage farming, such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) or Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- County, Township, City, and Village officials work together to promote efficient land use across Osceola County

**Issue #3** – Blight and junk adversely impact the appearance, safety and value of property in Osceola County

**Goal #3** – Eliminate blight in Osceola County

**Actions**

- Fund a county ordinance officer through fines collected, recycling fees, local contributions and other methods
- Establish a junk and blight task force to monitor progress
- Establish/enforce a countywide junk ordinance
- Provide a series of incrementally designed penalties for offenders – from warnings through fines and additions to tax bills
- Provide opportunities, such as transfer stations or annual pickups, for residents to dispose of junk

**Issue #4** – The area's roads are not adequate

**Goal #4** – Maintain roads at a level suitable for a rural county

**Actions**

- Local communities work with County Road Commission, Regional Planning Commission, and the Michigan Department of Transportation to identify and prioritize transportation issues
- Tie proposed improvements to economic development and other goals of the County

**Issue #5** – The need for affordable housing including low/moderate income housing, subdivisions, senior housing, townhouses, apartments and condominiums

**Goal #5** – Promote a diverse variety of housing to meet the varied needs of Osceola County's existing and future residents

**Actions**

- Use 2000 Census information to describe existing housing base and identify deficiencies
- Through planning and physical improvements, encourage the development of a diverse housing base in Osceola County

**Issue #6** – The need to protect the environment – includes such issues as the Muskegon/Middle Branch watersheds, groundwater protection, Zebra Mussels and other pests

**Goal #6** – Preserve Osceola County's environment including its watersheds and groundwater

**Actions**

- Gather information on existing quality of the County's environment to establish a benchmark and determine if problems exist

**Issue #7** – There is currently a need for additional law enforcement officers (local, county and state)

**Goal #7** – The Michigan State Police, the Osceola County Sheriff and the local units of government will work together to provide an adequate number of officers to serve the needs of Osceola County residents and visitors and provide acceptable response times for calls

**Actions**

- Coordinate actions between State, County and local jurisdictions across entire county
- Fund improvements through variety of federal and state programs and through the support of local jurisdictions
- This is currently a priority due to long response times

**Issue #8** – Inadequate mass transportation for children, seniors and physically disabled

**Goal #8** – Improve transit opportunities for all residents within Osceola County, including special needs groups

**Actions**

- Work with County transit provider to determine existing capacity
- Work with special needs groups including individuals, groups, and businesses, to determine level of services needed
- Identify gaps and develop strategy to address and fund deficiencies

**Issue #9** – Inadequate opportunities for proper waste management – including tires

**Goal #9** – Develop solid waste policies to provide adequate opportunities for residents, to decrease blight, control tire piles, and provide safe and environmentally stable opportunities for the disposal of local waste

**Actions**

- Maintain an up to date Countywide Solid Waste Plan

**Issue #10** – The need for additional park and recreation opportunities

**Goal #10** – Provide residents and visitors with increased parks and recreation opportunities

**Actions**

- Maintain an up to date Countywide Parks and Recreation Plan
- Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to improve State opportunities and fund local initiatives
- Explore fee structure to improve funding opportunities

**Issue #11** – Lack of adequate retail stores

**Goal #11** – Create a balance between the area's rural nature and the need for residents to have adequate shopping opportunities

**Actions**

- Identify areas suitable for additional retail opportunities
- Identify types of retail opportunities suitable for the area
- Work with Osceola Economic Alliance and local units of government to create incentives to attract targeted retail services to the area

**Issue #12** – The need to improve county-township relationships through liaisons or other methods

**Goal #12** – Develop improved relationships between communities and Osceola County

**Actions**

- Appoint liaisons from each community to follow County issues and report local issues to the County
- Develop “round-robins” where County Commissioners attend local meetings
- Establish monthly meetings between the County and local communities.

April 17, 2001 Issue Identification Workshop Summary

The fourth workshop, held in Evart at the Evart Township Hall, also had a good turnout. While the turnout was large enough to conduct a nominal group technique, a roundtable discussion of the County’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) was held and gave everyone an opportunity to express their views.

**Strengths**

- Agriculture
- Safe, very low crime rate
- Convenience
- Clean air and water
- Diverse industry and employment opportunities
- Good recreation opportunities, especially water and winter sports
- Open space and forested lands
- Health care facilities both within the county (Reed City), and in nearby larger communities (Big Rapids and Cadillac)
- Low traffic volumes
- Quality of schools across the County
- Good County and local parks
- Good rail-trail opportunities with the intersection of the White Pine Trail and the Pere Marquette Trail
- Evart’s annual Dulcimer Festival
- Clubs, churches and other social organizations
- Historic Preservation opportunities
- Historical Societies in Tustin, Evart, and Reed City
- Libraries across the County
- Schools provide many extra-curricular activities including sports and music
- Small town atmosphere
- Police protection
- Good ambulance service and 911 system
- Rivers, streams, and lakes across County
- Quality of life

- Thriving small town life
- Land preservation – land conservancy
- Forest Management has improved

#### **Weaknesses**

- Condition of roads
- Lack of higher paying employment opportunities
- Blight – including trash, junk, trailer graveyards – and its effect on the County's image
- Tire piles
- Flea markets
- Farms that are not actively farmed
- Lack of emergency warning system
- Access management issues on US-10
- Perception of inadequate retail opportunities
- Contaminated groundwater – Sites in Evart and Reed City, old dumps, influences industry, cancer risks, farm chemicals
- Damaged watershed over the past 60 years – influences quality of life and economy
- Muskegon River Watershed – lack of corrected sites since study performed
- Pine River being damaged
- Lack of incentives from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources – local units cannot afford to correct problems
- Lack of representation in Lansing
- Lack of transportation planning and funding
- Soil runoff into streams
- Population not fully counted due to dual residencies in areas such as Florida
- Spread of diseases in trees
- Decrease in the variety of wildlife
- Lady-bugs and other non-native pests

#### **Opportunities**

- Evart Airport – funding to improve capacity
- US-10 as an improved highway
- Retain agriculture and industry – expand agriculture-related markets
- Active farm bureau
- Dairy opportunities – milk and cattle in County
- Perrier Project – more diverse jobs and tax base and receive statewide attention
- Suitable land available for industry
- Need to manage growth
- Additional living-wage jobs needed
- Keep rural character with planning and zoning
- Wetland Protection

### **Threats**

- Need to monitor golf courses – related to wetlands and effects on environment
- Threats to lakes – Eurasian Millfoil
- Creating mono-cultures such as Christmas Tree Farms
- Loss of rural environment through development of large retail stores
- Loss of existing employers
- Automobile-related manufacturers
- Uncontrolled growth
- Local stores cannot compete with outside market areas such as Big Rapids and Cadillac
- Uncontrolled gasoline-powered recreational vehicles such as jet skis, snowmobiles, four-wheelers
- Loss of downtowns
- Lack of landfill
- Re-opening Richmond Landfill – past violations and no reason for State to leave open
- Richmond Landfill's past violations
- Opening a landfill would attract trash from other areas
- Incinerators
- Tire burning – alternate fuel in Wexford County's co-generation plant would burn 2 million tires annually
- Lack of knowledge related to environment
- County leadership related to environment
- Lack of recycling

### **Osceola County Community Survey**

The Osceola County Planning Commission and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission conducted a community survey in March 2001 to gain a better understanding of the residents' opinions related to planning, development and other community issues. Over 2,100 surveys were mailed to households in Osceola County, or about one of every four households. Of the 2,100 surveys distributed, 220 were returned for a 10.5 percent return rate.

The following information details the results of the survey. Both the numeric and percentage results are identified for most questions as well as an analysis of the results of each question.

#### **I. Demographic Section**

Information from this section identifies that the west side of the County had a better return rate and that respondents are older than the general population, tended to be male, and have lived in Osceola County for over 20 years. The average household size of respondents is also lower than the County average and most lived in single-family homes.

Full-time employment accounts for 80.2 percent of employment and 68.4 percent of the County's full-time employees work within Osceola County. Half of respondents are retired.

1. In which part of Osceola County do you live?
  - a. Northwest: 52/24.4%
  - b. Northeast: 39/18.3%
  - c. Southwest: 84/39.4%
  - d. Southeast: 38/17.8%

Analysis: All of the quadrants are well represented. If the results are compared to 2000 Census figures, the northwest quadrant makes up 20.3 percent of the County's population, the northeast quadrant makes up 18.4 percent, the southwest makes up 34.5 percent and the southeast makes up 26.7 percent. Overall, the west side of the County has a better return rate than the east side.

2. What is your age? (please check one)
  - a. Under 18: 0/0.0%
  - b. 18-24: 1/0.5%
  - c. 25-34: 13/5.9%
  - d. 35-44: 33/15.1%
  - e. 45-54: 49/22.4%
  - f. 55-64: 61/27.9%
  - g. 65-84: 62/28.3%
  - h. 85+: 1/0.5%

Analysis: The median age of survey respondents is 57.3. In 1990 the median age of the County was 33.4. If you take into account that most heads of household do not fall into the under 18, or the 18-24 categories, the 1990 median age increases to 48.2. Once the 2000 Census figures are available, the results will also show a higher median age in Osceola County, but the median age will most likely still be lower than 57.3. It is very common for the median age of survey respondents to be above average. This can be attributed to many factors including more available time and greater interest in the community.

3. What is your gender?
  - a. Male: 138/65.7%
  - b. Female: 72/34.3%

Analysis: In 1990 males and females were almost evenly divided, with males accounting for 49.5 percent of the population and females accounting for 50.5 percent. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents are men (with some people identifying jointly completing the survey.)



4. How many people live in your household?

- a. 1: 29/13.4%
- b. 2: 120/55.3%
- c. 3: 22/10.1%
- d. 4: 27/12.4%
- e. 5: 14/6.5%
- f. 6+: 5/2.3%

Analysis: The median household size of respondents is 1.7 persons per household, which is lower than the 1990 average of 2.7 persons per household. This indicates that more one and two person households, and fewer larger households, completed the survey. This goes along with question #2 since many of the retired households and older residents have smaller households.

5. How long have you lived in Osceola County?

- a. Less than 1 year: 2/0.9%
- b. 1-4 years: 15/6.9%
- c. 5-9 years: 42/19.4%
- d. 10-14 years: 18/8.3%
- e. 15-19 years: 13/6.0%
- f. 20 or more years: 127/58.5%

Analysis: The majority of respondents have lived in Osceola County for 20 or more years, which provides a perspective of long-time residents. Many respondents are also in the 5-9 year range, which is still a fairly long-time resident. The two categories between 10 and 19 years are lower, as is the 1-4 years category. Only two respondents have lived in the County less than one year.

6 (a). How many people in your household work full-time in Osceola County?

- a. 0: 90/46.6%
- b. 1: 63/32.6%
- c. 2: 36/18.7%
- d. 3 or more: 4/2.1%

6 (b). How many people in your household work part-time in Osceola County?

- a. 0: 103/73.0%
- b. 1: 33/23.4%
- c. 2: 5/3.5%
- d. 3 or more: 0/0.0%

Analysis: Questions 6, 7, and 8 are evaluated together

7 (a). How many people in your household work full-time outside Osceola County?

