



Existing Land Use

Chapter Six



Existing Land Use



Existing land use in Marion Township was analyzed in several ways. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) land coverage map was used as a base map for field analysis. Field research resulted in several changes to the SEMCOG map that yielded a new existing land use map (see map at end of chapter). Further changes were made after comparing the new existing land use map to Livingston County digital ortho photography, plat maps, and various road map sources.

Land Use Categories

Fourteen (14) existing land use categories were established to describe and map land use throughout Marion Township (see map at end of chapter). The categories are based on Michigan Resource Inventory System (MIRIS) Current Land Use/Land Cover Categories and are as follows: Agriculture, Commercial, Extractive, Industrial, Recreation & Open Space, Highways, Residential, Existing Residential Subdivisions, Residential Developments, Utilities, Vacant/Undeveloped, Lakes, Ponds & Streams, Wetlands, and Woodlands. Each land use category can be described as follows:

Agriculture - This land use category includes cropland, orchards, confined feeding areas, permanent pasture, farmsteads and other agricultural lands.

Commercial - This land use category includes service and institutional uses, primary central business districts, shopping centers/malls, secondary mixed business districts, and office centers or parks.

Extractive - The Extractive land use category includes open pits, underground extractive operations and oil or gas wells.

Industrial - The Industrial land use category includes general industrial and industrial parks.

Recreation & Open Space - This land use category includes public assembly spaces, outdoor recreation, and cemeteries.

Highways - This land use category indicates highway and interstate roads.

Residential - The Residential land use category includes single-family residences that are not developed in dense residential communities nor dense lakeside clusters of residences.

Existing Residential Subdivisions - This land use category includes platted existing residential subdivisions developed prior to March 14, 1996 (the effective date of the current Marion Township Zoning Ordinance).

Residential Developments - This land use category includes new, smaller lot (generally less than one acre), dense residential developments. Developments such as manufactured home communities, subdivisions, condominiums, site condominiums, apartments, planned unit developments, cluster developments and open space preservation communities.

Utilities - The Utilities land use category includes transportation networks such as: air, rail, water and road transportation. The category also includes communication, waste disposal, water and other utility structures.

Vacant/Undeveloped - This land use category encompasses all land area that is not being used for any

of the purposes of the other land use categories.

Lakes, Ponds & Streams - In addition to lakes, ponds and streams, this land use category includes reservoirs, drains and other waterways.

Wetlands - This land use category includes both forested and nonforested wetlands.

Woodlands - The Woodlands land use category includes both deciduous and coniferous forested land area and Christmas tree plantations.

Agriculture

Like most communities in Livingston County, agriculture is not as prominent in Marion Township as it was in years past. Each decade agricultural land use has diminished due to increased residential growth and development. The largest, contiguous expanses of agricultural land use are currently found in the northwest quadrant of the township in Sections 5,6,7,8,9,16,17 and 18, and on either side of D-19 in Sections 13,14,23 and 24.

In the northwest quadrant of the township there is over 1,000 acres of contiguous agricultural land within the Marion Township sewer district. Most of the land area has long been proposed as a large-scale residential development that if constructed, would dramatically alter the character of this area.

In Sections 13, 14, 23 and 24 along D-19, the larger agricultural parcels range in size from 140 to over 200 acres in size. The southwest quadrant of the township (Sections 19,20,21,28,29,30,31,32 and 33) represents a third area of the township where there is also a substantial amount of agricultural land area in smaller, scattered parcels. There are several parcels in these sections that are over 50 acres and less than 200 acres in size.

Commercial

Commercial establishments are infrequently found in Marion Township. They are located in the following four primary locations: The Lucy/National Road area adjacent to the City of Howell (Section 1), Mason Road and Michigan Avenue north of I-96 where a couple of Marion Township commercial properties are scattered amongst City of Howell properties (Sections 1 and 2), The D-19 corridor south of I-96 and north of Francis Road (Sections 1 and 2), and the northwest corner of the intersection of D-19 and Schafer Road at the Marion/Putnam Township line (Section 35).

