



MECOSTA TOWNSHIP 2010 MASTER PLAN



2010

Mecosta Township Master Plan

Township Board

Supervisor – Philip A. Hanford
Treasurer – Mary Quinlan
Clerk – Susan Sikkema
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Planning Commission

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Mary Quinlan, Board Representative

**Adopted by the Mecosta Township Board
October 13, 2010**

*Prepared with the assistance of
Tim Johnson, PCP
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*Maps by Progressive AE
And Mecosta County*

**VERIFICATION OF ADOPTION
BY TOWNSHIP BOARD**

I hereby certify that the 2010 Master Plan for Mecosta Township was duly adopted by the Mecosta Township Board on October 13, 2010.

Susan Sikkema

Susan Sikkema, Clerk

Mecosta Township

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INTRODUCTION

The Mecosta Township Master Plan has been prepared by the Township Planning Commission under the provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. The Planning Act authorizes townships to prepare and adopt a plan for the unincorporated areas of the township. The purpose of that plan, according to the State Act, is to:

- promote the public health, safety, and general welfare;
- encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- avoid overcrowding of the land by buildings and people;
- lessen congestion on public roads and streets;
- facilitate a transportation system, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements; and,
- consider the township's character and suitability for particular uses.

Although the Master Plan has no regulatory power, it states specific land development and preservation goals. These goals are intended to guide both the Planning Commission and the Township Board in making both day-to-day and long-range land use decisions.

This Master Plan has been developed based upon several factors: the existing natural resources of the Township; current land use trends; the need for different types of land use including industrial and commercial uses; and the desired community character as expressed through work sessions with local officials.

State law states that each community shall review its Master Plan every five years, and determine whether the plan should be amended or a new plan adopted. Therefore, the Mecosta Township Master Plan addresses land use policy for at least the next five years, and at the end of that period the Plan should be reviewed to determine whether its' stated goals and policies need to be revised.

Use of the Plan

The Master Plan serves as a tool for decision making by providing information and rationale for land use decisions. The Master Plan does not contain a specific time frame or timetable for the development of Township lands as recommended on the Future Land Use Map. Development takes place as land owners seek rezonings and as developers request approval of plans for residential and commercial projects in response to market demands.

The Master Plan does not dictate the timing of development but rather the Plan sets forth recommendations for what type of land uses can be established in the Township, where they can be established and under what conditions they can be established.

In particular, the Plan will assist local officials in the following:

- **Review of rezonings and special use permits.** Applications for rezonings and special use permits should be evaluated not only in terms of specific ordinance standards but also in terms of how well the proposed action will be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.
- **Review of public improvement projects.** All future public improvement projects, including the construction of new facilities, utilities, or buildings must first be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with the Master Plan, according to PA 33 of 2008. In particular, any public improvement project must be reviewed to see whether it is consistent with the planned future land use pattern in Mecosta Township. Public improvements projects include roads, public safety facilities, parks and recreation facilities, utilities, and any other public space, building, or structure.
- **Review of plats and site condominiums.** Site condominium divisions, have a profound impact upon the character of a community and future public service needs. The Master Plan provides policies to assist the Planning Commission with decisions as to location and design of subdivisions, and the adequacy of public services to meet the increase in demand placed upon the community by the land use intensity of site condominiums and platted subdivisions. Policies for subdivision of land apply not only to residential land use, but to commercial and industrial land use as well.
- **Maintaining community character while managing growth.** Each community has a vision for its future, and a sense for the desired character. However, growth is inevitable in a thriving community. **The Master Plan, more than any other document, provides direction for Township officials in managing growth while retaining the desired community character, and providing the best quality of life possible for current and future residents.**
- **Providing a legal framework for zoning actions.** The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that zoning regulations be "based upon a plan." (MCL 125.3203) A Township's zoning actions and regulations are generally viewed favorably by the courts provided that such actions and regulations are not deemed to be "arbitrary and capricious." By providing adequate support for zoning decisions, the Master Plan therefore serves as the legal backbone of the zoning ordinances and helps to protect zoning decisions made by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals

- This Plan is a very strong and visible statement by the Township and its residents, regarding the intended future character of the community and strategies to assure that character. As a formal and tangible document this Plan instills a sense of stability and direction for Township officials, Township activities, and Township residents.

Preparation of the Master Plan

The Master Plan process was begun by the Mecosta Township Planning Commission and the Township Board in May 2009. A brainstorming session was held to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) for Mecosta Township. This SWOT session constituted the beginning of identifying the community issues that would impact the preparation of the Master Plan. The results are contained in Appendix A.

A for community-wide SWOT session was held on July 16, 2009 to seek citizen comments on the future growth of Mecosta Township. In addition to the SWOT exercise participants prepared their own future land use maps. Although citizen participation was low, about 16 people attended, including Township Board and Planning Commissioners, the work session produced ideas and information useful in the preparation of the Master Plan. The results of both workshops are contained in Chapter 2.

The Planning Commission met monthly to prepare a draft Plan which was reviewed with the Township Board on October 28, 2009 and also on January 5, 2010. The Draft Plan was sent to adjoining communities as required by the Planning Enabling Act and on May 4, 2010 a public hearing was held to obtain further citizen comment on the proposed plan. Following the hearing the Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Mecosta Township Master Plan on May 4, 2010. **The Township Board adopted the Plan on October 13, 2010.**

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Location

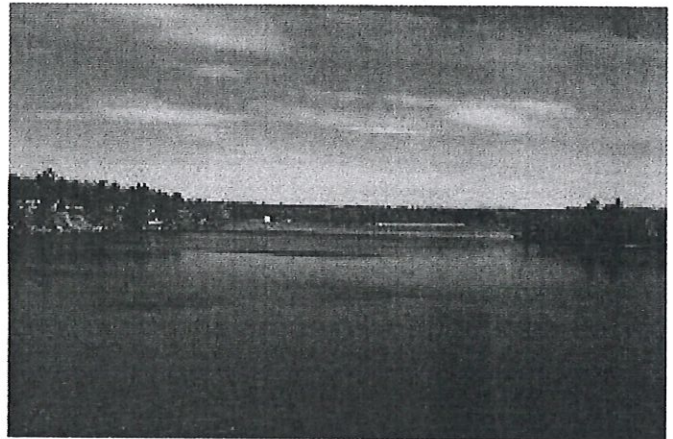
Mecosta Township, population 2435 (2000 US Census), is located in the southwest portion of Mecosta County just south of the City of Big Rapids and abuts Newaygo County. According to the United States Census Bureau, the Township has a total area of 35.9 square miles (93.1 km²), of which, 33.9 square miles (87.9 km²) of it is land and 2.0 square miles (5.2 km²) of it (5.57%) is water.

The Township is bisected by U.S. 131 with an interchange located at Eight Mile Road.

NATURAL FEATURES

Water

The most significant natural feature in Mecosta Township is the Muskegon River which flows southwest through the Township on its way to Lake Michigan. The Muskegon River is Michigan's second largest river, extending 219 miles. It is second in length only to the Grand River's 260 miles. The Muskegon River's headwaters are found in Houghton Michigan and Higgins Lake and it flows through the better part of several Michigan counties; Clare, Mecosta, Missaukee, Muskegon, Newaygo, Osceola, Roscommon. The river's mouth is in Muskegon Lake, which eventually flows into Lake Michigan. The entire Muskegon River watershed covers over 2720 square miles.

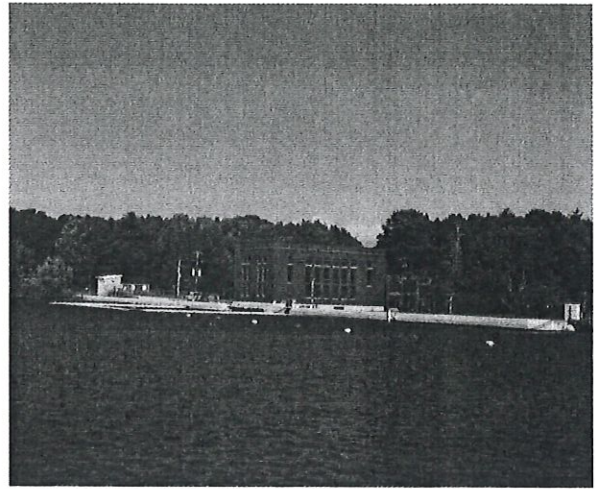


During Michigan lumber boom era, the Muskegon River was used as a means of transportation as logs were floated down the river from the northern Michigan forests, down river to the sawmills.

Other flowing waters include Macks Creek, Ladner Creek and Betts Creek which all flow to the Muskegon River. The entire Township is within the Muskegon River watershed with several sub-watersheds as illustrated on **Map 1** in the Appendix.

In 1906 Rogers Dam on the Muskegon River was constructed in the Township in the community known as Rogers Heights. The dam was destroyed by fire in 1921 and rebuilt in 1922. Rogers Dam is the site of the oldest hydro plant still in operation by Consumers Power, housing four generating units producing 6,700 kW of electricity.

Rogers Pond created by the dam is an all sports water body of over 700 acres and is a popular recreation area.



Rogers Heights is an unincorporated community located on Northland Drive (old US 131). A variety of businesses in Rogers Heights serve the surrounding residents many of whom live along both sides of Rogers Pond and form the largest concentration of dwellings in the Township.

The Village of Stanwood, population 204, (2000 US Census) is located in Section 25 in the southeast corner of the Township.

Topography, Geology & Soils

The topography in the Township is much higher with more hills and steep slopes on the west side of the Muskegon River particularly in the northwest portions (Sections 4-9 and 16, 17 and 18) with high banks along portions of the Muskegon River in Section 20 on Elder Road. Contour elevations drop from 1060 in the northwest corner of the Township to 860 or less along the river in Section 16 – a drop of 200 feet. Land on the east side of the Muskegon River contains large areas of flat land with scattered hills and some steep slopes following Macks Creek.

Map 2, Digital Elevation Model, provides a graphic representation of the elevation changes in the Township.

Mecosta County contains deposits 450 to 825 feet thick of shale and limestone left during the glacial period. The Muskegon River is located in an outwash plain created by the melting glaciers. Soils are predominantly classified Perrinton-Coloma Ithaca association and Coloma association both of which are somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils that formed in glacial till and outwash deposits. Soils along the Muskegon River itself are classified as being within the Mecosta association. These are also poorly to excessively drained soils formed in glacial till and outwash deposits. **Map 3**, Landtype Associations, illustrates the major land forms which make up Mecosta Township.

Soils for septic suitability are shown on **Map 4**. Most soils in Mecosta Township have severe limitations for septic drain field use due as the sandy soil types allow the septic system effluent to drain too rapidly for proper filtering of the effluent. This could create issues of ground water contamination for dense concentrations of residential developments.

These are generalized maps and are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Survey which lists the soil types within five feet of the surface. Consequently, on site inspection would be needed to determine if a particular site would be suitable for a septic system. However, in planning areas for specific densities (minimum lot sizes) this type of soils map is useful. Larger lots should be planned for areas with moderate to severe septic system limitations in order that there will be a greater chance of locating an area or a lot which is suitable for a septic system

Prime Farmland Soils. Most of this soil type is located in the southeast quadrant and in the northern central portion of the Township although active farms are located throughout the Township. **Map 5** illustrates the location of prime farmland soils.

Map 5 also illustrates lands enrolled in the State of Michigan Farmland Open Space Preservation Program also known as P.A. 116. Under this program, property owners agree to relinquish their non-farm development rights for period of at least 10 years in exchange for tax credits. Approximately 320 acres encompassing five parcels are enrolled in this program. Four of the parcels which are contiguous and under the same ownership are located in Sections 25 and 36 and are enrolled until 2015 while the largest parcel (159 acres) in Section 5 is enrolled until the year 2016.

Wetlands. **Map 6** shows the location of the different classes of wetlands. Many of these wetlands are located adjacent to streams throughout the Township

Vegetation/Land Cover

According to the 1998 Land Use Cover map compiled by the Michigan Center for Geographic Information much of the land west of the Muskegon River consists of hardwood forests with bands of coniferous trees located along major portions of the Muskegon River. Large areas of hardwood forests also exist east of the River in Sections 11-14. **Map 7 Land Use/Cover 1998** shows cropland in the south eastern portion and north central portion coinciding with the presence of Prime Farmland soils. Although this map is based on 1998 information most of the land cover has remained the same although some cropland active in 1998 has been allowed to return to field grass.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following information regarding population, housing and employment is based on the 2000 US Census which as of the date of Plan adoption will be 10 years old. This information will be updated as data from the 2010 Census becomes available.

Population Growth. Table 1 compares the population growth over the past three decades between 1970 and the year 2000 in both Mecosta Township and its surrounding communities including the County as a whole. Mecosta Township experienced a 23.9% increase in population from 1990 to 2000. This period of growth for the area is significant in size and ranks the highest in terms of the number of persons moving to the community when compared to those adjacent townships in Mecosta County.

When compared to the surrounding communities and Mecosta Township as a whole, Mecosta Township experienced a comparable rate of growth. Although the City of Big Rapids did see a population decline over the same ten year timeframe, the population shift could have attributed to families relocating throughout the County. The increase in population within the County as a whole could justify said claim as the data indicates a population gain of 8.7% overall. In general, growth rates are higher in outlying townships than in older incorporated cities and villages throughout Michigan.