- a. 0: 137/70.6%
- b. 1: 48/24.7%
- c. 2: 7/3.6%
- d. 3 or more: 2/1.0%

- 7 (b). How many people in your household work part-time outside Osceola County?
- a. 0: 127/93.4%
  - b. 1: 8/5.9%
  - c. 2: 1/0.7%
  - d. 3 or more: 0/0.0%

Analysis: Questions 6, 7, and 8 are evaluated together

8. How many people in your household are retired?
- a. 0: 109/50.2%
  - b. 1: 49/22.6%
  - c. 2: 58/26.7%
  - d. 3 or more: 1/0.5%

Analysis: Half (49.8 percent) of the households returning surveys have at least one retired person and half (50.2 percent) have no retired persons. Based on responses, the most common type of employment is full-time employment in Osceola County (147 employed) followed by full-time employment outside of Osceola County (68 employed). Part-time employment in Osceola County accounts for 43 people and part-time employment outside the County accounts for only 10 people. These figures indicate that 68.4 percent of the County's full-time employees work within Osceola County and 31.6 percent work outside the County. Part-time employees with jobs within Osceola County account for 81.1 percent of respondents' part-time jobs, and positions outside the County account for 18.9 percent. Full-time employment accounts for 80.2 percent of employment.

9. What type of home do you occupy?
- a. Single Family: 187/86.2%
  - b. Mobile Home: 25/11.5%
  - c. Multiple Family: 5/2.3%

Analysis: In 1990, single family units made up 68.7 percent of the units in Osceola County, multiple family units made up 5.5 percent, and mobile homes made up 25.8 percent. Survey respondents are primarily from occupants of single family units, but the other categories are also represented.

## II. Strengths and Weaknesses

Information from this section identifies that the area's residents consider the County's combination of rural environment, quality of life, and natural resources as its major strength. These three strengths are all closely related. While the primary strengths are related to natural features, all of the weaknesses are related to the built environment or programming including roads, employment, and blight.

1. What do you feel are the County's biggest strengths?
  - a. Rural Environment: 126/20.9%
  - b. Quality of Life: 110/18.3%
  - c. Natural Resources: 91/15.1%
  - d. Schools: 78/13.0%
  - e. Local People: 74/12.3%
  - f. Tourism and Recreation: 43/7.1%
  - g. Strategic Location: 43/7.1%
  - h. Employment Opportunities: 22/3.7%
  - i. Public Services: 8/1.3%
  - j. Other: 7/1.2%

Analysis: The top three responses are closely related to each other and include Rural Environment, Quality of Life, and Natural Resources. The top three responses make up 45.3 percent of strengths identified by survey respondents. The top three responses are also based on features that do not rely on infrastructure. Local People (number five) and Strategic Location (number seven) also do not depend on infrastructure. So, the area's natural amenities play an important role in the area's strengths.

Respondents identified schools as the fourth biggest strength, tourism and recreation as the sixth, employment opportunities as the eighth, and public services as the ninth greatest strength. All of these rely on some form of infrastructure and can more easily be improved.

2. What do you feel are the County's biggest weaknesses?
  - a. Roads: 109/18.6%
  - b. Employment Opportunities: 101/17.3%
  - c. Blight: 80/13.7%
  - d. Planning and Zoning: 70/12.0%
  - e. Economy: 66/11.3%
  - f. Environmental Concerns: 48/8.2%
  - g. Public Services: 40/6.8%
  - h. Recreation Opportunities: 38/6.5%
  - i. Other: 19/3.2%
  - j. Local People: 14/2.4%

Analysis: It is interesting that all of the weaknesses identified in the survey are man-made weaknesses. Roads topped the list with 18.6 percent of responses, followed by employment opportunities with 17.3 percent. Blight is identified as the third biggest weakness in Osceola County with 13.7 percent of the responses and Planning/Zoning is identified as the fourth biggest weakness with 12.0 percent. The County's economy is identified as the fifth biggest weakness with 11.3 percent of responses. The remaining responses each received less than ten percent of the responses and include Environmental Concerns, Public Services, Recreational Opportunities, and Local People.

Many topics were identified as both strengths and weaknesses. The fact that many more people identified employment opportunities as a weakness than as a strength negates much of the strength side. Closely related and backing the employment as a weakness argument, the economy was identified as a weakness and not as a strength. Also, recreation opportunities received a fairly equal (and small) percentage of responses in both the strengths and weaknesses categories. Public Services also received more weakness responses. Only one topic received more positive responses -- Local People received many more responses as a strength.

For the purposes of this plan, it would be best to concentrate on the top five strengths and weaknesses since they seem to have the clearest "mandate".

### III. Land Use

The major results of this section indicate that residents would like to see the rural character, identified as the County's biggest strength, preserved. The rural character includes agricultural areas, as well as open space and forests. Survey respondents also feel that commercial and industrial uses should be developed in cities and villages. Most also feel that land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts -- which is where planning plays a key role. Many people do not feel mobile home parks should be developed.

1. Please read the following statements regarding land use in Osceola County, and check your feelings in the adjacent spaces.

Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
a. Rural "large lot" single family housing should be developed (2.1)	77	72	58
b. Subdivision style housing should be developed (1.8)	51	69	87
c. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed (1.8)	54	64	88
d. Second homes (cottages) should be developed (1.9)	29	121	55
e. Mobile home parks should be developed (1.6)	39	45	122
f. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages (2.5)	130	54	20
g. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages (1.9)	64	63	79
h. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages (2.3)	117	42	46
i. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages (2.1)	84	46	73
j. Agriculture should be preserved (2.9)	186	21	5
k. Open space and forested areas should be preserved (2.8)	183	21	8
l. Additional parks should be developed (2.2)	82	80	43
m. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts (2.5)	127	53	25

Analysis: In order to interpret the results of this question, a score of three was assigned to each "agree" response, a score of two was assigned to each "neutral" response, and a score of one was assigned to each "disagree" response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score (shown in parentheses) with a perfect "agree" being a score of three, an evenly divided score being a score of two, and a perfect "disagree" score being a score of one.

The following statements would clearly fall into the “agree” category and are ranked by the strongest “agree” scores:

- a. Agriculture should be preserved (2.9)
- b. Open space and forested areas should be preserved (2.8)
- c. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages (2.5)
- d. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts (2.5)
- e. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages (2.3)

The following statement would clearly fall into the “disagree” category:

- a. Mobile home parks should be developed (1.6)

The following statements are fairly neutral either because neutral was frequently chosen, or because people both agreed and disagreed with the statements:

- a. Rural “large lot” single family housing should be developed (2.1)
- b. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages (2.1)
- c. Second homes (cottages) should be developed (1.9)
- d. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages (1.9)
- e. Additional parks should be developed (2.2)
- f. Subdivision style housing should be developed (1.8)
- g. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed (1.8)

2. Is your community zoned? (Please check one)

- a. Yes: 117/57.4%
- b. No: 40/19.6%
- c. I do not know: 47/23.0%

Analysis: The majority of respondents reside in communities that have zoning. A large percentage (23.0 percent) is unaware of whether their communities are zoned, which raises the question of the need to increase awareness.

#### **IV. Market Analysis**

This portion of the survey provides a lot of valuable information about where people shop, what types of services people desire, and if people feel certain types of services are “in character” with Osceola County. The results indicate that, for most types of services, most people are going outside of Osceola County. The exceptions include groceries, gasoline, eating/dining, and pharmacies. While preserving the rural character is important to the County, most people would like to see some additional businesses in Osceola County and feel there is not a conflict. Such businesses include businesses focused on apparel, building/garden supplies, eating/drinking, general merchandise, groceries, and home furnishings.

1. Please identify where your household does the majority of shopping for the following items.

Service/Goods	Evart	Reed City	Marion	Other Areas in County	Outside County	Internet or Mail
a. Apparel	0/ 0.0%	1/ 0.5%	5/ 2.3%	2/ 0.9%	204/ 92.7%	8/ 3.6%
b. Automotive Dealers	4/ 1.8%	44/ 20.2%	2/ 0.9%	6/ 2.8%	162/ 74.3%	0/ 0.0%
c. Building/garden supplies	19/ 8.3%	38/ 16.5%	25/ 10.9%	11/ 4.8%	136/ 59.1%	1/ 0.4%
d. Eating/Drinking	29/ 11.6%	49/ 19.7%	16/ 6.4%	40/ 16.1%	115/ 46.2%	0/ 0.0%
e. Gasoline	36/ 14.9%	73/ 30.2%	24/ 9.9%	30/ 12.4%	79/ 32.6%	0/ 0.0%
f. General Merchandise	17/ 7.2%	34/ 14.5%	11/ 4.7%	9/ 3.8%	161/ 68.5%	3/ 1.3%
g. Groceries/food	34/ 13.6%	79/ 31.6%	24/ 9.6%	9/ 3.6%	104/ 41.6%	0/ 0.0%
h. Home Furnishings	2/ 0.9%	2/ 0.9%	0/ 0.0%	7/ 3.3%	201/ 94.8%	0/ 0.0%
i. Pharmacy	40/ 18.0%	73/ 32.9%	24/ 10.8%	2/ 0.9%	78/ 35.1%	5/ 2.3%

Analysis: While people will often drive outside of their community to purchase durable items such as furniture, home appliances, or automobiles, most people choose to shop for convenience items, such as groceries, in their community. While this is generally the case in Osceola County, many people shop outside of the County for a wide variety of goods including convenience items such as groceries and even gasoline. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that many people are employed outside of Osceola County, but the location of larger shopping opportunities in Big Rapids, Cadillac, Clare, and Mount Pleasant provide opportunities for resident of Osceola County to shop elsewhere even for convenience goods.

Nearly 93 percent of respondents shop for apparel outside of Osceola County. Automobile dealers fare a little better with 20.2 percent of respondents shopping in Reed City – but 74.3 percent leave the County to purchase a vehicle. Building and garden supplies also capture a portion of the market, with shopping spread across the County, but again, 59.1 percent of respondents leave the County to do their shopping. Eating and drinking establishments in Osceola County attracted a large percentage of the respondents, but areas outside the County attracted nearly half (46.2 percent) of the respondents. Gasoline was another service that businesses inside of Osceola County attracted over half of shoppers, with only 32.6 percent purchasing fuel elsewhere. Each of the communities attracted a portion of shoppers for general merchandise, but 68.5 percent of residents choose to shop outside of Osceola County. Grocery stores, like restaurants and gasoline stations, managed to keep the majority of shoppers in the County, with 41.6 percent going elsewhere. Nearly everyone (94.8 percent) shops elsewhere for home furnishings. Pharmacies attract a large portion of shoppers, with only 35.1 percent leaving Osceola County.

2. What types of NEW commercial services would benefit Osceola County AND do you feel they would conflict with the character of the County?