The Lucy Road and National Street commercial area of the township contains a vacant commercial building located on National Road and an auto shop with a large salvage yard and outside construction storage that extends the full width between Lucy Road and National Street.

The Township has commercial properties that are interspersed among City commercial properties along Michigan Avenue and Mason Road.

The D-19 corridor south of I-96 and north of Francis Road contains the largest concentration of commercial establishments in Marion Township. Within this area along D-19, is a motel, three small commercial establishments, a community college and a mini-storage/monument business. A couple of

other businesses are located along Schroeder Road off of D-19. These commercial establishments include an auto center and a service club. An adult foster care home and a wood crafter business are also located along the north side of Francis Road near the intersection of D-19 and Francis Road. Future commercial growth is anticipated along D-19 including the construction of a new road connecting Peavy Road to D-19 north of the motel. The private road will provide a much needed secondary access from Peavy Road to D-19. Current traffic connections between Peavy Road and D-19 are Mason Road at the northern boundary of the Township, and Keddle Road (local gravel) approximately 1 ½ miles south of Mason Road.

The fourth commercial area in Marion Township consists of a restaurant/bar, and a gasoline station that includes a food mart and auto repair at the northwest corner of the D-19 and Schafer Road intersection. This settlement area of residences and commercial establishments extends across the Marion township line into Putnam Township where a party store is located at the southwest corner of D-19 and Schafer Road.

There are other small commercial establishments in the township that are either permitted by right within the zoning district in which they are located (e.g. landscaping establishments) or a special land use permit has been granted for the use.

Extractive

The Marion Township Existing Land Use Map indicates that there are two extractive sites in the township in Sections 10 and 21. The extraction site in Section 10 is an active site south of Sanitorium Road and west of County Farm Road. The active extraction site in Section 21 is known by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) as the Coon Lake extraction site. This site is north of Coon Lake Road on the west side of County Farm Road. The site encompasses 155 acres according to the Marion Township plat map.

Industrial

Industrial land uses are very limited in Marion Township. The Marion Township Existing Land Use Map indicates that there are two industrial sites located in the township. One industrial site is located just east of the I-96 expressway on the south side of Mason Road. A second industrial site is located at the southern end of Lucy Road where the road terminates at the I-96 expressway.

There are other small industrial land uses in the township that are either permitted by right within the zoning district in which they are located or a special land use permit has been granted for the use. These small uses are not mapped.

Recreation & Open Space

This existing land use category includes public assembly spaces such as the Marion Township Hall and attached Marion Township substation of the Howell Area Fire Authority. These two uses are located in Section 21 on the south side of Coon Lake Road.

This existing land use category also includes outdoor recreation establishments. Most recreational land use in Marion Township is privately owned. Privately owned golfing opportunities include a family golf

center with a driving range and practice facility located along the west side of Peavy Road in Section 2, and an eighteen hole golf course that is open to the public with a full-service restaurant and banquet facilities on 231 acres in Section 12. The gun club is a privately owned 40 acre firearms establishment located in Section 9 along the west side of Jewell Road. The conference and nature center is located south of Triangle Lake Road in Sections 34 and 35 on 230 acres owned by the Presbytery of Detroit. The center includes many camping, conference, and educational experiences that are open to the public.

Public recreational land use in Marion Township is limited to three land areas. One land area is 270 acres of undeveloped land owned by the State of Michigan in Sections 4 and 5 off of Cedar Lake Road. This outstanding property has 3/4 mile of Red Cedar River frontage and the State of Michigan currently allows hunting on the property. The second land area is 52 acres consisting of pond and extensive wetlands in Section 36. This land is a non-contiguous part of the Brighton State Recreation Area. The third land area is township parkland adjacent to the Marion Township Hall. This parkland is currently undeveloped, natural terrain.

Additionally, this existing land use category includes five Marion Township cemeteries. Lakeside Cemetery is located in Section 5 along the south side of Norton Road, Greene Cemetery is located in Section 19 along the west side of Pingree Road, County Farm Cemetery is located at the section line between Sections 15 and 22, Harger Cemetery is located in Section 23 along the west side of D-19 and Drew Cemetery is located in Section 3 along the east side of County Farm Road.