**TABLE 1
POPULATION IN MECOSTA TOWNSHIP
SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, AND
MECOSTA COUNTY AS A WHOLE
(1970 – 2000)**

Regional Population Trends

	1970	1980	1990	2000	Number of Persons	% Change (1990 - 2000)
Mecosta Township	1444	1885	1966	2435	469	23.9%
Big Rapids Township	1687	2471	3100	3249	149	4.8%
Colfax Township	1267	1885	1915	1975	60	3.1%
Austin Township	509	898	1102	1415	313	28.4%
Deerfield Township	817	1032	1231	1630	399	32.4%
Aetna Township	1002	1351	1622	2044	422	26.0%
City of Big Rapids	11995	14361	12603	10849	-1754	-13.9%
Village of Stanwood	241	209	174	204	30	17.2%
Mecosta County	27992	36961	37308	40553	3245	8.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

Age of Population. Table 2 illustrates the ages of the population in Mecosta Township. The percentage breakdown of persons is typical of most suburban and rural communities in Michigan, with no age groups consisting of significantly higher or lower numbers than that which are typically seen through out the State.

**TABLE 2
AGES OF POPULATION
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP**

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under 5 years	167	6.90%
5 - 19 years	540	22.20%
20 - 44 years	843	34.60%
45 - 64 years	632	25.90%
65 - 84 years	239	9.80%
85 and older	14	0.60%
Total	2435	100.0%

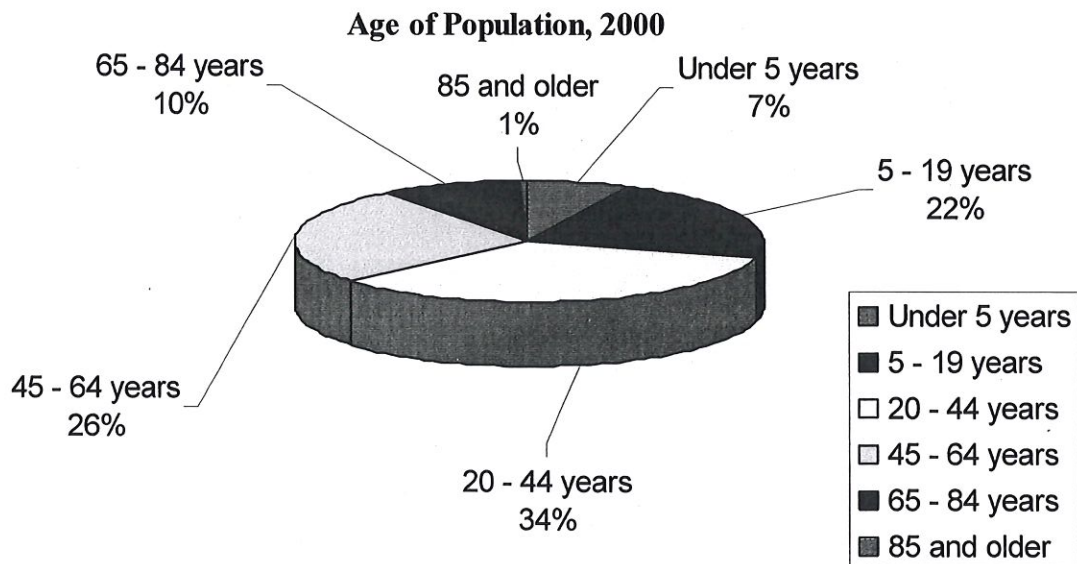


TABLE 3
MEDIAN AGE
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP & MECOSTA COUNTY

	<u>Median Age</u>
Mecosta Township	36.4
Mecosta County	31.9

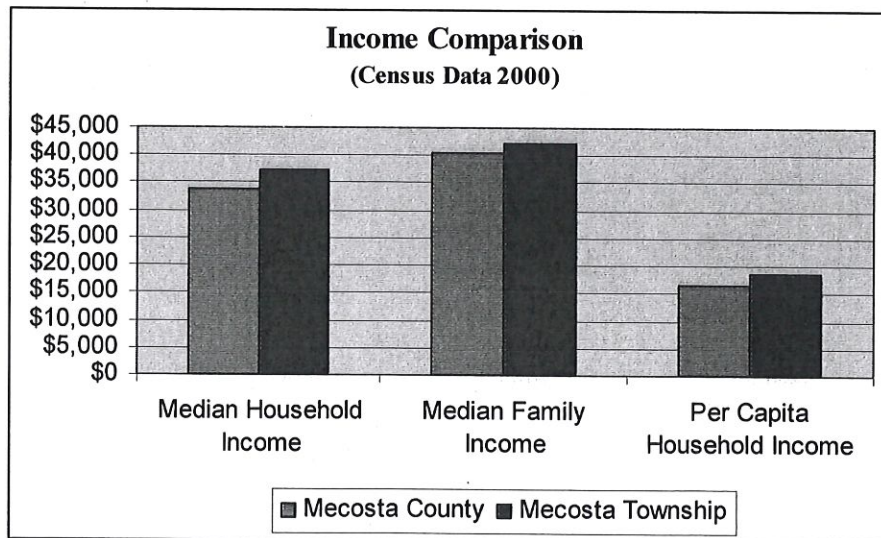
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

TABLE 4
MEDIAN INCOME
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP & MECOSTA COUNTY

	Mecosta Township	Mecosta County
Median Household Income	\$37287	\$33849
Median Family Income	\$42321	\$40465
Per Capita Household Income	\$18494	\$16372

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Families with poverty Status	46	6.7%	949	9.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000



Tables 3 and 4 show that the median age and median income is higher in Mecosta Township than the County Average. The higher age may account for the higher income as older wage earners typically earn more than those in a younger category.

Households and Housing. Table 5 shows the number of households and housing units in Mecosta Township as reported by the year 2000 US Census. A total of 938 housing units are occupied within the 1,184 existing housing stock. The remaining 246 units are classified as vacant, however, roughly 64% of those vacant homes are utilized seasonally, or recreationally throughout a calendar year.

Of those 938 occupied housing units, 682 are Family Households. The remaining 256 units are Non-family Households, which are defined as persons not related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The average household size is 2.59 persons, whereas the average family is 2.99 persons. (These numbers are fairly typical for similar / comparable communities in Michigan.) In Mecosta Township, 219 or 23% of all occupied housing units are renter occupied. This number is relatively high for a rural township. Consideration for the close proximity to the campus of Ferris State University, located within the city of Big Rapids, is likely a large contributor to said number.

**TABLE 5
HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP**

Total Housing Units	1184
Total Households (Occupied Housing Units)	938
Vacant Housing Units	246
Seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	158
Non-Seasonal / Vacant	88
Family Households	682
Married Couple Families	549
With Children Under 18 Years	304
Non-Family Households	256
Average Household Size	2.59 persons
Average Family Size	2.99 persons
Owner Occupied Housing Units	719
Renter Occupied Housing Units	219

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

TABLE 6
EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, INDUSTRY AND CLASS OF WORKER
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP

Employed civilian population 16 years and over	1094	100%
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OCCUPATION

Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	281	25.7%
Sales and office occupations	259	23.7%
Management, professional, and related occupations	237	21.7%
Service occupations	186	17.0%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	129	11.8%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	2	0.2%

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing	223	20.4%
Educational, health and social services	254	23.2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	22	2.0%
Retail trade	137	12.5%
Other services (except public administration)	54	4.9%
Construction	102	9.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	80	7.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	70	6.4%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	38	3.5%
Wholesale trade	34	3.1%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	34	3.1%
Information	28	2.6%
Public administration	18	1.6%

CLASS OF WORKER

Private wage and salary workers	759	69.4%
Private not-for-profit wage and salary workers	74	6.8%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	93	8.5%
Government workers	162	14.8%
Unpaid family workers	6	0.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Township Facilities & Services

Mecosta Township is governed by a five member Board including a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and two Trustees elected every four years. The Township offices are located at 19729 11 Mile Road. Township departments include zoning, assessing, and building as well as clerk and treasurer. The Township had eight employees in 2009.

There is no library in the Township. A ball diamond is located next to the Township hall. No public water or sanitary sewer service is available in the Township. All developed properties are served by private well and septic systems.

Fire and rescue services are provided by the Mecosta-Austin Township Fire /Rescue Department located at 19095 Eight Mile Road. This Department was created in 1998 by a joint agreement between Mecosta Township and Austin Township which abuts Mecosta Township on the east. The Department covers 72 square miles and is under the direction of a six member board consisting of two members from each Township Board and one citizen from each Township.

Members are all volunteers on a part time basis. There are 18 firefighters with nine of these being trained as Medical First Responders. Equipment consists of two fire engines, a 3000 gallon and a 2000 gallon Water Tender, a DNR grass truck and a 6 x6 grass truck, Rescue Truck and rubber boat, motor and cold water rescue equipment.

Cemeteries

The Township operates three cemeteries shown on **Map 8**: Fairview, Ladners and Potters.

Schools

There is one school, Stanwood Elementary, located in the Village of Stanwood.

Recreation Facilities

There are a number of public and private recreation facilities In Mecosta Township as shown on **Map 8** and described below:

Public

- Brower County Park is located on the Muskegon River and provides access to 18 miles of navigable river in the backwaters of the Hardy Dam. The park's 280 acres has 230 campsites, 10 camp-n-cabins and almost 8000 feet of river frontage.
- Davis Bridge Boat Launch and Day Park is operated by Mecosta County.
- Ulrich Park: fishing pier and Day Park maintained by Mecosta Township.

- Boat launch on the Muskegon River under the US 131 overpass owned by Consumers Energy.
- Boat launch on Rogers Pond operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- The White Pine Trail, which is a converted railroad track connects Grand Rapids with Cadillac, traverses the east portion of the Township running through the Village of Stanwood. This portion of the Trail is not paved.

Private

- River Ridge Resort: RV Park with 231 sites on the Muskegon River; marina, boat launch, clubhouse concessions. Operates April –October.
- Speeds Campground: 22 camp sites.

STREETS & TRAFFIC

U.S. Highway 131 travels through the Township in a north –south direction with an interchange at 8 Mile Road. Northland Drive (old 131) also traverses the Township to the east of and parallel to U.S. 131 and provides a direct connection to Big Rapids to the north. The major east –west road is 8 Mile Road which is also a portion of M-20, a State of Michigan Highway which connects with White Cloud to the west of Mecosta Township.

County Primary Roads, which are paved two lane roads, include Old State Road, a portion of 11 Mile Road and 185th Avenue. These roads are maintained by the Mecosta County Road Commission.

Traffic Counts

Table 7 illustrates 24 hour two way traffic counts for major roads in the Township for selected years.

**TABLE 7
24 HOUR TRAFFIC COUNTS**

ROAD	YEAR	24 HOUR COUNT
11 Mile: 180th to 185th	2006	680
8 Mile Road:185th to 180th	1998	1564
8 Mile Road:195th to 200th	2006	5519
8 Mile Road: at Old State Rd.	1998	3248
Old State Rd.220th to 215th	2000	5034
Polk Road: Brower Park to Old State Road	2000	4395
Source: Mecosta County Road Comm.		

The roads listed in Table 1 generally have a 24 hour capacity of 10,000 to 12,000 vehicles. Based on the above traffic counts all of these roads are operating within their designed capacity although some congestion may occur during certain periods.

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING

Agricultural

Map 5 illustrates the Prime Farmland soils in Mecosta Township. Most of the active farms are located in the south east quadrant of the Township although other farms are scattered around the Township. A number of farms are operated by Amish farmers who use no electricity or fuel powered machines in their work.

While most of the Township is zoned Agricultural Forestry farming is not the predominant land use within this zone as much of the land is open fields and forests particularly the lands west of the Muskegon River. Minimum lot size for a single family dwelling is one acre with 200 feet of lot width. Most parcels in the AF Zone are considerably larger indicating that most residents' desire acreage parcels.

Residential

The largest concentration of residential land use is in Rogers Heights. Several subdivisions are located south east of 11 Mile road and Northland Drive. Single family neighborhoods have developed over the years along both side of the Muskegon River north of Rogers Pond. Many of these houses originated as seasonal dwellings but have been converted to permanent use over the years.

Most of these lots along the river have 40 -60 feet of width which does not meet the current Zoning Ordinance requirement of 100 feet. As residents seek to expand existing units or build new larger houses variances from the building setback regulations are necessary.

A subdivision with older mobile homes has been established along the south side of Hayes Road on the west side of Northland Drive exists mobile. Many single wide modular homes have been established around the Township on individual parcels, prior to adoption of the requirement that all dwellings must have a minimum width of 24 feet for 2/3 of their length.

Residential development occurs along township roads on individual lots rather than in platted subdivisions or site condominium developments. **Map 9** illustrates where the most houses have been built from 2001 through 2008. Most activity has occurred in Sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11 & 12 which are closest to and includes Rogers Heights and Big Rapids. Very few dwellings were constructed west of the Muskegon River in what is very hilly and wooded land.

