

STURGIS TOWNSHIP

LAND USE PLAN

**PREPARED BY THE STURGIS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE PREIM GROUP LLC**

**ADOPTED BY THE STURGIS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING ON AUGUST 25, 2008**

STURGIS TOWNSHIP

LAND USE PLAN

The following Land Use Plan was developed and adopted prior to the effective date of the new Michigan Planning Enabling Act, being P.A. 33 of 2008. This new plan replaces a Land Use Plan adopted in 1992 and generally reflects a projection for future development to the year 2020.

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INTRODUCTION

This Land Use Plan for **Sturgis Township**, St. Joseph County, Michigan, has been developed through the combined efforts of the Township's Planning Commission, Board of Trustees and a private consulting firm. This Plan is the first Plan undertaken since the last Plan was approved in 1992.

Planning Process

The development of this plan was generally based upon the process for development, review and approval established under the Township Planning Act (P.A. 168 of 1959, as amended). This included the analysis of population and housing data in order to provide a projection of population over the next 20-year period. Each community also has its own unique natural resource base in support of either additional development or identification of those areas that should be preserved in their natural state.

The existing built environment includes a brief review of land use, whether in the form of agricultural, residential or commercial/industrial development. This may be based upon existing land use or the potential that may exist through current zoning. Once this data has been collected, the pattern of both existing and potential development areas can be utilized as a base for determining future direction. A series of goals and objectives are included to assist in defining this direction. Such goals are intended to provide a broad perspective on preferred land use, with specific objectives oriented toward an action plan for implementation. These have been categorized into four categories: *Open Space/Recreation, Agricultural Preservation, Residential Development and Commercial/Industrial Development*.

The Future Land Use Plan is then developed based upon the findings from the analysis of data, existing patterns of development and public/governmental input. If the direction of proposed development is consistent with past practices, the plan may not be drastically altered from what was adopted back in 1992. If changes are proposed, these should be based upon consistency with the goals and objectives established through this planning process.

The final step within this planning process includes a specific schedule of future action related to plan implementation. This schedule may include increased coordination with the Township Board or adjoining units of government in developing projects that are based upon this plan. These may include capital improvements associated with enhancement to development corridors or techniques that could be used in order to increase the preservation of farmland. This implementation plan is also directed at amendments to the Township's Zoning Ordinance, allowing for better coordination between the Plan designations and the zoning districts, and the uses intended to be supported in each classification.

Location

Sturgis Township is located in the southeastern portion of St. Joseph County, directly west of the City of Sturgis and north of the Indiana Stateline (LaGrange County). Plans and ordinance mapping for the City of Sturgis and the surrounding Townships (Fawn River to the east, Sherman Township to the north and White Pigeon to the west) have been incorporated into this review and recommendations reflect a coordinated planning approach consistent with the intent of the St. Joseph County Master Land Use Plan.

Sturgis Township is roughly half the size of a traditional township (only 24 Sections), with Sections 19-24 further reduced in size along the Indiana border. The City of Sturgis further reduces this area, encompassing some or all of Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 24. This reduced size does not diminish the scope of potential development that exists in this location of the County.

Transportation

Sturgis Township is well served by state and interstate highways, with I-80 running east/west directly south of the Township in northern Indiana (Map 1). Proximity to an interchange exists as I-9 turns into M-66, which runs northerly through the City of Sturgis and extends north to Battle Creek and beyond. US-12 provides east/west connection through the City and the Township, providing for access to commercial and industrial development areas along both State trunklines (See Development Trends and Strategies).

County roads serve the balance of the Township, running north/south and east/west along Section lines. Shimmel Road provides for north/south access to the Village of Centreville, the County Seat, and Glen Oaks Community College. Fawn River Road provides similar access east/west across the Township. Rail service generally parallels US-12 and Kirsch Airport is located in a part of Section 2 within the City of Sturgis. The influence of these two modes of transportation (rail and air) increase the potential for industrial development within the community.