	Need & would conflict with County's character	Don't Need & would conflict with County's character	Need & would not conflict with County's character	Don't Need & would not conflict with County's character
a. Apparel	7/3.8%	23/12.4%	117/63.2%	38/20.5%
b. Automotive Dealers	1/0.6%	49/27.8%	45/25.6%	81/46.0%
c. Building/garden supplies	5/2.8%	17/9.7%	99/56.3%	55/31.3%
d. Eating/Drinking	2/1.1%	16/8.7%	116/63.4%	49/26.8%
e. Gasoline	1/0.6%	36/20.5%	67/38.1%	72/40.9%
f. General Merchandise	4/2.2%	20/11.0%	124/68.5%	33/18.2%
g. Groceries/food	6/3.4%	18/10.2%	97/54.8%	56/31.6%
h. Home Furnishings	5/2.8%	23/12.8%	93/52.0%	58/32.4%
i. Pharmacy	2/1.2%	25/14.5%	55/31.8%	91/52.6%
j. Other (identify)	1/2.8%	6/16.7%	22/61.1%	7/19.4%

Analysis: This question rates not only if people would like the convenience of a commercial service, but also if the service is in character with Osceola County. The series of questions encourages people to think about convenience versus preserving the area's rural character.

The majority of respondents to this question (63.6 percent) feel an apparel store is needed and would not conflict with the County's character. A substantial proportion (32.9 percent) does not feel there is a need.

The majority of respondents (73.8 percent) do not feel an automobile dealer is needed and 27.8 percent feel such a development would conflict with the area's character. Just over 25 percent feel the need for such a facility.

The majority (56.3 percent) feels there is a need for a building/garden supply store in the County and that such a development would not present a conflict. While the majority feels there is a need for building/garden supplies, a full 41 percent do not see the need for such a service.

The majority (61.3 percent) of respondents to this question does not see the need for additional gasoline stations and many (20.5 percent) feel additional facilities would conflict with the County's character. This was one of the few categories where the majority of people shopped in Osceola County.

Most respondents (68.5 percent) see the need for a general merchandise store and do not see such a facility conflicting with the area's character. Less than one-third (29.2 percent) do not feel such a facility is needed.

Most respondents to this question (54.8 percent) would like an additional grocery store and do not see such a facility as a conflict with the County's character. Many (41.8 percent) do not see the need for an additional grocery in Osceola County.

Just over half (52 percent) feel a home furnishings store is needed and would not present a conflict. Many (45.2 percent) do not see the need for such a facility.

Over two-thirds (67.1 percent) do not feel the need for an additional pharmacy. This was one of the few categories where the majority of people shopped in Osceola County.

## V. Community Services

Overall, people are pleased with the quality of life in Osceola County, but feel several areas are below average. Some of the lower scoring categories include, public transportation, household hazardous waste, planning and zoning, County road maintenance, and recycling.

1. Please rate the following services.

Service	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Not Applicable
1. Health Services (1.8)	55	124	24	6
2. Household Hazardous Waste (1.5)	100	76	11	16
3. Library (2.1)	30	118	54	5
4. Parks and Recreation (County) (2.0)	34	137	29	7
5. Parks and Recreation (Local) (2.0)	43	110	49	7
6. Parks and Recreation (State) (2.1)	31	94	50	28
7. Planning and Zoning (1.6)	85	90	7	9
8. Public Transportation (1.4)	113	59	4	22
9. Quality of Life (2.4)	19	95	92	3
10. Road Maintenance (131, 10, 66, 115) (1.9)	66	115	34	0
11. Road Maintenance (Other) (1.6)	106	83	20	3
12. Roads (Snow Removal) (2.1)	36	129	51	0
13. Schools (2.2)	25	113	67	7
14. Trash Removal (2.0)	37	117	35	18
15. Recycling (1.6)	107	64	24	15
16. Utilities (Water and Sewer) (1.9)	25	89	15	73
17. Utilities (Gas and/or Electric) (2.0)	28	147	25	15
18. Utilities (Telephone) (1.9)	38	162	12	3

Analysis: In order to interpret the results of this question, a score of three was assigned to each "above average" response, a score of two was assigned to each "average" response, and a score of one was assigned to each "below average" response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score (shown in parentheses) with a perfect "above average" being a score of three and a perfect "below average" score being a one.



The following statement would clearly fall into the “above average” category:

- a. Quality of Life (2.4)

The following statements would clearly fall into the “below average” category and are listed from the lowest score to the highest:

- a. Public Transportation (1.4)
- b. Household Hazardous Waste (1.5)
- c. Planning and Zoning (1.6)
- d. Road Maintenance (Other than state highways) (1.6)
- e. Recycling (1.6)

The remaining statements received average scores and are listed from the highest to the lowest scores:

- a. Schools (2.2)
- b. Library (2.1)
- c. Parks and Recreation (State) (2.1)
- d. Roads (Snow Removal) (2.1)
- e. Parks and Recreation (County) (2.0)
- f. Parks and Recreation (Local) (2.0)
- g. Trash Removal (2.0)
- h. Utilities (Gas and/or Electric) (2.0)
- i. Road Maintenance (131, 10, 66, 115) (1.9)
- j. Utilities (Water and Sewer) (1.9)
- k. Utilities (Telephone) (1.9)
- l. Health Services (1.8)

Overall, respondents gave satisfactory scores to services within Osceola County with the exception of the five categories that clearly received below average scores.

## VI. Emergency Services

Survey respondents seem very pleased with Osceola County’s emergency services.

- 1. Please rate the following services.

Service	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Not Applicable
1. Ambulance Services (2.3)	12	114	78	11
2. Fire Protection Services (2.2)	21	118	67	9
3. Law Enforcement (State) (2.2)	24	119	63	8
4. Law Enforcement (County) (2.0)	38	126	43	6
5. Law Enforcement (Local) (1.9)	42	105	27	38
6. 911 Services (2.2)	17	124	59	9

Analysis: In order to interpret the results of this question, a score of three was assigned to each “above average” response, a score of two was assigned to each “average” response, and a score of one was assigned to each “below average” response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score (shown in parentheses) with a perfect “above average” being a score of three and a perfect “below average” score being a one.

All of the categories except local law enforcement and county law enforcement received slightly above average scores. County law enforcement received an average score and local law enforcement was only slightly below average. Overall, people seem satisfied with the County’s emergency services.

### Cross Tabulations

In order to determine if people in the different quadrants of Osceola County feel differently about the types of development they would like to see, cross tabulations were performed.

Statements	County	NW	NE	SW	SE
a. Rural “large lot” single family housing should be developed	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.9
b. Subdivision style housing should be developed	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.7
c. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.7
d. Second homes (cottages) should be developed	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9
e. Mobile home parks should be developed	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.4
f. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6
g. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.8
h. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4
i. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.1	1.9
j. Agriculture should be preserved	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
k. Open space and forested areas should be preserved	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8
l. Additional parks should be developed	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.2	2.1
m. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.4

Similar to the original question, in order to interpret the results of these questions, a score of three was assigned to each “agree” response, a score of two was assigned to each “neutral” response, and a score of one was assigned to each “disagree” response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score (shown in parentheses) with a perfect “agree” being a score of three, an evenly divided score being a score of two, and a perfect “disagree” score being a score of one.

The overall County score is shown in the “County” column and the scores for each of the quadrants are shown in the next four columns. Overall, the results between the quadrants are very similar, indicating very little difference in beliefs about how Osceola County should develop in the future.

The following statements would clearly fall into the “agree” category and are ranked by the strongest “agree” scores and show the ranges between the quadrants:

- a. Agriculture should be preserved (2.9 with a range of 2.8 to 2.9)
- b. Open space and forested areas should be preserved (2.8 with a range of 2.7 to 2.9)
- c. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages (2.5 with a range of 2.5 to 2.6)
- d. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts (2.5 with a range of 2.4 to 2.6)
- e. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages (2.3 with a range of 2.3 to 2.5)

The following statement would clearly fall into the “disagree” category:

- a. Mobile home parks should be developed (1.6 with a range of 1.4 to 1.8)

The following statements are fairly neutral either because neutral was frequently chosen, or because people both agreed and disagreed with the statements:

- a. Rural “large lot” single family housing should be developed (2.1 with a range of 1.9 to 2.2)
- b. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages (2.1 with a range of 1.9 to 2.2)
- c. Second homes (cottages) should be developed (1.9 with a range of 1.8 to 1.9)
- d. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages (1.9 with a range of 1.8 to 2.0)
- e. Additional parks should be developed (2.2 with a range of 2.0 to 2.3)
- f. Subdivision style housing should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.7 to 1.9)
- g. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.7 to 2.0)

In order to determine if people of different ages feel differently about the types of development they would like to see, cross tabulations were performed.

Statements	County	Under 25	25-44	45-64	Over 64
a. Rural "large lot" single family housing should be developed	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.2
b. Subdivision style housing should be developed	1.8	1.0	1.9	1.7	2.0
c. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed	1.8	1.0	1.7	1.9	1.8
d. Second homes (cottages) should be developed	1.9	1.0	1.5	1.9	1.8
e. Mobile home parks should be developed	1.6	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.9
f. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.6	2.5
g. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages	1.9	1.0	1.7	2.0	2.0
h. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages	2.3	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.2
i. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages	2.1	2.0	1.8	2.1	2.3
j. Agriculture should be preserved	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9
k. Open space and forested areas should be preserved	2.8	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.8
l. Additional parks should be developed	2.2	3.0	2.2	2.2	2.1
m. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.5	2.5

Similar to the original question, in order to interpret the results of these questions, a score of three was assigned to each "agree" response, a score of two was assigned to each "neutral" response, and a score of one was assigned to each "disagree" response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score with a perfect "agree" being a score of three, an evenly divided score being a score of two, and a perfect "disagree" score being a score of one.

The overall County score is shown in the "County" column and the scores for each of the age groups are shown in the next four columns. Overall, the results between the age groups are very similar, indicating very few contrasting views related to age and beliefs about how Osceola County should develop in the future. Only one respondent participated in the under 25 category, so the results of the column do not necessarily represent the views of residents under 25 in Osceola County and were not shown in the ranges below.

The following statements would clearly fall into the "agree" category and are ranked by the strongest "agree" scores and show the ranges between the quadrants:

- a. Agriculture should be preserved (2.9 with a range of 2.8 to 2.9)
- b. Open space and forested areas should be preserved (2.8 with a range of 2.7 to 2.8)

- c. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages (2.5 with a range of 2.5 to 2.6)
- d. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts (2.5 with a range of 2.5 to 2.9). This is a considerable range and identifies that younger respondents agree more with this statement.
- e. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages (2.3 with a range of 2.2 to 2.5)

The following statement would clearly fall into the “disagree” category:

- a. Mobile home parks should be developed (1.6 with a range of 1.2 to 1.9). In this instance there is a pretty clear indication that age influences how people feel. Older residents seem more tolerant of mobile home parks.

The following statements are fairly neutral either because neutral was frequently chosen, or because people both agreed and disagreed with the statements:

- a. Rural “large lot” single family housing should be developed (2.1 with a range of 2.0 to 2.2)
- b. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages (2.1 with a range of 1.8 to 2.3). This is a fairly large range and shows that older respondents tend to agree with this statement more often than younger respondents.
- c. Second homes (cottages) should be developed (1.9 with a range of 1.5 to 1.9). This is also a fairly large range with those respondents between 45 and 64 agreeing the strongest with the statement.
- d. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages (1.9 with a range of 1.7 to 2.0)
- e. Additional parks should be developed (2.2 with a range of 2.1 to 2.2)
- f. Subdivision style housing should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.7 to 2.0)
- g. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.7 to 1.9)

In order to determine if people living in different types of housing feel differently about the types of development they would like to see, cross tabulations were also performed.