Lot sizes in the R1 and R2 zones are 20, 000 sq. ft. with 100 feet of lot width. Land zoned RR-2 which makes up a sizable portion of the land in the northeast quadrant of the Township requires a minimum of one acre with 200 feet of width.

Commercial / Industrial

Rogers Heights on Northland Drive between Hayes Road and 11 Mile Road has the largest concentration of retail and service uses although here are other pockets of commercial use and some individual commercial uses elsewhere in the Township. The intersection of Old State road and Northland Drive is one such area which has several service type businesses.

A convenience store/restaurant is located on 8 Mile and Old State Road close to a self storage facility on 8 Mile Road. A lumber yard is located on 8 Mile Road and Northland Drive. Vacant commercial buildings including a former restaurant occupy land on both sides of the U.S. 131/ 8 Mile interchange.

The Village of Stanwood which is within the Township offers very little in terms of retail and service uses as many such businesses have closed in recent years due to the poor economy although a bank and post office remain along with a feed mill.

The largest industrial use is the Ice Mountain bottling facility on 8 Mile Road just east of U.S. 131. This factory employs several hundred and contributes to local agencies and projects.

Other Land Uses

A significant land use in Mecosta Township and one which has had perhaps the greatest influence in addition to U.S. 131 is Rogers Dam which is the oldest hydro plant still in operation by Consumers Energy, housing four generating units producing 6,700 kw of electricity. Consumers Energy continues to play a major role in land use development in the Township as it owns or controls almost all of the land abutting both sides of the Muskegon River. Under the ownership of Consumers the land along the river as shown on **Map 10** is protected from future development which will do much to preserve the natural beauty of the river.

CHAPTER 2

WORK SHOP RESULTS & ANALYSIS

In order for the Mecosta Township Master Plan to be successfully implemented, it must reflect the values and desires of those who live there. For this reason two workshops were held to solicit the comments of Township officials and residents regarding the preferred future of Mecosta Township. The first workshop held on May 5, 2009 involved the Township Board and Planning Commission identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Strengths (SWOT) of the Township.

A second workshop was offered to Township residents and announced in the Township newsletter. Attendance at this workshop held on July 16, 2009 involved about 16 residents which included Board and Planning Commissioners. In addition to the SWOT exercise participants prepared their own future land use maps.

Results of the SWOT sessions are as follows:

MASTER PLAN COMBINED S.W.O.T. WORKSHOP RESULTS

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Recreation Opportunities:	7	Lack of local businesses:	10
Local Fire Dept. /First Responders:	6	High unemployment:	6
River/ Natural resources:	6	Lack of industry:	4
Freeway interchange:	4	Stanwood:	3
Ferris educational opportunities:	4	Junk / housing neglect:	3
Ice Mountain:	4	Poor roads	
Proximity to larger cities:	2	Lack of commercial	
Rural setting:	1	Empty commercial buildings	
Agriculture:	1	Lack of entertainment	
Northland Drive:	1	Lack of restaurants	
The people	1	Old house trailers	
Building sites		Lack of resident involvement	
Nature / Open space			
Amish			
Small schools			
Empty commercial buildings			
Galloup Guitars			
Traffic to/from Tullymore			

<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Threats</u>	<u>Votes</u>
8 Mile & US 131 interchange	9	Losing rural character:	7
Ferris State University/ Higher ed. work force:		Stanwood dying:	6
7		Declining population:	4
Tourism & recreation –Muskegon River:	6	Dam removal:	3
Empty commercial buildings:	6	Lack of local employment:	4
Recreation:	4	Tax base/property values:	3
Stanwood:	4	State revenue:	2
Building sites		Unwanted business/industry	2
Amish		Poor economy:	1
Proximity to larger cities		Lack of local involvement:	1
Available work force		Loss of agriculture:	1
Grants		Loss of recreation:	1
Northland Drive		Principal use per parcel:	1
Rogers Heights		Rising unemployment	
		Undesirable industry	
		Loss of use of river due to silt from upstream	
		Lack of youth activities	

S.W.O.T. SUMMARY OF ITEMS RECEIVING MOST VOTES

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES: WHAT WE CAN BUILD ON

- Recreation, tourism, natural resources, Muskegon River
- US 131/ 8 Mile Road interchange
- Ferris State University/ higher ed. work force
- Empty commercial buildings.
- Ice Mountain
- Proximity to larger cities
- Stanwood

WEAKNESSES & THREATS: ISSUES TO ADDRESS

- Lack of local businesses
- High unemployment
- Stanwood
- Loss of rural character
- Declining population
- Dam removal
- Junk / housing neglect

CHAPTER 3

GOALS & ACTIONS

Based on the workshop results the following set of goals and objectives were developed to guide the preparation of the Future Land Use portion of Master Plan and to serve as statements that express the community's long range desires and to provide direction for related planning activities.

Goals are intended to provide a basic framework upon which long term development decisions and day to day decisions may be made by public and private agencies. The Goals below are listed by topic areas. Following the Goals are Action Steps which give more specific means of reaching the desired overall Goals.

General Planning Goals

- 1. Plan for and guide new development in a manner which preserves and protects the most significant natural features in the Township, particularly the lands along the Muskegon River and other bodies of water, as well as the rural views and character.**

Action: Review and revise regulations for new housing, commercial and industrial developments in order to protect and preserve natural features such as steep slopes, non-regulated wetlands, drainage ways, mature trees along Township roadways and scenic views.

Action: Provide for clustering of new residential development within a parcel so as to maximize the amount of open space and natural areas preserved.

- 2. Direct small lot subdivision type residential growth so it is adjacent to the settlement of Rogers Heights and the Village of Stanwood.**
- 3. Promote the recreational and tourism opportunities afforded by the natural features and cultural attractions of the Township.**

Action: Work with the Mecosta County Alliance group (Mecosta County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, Mecosta County Development Corporation) to advertise and support Township businesses and attractions.

- 4. Minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas which have high value for agricultural and forestry purposes.**

Action: Identify those lands which are best suited for natural resource utilization and determine how best to maximize this potential.

Action: Examine the feasibility and impact of increasing the minimum lot width and lot size of lands in the western portion of the Township to more closely match the size of existing parcels which are reflective of the desires of existing land owners.

- 5. Provide opportunity for a mix of commercial uses at planned locations which should be developed in an aesthetically pleasing fashion and which provide for safe and efficient patterns of pedestrian and vehicular circulation.**

Action: Develop measures or a specific plan to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety for the commercial areas in Rogers Heights. These measures could include: the shared use of commercial driveways; limiting the number and spacing of driveways; providing landscaping, signs, sidewalks or similar items to slow traffic and create a "downtown" atmosphere.

Action: Review and revise landscaping requirements for commercial development within the Township.

- 6. Cooperate with / assist the Village of Stanwood in efforts to promote business and residential development opportunities which will benefit both Township and Village residents.**

Action: Meet with Stanwood officials to identify areas of common concern and prepare a plan of action to address them.

- 7. Explore opportunities with Ferris State University which would be of mutual benefit to Ferris State students, educators and officials and Township residents and businesses.**

Action: Meet with University officials to determine how to match University and Township resources and needs.

- 8. Preserve and promote Rogers Heights as the Town Center of Mecosta Township in order to create an identity for the Township and serve as a location for both commercial and residential use; promote the business district as an attractive and functional place for both resident and tourist retail and service uses.**

- Action: Initiate the formation of a business association by sponsoring an exploratory meeting at the Township offices.
- Action: Partner with the Mecosta County Alliance group (Mecosta County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, Mecosta County Development Corporation) to advertise and support Rogers Heights businesses.
- Action: Explore the possibility of establishing a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) as allowed by Michigan Public Act 197 of 1975, as amended.
- Action: Partner with Ferris State University to utilize students and professors with talents and interests in landscaping, architecture and marketing to prepare drawings and plans for the improvement of the Rogers Heights business area.

9. Attract and retain desirable industrial operations to increase employment opportunities for Township residents.

- Action: Utilize the resources of the Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote industrial development in the Township and to seek grant opportunities for infrastructure improvements and related projects.
- Action: Provide suitable locations for industrial development with appropriate zoning regulations to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses.

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING ANALYSIS

Regional Influences

Adjacent Communities

Mecosta Township is bounded by Big Rapids Township to the north, Austin Township on the east and Aetna Township to the south. Goodwell Township in Newaygo County abuts the west side of Mecosta Township.

Big Rapids Township – Most of the land within Big Rapids Township on the north is zoned Agricultural. This zone permits generalized farming and requires a minimum lot size of one acre which is compatible with uses and zoning in Mecosta Township. The northeast corner of Mecosta Township matches land use with adjoining Big Rapids Township in that both allow single and two family dwellings on lot sizes of 15,000 to 20,000 sq. ft. Big Rapids Township has its own zoning requirements.

Austin Township & Aetna Townships – Both of these townships are regulated by the Mecosta County Zoning Ordinance and 2001 County Master Plan. The zoning for both Townships along the common boundary with Mecosta Township is Agricultural Forestry which matches the zoning as well as the land uses for the majority of abutting land in Mecosta Township.

Starwood Village - The Village does not have zoning. The land uses in the Village which abut the Township are not inconsistent with each other and have existed in this fashion for a number of years. There has been little growth in the Village in recent years and a number of businesses have closed since the year 2000. An impediment to new development, particularly the expansion of existing businesses, is the lack of public sanitary sewer.

Other Influences – The interchange at U.S. 131 and 8 Mile Road provides a gateway into Mecosta Township for travelers seeking destinations east and west. Eight Mile Road is part of State Highway M-20 which connects to White Cloud to the west while Eight Mile Road connects to Canadian Lakes and the golf destinations of St Ives and Tullymore to the east of Mecosta Township. Future retail or service business opportunities at the interchange may arise as traffic to these destinations increases.

Future Roads - The construction of 205th Avenue from its present terminus in Section 3 (about ½ mile north of 11 Mile Road) so it connects with 205th north of 12 Mile Road would provide an alternate route into Big Rapids for Township residents. Presently the best and most traveled route is Northland Drive (Old US 131). Providing an alternate and less busy route would allow residents to travel more directly to shopping opportunities just west of Big Rapids (Meijer, Wal-

Mart). Such a route would be safer for Amish residents who travel by horse and buggy. The right of way is in place for such future construction.

While construction of this road way makes some sense it must be balanced against the traffic it would bring to that portion of the Township containing prime farmland soils. (See Map 5). This land is zoned RR-2 which means it is not planned for long term farmland preservation. Construction of 205th could likely induce more residential development and hasten the demise of farming in Section 3.

Population Trends & Projections

Mecosta Township is expected to experience steady growth in the coming years. The following table provides a comparison of different methods of population projections. The assumptions used for each projection are based on a combination of historical trends and judgments made with knowledge of the area.

Projections are only refined estimates of future conditions and it is impossible to precisely forecast the end result of the actions of individuals and public decisions. However, it is reasonable to assume that forces which shaped the past will continue to shape the future.

**MECOSTA TOWNSHIP
POPULATION PROJECTIONS
Table 8**

	2000	2010	2020
ALT.A	2435	2647	2875
ALT.B	2435	2953	3583
ALT.C	2435	2765	3095
ALT.D	2435	2925	3425
AVERAGE		2822	3244

‘Alternative A’ assumes that the population of Mecosta Township will continue to be the same percentage of the population of Mecosta County. This percentage equaled 6 percent from 1990 & 2000. Source for Allegan County projections was the Mecosta County Master Plan of 2001.

“Alternative B” assumes a yearly growth rate of 1.95 percent per year from 1970 to 2000.

“Alternative C” assumes that the population will increase by 33 persons per year which is the average yearly increase between 1970 and 2000.

“Alternative D” assumes a continuing average of 18.8 new dwellings constructed per year as was the case between 2001 and 2008 with an average of 2.59 persons per household for an increase of 49 persons per year. The Persons per Household is taken from 2000 Census.

For purposes of this Master Plan the average of these four methods can be used as a reasonable population projection for Mecosta Township.

The projection for 2010 for Alternative D may be the most accurate due to factual data on the number of building permits issued between 2001 and 2008 and the actual number of persons per household.

For planning purposes the increases forecast for Mecosta Township to the year 2020 can be adequately accommodated on the vacant land remaining in the Township.

CHAPTER 5

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains the recommendations, strategies, and policies which will guide the development of Mecosta Township for the next five to ten years. The Future Land Use Plan establishes the pattern of land use desired by the community, but that pattern must be re-evaluated every five years according to State of Michigan law.

The Goals and Objectives presented in the Chapter 3 as well as principals of sound land use planning are the foundation upon which the Future Land Use Plan is based. The Future Land Use Plan consists of the text within this document as well as the Future Land Use Map.

MASTER PLAN CONCEPTS

The Future Land Use Map is based upon several major concepts for the general development of Mecosta Township. These concepts are derived from the goals and objectives stated in Chapter 3 and the desires of Mecosta Township citizens and are intended to guide the growth of Mecosta Township.