STURGIS TOWNSHIP
St. Joseph County, Michigan



MAP 1

POPULATION/DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

This section of the Plan is primarily directed at an analysis of the past in terms of population and the influence of housing within the Township. The 1992 Plan presented population for the Township from 1960-1990, with Sturgis Township evaluated in relation to the surrounding units of government and the County as a whole. Table 1 below compares the 1970 through 2000 Census data for the same governmental units. The 2000 Population of 2,403 is substantially higher than what was anticipated from the 1992 Plan, with only moderate population growth occurring between 1980 and 1990 as the basis for that projection.

Table 1
Population

Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change (1970-2000)
STURGIS TOWNSHIP	1,449	1,871	1,965	2,403	66%
City of Sturgis	9,295	9,468	10,130	11,285	21%
Fawn River Twp.	1,471	1,639	1,571	1,648	12%
Sherman Township	2,101	2,756	2,978	3,248	55%
White Pigeon Twp.*	1,540	2,125	2,196	2,220	44%
White Pigeon Village	1,455	1,478	1,458	1,627	12%
St. Joseph County	47,392	56,083	58,913	62,422	32%

* Does not include population of White Pigeon Village

For purposes of the evaluating the data within Table 1, the 30-year period was utilized to analyze population growth. Sturgis Township had substantial rate of growth between 1990 and 2000 (over 22%) and the growth rate between 1970 and 2000 (66%) exceeded that for all surrounding units of government and the County as a whole. It should be noted that LaGrange County to the south in Indiana, experienced an increase of over 18% during the 1990-2000 period and an almost identical 67% increase over the 30-year period.

Sherman Township, to the north, and White Pigeon Township, to the west, also experienced increases beyond the rate for the County, while the City of Sturgis, Fawn River Township (to the east) and White Pigeon Village had rates of growth below that of the County. The growth that has occurred within the City of Sturgis is somewhat unique for cities in southwest Michigan during the same period of time, as many have simply lost population to the surrounding Townships as more residents seek greater open space and a more rural lifestyle.

Population growth is often reflective of in-migration based upon the desirability of the community and the age of new residents. Table 2 presents the breakdown in age categories for the same units of government listed in Table 1. This data reflects the general makeup of the population, with the median age of 33 years more consistent with an urban setting rather than the older populations found in most rural areas.

Table 2
Age Breakdown (2000 Census)

Community	0-17	18-44	45-64	65+	Median Age
STURGIS TOWNSHIP	31%	37%	21%	11%	33
City of Sturgis	28%	39%	18%	15%	32
Fawn River Twp.	28%	38%	25%	9%	35
Sherman Township	25%	37%	26%	12%	39
White Pigeon Twp.*	25%	35%	27%	13%	38
St. Joseph County	27%	37%	23%	13%	36

* The totals for White Pigeon Township include White Pigeon Village

The data presented within Table 2 indicates that the high percentage of residents under age 17 has contributed to the population growth within the Township. When the population totals between the ages of 45-64 and 65 and over are combined for Sturgis Township, the total percentage (32%) is the lowest of any of the other units, reflecting the likelihood that some natural population increase (births – deaths) has added to the in-migration totals. This may also reflect more stability based upon the number of traditional families living in households in the Township.

The makeup of the household unit (an occupied housing unit) may be in the form of a family household, married couples living together or single parents with a child under the age of 18, or a non-family household, with either unrelated individuals living together or single persons living alone. The data within Table 3 reflects the type of family households, with a very high percentage of married couples in the Township.

Table 3
Households

Community	Married Couples %	Average Family Size	% Non-Family	Average Household Size	% Living Alone 65 and Over
STURGIS TOWNSHIP	60%	3.18	24%	2.80	7%
City of Sturgis	46%	3.20	37%	2.57	15%
Fawn River Township	63%	3.15	25%	2.76	7%
Sherman Twp.	67%	3.05	23%	2.69	7%
White Pigeon Township*	58%	2.99	29%	2.55	9%
St. Joseph Co.	56%	3.09	29%	2.63	10%

* Totals for White Pigeon Township include White Pigeon Village

Overall Analysis

Sturgis Township appears to be benefiting from both immigration into the community and natural population increase with births exceeding deaths. The strong family household makeup also presents the potential for such growth, or at least stability, to continue should such families remain within the community over the next twenty years. The 20-year life of a Plan is intended to track a generational perspective, with the age breakdown in Table 2 providing for the best future snapshot. As residents “age in-place”, remaining within their existing housing or at least within the same community, providing housing alternatives should be considered critical in support of this trend.