Highways

Highway land use in Marion Township is exclusive to Interstate 96 which traverses the north east corner of the township and includes the D-19/I-96 interchange just south of the City of Howell.

Residential

Marion Township largely consists of low -density single-family residential lots that are not developed in dense residential communities nor dense lakeside clusters. These lots are primarily greater than two acres and they are dispersed throughout the Township. Most of this land use is located along county road frontage or in small, large lot private road developments.

Existing Residential Subdivisions

Existing residential subdivisions were platted and developed prior to the March 14, 1996, effective date of the current Marion Township Zoning Ordinance. The subdivisions are dispersed throughout the township. The establishment of these subdivisions is no longer allowed under the Marion Township Zoning Ordinance.

Several Existing Residential Subdivisions are located around the lakes in the southern half of Marion Township. Residential lots on lake frontage are highly sought-after, premium properties in the Township. The character of these areas includes a mixture of types of homes along the lake frontage. There are older cottage style dwellings and newer, large homes that often dwarf the older homes. Most often a narrow roadway rings the lake and separates the dwellings right on the lake from those that offer lake views. The result of this development pattern is densely clustered residences, although the influence of this pattern is usually confined to the platted area surrounding the lake and the density and clustering do

not extend far beyond the lake front. The high density of this land use means that a fairly large population of township residents reside around the lakes.

In Marion Township there are six (6) lakes that have Existing Residential Subdivisions surrounding some of their shores. Coon, Gale and Pardee Lake are clustered together in Sections 24 and 25 of the Township. Portions of Gale and Pardee Lake extend into Genoa Township. Most of Coon Lake is surrounded by Existing Residential Subdivision land use, and on the eastern side of Coon Lake these platted subdivisions also abut Gale and Pardee Lakes. Triangle Lake in Section 27 also has Existing Residential Subdivision land use surrounding most of the lake. Cedar Lake in Sections 28 and 29 has Existing Residential Subdivision land use along the eastern and western shores of the lake, and Pleasant Lake in Sections 34 and 35 has limited Existing Residential Subdivision land use on the northern shore of the lake.

Residential Developments

Marion Township is currently one of Livingston County's most prolific locations for residential development. According to Livingston County Department of Planning's Planned and Proposed Residential Development data base, over the last ten years the number of planned and proposed housing units in Marion Township has more than quadrupled. In June 1993, Marion Township reported eight planned and proposed residential developments totaling 332 housing units. Ten years later Marion Township reported thirty-one (31) planned and proposed residential developments totaling 4,301 housing units (July 2003). In the year 2004 these numbers further increased to thirty-one (31) planned (under construction) and six (6) proposed (site plan review stage) residential developments totaling 4,654 housing units (April 2004).

Annual residential construction in the Township topped 1,000 planned and proposed residential units by 1995 and the number of residential units has been consistently at this level ever since. The 4,654 planned and proposed residential units reported in 2004 represents the highest total of all time. The number of planned and proposed residential units in the Township has fluctuated most dramatically with the variety of proposals that have been submitted for a large scale residential development on over 1,000 acres of land in Sections 5, 6,7,8 and 9 of the Township.

The annual number of planned and proposed residential developments increased most dramatically between the years 1998 and 1999 when the total number of developments rose from nineteen (19) to thirty-two (32), a gain of 13 new developments. The thirty-seven (37) developments planned and proposed in 2004 represents an all time high. Although not all of these planned and proposed residential developments have been constructed and many have not reached their full build-out capacity, the data base is indicative of the high level of residential development that has occurred in the township over the last eleven years.

The Residential Developments land use category of the Marion Township Existing Land Use map depicts most of these planned and proposed residential developments. Twenty-eight (28) smaller lot residential developments have been identified (see Map 10 on following page). They are the newer, highest density developments in the Township and they include manufactured home communities, subdivisions, condominiums, site condominiums, apartments, planned unit developments, cluster developments and open space preservation communities that by the nature of their density (lots that are less than 2 acres in size, most of which are one acre or less in size) and their developmental scale (total number of lots) substantially influence the land use patterns surrounding their location.