These major land use concepts include the following:

- Agricultural uses in Mecosta Township can continue to be a strong component of the Township's economy and culture within this planning period with the recognition that farmlands will also "grow houses" as well.
- The abundant natural features in the Township: the Muskegon River, the steep slopes, and other lands along the river, wetlands and forested areas need to be preserved and protected by limiting development in these areas.
- The rural character and the views of agricultural and wooded lands in the Township are important elements in the quality of life of all Township residents and need to be preserved and enhanced.
- Rogers Heights should function as the identity of Mecosta Township and serve as a gathering place for Township residents and seasonal visitors.
- What happens in the Village of Stanwood affects the future of Mecosta Township; cooperative planning efforts can benefit both communities.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The Future Land Use Plan recommends a number of different Future Land Use Categories. The following descriptions explain the type of land use, the intensity of that land use, and the locations for proposed uses. Policies and rationale guiding the establishment of those uses are also provided, as well as implementation steps for carrying out the recommendations of the Plan.

The future land use recommended for an area may be the same as the existing zoning for that area, while in some cases the future land use recommended is different from the existing zoning. Future Land Use categories may or may not correspond to zoning districts existing in the Township; in some cases, a new zoning district is recommended as an implementation strategy.

The Future Land Use Map does not change the existing zoning in an area. A property owner or the Township will need to apply for a rezoning at some point in the future if the future land use category is different from the existing zoning. Meanwhile, a property owner must use the property as it is currently zoned.

The boundaries of the future land use categories shown on the Future Land Use Map should be interpreted with some flexibility. For example, lands abutting a "boundary" as depicted on the Map might be considered for rezoning within either category. The Township, in making land use decisions, should avoid "hopscothching" or approving land use changes which are some distance from boundaries indicated on the Future Land Use Map. Particular flexibility may be appropriate in the designation of commercial / highway commercial / industrial use as depicted on 8 Mile Road, near the U.S. 131 interchange.

AGRICULTURAL (AG)

The purpose of this category is the long term preservation of farmland in Mecosta Township. The Plan recommendation is to create an Agricultural zoning classification separate from the current zoning district called Agricultural Forestry (AF) as recognition that farming is still a strong component of the Township's economy and culture and deserves its own zoning district with its own set of regulations designed to preserve this important Township resource.

The Plan proposes the Agricultural designation for that portion of the Township south of Pierce Road east of the Muskegon River and recommends the continued use of this area for long term agricultural purposes due to the presence of prime agricultural soils, the number and size of active farms including those in the Amish community, lands enrolled in PA 116 (Farmland and Open Space Protection Program) and scattered non-farm dwellings.

Action Step

Because the Zoning Ordinance does not contain an Agricultural Zoning District the Plan recommends that the Township adopt appropriate regulations to achieve the intent of this classification. Also because these lands are zoned Agricultural Forestry they will need to be rezoned to the new Agricultural zoning district.

New zoning regulations would recognize that the principal land use is agriculture and agriculture support services which help to enhance and stabilize the farming industry. The Plan recognizes that this area is not an exclusive agricultural preserve and that single-family homes will also be a permitted use.

Action Step

A minimum lot size of 10 acres with 330 feet of road frontage is recommended for a single family dwelling in order to minimize the number of non-farm residents and the accompanying traffic which can be incompatible with farming practices. The minimum lot size and width also will preserve rural character and views by spacing out houses, driveways and reducing the potential for manicured lawns which are indicative of suburban neighborhoods.

Other permitted uses would include farm markets, hayrides, demonstration farms and petting farms, sawmills and agriculture support services such as farm implement sales and service and other uses permitted in the Agricultural Forestry District which are compatible with farming practices and the principal objective of the Agricultural District which is to preserve farming and farmland.

AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY (AF)

This future land use category is analogous to the Agricultural / Forestry Zoning District which has been established to preserve and protect those areas of the Township which are characterized by gravel roads, large parcels, large forested areas and farming. Much of the Township is zoned AF. Current AF Zone requirements for a lot containing a single family dwelling are a minimum of one acre and 200 feet of lot width.

The AF area west of US 131 which makes up about one quarter of the Township is sparsely populated and only 39 new houses have been built in this area since 2001. The average lot size of lands west of U.S.131 is about 11.57 acres and the majority of parcels -736 out of 1251- are between .25 acres and 9.99 acres.

Action Step

Based on these figures and the Township's desire to maintain the rustic feel and forested roadways and views in AF areas **the Plan is recommending that the minimum lot size be increased to five**

acres with 330 feet of lot width. The Plan also recommends that the areas zoned AF as of 2010 be reduced in size so the majority of the AF zoned land is located west of the Muskegon River with a smaller AF zoned area in Sections 3 and 4 just east of US 131.

Other reasons for increasing the lot size are:

- A five acre minimum lot size will reduce the possible number of new houses and fewer new houses will preserve the rural, forested character of this area;
- A larger lot size will increase the distance between wells and septic systems on adjacent lots which, because of the poor filtering capability of the soils, will reduce the likelihood of ground water contamination
- Fewer lots mean fewer vehicles on the gravel roads in this portion of the Township thereby reducing road maintenance costs.
- A larger minimum lot is reflective of the average lot size in the AF Zone.

Action Step

In order to implement the above recommendations the Township will need to amend the minimum lot size and width requirements of AF Zoning District and rezone the land in Sections 3 and 4 to AF as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RR)

This future land use category is essentially the same as the RR-2 Zoning District. The Rural Residential category is intended to serve as a transition zone between the more intensive land uses such as Commercial and Low Density Residential areas and less intensive AG and AF areas.

Farming would be a permitted use along with single family dwellings but it is expected that over time farming uses in this area would decline as more non-farm dwellings are built for people wishing to live in a rural setting but who are not farmers.

Action Step

In order to achieve and maintain a rural character and to allow adequate space for on site well and septic systems the minimum lot size for a single family dwelling is recommended to be increased from one acre with 200 feet of lot width to two acres with 200 feet of width.

Rural Residential areas are proposed for the eastern third of the Township north of 8 Mile Road and east of US 131 where a rural residential land use pattern has emerged and where RR-2 zoning already exists. RR land use is also proposed west of Old State Road and the Muskegon River in order to encourage residential growth closer to support services and good roads and to direct such growth away from those areas planned for Agricultural and Agricultural / Forestry.

The Plan also recommends RR land use along the south side of 8 Mile Road in Section 28 and both sides of 8 Mile Road west of the Muskegon River due to the excellent access provided by 8 Mile Road which connects to State Highway M-20 to the west and to US 131 to the east. By allowing Rural Residential lot sizes in these areas the Plan protects those lands planned for AG and AF by providing an opportunity to those seeking a rural environment which may be more affordable due to the smaller lot size. The RR Zone also satisfies a major goal of the Mecosta Township Master Plan which states: "Minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas which have high value for agricultural and forestry purposes."

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LDR)

This Future Land Use category calls for single family dwellings as the principal land use at a density of about two dwelling units per acre. Minimum lot size would be 20,000 sq. ft. with 100 feet of lot width with no public utilities. Smaller lot sizes would be allowed if water and sanitary sewer are provided.

LDR areas are planned in the Rogers Heights area along both sides of the Muskegon River where a low density residential land use pattern exists and to allow for expansion of this pattern to the north towards the City of Big Rapids. Concentrating residential use in this manner also will provide a population base to support the commercial and services uses existing and planned in Rogers Heights and also carries out a General Goal of the Master Plan which is to direct small lot subdivision type residential growth so it is adjacent to the settlement of Rogers Heights and the Village of Stanwood.

Action Step

This category includes the R1 and R2 zoning districts and the Plan recommends that these two zoning districts be combined as the lot sizes are the same and the land uses permitted are almost identical. Duplexes are allowed by Special Use in R1 and By Right in R2 and horses are allowed in R2 by Special Use Permit. A new zoning district should be adopted which combines these districts and continues the existing permitted uses and the land rezoned accordingly.

An LDR area is proposed along the west side of the Village of Stanwood between Northland Drive and Pierce Road to provide a compatible residential land use pattern established by the Village and to serve as a transition into the Township. Additional residential development around the Village can also serve as an incentive for the provision of public sanitary sewer and water for the Village and Township land uses.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

(MDR)

The Medium Density Residential Category would allow duplexes and multi-family buildings with no more than eight dwellings per building. The density for the multi-family buildings would be limited to approximately six dwelling units per acre. MDR areas would allow elderly housing and assisted living facilities. Duplexes should be required to have a minimum of 30,000 square feet for each duplex unit with 132 feet of lot width.

Action Step

Medium Density Residential would be similar to the R-3, Multi-Family residential Zone but the Plan recommends that the regulations be revised to decrease the allowable density from 12 units per acre to six units per acre due to the lack of public sanitary sewer and water.

The Medium Density Residential Category would also accommodate a manufactured housing community, as the density within such developments is traditionally 4 to 6 units per acre.

Action Step

A new zoning district which only allows a manufactured housing community (mobile home park) should be adopted and added to the Zoning Ordinance text.

The Future Land Use Map shows an MDR area next to Stanwood at the south west corner of 185th Avenue and 8 Mile Road. This density would be compatible with density in the Village and the site has excellent access on well traveled roads. Future residential uses in this area also provide support for needed public sewer and water in the Village of Stanwood. A MDR area is also proposed in Section 3 to support the extension of 205th Avenue and to provide additional opportunity for multifamily development or a manufactured housing community. In Rogers Heights, an MDR area is proposed south of Hayes Road west of Northland Drive due to the existence of smaller lot sizes along Hayes Road and the Plan's Goal of directing small lot development to Rogers Heights. This area on Hayes would also be suitable for duplexes, multi-family or elderly housing but less suitable for a manufactured housing community due to the number and size of existing parcels.

To be eligible for rezoning to the manufactured community district. Land should have direct access to or frontage on a paved public road with sufficient carrying capacity, and in addition either public water and sanitary sewer service, or suitable soils and location for a private community sanitary sewer and water system. State Manufactured Housing Commission approval is required for any design standards in local ordinance which exceed State regulations for community design and construction.

LAKE RIVER RESORT (L/R)

This category is analogous to the Lake /River Resort Zoning District and includes certain residential areas around and fronting on Rogers Pond which were established well before the Township imposed the current minimum lot size requirements of 20,000 sq. ft. and 100 feet of lot width for these areas.

Action Step

The Plan calls for the L/R areas shown on the Future Land Use Map to be rezoned to the L/R Zoning District and for the Zoning Ordinance to be amended to reduce the minimum lot size and building setback requirements to more closely match what actually exists in these lots.

The Township will need to analyze the existing lot sizes and setbacks and come up with a new set of requirements. Doing this will make many if not most of the existing houses conforming and reduce the need for variances when a home owner seeks to expand their house or accessory building.

The Plan also recognizes the existing L/R Resort area known as River Ridge resort in Section 29 on the Muskegon River as described in Chapter 1.

VILLAGE COMMERCIAL (VC)

This is a new category for which there are no current zoning regulations. The Village Commercial category applies to the commercial zoned uses in Rogers Heights along Northland Drive. One of the major concepts which came out of the planing process was that Rogers Heights should function as the identity of Mecosta Township and serve as a gathering place for Township residents and seasonal visitors.

Action Step

In order to achieve this concept and also one of the Plan's objectives of creating this area as the Mecosta Township "Town Center" a new set of zoning regulations is needed to make sure that future land uses are compatible with the vision for this area and that the form of these uses (setback, building materials, landscaping, sidewalks) will also achieve that vision.

The Township may wish to consider the establishment of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) as a tool to prepare and finance a more detailed plan for this area. Chapter 3 also contains additional action steps to create the Village Commercial Zoning District.

COMMERCIAL

(C)

This category recognizes existing commercial uses on 8 Mile Road and Old State Road. Generally recognized retail and service uses would be the principal uses allowed.

Action Step

The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to determine if certain land uses currently allowed by right and by special use in the Commercial Zone such as mobile home parks, food processing facilities and multifamily residential and even single family dwellings should be removed from the Zoning Ordinance as such uses are allowed elsewhere. Further, establishment of such uses can compromise the quality of a commercial area and create un-necessary landscaping and increased setback requirements.

A Commercial area is proposed on Northland Drive abutting the west boundary of Stanwood in order to serve as a transition into the Township from the existing commercial uses in Stanwood. Additional commercial land is proposed along 8 Mile Road west of Old State Road due to the traffic volumes and presence of existing commercial zoning and land uses.

HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

(HC)

This category is analagous to the Highway Interchange Zoning District. The intent of this district is to provide goods and services for travelers on US 131. Permitted uses include restaurants, vehicle service stations, hotels, and uses which support the trucking industry.

The Plan recognizes the existing Highway Commercial land at the southeast corner of 8 Mile and US 131. Additional HC land is proposed south of this existing HC land and also on the north side of 8 Mile adjacent to the on ramp of US 131 in order to provide further opportunities for development of this particular type of land use.

INDUSTRIAL

(I)

This category recognizes the existing Industrially zoned land containing the Ice Mountain bottling facility on 8 Mile Road and recommends industrial use for the land directly across 8 Mile Road extending east to Northland Drive for additional industrial use. This new area is relatively flat, has excellent access to US 131 and is large enough to accommodate a multitude of smaller industrial uses or several large industrial uses.