The St. Joseph County Master Plan (Socio-Economic Profile) reflects a more segregated age breakdown of pre-schoolers (0-4), school age children (5-17), college age individuals (18-24), young adults (25-35), adults (36-49), empty nesters (50-64) and seniors (65 and over). This type of breakdown gets more difficult to project out as young adults often have children later in life and many of the “empty nesters” retain the care of children, grandchildren or their own parents within the household. This may lead to an expanding size of a household (and possibly expanding the size of the dwelling unit) at a time when the age breakdown would suggest otherwise. This County Master Plan also utilizes such data in projecting future population to the year 2015.

Population Projections

There are numerous methods of conducting population projections but they can be categorized in primarily two ways. One category focuses on the natural increase in population associated with the number of births exceeding the number of deaths. An often used method is the “cohort-survival” method, using the age/sex breakdown for that community and projecting: a) the number of potential births from the base of females in the 15 to 44 “fertility” age range; and b) the number of anticipated deaths based upon average life expectancy. This method is most often based on the current census of population.

The second category relates to the net population increase associated with the immigration (or in-migration) of people into the community minus the out-migration that may occur. This becomes much more difficult to calculate. Adding this projection to the natural increase, sometimes referred to as the “cohort-component” method, provides for both categories to be utilized in one projection.

Another approach is simply to use the pattern over the past to project the future population. This “growth rate” method to project future population tends to remove the fluctuations from economic related cycles that may influence a 10-year period. Based upon the inconsistent increases in population between 1980 and 2000, the intent is to utilize the 20-year period as the basis for a twenty-year projection. Thus, the population increase of 28% between 1980 and 2000 will be utilized as the base for this future projection and will then be evaluated in terms of the impact on the housing stock.

Table 4
Population Projections

2000 Census	2005 Projection	2010 Projection	2015 Projection	2020 Projection
2,403	2,571	2,751	2,944	3,165

Utilizing a 7% population increase projection for each five-year increment would result in a 2020 population of 3,165 persons, or an increase of 762 people over the period. If the projections of decline in average household size remain consistent, and if the Township continues to attract more family households, an average family household size of 3 persons could be utilized to project the need for additional housing units. In this scenario, the increase of 762 persons would minimally reflect the presence of at least 254 households.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS & STRATEGIES

This section of the Plan will focus on those issues now facing that Township that may influence the direction of development over the next twenty years. The 1992 Land Use Plan utilized this section for an analysis of existing land use by reviewing development within the 24 sections of the Township (including Section 1, which is entirely within the City of Sturgis, and several other partial sections within the City limits). This new Plan will focus on a review related to **development corridors**, with the intent to utilize these corridors in support of more intensive development.

M-66 South

This development corridor is a north/south state transportation route running south from US-12 to the Indiana state line, where it becomes I-9 with linkage at Interstate 80. A high percentage of both commercial and industrial development within the Township is located along this corridor. Consideration is now being given to the establishment of an “overlay district” that would serve to provide consistency in design between MDOT, which has jurisdiction over the state trunkline, The City of Sturgis and Sturgis Township, which regulate zoning along the corridor, and LaGrange County, Indiana, which regulates zoning along I-9. Such an overlay district would require adoption by Sturgis Township as an amendment to the Township’s zoning ordinance.

With the influence of both local and regional traffic utilizing this corridor, access management guidelines will be needed to assist in reducing the number of driveways with direct access onto the roadway. The use of service drives and possibly cross-access agreements will be needed to support the level of development, both commercial and industrial, that is likely to continue along this corridor. Fawn River Road and Bogen Road, two east/west county roads, provide intersections with M-66 at central points along this approximately 3-mile corridor. It is anticipated that a service road paralleling M-66 would extend from State Line Road to Bogen Road along the west side of the corridor, providing access to a depth of approximately ¼ of a mile. The St. Joseph County Utility Service Master Plan has identified this area as the South Sturgis Development Area for extension of public sewer and water services.