Statements	County	Single Family	Mobile Home	Multiple Family
a. Rural "large lot" single family housing should be developed	2.1	2.1	2.2	1.6
b. Subdivision style housing should be developed	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.5
c. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.0
d. Second homes (cottages) should be developed	1.9	1.9	1.3	1.3
e. Mobile home parks should be developed	1.6	1.6	1.7	2.0
f. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages	2.5	2.6	2.3	1.8
g. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.6
h. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages	2.3	2.4	2.2	1.8
i. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages	2.1	2.0	2.3	1.8
j. Agriculture should be preserved	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.4
k. Open space and forested areas should be preserved	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.5
l. Additional parks should be developed	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.0
m. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts	2.5	2.6	2.2	2.4

Similar to the original question, in order to interpret the results of these questions, a score of three was assigned to each "agree" response, a score of two was assigned to each "neutral" response, and a score of one was assigned to each "disagree" response. These scores were used to calculate a standard score with a perfect "agree" being a score of three, an evenly divided score being a score of two, and a perfect "disagree" score being a score of one.

The overall County score is shown in the "County" column and the scores for each of the different housing types are shown in the next three columns. Overall, the results between the housing types similar, with a few interesting differences about how Osceola County should develop in the future. Only five respondents live in multiple family housing, so caution should be used with the category.

The following statements would clearly fall into the "agree" category and are ranked by the strongest "agree" scores and show the ranges between the quadrants:

- a. Agriculture should be preserved (2.9 with a range of 2.4 to 3.0). This is a large range, with people living in multiple family housing agreeing less than others.

- b. Open space and forested areas should be preserved (2.8 with a range of 2.5 to 2.9). This is a large range, with people living in multiple family housing agreeing with the statement less than others.
- c. Commercial uses should be developed in cities and villages (2.5 with a range of 1.8 to 2.6). This is also a large range with people living in single family homes agreeing the most with the statement, people living in mobile homes agreeing less, and people living in apartments agreeing even less with the statement.
- d. Land uses should be guided to reduce conflicts (2.5 with a range of 2.2 to 2.6). People living in apartments agreed the least with this statement and people living in single family homes agreed the most.
- e. Industrial parks should be developed in cities and villages (2.3 with a range of 1.8 to 2.4). People living in apartments agreed the least with this statement and people living in single family homes agreed the most.

The following statement would clearly fall into the “disagree” category:

- a. Mobile home parks should be developed (1.6 with a range of 1.6 to 2.0). People living in single family homes and mobile homes tended to disagree with the statement while people living in apartments were neutral.

The following statements are fairly neutral either because neutral was frequently chosen, or because people both agreed and disagreed with the statements:

- a. Rural “large lot” single family housing should be developed (2.1 with a range of 1.6 to 2.2). People living in apartments tended to disagree with this statement more than the other two categories.
- b. Industrial parks should be developed outside of cities and villages (2.1 with a range of 1.8 to 2.3). This question has a large range and demonstrates that people living in mobile homes are more in favor of developing industrial areas outside of the County’s cities and villages.
- c. Second homes (cottages) should be developed (1.9 with a range of 1.3 to 1.9). This answer has a large range and shows that people living in mobile homes and apartments are more opposed to the development of additional cottages.
- d. Commercial uses should be developed outside of cities and villages (1.9 with a range of 1.6 to 2.1). This answer has a large range and indicates that people living in mobile homes are more in favor of developing commercial areas outside of cities and villages.
- e. Additional parks should be developed (2.2 with a range of 2.0 to 2.4). This question has a fairly large range and indicates that people living in mobile homes are more in favor of developing additional parks.
- f. Subdivision style housing should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.5 to 1.9). This has a fairly large range and indicates that people in mobile homes and apartments are less supportive of this type of development
- g. Multiple family housing (apartments) should be developed (1.8 with a range of 1.8 to 2.0)

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES/ACTIONS

### Goals

The following goals are based on interviews with Osceola County residents, four issue identification workshops, and the countywide community input survey. The goals are not shown in order of importance.

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#### Goal #1:

Maintain a system of streets and roads that will adequately meet the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and emergency vehicles.

#### Objectives/Actions:

- a. Provide residents with a safe network of state, county, and local streets and roads linking residential, employment, shopping, public, and recreational centers
- b. Promote economic development by ensuring existing and future commercial, service, and industrial businesses are not limited by the County's system of state, county, and local streets and roads.
- c. Promote tourism in Osceola County by ensuring visitors have access to a safe, well-maintained, and well-signed network of state, county and local streets and roads.
- d. Work closely with the Regional MDOT Office to identify projects specific to Osceola County.
- e. Ensure emergency vehicles have adequate access throughout the County.
- f. Encourage non-motorized transportation opportunities when feasible by continuing to develop and improve the White Pine Trail, the Pere Marquette Trail, as well as other networks of non-motorized pathways.
- g. Determine the feasibility of linking lakes, rivers and other bodies of water to create a network of waterways for transportation and recreation.
- h. Work with MDOT and local units of government to develop an "access management" program that controls the location of entrances to US-10.



**Goal #2:**

Continue to improve the County's economy and employment opportunities.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Continue to support the Osceola Economic Alliance.
- b. Continue to participate in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and continue to work with the U.S. Economic Development Administration to promote economic development in the County.
- c. Continue to target businesses for location in the County's Renaissance Zone and Industrial Parks.
- d. Continue to perform retention calls to the County's existing businesses to prevent unnecessary losses and promote expansion of employment.
- e. Work with the area's schools to develop programs to address local businesses needs.
- f. Through planning, insure that adequate land is available for the expansion and creation of industrial and commercial businesses.
- g. Promote the County's strategic location at the intersection of US-131 and US-10.
- h. Work with utilities and communication providers to insure Osceola County is prepared to meet the demands of businesses.

**Goal #3:**

Preserve the County's rural environment by preserving agriculture, open space and forested areas.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with farmers and other landowners to identify their needs, and to identify available programs to encourage the preservation of desired areas.
- b. Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to acquire areas for recreational uses.
- c. Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to encourage farmers to participate in purchase of development rights programs. Encourage the

Michigan State Legislature to develop additional incentives such as expanded purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and transfer of development rights (TDR) programs.

- d. Work with the Osceola County MSU Extension Office and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to identify areas that should be preserved for agricultural purposes.
- e. Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service to encourage the preservation of open space and forested areas.
- f. Promote "Value Added" programs for agriculture to make farming more profitable and to add employment to the area.

**Goal #4:**

Work with individual communities across the County to encourage planning.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission to assist local units of government in gathering information necessary for planning.
- b. Encourage local units of government to participate in the annual CEDS process.
- c. Regularly attend township, village, and city meetings to promote planning and gain an understanding of current issues.

**Goal #5:**

Protect and improve the County's environment.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, local units of government, local business, farmers, and others to ensure that illegal activities are not tolerated.
- b. Work with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and existing landowners to identify and correct environmental hazards.
- c. Protect the area's groundwater from contamination by developing a groundwater protection program.

- d. Determine the County's response to businesses wishing to benefit from the removal of the County's renewable and nonrenewable natural resources.
- e. Identify areas with special positive environmental features that should be protected.
- f. Plan any new development around lakes, rivers, and streams at a level that will limit the impact of development on water quality. Identify areas that may already be overdeveloped and begin planning for necessary upgrades to septic tanks and sanitary sewer systems.
- g. Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to determine the best ways to limit the introduction and effects of foreign animal and plant pests.

**Goal #6:**

Promote the natural beauty of the County by reducing blight, in the form of improperly maintained homes and businesses, trash, junk, non-functioning automobiles and other equipment, and other unsightly features.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with local communities to develop a countywide blight ordinance that defines blight and the steps necessary to correct blight.
- b. Work with local communities and the Osceola County Sheriff's Department to identify and correct blighted properties.
- c. Determine if additional staffing is necessary to address blight in Osceola County.
- d. Develop an easy method for residents to identify and report blighted properties in Osceola County.
- e. Consider sponsoring trash days to reduce illegal dumping in Osceola County. Work with surrounding counties to coordinate dates and to discourage dumping from people in other counties.
- f. Work with individual communities to establish additional transfer stations.
- g. Work with MDOT and the Osceola County Road Commission to sponsor "Adopt a Highway" programs on State and County roads.
- h. Work with local communities to develop an ordinance that establishes an acceptable level of appearance for businesses across Osceola County.

- i. Maintain an up-to-date Solid Waste Plan.

**Goal #7:**

Promote balanced land use through appropriate planning.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Regularly review the contents of the County's Land Use Plan for accuracy
- b. Work with communities to develop and update land use plans and zoning ordinances
- c. Attend planning conferences and workshops to update skills and learn about the latest planning techniques.
- d. Solicit public input for planning using a variety of methods such as newspaper and television reporting, surveys, workshops, and attending city, village, and township meetings.
- e. Continue to work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission in order to keep up-to-date on planning issues influencing the Region.
- f. Review local plans to determine if they relate to the County's Land Use Plan.

**Goal #8:**

Promote a balanced mix of housing types to meet the various needs of existing and future residents.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Through planning and zoning, designate adequate acreage for different types of housing across Osceola County.
- b. Consider working with communities across the County to perform a housing survey that would provide a "base-line" inventory (quantity and quality) of the County's housing stock.
- c. Work with local communities to develop an ordinance that defines minimum housing standards necessary to promote the health, safety, and welfare of Osceola County residents.

- d. Identify resources available to assist residents in purchasing homes
- e. Identify types of preferred housing development in other areas of West Michigan and determine the feasibility of duplicating such developments in Osceola County.

**Goal #9:**

Promote the development and expansion of commercial uses in cities and villages.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Through planning and zoning, work with cities and villages to insure that adequate land is available for existing commercial businesses to expand and new businesses to begin.
- b. Encourage commercial businesses (existing and new) to provide services residents identified as needed – such as apparel, building /garden supplies, eating/drinking establishments, general merchandise, groceries, and home furnishings.
- c. Encourage cities and villages to perform downtown development plans to identify issues and establish goals specific to their downtown areas.
- d. Work with townships to identify land appropriate for commercial development and limit land available for commercial development outside of cities and villages.

**Goal #10:**

Promote the development and expansion of industrial parks in cities and villages.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Through planning and zoning, work with cities and villages to insure that adequate land is available for existing industrial businesses to expand and new businesses to begin.
- b. Encourage cities and villages to work with the Osceola Economic Alliance to identify issues and establish goals specific to industry.
- c. In order to ensure that all communities have economic development opportunities, work with townships to identify land appropriate for industrial development without encouraging the unnecessary development of open space.

**Goal #11:**

Promote recreation and tourism in Osceola County

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Use Tourism and Recreation as both an economic development tool and a way to preserve the County's rural attributes.
- b. Maintain an up-to-date countywide recreation plan and apply for appropriate grants to improve recreation opportunities in Osceola County.
- c. Encourage individual communities to maintain recreation plans, or to combine efforts with the County.
- d. Continue investigating the possibility of affiliating with Mecosta County's Convention and Visitors Bureau.