The classification is intended to accommodate uses such as manufacturing and processing, warehousing, contractor equipment yards and truck terminals. Other industrial uses which might have objectionable operating characteristics such as asphalt plants and salvage yards would be permitted by special land use.

FUTURE ROADS

The Master Plan recommends a future public road in Section 3, specifically the extension of 205th Avenue from its terminus north of 11 mile Road to 12 Mile Road. The right of way exists for this road which when constructed would provide an alternate route into Big Rapids for Township residents. Presently the best and most traveled route is Northland Drive (Old US 131). Providing an alternate and less busy route would allow residents to travel more directly to shopping opportunities just west of Big Rapids (Meijer, Wal-Mart). Such a route would be safer for Amish residents who travel by horse and buggy.

This road would provide access to an area planned for Medium Density Residential development at the intersection with 12 Mile Road. Construction could be financed by private developers, special assessment, or Township general funds. Placing this on the Master Plan signifies a need for this road but does not specify when it would actually be constructed.

CHAPTER 6

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide to the continued development of Mecosta Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Board, the Planning Commission and the Township staff. This is done through a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures.

It is important to note that the Master Plan itself has no legal authority to regulate development in order to implement the recommendations of the Plan. This implementation must come from the decisions of the Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures relative to the use of the land.

The private sector, which includes individual land owners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Chapter 3 of the Plan sets forth goals as well as a set of actions which serve to guide the future development of Mecosta Township. Some of the specific implementation recommendations of this chapter are taken from these action steps, while others are taken from the land use recommendations made in Chapter 5.

The following sections identify the major activities which the Mecosta Township Planning Commission and Township Board should pursue in order to be pro-active in the implementation of the Master Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMENDATIONS

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. It is the process most commonly used to implement community Master Plans. The zoning ordinance consists of an official zoning map and zoning ordinance text.

The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts within which certain uses are permitted and others are not. The zoning ordinance text notes the uses which are permitted and establishes regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setback, lot sizes, and accessory uses.

The zoning ordinance also sets forth procedures for site plan review, conditional uses, and sign controls. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as the type of development.

In order that the recommendations and goals of the Master Plan are implemented, the following amendments to the Zoning Ordinance must be prepared and adopted:

1. Amend Section 3.5 so that in all zoning districts a parcel shall only have one principal use except for related uses under one ownership such as commercial, industrial or multi-family dwellings so as to avoid situations where there are two houses on one parcel.
2. Review those Zoning Districts where single family dwellings are the predominant use but which permit multi-family dwellings by Special Use Permit in order to decide if the multi-family use provision should be continued or deleted.
3. Revise the Highway Interchange list of uses to delete non-commercial uses.
4. Adopt appropriate regulations to achieve the intent of the new Agricultural Zoning District classification. Rezone lands to the AG District as recommended in Chapter 5 and as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.
5. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to increase the minimum lot size in the AF District to five acres and 330 feet of lot width and rezone lands to the AF District as recommended in Chapter 5 and as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.
6. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to increase the minimum lot size in the RR-2 District to two acres.
7. Prepare new zoning regulations to combine the R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts as recommended in Chapter 5.
8. Revise the R-3 regulations to decrease the allowable density from 12 units per acre to six units per acre.
9. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to create a Manufactured Housing Community Zoning District which would only permit mobile home parks.
10. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the minimum lot size and building setback requirements in the Lake / River Resort to more closely match what actually exists on these lots and rezone lands to the L/R Zone as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.
11. Prepare a new set of zoning regulations on order to create a "Town Center" for the Rogers Heights commercial area as recommended in Chapter 5.

12. The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to determine if certain land uses currently allowed by right and by special use in the Commercial Zone such as mobile home parks, food processing facilities and multifamily residential and even single family dwellings should be removed from the Zoning Ordinance as such uses are allowed elsewhere.
13. Consider increasing the dwelling unit size and width requirement in those zoning districts which allow single family detached dwelling units.
14. Consider adopting "anti-funneling" provisions to regulate waterfront access by properties without water frontage.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 3 contains a number of Actions to carry out the Goals of the Master Plan. These are listed here with the recommendation that the Planning Commission and Board review these twice each year in January and July and decide which ones to act upon and as a means to monitor progress in implementing these important measures.

Action: Review and revise regulations for new housing, commercial and industrial developments in order to protect and preserve natural features such as steep slopes, non-regulated wetlands, drainage ways, mature trees along Township roadways and scenic views.

Action: Provide for clustering of new residential development within a parcel so as to maximize the amount of open space and natural areas preserved.

Action: Work with the Mecosta County Alliance Group (Mecosta County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, Mecosta County Development Corporation) to advertise and support Township businesses and attractions.

Action: Identify those lands which are best suited for natural resource utilization and determine how best to maximize this potential.

Action: Examine the feasibility and impact of increasing the minimum lot width and lot size of lands in the western portion of the Township to more closely match the size of existing parcels which are reflective of the desires of existing land owners.

Action: Develop measures or a specific plan to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety for the commercial areas in Rogers Heights. These measures could include: the shared use of commercial driveways; limiting the number and spacing of driveways; providing

landscaping, signs, sidewalks or similar items to slow traffic and create a "downtown" atmosphere.

- Action:** Review and revise landscaping requirements for commercial development within the Township.
- Action:** Meet with Stanwood officials to identify areas of common concern and prepare a plan of action to address them.
- Action:** Meet with Ferris State University officials to determine how to match University and Township resources and needs.
- Action:** Initiate the formation of a business association by sponsoring an exploratory meeting at the Township offices.
- Action:** Partner with the Mecosta County Alliance group (Mecosta County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, Mecosta County Development Corporation) to advertise and support Rogers Heights businesses.
- Action:** Explore the possibility of establishing a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) as allowed by Michigan Public Act 197 of 1975, as amended.
- Action:** Partner with Ferris State University to utilize students and professors with talents and interests in landscaping, architecture and marketing to prepare drawings and plans for the improvement of the Rogers Heights business area.
- Action:** Utilize the resources of the Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote industrial development in the Township and to seek grant opportunities for infrastructure improvements and related projects.
- Action:** Provide suitable locations for industrial development with appropriate zoning regulations to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses.
- Action:** Adopt a subdivision ordinance for the Township.

PLANNING COMMISSION WORK PROGRAM

The Plan recommends that the Planning Commission prepare an annual work program in the beginning of each year. This work program would set forth the tasks of goals which the Planning Commission determines to accomplish for the upcoming year. This will allow the Commission to stay focused on important tasks, in order to develop and implement goals and strategies identified within this Plan.

PLANNING EDUCATION

The Planning Commissioners should be kept informed of planning seminars to learn how to better carry out their duties and responsibilities as Planning Commissioners. These seminars are regularly sponsored by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) and the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) and are a valuable resource for Planning Commissions. There are also several planning publications which are useful information tools for Planning Commissions. The main publications are Planning and Zoning News and Michigan Planner Magazine.

The Michigan Citizen Planner Program which is administered by the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service is also an important education program for Planning Commissioners

REVISIONS TO MASTER PLAN

Amendments to the Township Planning Act effective on January 9, 2002 require Township Commissions to review their Master Plans every five years and determine whether to amend the plan or adopt a new plan. This review allows the Commission to be responsive to new growth trends and current citizen attitudes.

As growth occurs over the years, the Plan's goals, land use information, population projections, and other pertinent data can then be reviewed and revised as necessary so the Plan can continue to serve as a valid guide to the growth of the Township.

APPENDIX A

Mecosta Township History

In 1852 John William Davis purchased 160 acres in Mecosta Township, built the first frame building and became the first permanent resident. He died in February of 1852 to become the first recorded death in the township.

The Township was organized in 1861 and R. A. Moon was its first supervisor. Today the township is one of the most diversified townships in Mecosta County. It is rural, agricultural and recreational with wooded and undeveloped spaces.

The first schoolhouse was erected in 1859 in section three and was taught by Mary Gilmore. The first store was opened by James H. Rogers.

The area where the community of Rogers Heights is located was at one time inhabited by Potowatomi and Chippewa Indians. The leader of the Potowatomi was Chief Mecosta. Mecosta County and Mecosta Township were named after him. Chief Mecosta made his home on the banks of the Muskegon River approximately where Rogers Dam is now located. Rogers Heights is on the backwaters of the Muskegon River. Today it is a small community with a few thriving businesses. Richard Ulrich Community Park is located at the dam. It provides a picnic area and attracts locals and travelers. The DNR maintains a public access to the pond just off Park Road. The township hall is located in Rogers Heights.

Stanwood is the smallest incorporated village in Mecosta County. The village was organized in 1870 and incorporated in 1907. It got its name from the old logging days and abundant stands of hardwood. At one time the town was known as Rustford, but was more commonly called Stanwood. Stanwood used to be a thriving logger "boom town" with an opera house, millers shop, pickle factory, funeral parlor, hardware store, dry goods store, creamery and three hotels. The trains used to come through every hour and there were four spurs off the main tracks. Today all the train tracks are gone and the White Pine Trail passes through the township where the tracks used to be.

Halfway houses were located on the corner of Jefferson and Front Street in Stanwood and on Old State Road. They were called halfway houses because they were halfway between Cadillac and Grand Rapids. The stagecoach would stop at these places so the drivers and passengers could rest overnight.

In 1883 a county poor house and insane asylum was built in Mecosta Township just a short distance south of the Village of Stanwood. In the fall of the same year, it burned down. Another poor house was erected in 1885 and although it was built of bricks, in 1889 all but one wing burned with a loss of one life. An addition was built onto the remaining wing in 1900. In 1932 the entire building was again destroyed by fire. Three lives were lost. A new hospital was built in 1933 and became the County Convalescent Hospital in 1946. In 1951 the name was changed to Mecosta Memorial Hospital. For years the community conducted activities to support the hospital, the biggest being the Buffalo Barbeque, but in 1986 the hospital could no longer afford to operate and closed.

Today Stanwood has only a few businesses but the village leaders are working toward attracting new businesses to the area.

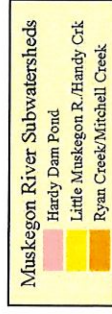
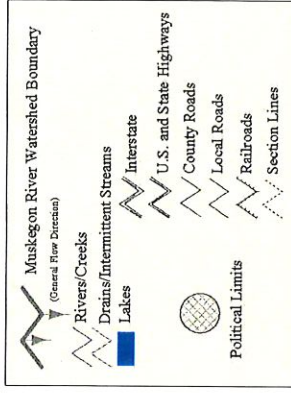
APPENDIX B

Subwatersheds

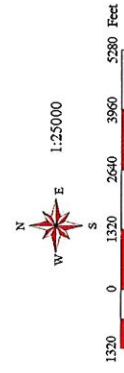
Muskegon River Watershed

Mecosta Township

Mecosta County, Michigan

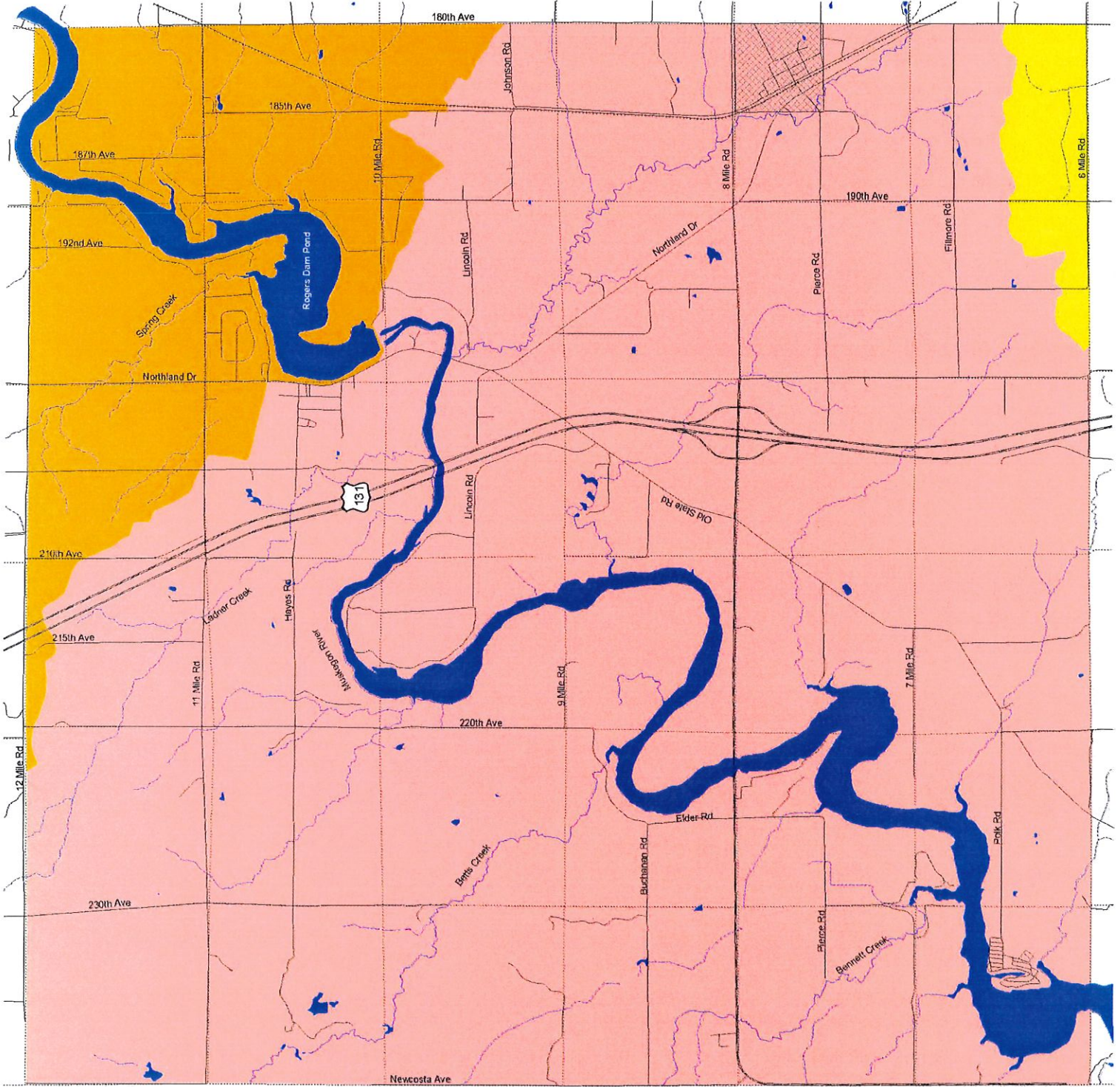


MAP 1



Base Data Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information,
Department of Information Technology, 2002.
Subwatershed Source:
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality,
Land and Water Management Division,
Hydrologic Studies Unit, 1998.