US-12

This development corridor is an east/west state transportation route running west from the City of Sturgis through the Township to the White Pigeon Township line. Commercial development extends from the City into the Township along the eastern portion of this corridor and then is generally limited in scope west of the White School Road intersection. Commercial development is then initiated again in White Pigeon Township, south of Klinger Lake.

It is anticipated that this corridor could support the service needs of local residents along White School Road and more regional agricultural needs as it extends west through the

Township. The 1992 Plan identified the potential for limited commercial development at the Balk Road intersection. As residential development continues to move west of the City, greater demand for commercial services may be anticipated extending to the west along this corridor. It is anticipated that the land area north to the railroad R.O.W. would be more suitable for commercial and the lands on the south side of US-12 more suitable for residential development, at a density less intensive than the existing mobile home park. The St. Joseph County Utility Service Master Plan has identified this area as the West Sturgis Development Area for extension of public sewer and water services.

Fawn River Road

This development corridor is an east/west county road which extends the full length of the Township from White Pigeon Township to Fawn River Township, including a segment through the City of Sturgis. With the most intensive development at or near the intersection with M-66, it is anticipated that residential development of a medium to higher density will likely occur as public utilities are extended. The St. Joseph County Utility Service Master Plan has identified this area (and extending north along White School Road) as the Southwest Sturgis Service Area, where higher residential density and the potential for commercial development may require extension of public services.

Bogen Road

This development corridor is an east/west county road which extends from Balk Road to the west to Fawn River Township (Lakeview Road). More intensive commercial and industrial development is anticipated in this location around M-66. Much of the roadway to the west of the railroad R.O.W. is characterized by limited development potential due to the Nye Drain and related drainage needs.

White School Road

This development corridor is a north/south county road which extends from Airline Road (north Township boundary) to south of Fawn River Road. The primary land use is single family detached residential units on larger lots. It is this area that is likely to absorb increased residential development as growth continues to the west of the City of Sturgis and along the M-66 corridor.

Balk Road

This development corridor is a north/south county road which extends north through Sherman Township to Lake Templene and south into La Grange County. While not intensively developed, this road provides linkages to the surrounding area and may have some potential for expanded commercial development at its intersection with US 12. It is anticipated that such development could be to a depth of approximately 600 feet to the west of Balk Road, extending north to the railroad R.O.W.

Shimmel/Stubey Roads

While these two county roads traverse north and south, with Shimmel extending to Glen Oaks Community College and the Village of Centreville, the agricultural nature of these areas within Sturgis Township does not support increased scrutiny as development corridors, with no anticipation of public utility extensions during the 20-year life of this Plan.

Airline/Klinger Lake Roads

These two county roads serve as the boundary lines to the north and west of the Township. In both instances, the nature of development in these areas is primarily agricultural within Sturgis Township, with more intensive development to the west in White Pigeon Township and to the north in Sherman Township.

Capital Improvement Programming (CIP)

The need for development areas to be served by public utilities is not an absolute, but it is intended that as demand places greater focus on these areas, efforts will be made to invest in off-site infrastructure improvements (roads, utility lines, etc.) in support of more intensive land use. This demand has presented itself within the development corridors indicated above, with M-66 and US-12 both supporting a continued focus on commercial and industrial development. Fawn River Road and White School Road provide for further growth potential, connecting these two commercial/industrial development areas with supporting residential land use in varying densities. A natural pattern of development exists for these areas to extend further to the west to, and including, the Balk Road corridor. A primary focus on maintenance and improvements to these two state trunklines and three county roads would serve as the basis for initial capital improvement programming for the Township.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives are based upon input generally consistent with the findings from the 1991 community survey. At that time, the survey results indicated that the public was divided as to supporting increased commercial development along US-12 or retaining this area for agricultural use. It also supported the continuation of residential development in the Township, with preference for areas that minimize the impact on the environment.

Open Space/Recreation: A goal of preserving natural areas in order to protect the environment and provide for long term quality of life for current and future residents. The following objectives are in support of this goal:

- Seek to preserve those lands with soils that are sensitive to more intensive development
- Promote well planned and well managed open space, with these open space areas integrated into development plans where feasible.
- Preserve open space and rural character through the use of zoning techniques directed toward reducing sprawl and preventing or minimizing the loss of woodlots, wetlands and agricultural lands.