**Goal #12:**

Osceola County will continue to provide an appropriate level of services to residents, businesses, and visitors.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. The Osceola County Board of Commissioners will continue to work with County staff and communities within the County to insure that the County uses its resources in an efficient and effective manner.
- b. County programs will frequently be evaluated to determine appropriate levels of service.

**Goal #13:**

Osceola County will cooperate with school districts located within the County to provide opportunities for quality education opportunities

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Insure adequate land is available for expansion of school facilities and work with schools to insure school growth can match development demands.
- b. Work with schools to identify educational needs of local businesses.

**Goal #14:**

Osceola County will maintain emergency service facilities and programs that will provide an adequate level of protection to protect the lives and property of residents, visitors and businesses.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with local units of government, the Michigan State Police and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to insure complete fire protection coverage across Osceola County. Develop strategies to address issues such as forest fires and tire fires.
- b. Work with Osceola County Emergency Services and Spectrum Health Services to insure an appropriate level of ambulance service.
- c. Work with the Osceola County Road Commission to insure street and road signage is easy to understand for emergency responders.
- d. Encourage the Michigan State Police, the Osceola County Sheriff, the Department of Natural Resources, and local law protection agencies to coordinate law enforcement efforts and emergency situations.
- e. Maintain an appropriate level of emergency warning systems.

**Goal #15:**

Osceola County will protect its residents from any physical, aesthetic, and/or financial liabilities associated with communications equipment.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Osceola County will work with local communities to develop an ordinance that will guide the appropriate location of communications equipment.
- b. Ensure all communications towers are used to the fullest extent to limit the number of towers across Osceola County.
- c. Ensure that companies installing towers have the financial resources to remove towers if they become obsolete.

**Goal #16:**

Osceola County will work with utilities to develop uniform methods to compensate property owners for rights-of-way.

**Objectives/Actions:**

- a. Work with local units of government and utilities to develop an ordinance that defines appropriate levels of compensation for different types of rights-of-way such as gas, electric, and fiber optic.



## FUTURE LAND USE

### Methodology

Like the Existing Land Use Inventory, it was important to establish an appropriate level of detail. The Future Land Use Plan is not a parcel-by-parcel plan for the future, but shows the general goals of the County down to quarter sections, or sometimes quarter-quarter sections or smaller. The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission did not propose any future land uses that were not already planned by the individual communities, but used the communities future land use plans as a guide for developing the Future Land Use Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan Table identifies planned land use distribution in 2020. Distribution is shown for the entire County, each of the quadrants, and each of the County's quadrants is further divided into the township designations (even though cities and villages are within some of the townships). The table corresponds with the Future Land Use Plan maps, which graphically show the future land use distributions. Maps show the County's four quadrants to increase legibility. Each quadrant includes four townships and the cities and villages within the quadrant. Changes in land use distribution between 2001 and 2020 are identified in the table titled Changes in Land Use Distribution: 2001-2020.

### Future Land Use Distribution

Like the Existing Land Use Inventory, very general land use categories are used to create future land use maps that provide enough information, but do not overwhelm people using the Plan. Each of the categories is described below. The categories are the same as the Existing Land Use Inventory to allow comparisons between the existing and future land use distributions.

**Agriculture** – This category includes a variety of uses including crops, orchards, Christmas trees, livestock, and other uses related to agriculture. Barns and other outbuildings are also included in this category, as are homes associated with the agricultural uses. Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 150,738 acres of agriculture, which is 41.3 percent of the County's area and the second largest land use. This represents a decrease of 691 acres between 2001 and 2020, with two of the County's quadrants experiencing greater decreases.

**Commercial** – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and

other related areas. Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 2,464 acres of commercial, which is 0.7 percent of the County's area. This represents an increase of 1,854 acres between 2001 and 2020, with most of the increase occurring in the County's northern half.

**Industrial** – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities. This category also includes extraction sites, where gravel, sand, or other natural resources are removed. Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 2,782 acres of industrial, which is 0.8 percent of the County's area. This represents an increase of 715 acres between 2001 and 2020, with the increases occurring in three of the County's quadrants. Decreases occurred, with areas converting from mining to other uses.

**Modular** – This category includes areas where mobile homes, trailers, modular housing, or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. Typically, since the categories are fairly general and must cover a certain area to be considered, this category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occurs, such as mobile home parks or modular home subdivisions.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 86 acres of modular, which is too small of an amount to be identified as a percentage of the County's area. This represents an increase of 40 acres between 2001 and 2020, with the increase occurring in the County's SW Quadrant.

**Multiple Family** – This category includes attached housing with three or more units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses. Since the coverage of the inventory maps is limited to land uses of certain sizes, multiple family facilities may be identified in other land use categories. No new major facilities were identified in Osceola County.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 51 acres of multiple family, which is too small of an amount to be identified as a percentage of the County's area. This represents an increase of 51 acres between 2001 and 2020, with the increase occurring in the County's NW and SE Quadrants.

**Open Space** – This category consists primarily of undeveloped areas including forested areas and pastures that are not actively used for agriculture. Homes may be included in this category if there is not a sufficient developed housing density of housing in an area. Since the Existing Land Use Inventory is at a general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in areas identified as open space. Also, it is often difficult to determine (with aerial photos) if an area is actually open space or if it is used for some form of agricultural uses. Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 193,318 acres of open space, which is 53.0 percent of the County's area and the largest land use. This represents a decrease of 4,752 acres between 2001 and 2020, with most of the decrease occurring in the County's western half.

**Public** – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, schools, libraries, parks, golf courses (public or private) cemeteries, maintenance facilities, and other areas open to the general public. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas. Transportation is included in this category, but tends to be included in whatever categories the network crosses or borders. This category does not identify public land as a land use, the many areas within Osceola County that are public land are listed in the Open Space or Agriculture categories. Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 4,188 acres of public, which is 1.1 percent of the County's area. This represents an increase of 19 acres between 2001 and 2020.

**Single Family** – This category includes unattached single-unit homes built on-site. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. Since the Land Use Inventory is fairly general, this category will often contain modular units, duplexes, and other housing that has characteristics similar to unattached, single-unit homes built on-site. Many single family units are included in other categories (primarily agriculture and open space) due to lack of compact development. This category does not distinguish between year-round residences and seasonal units (cottages). Due to the general level of detail, other land uses may also exist in this category.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 11,278 acres of single-family, which is 3.1 percent of the County's area. This represents an increase of 2,760 acres between 2001 and 2020, with most of the increase occurring in three of the County's quadrants.

The NE Quadrant contains the townships of Highland, Hartwick, Marion, and Middle Branch, as well as the Village of Marion. The biggest land use changes planned for the quadrant is the decrease in the amount of open space by 661 acres and agriculture by 308 acres. This represents a 1.5 percent decrease in the amount of open space, from 44,720 acres in 2001 to 44,059 in 2020, and a 0.7 percent decrease in agriculture during the same period – from 46,111 to 45,803 acres. These decreases are created by a planned increase of 425 acres of commercial area and 562 acres of single-family homes. The overall intent of the planned changes is to maintain the existing character of the area, but provide for additional commercial areas at some of the more major intersections and residential areas adjacent to existing homes.

When compared to the other quadrants, the NE Quadrant has very few changes planned for the next 20 years.

The NW Quadrant contains the townships of Burdell, LeRoy, Rose Lake, and Sherman. The quadrant also contains the villages of LeRoy and Tustin. The biggest changes shown in the Future Land Use Plan include a decrease of 2,016 acres of open space and 42 acres of agriculture. These areas are being proposed for more intensive development including 1,224 acres of commercial, most of which is located in Sherman Township along 20 Mile Road and M-115. Single Family land uses (619 additional acres) are another planned change, with three of the four townships (Burdell, LeRoy, and Rose Lake) planning for additional single-family areas. Burdell and LeRoy townships are also planning for a total of 149 acres of additional industrial, including the site on 14 Mile Road, which is a designated “Renaissance Zone.” There is also a multiple-family use planned for the area in LeRoy Township, which is the only planned site in the entire County.

The most major changes planned for the NW Quadrant relate to the large amount of commercial areas being proposed by Sherman Township. The NW Quadrant has the greatest loss of open space and agriculture and will probably change more than the other four quadrants if the plan is completely implemented.

The SW Quadrant contains the townships of Lincoln, Richmond, Cedar, and Hersey. The quadrant also contains the Village of Hersey and the City of Reed City. The largest changes proposed by the Plan include the development of 1,882 acres of open space to other uses. The largest proposed change includes developing 1,507 acres of additional single-family areas in Cedar Township and Richmond Township. There are plans for an additional 219 acres of Industrial and 188 acres of Commercial areas in Richmond Township. Richmond Township has also identified a 40-acre site for modular housing. While there is a significant decrease in open space, most of the changes proposed in the SW Quadrant are extensions of existing land uses and do not propose any great changes in the area’s character.

The SE Quadrant contains the townships of Osceola, Evart, Orient, and Sylvan. The quadrant also contains the City of Evart. While the SE Quadrant is one of the more developed areas, it has the smallest amount of changes planned. There is a planned

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development of 193 acres of open space and 259 acres of agriculture to other uses including 359 acres of Industrial in Osceola Township. There are also an additional 72 acres of Single-Family development and 17 acres of commercial planned in Osceola Township. These changes are extensions of existing development and will not drastically change the area's character.

Table 26: Future Land Use Plan: 2020

Location	Total	Agriculture	Commercial	Industrial	Modular	Multiple Family	Open Space	Public	Single Family	Water (not part of total)
<b>NE Quad</b>	<b>92,850</b>	<b>45,803</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44,059</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>2,061</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Highland	23,877	14,844	34	33	0	0	8,729	16	220	26
Marion	23,639	14,599	80	25	0	0	8,336	248	348	25
Hartwick	22,627	9,261	355	51	0	0	12,379	6	576	317
Middle Branch	22,707	7,099	45	3	0	0	14,605	40	917	16
<b>NW Quad</b>	<b>92,308</b>	<b>33,844</b>	<b>1,291</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>53,106</b>	<b>1,281</b>	<b>2,192</b>	<b>1,149</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Burdell	23,835	7,114	241	117	46	0	15,481	376	534	133
LeRoy	22,411	8,717	20	256	0	40	12,531	510	337	104
Rose Lake	22,312	6,836	0	77	0	0	14,248	16	1,136	782
Sherman	23,750	11,177	1,030	58	0	0	10,846	379	185	130
<b>SW Quad</b>	<b>89,817</b>	<b>37,212</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44,580</b>	<b>1,794</b>	<b>4,244</b>	<b>665</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Lincoln	22,628	9,803	20	191	0	0	11,660	602	352	244
Richmond	22,415	12,355	382	503	40	0	6,698	857	1,580	60
Cedar	22,417	5,551	0	0	0	0	15,577	3	1,286	351
Hersey	22,357	9,503	4	847	0	0	10,645	332	1,027	10
<b>SE Quad</b>	<b>89,930</b>	<b>33,889</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>51,573</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>2,781</b>	<b>1,373</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Osceola	22,308	8,088	98	497	0	11	12,432	528	655	51
Evart	22,559	9,244	40	78	0	0	11,869	235	1,092	811
Orient	22,621	8,250	94	39	0	0	13,829	35	373	391
Sylvan	22,442	8,307	21	6	0	0	13,443	5	661	120
<b>County</b>	<b>364,905</b>	<b>150,738</b>	<b>2,464</b>	<b>2,782</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>193,318</b>	<b>4,188</b>	<b>11,278</b>	<b>3,571</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>