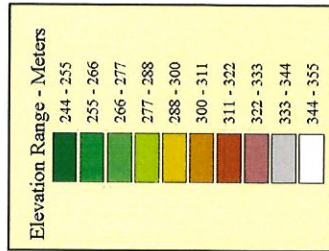
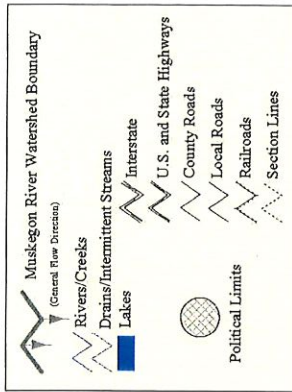
Information Services Center
Annis Water Resources Institute
Grand Valley State University
Map Prepared: September 2003



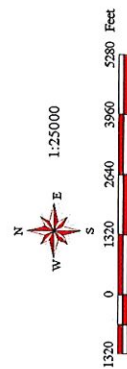
Digital Elevation Model

Mecosta Township

Mecosta County, Michigan



MAP 2



Base Data Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information,
Department of Information Technology, 2002.
Elevation Source:
Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM)
about the Space Shuttle Endeavour,
launched on Feb. 11, 2000. Obtained from the
U.S. Geological Survey, EROS Data Center, 2002.

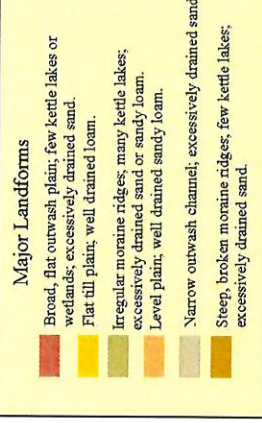
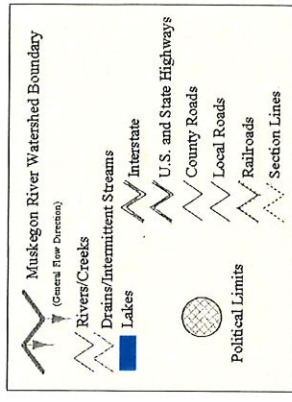
Information Services Center
Annis Water Resources Institute
Grand Valley State University

Map Prepared: September 2003

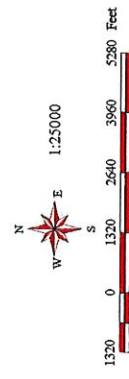
Landtype Associations

Mecosta Township

Mecosta County, Michigan

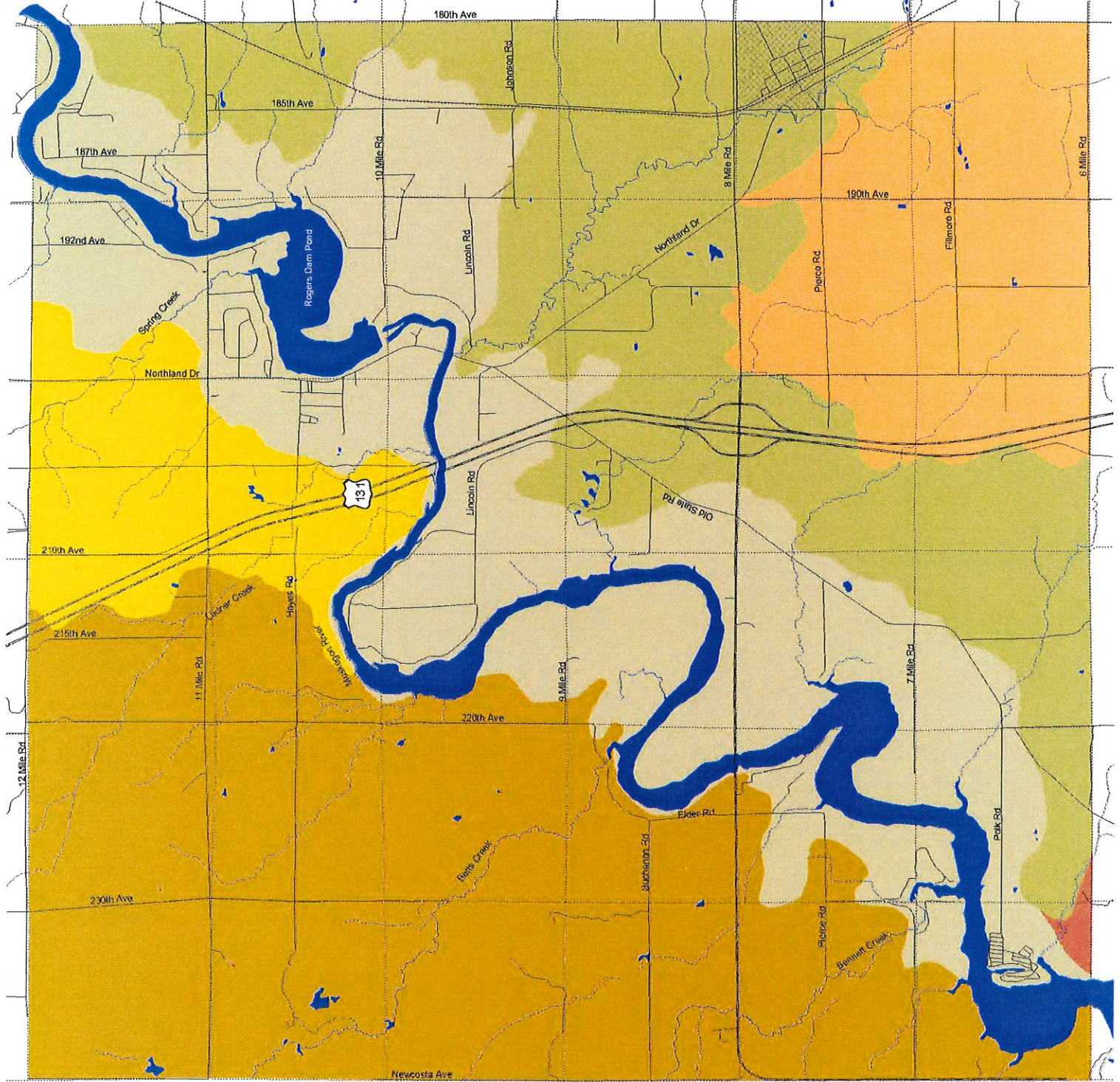


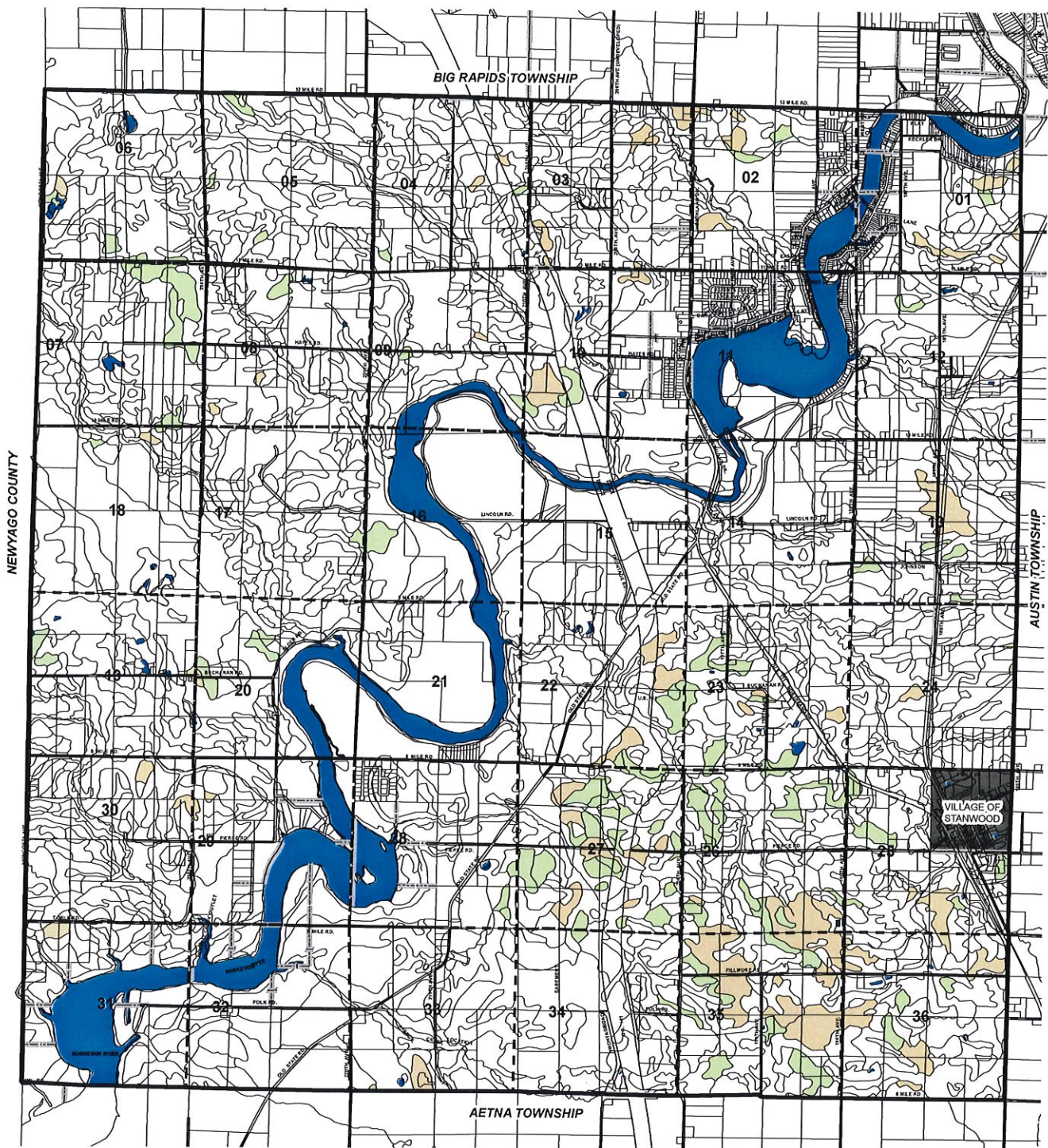
MAP 3



Base Data Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information,
Department of Information Technology, 2002.
Landtype Data Source:
Landtype Associations of Northern Michigan Section VII,
Michigan Natural Features Inventory,
Lansing, MI 1999.

Information Services Center
Annis Water Resources Institute
Grand Valley State University
Map Prepared: September 2003





BASE INFORMATION

— PARCELS

SOILS INFORMATION

NOTE: THESE SOILS SEVERELY OR MODERATELY PLACE LIMITS ON THE USE OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS. SOILS ARE SANDY AND THE EFFLUENT MOVES TOO RAPIDLY TO ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE FILTRATION OF THE EFFLUENT FROM THE SEPTIC SYSTEM.