Agricultural Preservation: A goal of preserving the maximum amount of agricultural land in order to promote the continuance and expansion of agriculture within the Township. The following objectives are in support of this goal:

- Seek to preserve farmland and support agriculture as a viable industry within the Township.
- Minimize agricultural land fragmentation and provide for the continuation of agricultural production between family generations.
- Utilize a “growth boundary” to separate residential areas from agricultural areas and support Michigan’s Right to Farm Act and statewide farmland preservation programs.

Residential Development: A goal of providing for new residential development while promoting the maximum preservation of agricultural land. The following objectives are in support of this goal:

- Encourage more intensive residential development within the eastern portion of the Township, within close proximity to the City of Sturgis, where higher densities exist and have the greatest potential to be supported by public utilities in the future.
- Provide for residential development of much lower densities within agricultural areas while not utilizing excess land beyond that needed to support such use.

Commercial/Industrial Development: A goal of providing for business development without negatively impacting agricultural or residential areas of the Township. The following objectives are in support of this goal:

- Commercial development should be encouraged to locate along State trunklines (US-12 and M-66) within proximity to public services now or within future utility service areas.
- Industrial development should be directed into the City of Sturgis Industrial Park or to the south along M-66.
- Home occupations may be supported within agricultural and residential areas provided they meet conditions related to their operation.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This Future Land Use Plan seeks to coordinate the varying interests of farmland preservation with residential development and commercial and industrial uses along development corridors within the Township. In addition to coordination with adjoining Townships, this plan will build upon the relationship with the City of Sturgis in terms of both community and economic development. The following seven (7) designations of land use are presented on the Future Land Use Plan map as follows:

- Open Space
- Agricultural Preservation
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial

Open Space: This designation of land use is primarily based upon data from soil surveys, with areas identified that are less suitable for development. Such areas usually serve as natural drainage areas in support of adjoining agricultural or residential development. Where these areas have been drained, they are clearly in support of agricultural preservation and may be included within any compatible farmland preservation programs.

The areas designated open space follow the mapping presented within the Geographic Analysis, with floodplains and wetlands generally linked to other hydric soils. Generally, these areas are located south of Fawn River Road and include areas along the Nye Drain. The Green Valley golf course and the adjoining campground area would also be consistent with the recreational focus of this designation.

Residential development within these areas would be possible, as special land uses, where more specific information is available or required on the ability of such lands to support private well and septic systems. The use of the Open Space Preservation development option may be useful in implementing this plan designation. The “R/C” Recreation/Conservation District would be considered the compatible zoning district, with residential density limited to no more than one unit per every five (5) acres.

Agricultural Preservation: This designation of land use is also based upon data from soil surveys, with areas identified as prime farmland. With the vast majority of soils typically supporting some type of agricultural use, the area designated will generally encompass all other lands not specifically designated for more intensive development. Generally, these areas are located west of Balk Road.

The intent of farmland preservation within this Plan is two-fold: (1) To protect agriculture as an important economic base within the community; and (2) To restrict the encroachment of residential development into these areas when other areas of the Township are more suitable for such development. The use of the Open Space Preservation development option may be useful in long-term preservation efforts. The “A” Agricultural District would be considered the compatible zoning district, with residential density limited to no more than one unit per every two (2) acres.

Low Density Residential: This designation provides for the establishment of residential development areas that may or may not be supported by public utilities and other infrastructure improvements. The “R-1” Single Family Residential District would be considered the compatible zoning district, with residential density limited to no more than one (1) unit per acre. The use of both the Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Open Space Preservation (OSP) options would be useful in clustering residential use into areas most suitable for such development. The preserved open space may then be used for recreational pursuits or to provide buffers from more intensive development or next to adjoining agricultural use. The separation line between areas designated low density residential and agricultural is to be considered a “growth boundary”. Areas inside of this growth boundary provide sufficient capacity for residential development to occur in the Township over the next twenty years.