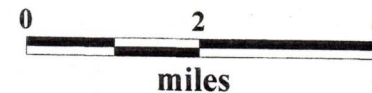
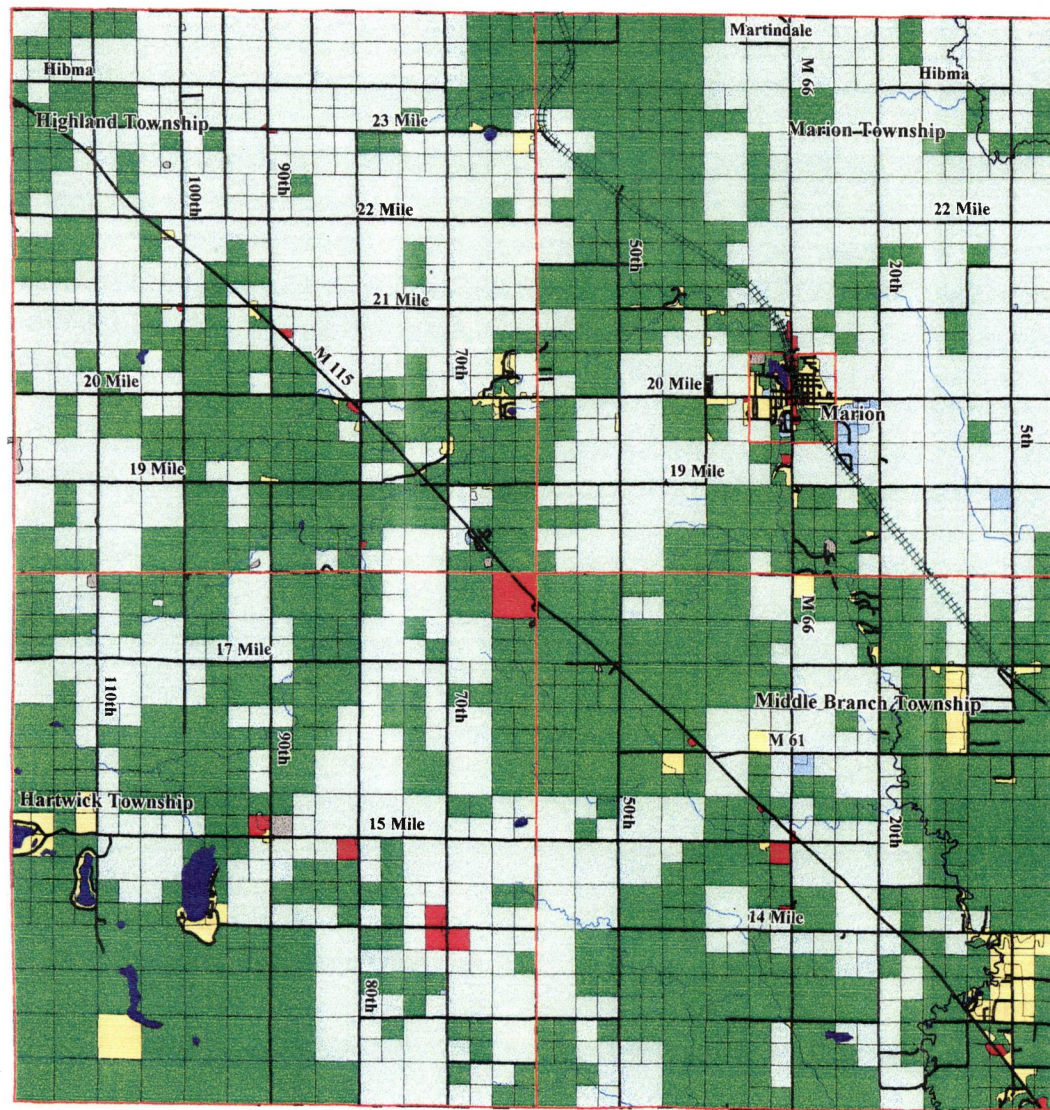
Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Table 27: Changes in Land Use Distribution: 2001-2020

Location	Total	Agri- cul- ture	Com- mer- cial	Indus- trial	Mod- ular	Multi- ple Fam- ily	Open Space	Public	Single Fam- ily	Water (not part of total)
NE Quad	0	-308	425	-12	0	0	-661	0	562	0
%	0.0	-0.7	477.5	-9.6	0.0	0.0	-1.5	0.0	37.5	0.0
NW Quad	0	-42	1,224	149	0	40	-2,016	26	619	0
%	0.0	-0.1	1,826.9	41.5	0.0	100.0	-3.7	2.1	39.4	0.0
SW Quad	0	-72	188	219	40	0	-1,882	0	1,507	0
%	0.0	-0.2	86.2	16.6	100.0	0.0	-4.1	0.0	55.1	0.0
SE Quad	0	-259	17	359	0	11	-193	-7	72	0
%	0.0	-0.8	7.2	137.5	0.0	100.0	-0.4	-0.9	2.7	0.0
<b>County</b>	0	-691	1,854	715	40	51	-4,752	19	2,760	0
<b>%</b>	0.0	-0.5	303.9	34.6	87.0	100.0	-2.4	0.5	32.4	0.0

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission





## OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Future Land Use  
Plan

### Legend

Township and City Boundaries



Roads and Highways



Railroad



Water Features



### Land Uses

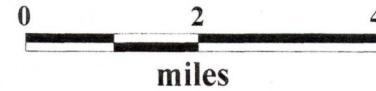
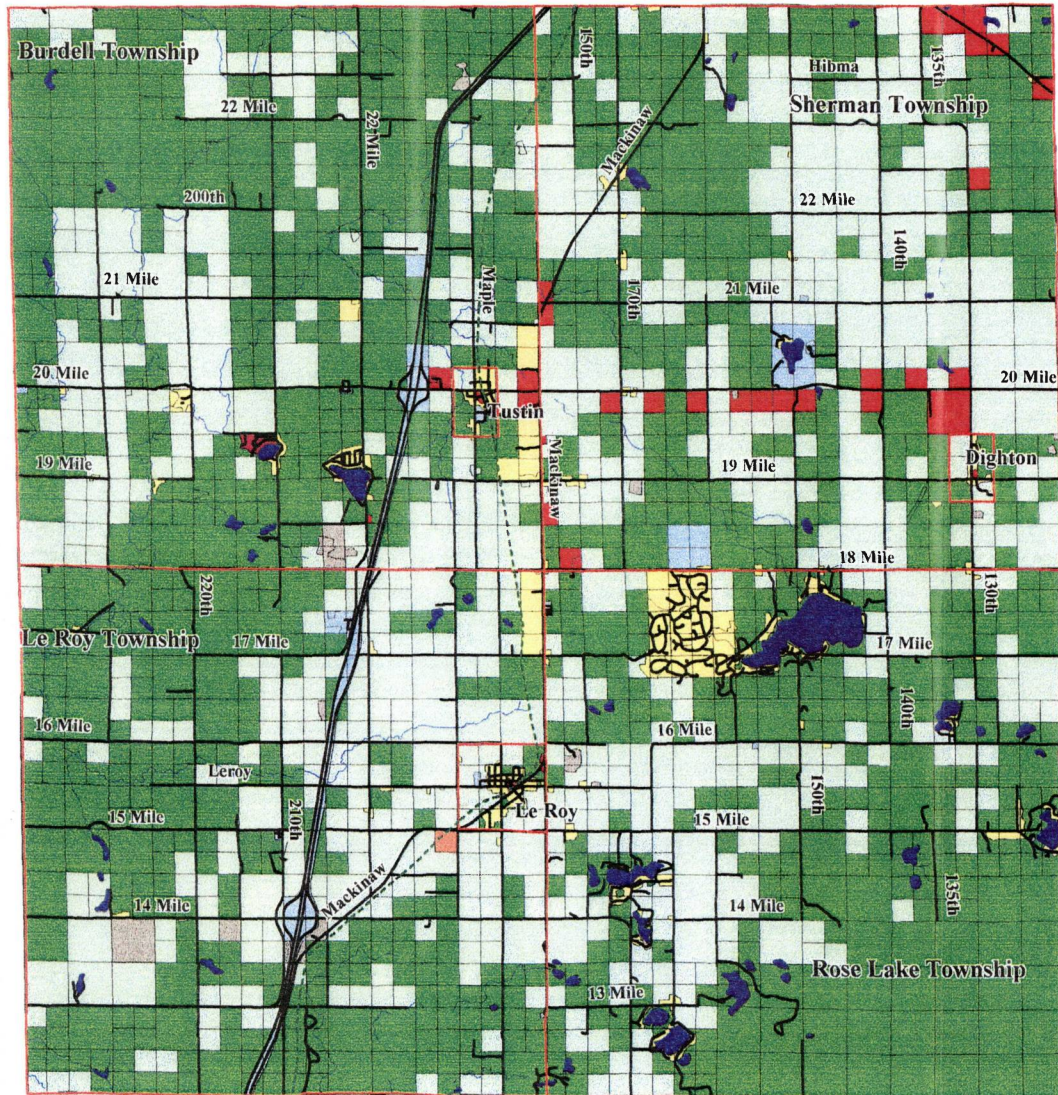
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





## OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Future Land Use  
Plan



### Legend

Township and City Boundaries



Roads and Highways

Recreational Trail



Water Features



### Land Uses

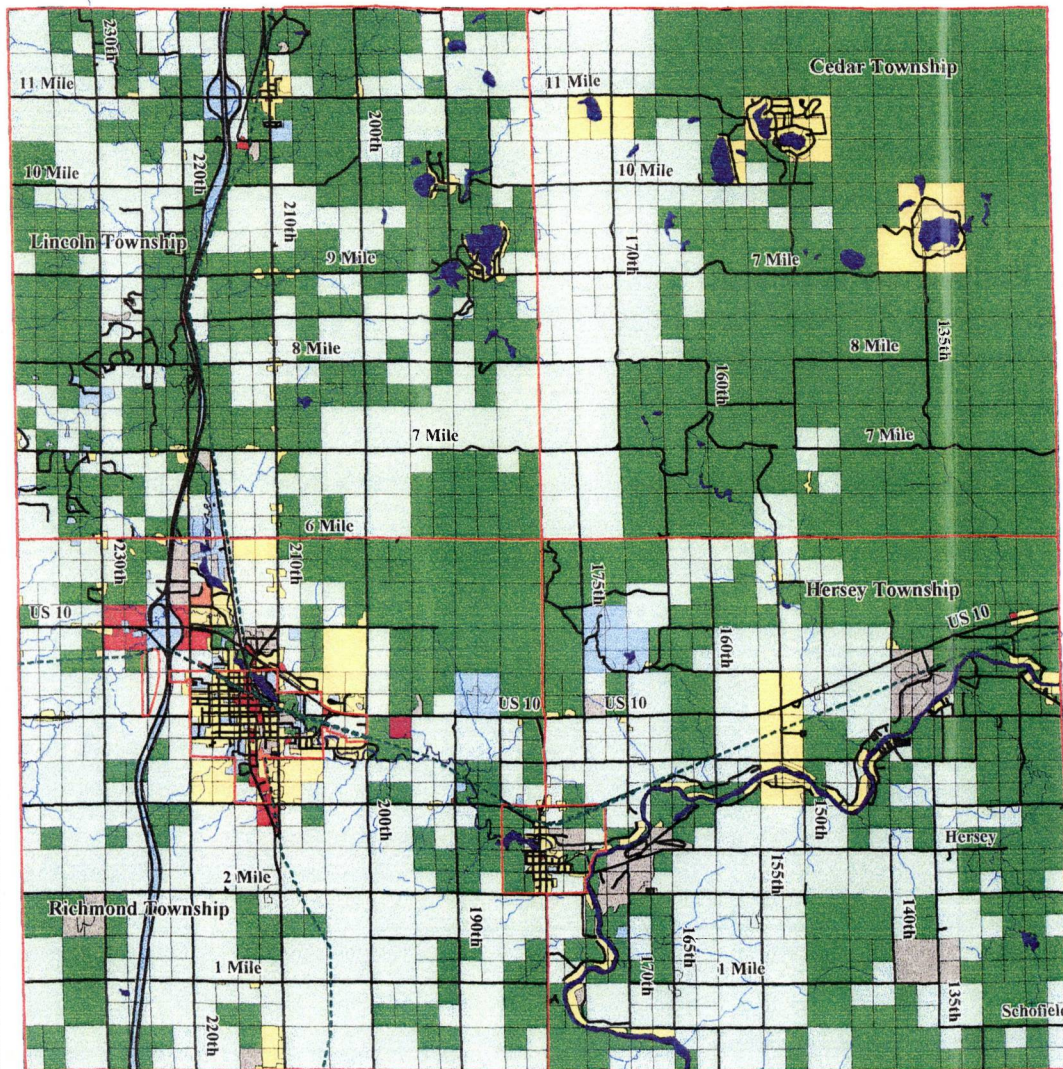
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- MULTIPLE FAMILY
- MODULAR
- OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





# OSCEOLA COUNTY Land Use Plan

Future Land Use  
Plan



## Legend

Township and City Boundaries



Roads and Highways

Recreation Trails

Water Features



## Land Uses

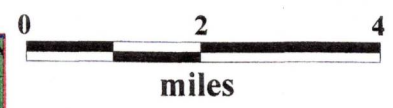
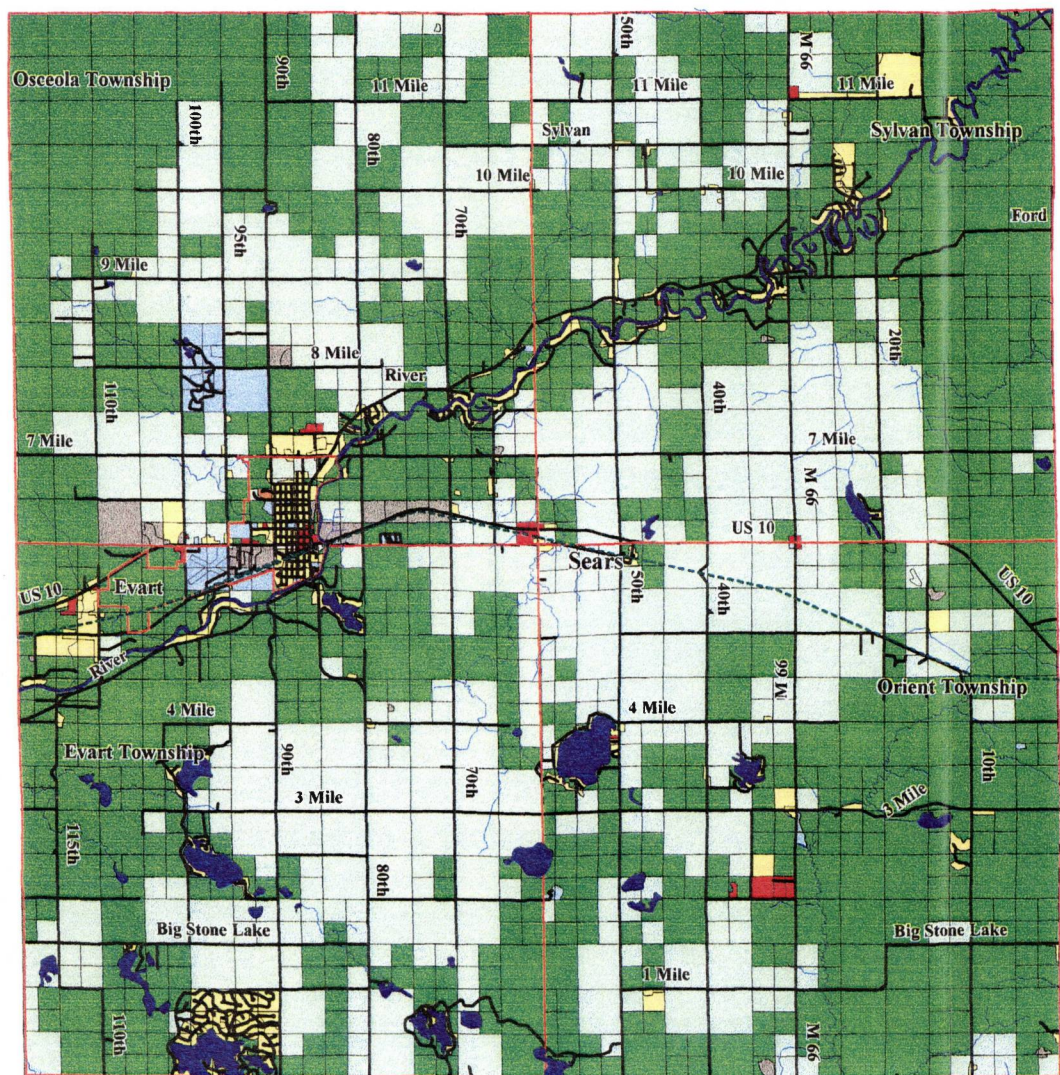
- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
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- MODULAR
- OPEN SPACE / FOREST LAND
- PUBLIC
- SINGLE FAMILY

## Quadrant Locator

NW	NE
SW	SE

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning  
Commission; Michigan Resource Information  
System





# OSCEOLA COUNTY

## Land Use Plan

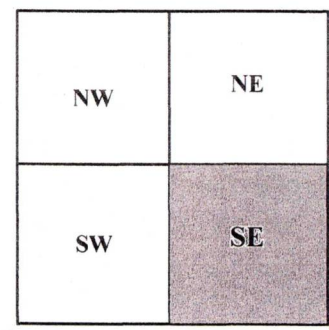
Future Land Use Plan



### Legend

- Township and City Boundaries**
- Roads and Highways**
- Recreation Trail**
- Water Features**
- Land Uses**
  - AGRICULTURE
  - COMMERCIAL
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - MULTIPLE FAMILY
  - OPEN SPACE/FOREST LAND
  - PUBLIC
  - SINGLE FAMILY

### Quadrant Locator



Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission; Michigan Resource Information System

## IMPLEMENTATION

This section takes the goals and objectives and places them into a schedule format that identifies responsibilities, time frames, and potential funding sources. The time frames are meant to provide a guideline and are intended to be flexible enough to meet the demands of the County Planning Commission. Many of the time frames identify “ongoing,” which is intended to imply that the identified actions should occur on a regular basis throughout the planning process. Funding sources are very general since they will change over the planning period – MEDC, MDNR, MDEQ and other state and federal programs will likely change as administrations change. The best plan for funding is to perform active research as the need to perform actions approach.

<b>Goal #1:</b> Maintain a system of streets and roads that will adequately meet the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and emergency vehicles.		
<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with the County Road Commission, County Commission, MDOT, and local units of government to provide residents with a safe network of state, county, and local streets and roads linking residential, employment, shopping, public, and recreational centers	Ongoing	Local, County, State, and Federal Transportation funds
2. The Osceola Economic Alliance will promote economic development by ensuring existing and future commercial, service, and industrial businesses are not limited by the County’s system of state, county, and local streets and roads.	Ongoing	MDOT, MEDC, EDA
3. The County Road Commission will work with MDOT to promote tourism in Osceola County by ensuring visitors have access to a safe, well-maintained, and well-signed network of state, county and local streets and roads.	Ongoing	Local, County, State, and Federal Transportation funds
4. The County Road Commission, the County Planning Commission, the Osceola Economic Alliance, and the WMRPC will work closely with the Regional MDOT Office to identify projects specific to Osceola County.	Ongoing	Administrative costs only
5. The Emergency Management Coordinator will work with fire departments, police, local units of government, the County Road Commission, and MDOT to ensure emergency vehicles have adequate access throughout the County.	Ongoing	Local, County, State, and Federal Transportation funds
6. County and local recreation providers will encourage non-motorized transportation opportunities when feasible by continuing to develop and improve the White Pine State Park (Trail), the Pere Marquette Trail, as well as other networks of non-motorized pathways.	Ongoing	MDNR, MDOT
7. County recreation providers will determine the feasibility of linking lakes, rivers and other bodies of water to create a network of waterways for transportation and recreation.	2005	MDNR
8. The County Road Commission, County Planning Commission, and the WMRPC will work with MDOT and local units of government to develop an “access management” program that controls the location of entrances to US-10.	2004	MDOT

<b>Goal #2: Continue to improve the County's economy and employment opportunities.</b>		
<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Board of Commissioners will continue to support the Osceola Economic Alliance.	Ongoing	County General Funds, Other
2. Osceola County will continue to participate in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and continue to work with the WMRPC and U.S. Economic Development Administration to promote economic development in the County.	Ongoing	County General Funds, Other
3. The Osceola Economic Alliance will continue to target businesses for location in the County's Renaissance Zone and Industrial Parks.	Ongoing	OEDA, EDA, MEDC
4. The Osceola Economic Alliance will continue to perform retention calls to the County's existing businesses to prevent unnecessary losses and promote expansion of employment.	Ongoing	OEDA, MEDC
5. The Osceola Economic Alliance will work with the area's schools to develop programs to address local businesses needs.	Ongoing	OEDA, MEDC, Schools
6. The County Planning Commission will work with local units of government and the Osceola Economic Alliance to insure that adequate land is available for the expansion and creation of industrial and commercial businesses.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
7. The Osceola Economic Alliance will promote the County's strategic location at the intersection of US-131 and US-10.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
8. The Osceola Economic Alliance will work with utilities and communication providers to insure Osceola County is prepared to meet the demands of businesses.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