CLASS

- Severe
- Moderate
- Slight

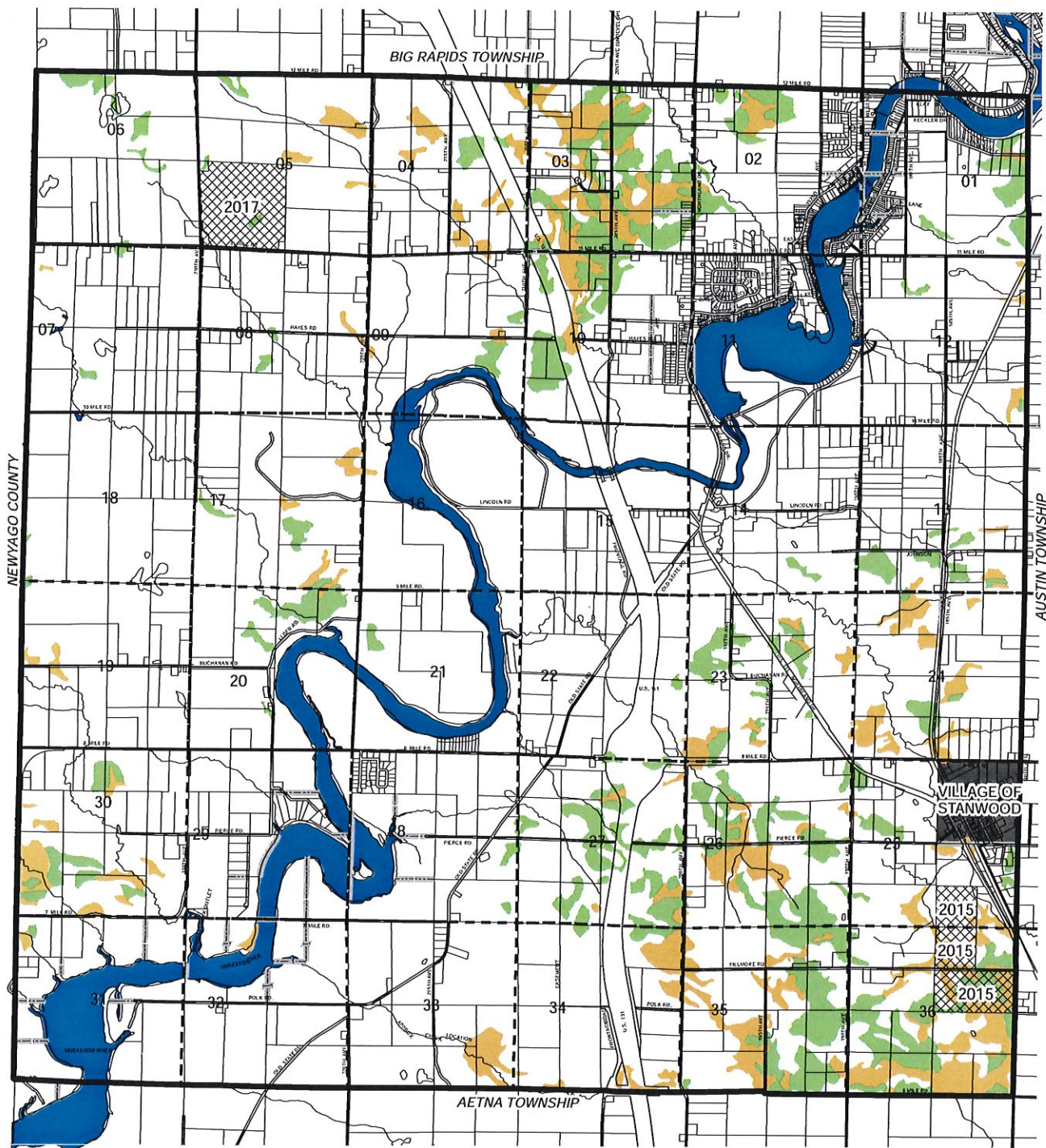
MAP 4

MECOSTA TOWNSHIP SEPTIC SUITABILITY MAP

MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN



NO SCALE



MAP 5 **MECOSTA TOWNSHIP** **PRIME FARMLAND SOILS** **AND PA116 MAP** **MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

BASE INFORMATION

— PARCELS

SOILS INFORMATION

CLASS

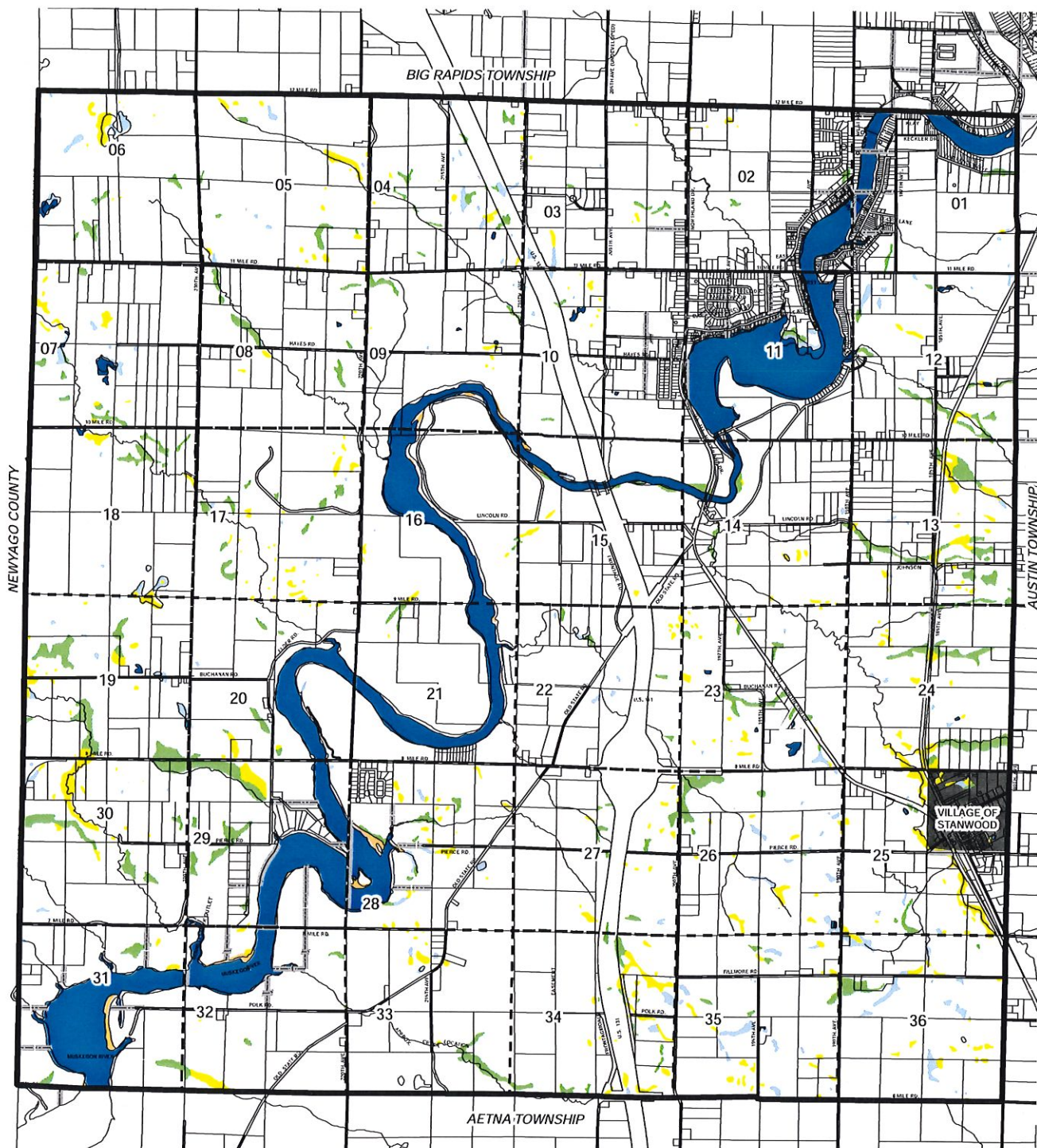
Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland (where drained)

2015 Parcels in P.A. 116 (2015 = Termination Year)



NO SCALE



BASE INFORMATION	
—	PARCELS
NWI WETLANDS	
CLASS	
	Aquatic Bed
	Emergent
	Forested
	Scrub-Shrub
	Unconsolidated Shore

MAP 6 **MECOSTA TOWNSHIP** **NWI WETLAND INVENTORY MAP** **MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

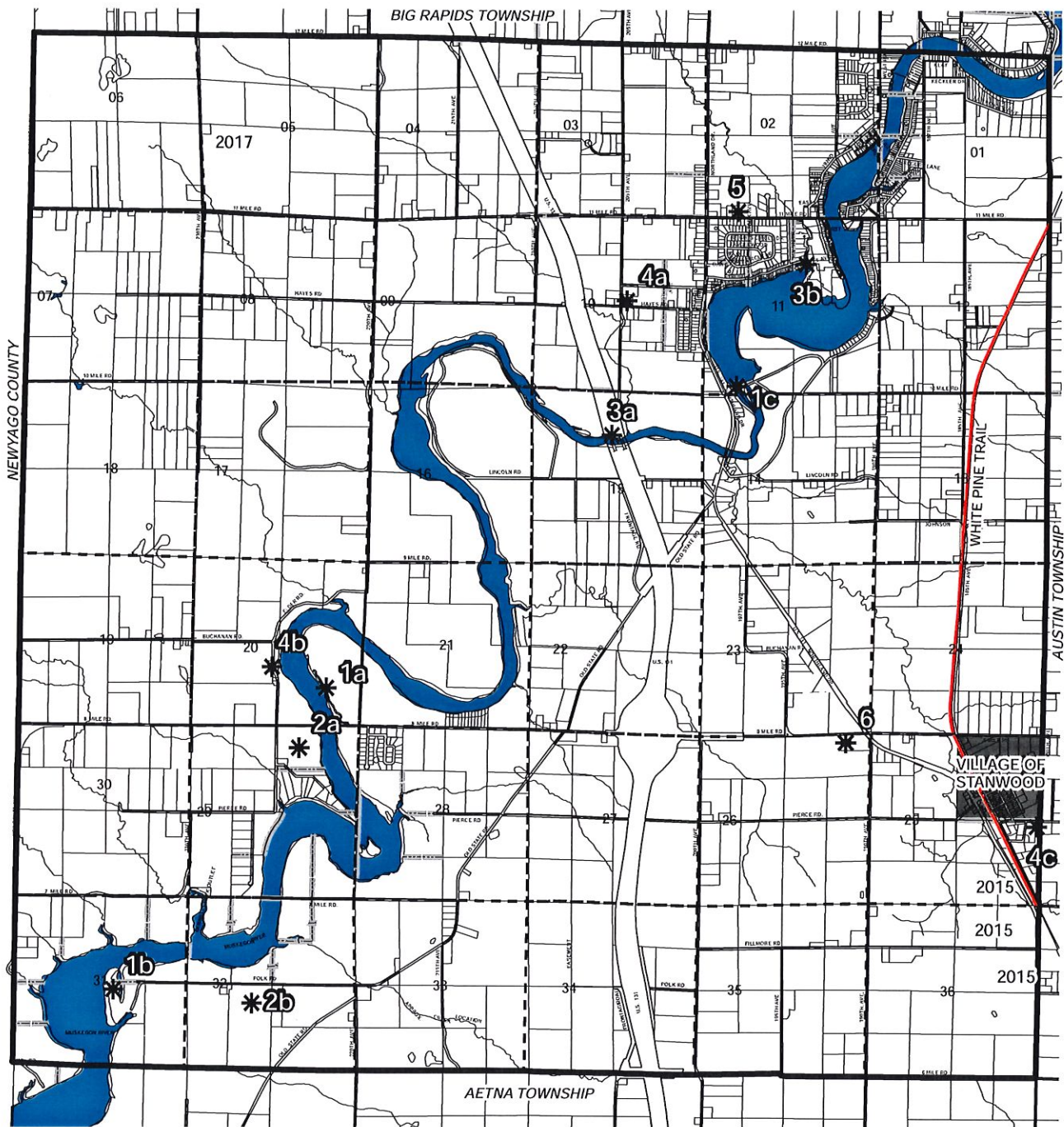
N
 NO SCALE

This is a detailed land-use or zoning map of a rural area centered around Rogers Dam Pond. The map features a grid of roads and various colored regions representing different land uses. Key elements include:

- Road Network:** Major roads shown include Highway 131 running diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. Other labeled roads are 180th Ave, 192nd Ave, 210th Ave, 216th Ave, 220th Ave, 230th Ave, Johnson Rd, Lincoln Rd, Northland Dr, Pierce Rd, Filmore St, Old State Rd, Elder Rd, Burdick Rd, Farnon Rd, and Newcosta Ave.
- Water Bodies:** Rogers Dam Pond is a large blue feature in the upper center. Other smaller water features include Egypt Creek, Kettle Lake, and Burnt Creek.
- Land Use Patterns:** The map is divided into numerous irregularly shaped polygons colored in shades of green, brown, yellow, pink, and blue, indicating different types of land use or ownership.
- Infrastructure:** A prominent red line runs horizontally across the middle of the map, likely representing a railway or a major utility corridor.