Although there are many other examples of residential communities in Marion Township, field analysis reveals that many of these communities are platted developments that may be associated with a lake or they are private road developments involving lots larger than two acres, often with fewer than ten (10) total lots. Although the platted developments are similar in density to the residential developments that have been mapped, they are not included in this land use category because the impact of this type of development is limited to the plat and further establishment of these platted existing residential subdivisions is no longer allowed under the Marion Township Zoning Ordinance. Private road developments are also not included in this land use category because they are more rural in character, and they do not impact surrounding land use to the same extent that the high density developments do. Also not included is another large-scale development that has been verbally proposed for years. It is the previously mentioned development proposed on over 1,000 acres in Sections 5, 6,7,8 and 9 of the Township for 2,000 living units. Although the impact of this proposed development would be extensive, it is not represented on the following pictorial inventory or location map due to the very tentative nature of the proposal.

Following is a location map and pictorial inventory of the twenty-eight (28) residential developments that currently exist or are under construction in Marion Township. When each of these residential developments is complete, they will contain a total of over 2,249 units of housing which is nearly equal to the total number of existing Marion Township housing units reported in the 2000 Census (2,365). Almost half of the twenty-eight (28) residential developments (12) are located within the Proposed Water/Sewer Boundary in the northern portion of the township. Among these twelve (12) developments are some of the highest density residential developments such as: Crystal Wood, Hometown Village of Marion, and Woodberry Park; each of these developments contains 2.5 to 7.0 units per acre. The remaining sixteen (16) residential developments are located outside of the Proposed Water/Sewer Boundary, primarily in the southeast quadrant of the township (Sections 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36).

Utilities

On the eastern side of Marion Township an electricity substation is located between Dutcher and Pingree Roads in the southwest corner of Section 18. An associated transmission corridor runs north and south near the western boundary of the township through Sections 7, 18, 19, 30 and 31. Another electric transmission corridor runs in an east/west direction through Sections 13,14,15,16,17 and 18.

Marion Township is a member of a water authority make up of four townships: Marion; Howell; Oceola; and Genoa. The water authority is called MHOG. The MHOG wells and water treatment plant are located in the northwestern part of the township on Norton Road near Amos in Section 5.

Vacant/Undeveloped

There are numerous areas of vacant/undeveloped land scattered throughout Marion Township that aren't designated by any other land use category. Many of these areas are adjacent to wetlands and small water bodies. One of the largest contiguous swaths of vacant/undeveloped land in the Township is present in Section 9.

Lakes, Ponds & Streams

The four largest lakes in Marion Township are located in the southern half of the Township. They include: Cedar Lake (117 acres); Coon lake (106 acres); Pleasant Lake (78 acres) and Triangle Lake (51 acres). There are five additional lakes ranging in size from 12 to 25 acres. The combined surface area of these nine lakes is nearly 450 acres. Additionally, numerous ponds and other small water bodies are dispersed throughout the Township.

Marion Township is the source of two important rivers. The Red Cedar, which begins at Cedar Lake, runs northwest and eventually joins the Grand River near Lansing. The South Branch of the Shiawassee, for which Coon Lake is the source, continues north into Shiawassee County. Dozens of drains connect to both of the rivers.

Wetlands

Wetland areas are spread throughout Marion Township, particularly adjacent to woodlands, drains, lakes, the Red Cedar River and the South Branch of the Shiawassee River. One notable exception is a wide swath of wetland that diagonally dissects Section 6 in the northwest corner of the Township. Cedar Lake is the Marion Township lake that is surrounded by the most wetland acreage.

Woodlands

Woodland areas are also scattered throughout Marion Township. There are however, two areas that stand out as having the largest contiguous acreage of woodland. One of these areas is in Sections 3,4,5 and 9 of the Township. This area is primarily owned by the State of Michigan and woodlands in this area have remained undisturbed. The second most predominant woodland area in the Township is in Sections 26 and 27 where land owners have large parcels of land on which woodlands have been preserved.