<b>Goal #3:</b> Preserve the County's rural environment by preserving agriculture, open space and forested areas.		
<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with MSUE, USDA, local units of government; to work with farmers and other landowners to identify their needs, and to identify available programs to encourage the preservation of desired areas.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. County and local recreation providers will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to acquire areas for recreational uses.	Ongoing	MDNR
3. The County Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources/Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to encourage farmers to participate in purchase of development rights programs. Encourage the Michigan State Legislature to develop additional incentives such as expanded purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and transfer of development rights (TDR) programs.	Ongoing	MDNR, MDEQ
4. The County Planning Commission will work with the Osceola County MSU Extension Office and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to identify areas that should be preserved for agricultural purposes.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
5. The County Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service to encourage the preservation of open space and forested areas.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs, MDNR, MDEQ
6. The Osceola Economic Alliance will promote "Value Added" programs for agriculture to make farming more profitable and to add employment to the area.	Ongoing	EDA

<b>Goal #4:</b> Work with individual communities across the County to encourage planning.		
<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission to assist local units of government in gathering information necessary for planning.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The Osceola Economic Alliance will encourage local units of government to participate in the annual CEDS process.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
3. The County Planning Commission will regularly attend township, village, and city meetings to promote planning and gain an understanding of current issues.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

<b>Goal #5: Protect and improve the County's environment.</b>		
<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, local units of government, local business, farmers, and others to ensure that illegal activities are not tolerated.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The County Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and existing landowners to identify and correct environmental hazards.	Ongoing	MDEQ, private
3. The County Planning Commission will protect the area's groundwater from contamination by working with local units to coordinate groundwater protection efforts.	2005	MDNR
4. The County Planning Commission will work to identify the County's response to businesses wishing to benefit from the removal of the County's renewable and nonrenewable natural resources.	2004	Administrative Costs
5. The County Planning Commission will work with a variety of groups to identify areas with special positive environmental features that should be protected.	2006	Administrative Costs
6. The County Planning Commission and local units of government will plan any new development around lakes, rivers, and streams at a level that will limit the impact of development on water quality. Identify areas that may already be overdeveloped and begin planning for necessary upgrades to septic tanks and sanitary sewer systems.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
7. The County Planning Commission, MSUE, recreation providers, and others will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to determine the best ways to limit the introduction and effects of foreign animal and plant pests.	Ongoing	MDNR



**Goal #6:** Promote the natural beauty of the County by reducing blight, in the form of improperly maintained homes and businesses, trash, junk, non-functioning automobiles and other equipment, and other unsightly features.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
1. The County Planning Commission will work with local communities to develop a countywide blight ordinance that defines blight and the steps necessary to correct blight.	2004	Administrative Costs
2. The County Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners, and County Staff will work with local communities and the Osceola County Sheriff's Department to identify and correct blighted properties.	Ongoing	General Fund
3. The County Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners, and County Staff will determine if additional staffing is necessary to address blight in Osceola County.	2004	Administrative Costs
4. The County Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners, and County Staff will develop an easy method for residents to identify and report blighted properties in Osceola County.	2004	Administrative Costs
5. The County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners will consider sponsoring trash days to reduce illegal dumping in Osceola County. Work with surrounding counties to coordinate dates and to discourage dumping from people in other counties.	2004	General Fund, Fees
6. The County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners will work with individual communities to establish additional transfer stations.	2004	Local Funds, Fees
7. The County Road Commission will work with MDOT and local organizations to sponsor "Adopt a Highway" programs on State and County roads.	Ongoing	MDOT
8. The County Planning Commission will work with local communities to develop ordinances that establish an acceptable level of appearance for businesses across Osceola County.	2005	Administrative Costs
9. The County Planning Commission will maintain an up-to-date Solid Waste Plan.	Ongoing	General Fund

**Goal #7: Promote balanced land use through appropriate planning.**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. Regularly review the contents of the County's Land Use Plan for accuracy	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The County Planning Commission and the WMRPC will work with communities to develop and update land use plans and zoning ordinances	Ongoing	Local Sources
3. The County Planning Commission will attend planning conferences and workshops to update skills and learn about the latest planning techniques.	Ongoing	General Fund
4. The County Planning Commission will solicit public input for planning using a variety of methods such as newspaper and television reporting, surveys, workshops, and attending city, village, and township meetings.	Ongoing	General Fund
5. The County Planning Commission will continue to work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission in order to keep up-to-date on planning issues influencing the Region.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
6. The County Planning Commission will review local plans to determine if they relate to the County's Land Use Plan.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

**Goal #8: Promote a balanced mix of housing types to meet the various needs of existing and future residents.**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with Osceola County's communities to designate adequate acreage for different types of housing across Osceola County.	2003	General Fund
2. The County Planning Commission will consider working with communities across the County to perform a housing survey that would provide a "base-line" inventory (quantity and quality) of the County's housing stock.	2005	General Fund, MSHDA
3. The County Planning Commission will work with local communities to develop an ordinance that defines minimum housing standards necessary to promote the health, safety, and welfare of Osceola County residents.	2006	Administrative Costs
4. The County Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners, and County Staff will identify resources available to assist residents in purchasing homes	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
5. The County Planning Commission and local units of government will identify types of preferred housing development in other areas of West Michigan and determine the feasibility of duplicating such developments in Osceola County.	2006	Administrative Costs



**Goal #9:** Promote the development and expansion of commercial uses in cities and villages.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
1. Through planning and zoning, the County Planning Commission will work with cities and villages to insure that adequate land is available for existing commercial businesses to expand and new businesses to begin.	Ongoing	Administrative costs
2. The Osceola Economic Alliance will encourage commercial businesses (existing and new) to provide services residents identified as needed – such as apparel, building /garden supplies, eating/drinking establishments, general merchandise, groceries, and home furnishings.	Ongoing	General Fund, Chambers of Commerce
3. The County Planning Commission and the Osceola Economic Alliance will encourage cities and villages to perform downtown development plans to identify issues and establish goals specific to their downtown areas.	Ongoing	General Fund, Chambers of Commerce
4. The County Planning Commission will work with townships to identify land appropriate for commercial development and limit land available for commercial development outside of cities and villages.	Ongoing	Administrative costs

**Goal #10:** Promote the development and expansion of industrial parks in cities and villages.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
1. Through planning and zoning, The Osceola Economic Alliance and the County Planning Commission will work with cities and villages to insure that adequate land is available for existing industrial businesses to expand and new businesses to begin.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The County Planning Commission will encourage cities and villages to work with the Osceola Economic Alliance to identify issues and establish goals specific to industry.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
3. The County Planning Commission and the Osceola Economic Alliance will work with townships to identify land appropriate for industrial development without encouraging the unnecessary development of open space.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

**Goal #11: Promote recreation and tourism in Osceola County**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission, Osceola Economic Alliance, County recreation providers, and local recreation providers will use tourism and recreation as both an economic development tool and a way to preserve the County's rural attributes.	Ongoing	Local, County, MDNR
2. The County Planning Commission and the County Board of Commissioners will maintain an up-to-date countywide recreation plan and apply for appropriate grants to improve recreation opportunities in Osceola County.	Ongoing	County, MDNR
3. The County Planning Commission and the County Board of Commissioners will encourage individual communities to maintain recreation plans, or to combine efforts with the County.	Ongoing	Local, County, MDNR
4. Local lodging facilities, chambers of commerce, and others will continue investigating the possibility of establishing a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) or affiliating with an adjacent CVB.	Ongoing	Lodging Facilities, Chambers of Commerce

**Goal #12: Osceola County will continue to provide an appropriate level of services to residents, businesses, and visitors.**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Board of Commissioners will continue to work with County staff and communities within the County to insure that the County uses its resources in an efficient and effective manner.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The County Board of Commissioners and staff will frequently evaluate county programs to determine appropriate levels of service.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

**Goal #13: Osceola County will cooperate with school districts located within the County to provide opportunities for quality education opportunities**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>
1. The County Planning Commission will work with local units of government and school districts to insure adequate land is available for expansion of school facilities and work with schools to insure school growth can match development demands.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
2. The Osceola Economic Alliance will work with schools to identify educational needs of local businesses.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

**Goal #14:** Osceola County will maintain emergency service facilities and programs that will provide an adequate level of protection to protect the lives and property of residents, visitors and businesses.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
1. The County Planning Commission, the County Board of Commissioners, and the Emergency Management Coordinator will work with local units of government, the Michigan State Police and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to insure complete fire protection coverage across Osceola County. Develop strategies to address issues such as forest fires and tire fires.	2003	FEMA
2. The County Planning Commission and the County Board of Commissioners will work with Osceola County Emergency Services and Spectrum Health Services to insure an appropriate level of ambulance service.	2003	County, Private
3. The Osceola County Road Commission will work with emergency responders to insure street and road signage is easy to understand.	Ongoing	County Road Commission
4. The County Planning Commission and the County Board of Commissioners will encourage the Michigan State Police, the Osceola County Sheriff, the Department of Natural Resources, and local law protection agencies to coordinate law enforcement efforts and emergency situations.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs
5. The County Board of Commissioners will work with the appropriate staff and officials to maintain an appropriate level of emergency warning systems.	Ongoing	FEMA, Michigan State Police, County

**Goal #15:** Osceola County will protect its residents from any physical, aesthetic, and/or financial liabilities associated with communications equipment.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
1. The County Planning Commission will work with local communities to develop an ordinance that will guide the appropriate location of communications equipment.	2005	Administrative Costs
2. The County Planning Commission will ensure all communications towers are used to the fullest extent to limit the number of towers across Osceola County.	2005	Administrative Costs
3. The County Planning Commission will ensure that companies installing towers have the financial resources to remove towers if they become obsolete.	Ongoing	Administrative Costs

**Goal #16:** Osceola County will work with utilities to develop uniform methods to compensate property owners for rights-of-way.

Actions:	Time Frame	Funding Source(s)
The Osceola County Planning Commission will work with local units of government and utilities to develop an ordinance that defines appropriate levels of compensation for different types of rights-of-way such as gas, electric, and fiber optic.	2004	Administrative Costs

## CONCLUSION

The Osceola County Planning Commission worked between 2000 and 2002 to create this Land Use Plan. The plan is based on input from citizens, communities, schools, elected officials, planning commissioners, and many others interested in the future of Osceola County and identifies a vision for the County's future.

Implementing the Plan will involve many more years of work on the part of the Planning Commission and others. Cooperation will need to be emphasized throughout the process and the goals of the Plan should be kept alive throughout the planning period. Each monthly agenda for the Planning Commission should relate to the overall plan in some way – whether it is review the progress of the implementation program, creating a zoning ordinance, creating new ordinances, or working with other groups in order to reach the vision established in this plan.

Additionally, as time progresses, the Planning Commission should review the contents of the plan for accuracy and relevance to changing issues. The Planning Commission should frequently review the plan, but should give the document a good overhaul in 2012 when the 2010 Census figures are available and a complete overhaul in 2022. These reviews will provide many benefits including determining if the County is going in a positive direction, and familiarizing new planning commissioners with the overall goals established during the original process.

The Plan can also be the foundation of many other documents including a zoning ordinance, a recreation plan, a farmland preservation program, a waste management plan, strategic plans, economic development plans, and other documents intended to guide the County towards its preferred future. The Plan represents a major step towards the County's residents controlling the future of the County – as opposed to groups and individuals from outside the County that may not always have the residents' best interests in mind.