Information Services Center
Annis Water Resources Institute
Grand Valley State University
Map Prepared: September 2003



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

1. Parks

- 1a. Davis Bridge Boat Launch & Day Park
- 1b. Brower Park
- 1c. Ulrich Park

2. Campgrounds

- 2a. River Ridge Resort
- 2b. Speeds Campground

3. Boat Launch Only

- 3a. Consumers Property Boat Launch
- 3b. DNR Boat Launch

4. Township Cemeteries

- 4a. Ladners
- 4b. Fairview
- 4c. Potters

5. Township Offices

6. Fire Station

— WHITE PINE TRAIL

MAP 8 MECOSTA TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY FACILITIES MAP MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

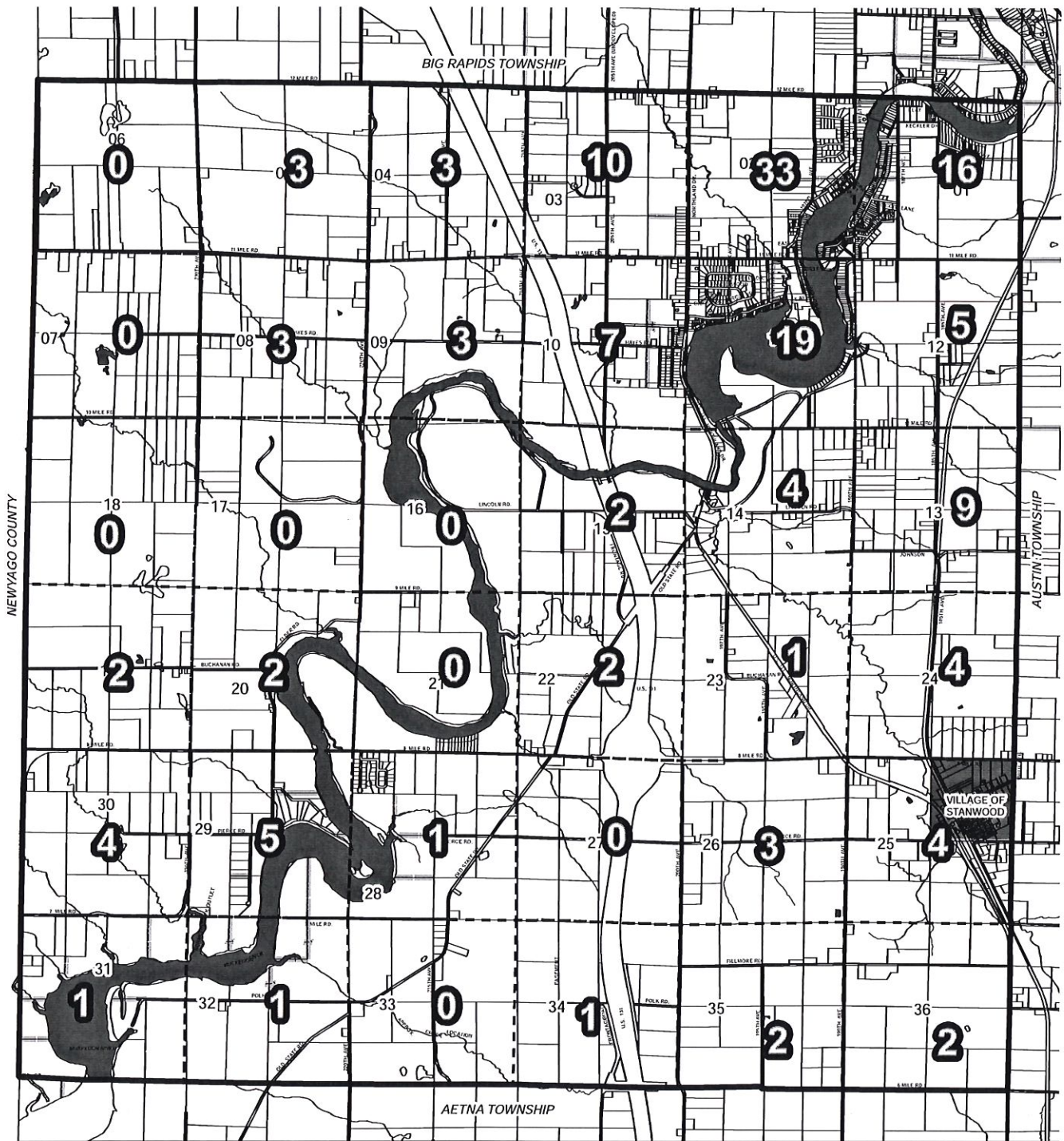


NO SCALE



progressive|ac

1000 N. Main Street
Mecosta, MI 49756
(269) 325-1000
www.progressiveac.com



MAP 9
BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED
FOR SINGLE FAMILY DWELLINGS
2001 THROUGH 2008
MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

TOTAL = 151
 AVE/YR = 18.8
 BASE INFORMATION

— PARCELS

1 # PERMITS IN THIS SECTION

SOURCE: PARCEL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

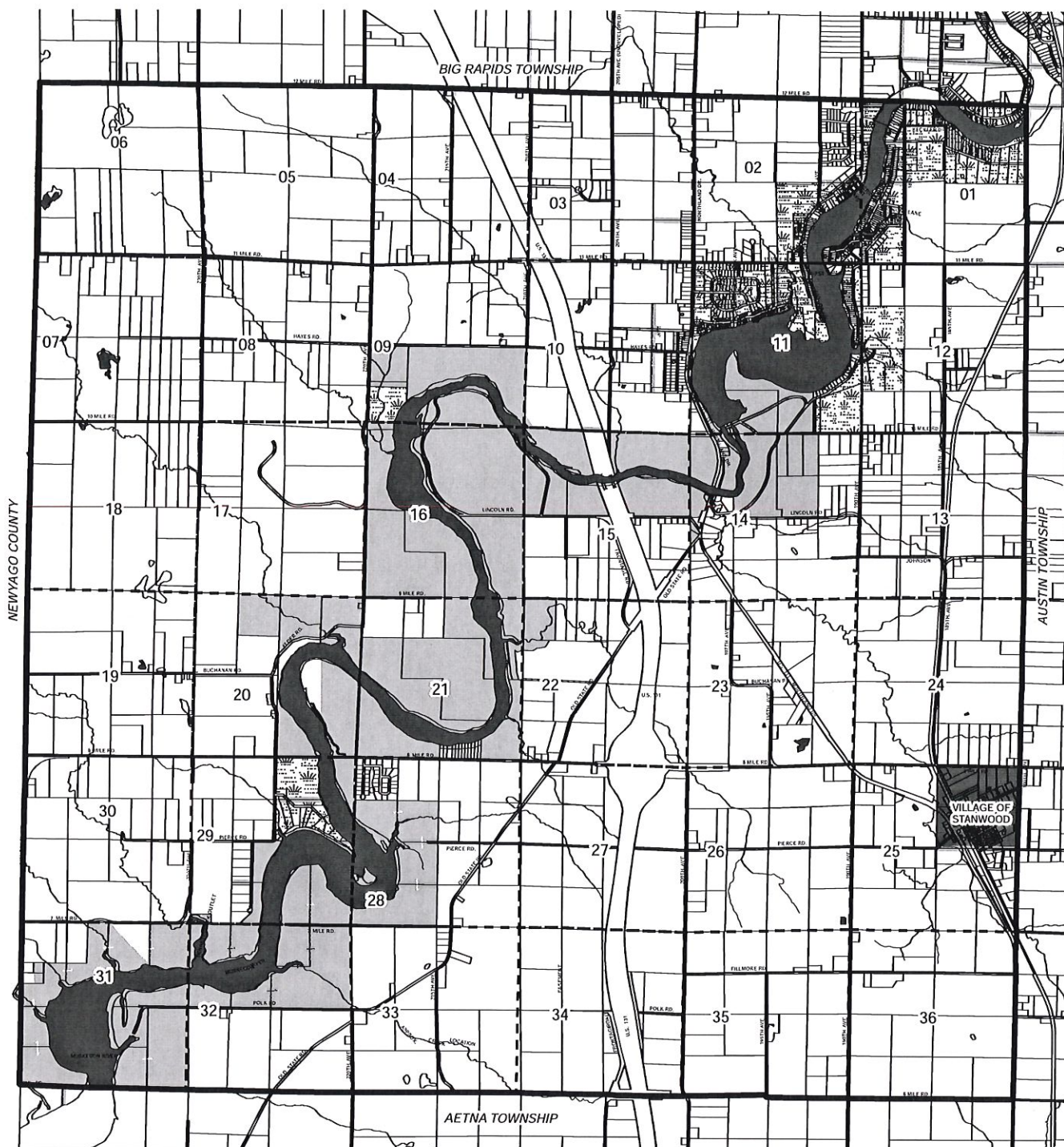


NO SCALE



progressive | ap

1111 MAIN STREET
 EAST LANSING, MI 48006
 313.481.1000
 313.481.1000



BASE INFORMATION

— PARCELS

CONSUMERS ENERGY

■ OWNED

CONTROLS FLOWAGE RIGHTS (ALLOWS CONSUMERS TO REGULATE DOCKS, ETC IN RIVER)



NO SCALE

MAP 10
PARCELS OWNED OR CONTROLLED
BY CONSUMERS ENERGY MAP
MECOSTA COUNTY, MICHIGAN



progressive

1011 N. MAIN ST.
 MECOSTA, MI 49756
 616.764.0000
 www.mecosta.org

MAP 11- MECOSTA TOWNSHIP FUTURE LAND USE MAP

ADOPTED BY THE MECOSTA TOWNSHIP BOARD ON OCTOBER 13, 2010.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

**AGRICULTURAL
AG**

The principal land use is agriculture and agriculture support services which help to enhance and stabilize the farming industry. The Plan recognizes that this area is not an exclusive agricultural preserve and that single-family homes will also be a permitted use. A minimum lot size of 10 acres with 330 feet of road frontage is required. Other permitted uses would include farm markets, feed stores, farm equipment and supply stores, and agriculture support services such as farm implement sales and service and other uses permitted in the Agricultural Forestry District which are compatible with farming practices and the principal objective of the Agricultural District which is to preserve farming and farmland.

**AGRICULTURAL / FORESTRY
AF**

This future land use category is analogous to the Agricultural / Forestry Zoning District which has been established to preserve and protect those areas of the Township which are characterized by gravel roads, large parcels, large forested areas and farming. The Plan calls for a minimum lot size of five acres with 330 feet of lot width.

**RURAL RESIDENTIAL
RR**

This future land use category is essentially the same as the RR-2 Zoning District. The Rural Residential category is intended to serve as a transition zone between the more intensive land uses such as Commercial and Low Density Residential areas and less intensive AG and AF areas. The Plan recommends a minimum lot size of two acres with 200 feet of width.

Farming would be a permitted use along with single family dwellings. It is expected that over time farming uses in this area would decrease as a rural setting but who are not farmers.

**LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
LDR**

This Future Land Use category calls for single family dwellings as the principal land use at a density of about two dwelling units per acre. Minimum lot size would be 20,000 sq. ft. with 100 feet of lot width with no public utilities. Smaller lot sizes would be allowed if water and sanitary sewer are provided.

**MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
MDR**

The Medium Density Residential Category would allow duplexes and multi-family buildings with no more than eight dwellings per building. The density for the multi-family buildings would be limited to approximately six dwelling units per acre. MDR areas would allow elderly housing and assisted living facilities. Duplexes should be required to have a minimum of 30,000 square feet for each duplex unit with 132 feet of lot width.

Medium Density Residential would be similar to the R-3, Multi-Family Residential Zoning District. The Plan recognizes that the boundaries between the future land use categories are not precise and that the Plan is intended to describe the allowable density for use in the future.

**LAKE / RIVER RESORT
L/R**

This category is analogous to the Lake / River Resort Zoning District and includes certain residential areas around and fronting on Rogers Pond which were established well before the Township imposed the current minimum lot size requirements of 20,000 sq. ft. and 100 feet of lot width for these areas.

**VILLAGE COMMERCIAL
VC**

The Village Commercial category applies to the commercial zoned uses in Rogers Heights along Northland Drive. One of the major concepts which came out of the planning process was that Rogers Heights should function as the identity of Mecosta Township and serve as a gathering place for Township residents and seasonal visitors. A new set of "Town Center" zoning regulations is needed to make sure that future land uses are compatible with the vision for this area and that the form of these uses (parking, building materials, landscaping, sidewalks) will also achieve that vision.

**COMMERCIAL
C**

This category recognizes existing commercial uses on 8 Mile Road and Old State Road. Generally recognized retail and service uses would be the principal uses allowed.

**HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
HC**

This category is analogous to the Highway Interchange Zoning District. The intent of this district is to provide goods and services for travelers on US 131. Permitted uses include restaurants, vehicle service stations, hotels, and uses which support the trucking industry.

**INDUSTRIAL
I**

This category recognizes the existing Industrially zoned land containing the Ice Mountain bottling facility on 8 Mile Road and recommends industrial use for the land directly across 8 Mile Road extending to Northland Drive for additional industrial use. The classification is intended to accommodate uses such as manufacturing and processing, warehousing, contractor equipment storage, and other uses which are compatible with the light and appropriate building characteristics such as asphalt, paint and salvage yards would be permitted by special land use.

***** FUTURE ROAD

The Master Plan recommends a future public road in Section 3, specifically the extension of 205th Avenue from its terminus north of 11 Mile Road to 12 Mile Road. This road would provide access to an area planned for Medium Density Residential development at the intersection with 12 Mile Road. Construction could be financed by private developers, special assessment, or Township general funds. Placing this on the Master Plan signifies a need for this road but does not specify when it would actually be constructed.