Medium Density Residential: This designation supports single family dwellings on smaller lots and two family dwellings (duplexes) in areas that can be served by public utilities now or within the near future. The “R-2” Two Family Residential District would be considered the compatible zoning district, with residential density limited to no more than three (3) units per acre, with this higher density permitted where public utilities can be extended in support of such use. The use of both Planned Unit Development and Open Space Preservation options would be supported, provided overall density does not exceed the three (3) units per acre standard.

High Density Residential: This designation supports the most intensive residential development, with public utilities required to serve such areas of the Township. The “R-3” Multiple Family Residential District would be considered the compatible zoning district, although a proposed new “MHP” Mobile Home Park District would also be considered compatible. Residential density would be supported at more than three (3) units per acre. The planned unit development option would also be encouraged, especially in those areas adjoining commercial or as part of a mixed used development plan.

Commercial: This designation would follow the development corridors along M-66 south of the City and US-12 west of the City. The “C-1” Neighborhood Service and “C-2” Highway Service Commercial Districts would both be considered compatible. The range of permitted and special land uses within these

districts would be supported, with consideration given to less intensive residential use or more intensive industrial use in terms of the need for greenbelt or screening requirements.

The Township and the City of Sturgis are working on overlay development standards that will streamline the application and approval process for new business or existing business expansion along the M-66 development corridor. Mixed-use development options may also be considered, with planned unit development a special land use in both zoning districts.

Industrial: This land use designation is directed at supporting businesses of an industrial or more intensive commercial nature. The “I” Light Industrial District is considered the most compatible zoning district, although less intensive commercial zoning and uses would also be consistent. As with the commercial designation, this industrial designation would be subject to the overlay development standards along the M-66 corridor.

These plan designations serve as the foundation for zoning and are to be considered the starting point for review of any request for rezoning of property. Where the proposed rezoning is clearly inconsistent with the plan designation, a request for plan amendment should first be initiated in support of such a request. Otherwise, inconsistency with the Plan would be a strong position in denial of the request. Where the proposed rezoning is to a less intensive zone than intended by the Plan, the Plan need not be amended, but the Planning Commission and Township Board should consider whether development of the area for a less intensive may reduce the potential for the intended outcome. Thus, commercial zoning within an area designated industrial would be acceptable provided sufficient area exists for future industrial development.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Land Use Plan, through the Future Land Use Map and Text, provides for designating locations for more intensive land use. As this growth occurs, it is typically implemented through requests for rezoning by the property owner or developer. Thus, it is critical that the Plan serve as a general guideline for these growth areas, with consistency in regulation through the compatible zoning districts. It is necessary that amendments to the Zoning Ordinance be made periodically in order to gain greater consistency with the intent of the Plan. The following amendments are proposed as part of this Plan adoption:

- ✓ Create an Overlay District for Commercial/Industrial development along M-66
- ✓ Create an Overlay District for Open Space Preservation (OSP) Projects within the recreation/conservation, agricultural and residential districts
- ✓ Provide for expanded home occupation use along US-12
- ✓ Create a new Mobile Home Park (MHP) zoning district
- ✓ Expand the regulation of animals, residential care facilities and other ordinance amendments consistent with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006)

While the Land Use Plan is primarily intended to serve as the foundation for the Zoning Ordinance, it can also be utilized to initiate consideration of other plans, programs and ordinances that may serve the Township. The section of Development Trends and Strategies introduces the coordination of public utilities and infrastructure within a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This 6-Year program is intended to have the Planning Commission serve in an advisory role to the Township Board in creating a listing of priority projects that can be incorporated into annual budgets.

As population growth brings new residents into the community, greater focus may be on providing recreational facilities to serve the various demands for target populations, whether in the form of playgrounds for kids or walking paths for adults. A 5-year Recreation Plan is intended to coordinate these various priorities into a locally approved plan that can be utilized as the basis for grant funding of projects through the State or Federal government.

Should farmland preservation programs be expanded at the County and State level, this Plan shall provide the initial basis for consistency of those applications through the "Agricultural Preservation" designation. Expanded opportunity for agricultural business development should also be a consideration within possible zoning ordinance text amendments.