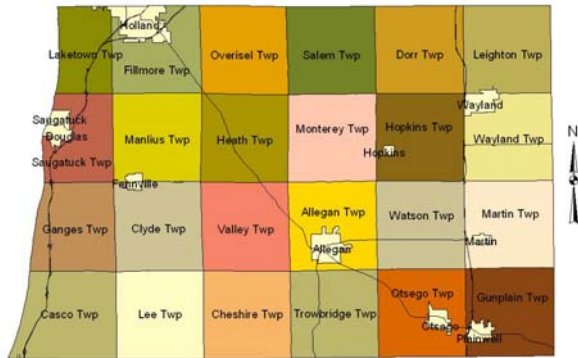


Allegan County



INTRODUCTION

Bordered by Lake Michigan and located between Holland and Saugatuck, Laketown Township is a highly desirable place to both live and recreate. As a part of the marketed ‘West Coast of Michigan’, Laketown Township is a part of the 1.1 million people that live, work and recreate in this fast growing region. Retirees can enjoy a private and secluded residential lifestyle, close to both medical and shopping services. Major transportation routes assures that residents wanting to reside in Laketown Township do so because they can selectively afford to locate in these areas.

This Plan update is a product of a community survey and multiple work sessions with the Township Board and Planning Commission. Issues of growth, development, environmental resources and recreation were discussed at a public meeting. Trends, issues, opportunities and challenges were also identified. The result is a Plan update that continues to accommodate growth at a controlled level, consistent with the community’s vision and in a manner that protects natural features that symbolize the essence of Laketown.



Community Profile

It is important to understand the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the township in order to understand our past, as well as guide future policy decisions.

POPULATION

The area has seen steady growth in each decade since 1950. While some decades witnessed more dramatic growth spurts than others, on average the township grew 13 percent per decade since 1980. Since the last update, Laketown has grown an additional 14 percent.

Population Trends

As noted in the table below, Laketown was just behind Park and Holland Township for highest overall growth within the region between the years 1950 to 2000.

With an average of 1 person for every 2.5 acres of land, Laketown Township is still considered a low-density community, despite its relative growth. The continuous increase in population in a mostly rural setting indicates that most new residents find employment outside of the township or are seeking a place to retire. With most of the major employment centers are within an easy commuting distance, Laketown continues to attract residents seeking a quiet, rural atmosphere, with working and shopping opportunities nearby.

Township Population growth 1990-2000	
Township	% Growth 1990 -- 2000
Park	59%
Laketown	14%
Saugatuck	19%
Holland	65%
Fillmore	2%
Manlius	48%
Source: U.S. Census, 2000	

HISTORIC POPULATION- LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, 1950 -2000							
Community	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1950-2000
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP	1,240	1,814	2,175	4,332	4,888	5,561	348.5%
Saugatuck Township	1,292	1,735	2,067	2,701	2,916	2,376	83.9%
City of Saugatuck	770	927	1,022	1,079	954	1,065	38.3%
Fillmore Township	N/A	1,877	2,126	2,307	2,710	2,756	46.8%
Park Township	3,295	4,043	6,461	10,354	11,060	17,579	433.5%
Holland Township	6,224	6,498	8,455	13,739	17,523	28,911	364.5%
City of Holland	15,850	24,777	26,479	26,281	30,745	35,048	121.1%
Allegan County	47,493	57,729	66,575	81,555	90,509	105,665	122.5%
Ottawa County	73,751	98,719	128,181	157,174	187,768	238,314	223.1%
Source: U.S. Census, 2000							

COMMUTER PATTERNS IN LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP 1990-2000				
Laketown Township	2000		1990	
	Number	%	Number	%
Less than 5 minutes	58	2	28	1.2
5 to 9 minutes	355	12.7	220	9.7
10 to 14 minutes	688	24.6	687	30.3
15 to 19 minutes	736	26.3	663	29.2
20 to 29 minutes	638	22.8	417	18.3
30 to 44 minutes	121	4.3	117	5.2
45 to 59 minutes	109	4	81	3.6
60 or more minutes	93	3.3	57	2.5
Total	2798	100	2270	100
Source: U.S. Census, 2000				

With limited means of public transportation available in the township, reliance on personal automobiles is the primary mode of carrying people throughout the area. Nearly 66 percent of the working population in Laketown Township spends not more than 20 minutes commuting to work, which is similar to 1990 Census figures.

Population Projections

Population projections were prepared by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission from 2000 Census data. Laketown's population is expected to grow nearly twice as fast for the 2000-2020 time period (a 50.1 percent increase) as the 1980-2000 time period (a 28.4 percent increase). Only Saugatuck Township is projected to have a greater increase in rate of population growth. While projections indicate increased growth, overall density is still much lower than the surrounding communities.

Population Projections 2000 - 2020					
Community	2000	2010	2020	% Change-2000-2020	% Change-1980-2000
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP	5,561	6,775	8,347	50.1%	28.4%
Saugatuck Township	2,376	2,531	2,752	15.8%	-12%
City of Saugatuck	1,065	1,107	1,152	8.2%	-1.3%
Fillmore Township	2,756	2,936	3,126	13.4%	19.5%
Park Township	17,579	23,346	30,980	76.2%	69.8%
Holland Township	28,911	42,784	63,229	118.7%	110.4%
City of Holland	35,048	39,726	45,021	28.4%	33.4%
Allegan County	105,665	122,993	144,266	36.5%	29.6%
Ottawa County	238,314	303,676	393,642	65.2%	51.6%
Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, Percentage and Numeric Based Trend Projections					

Laketown Township has excellent proximity to the I-196 corridor and Lake Michigan, increasing waterfront accessibility and potential for development. Other features that make Laketown attractive for residential growth are the aesthetic features of sand dunes and agricultural lands. In order for a rural environment to continue, the Township desires growth that is harmonious with the community's natural character, existing land use patterns, available infrastructure, environmental resources and adopted goals.

AGE

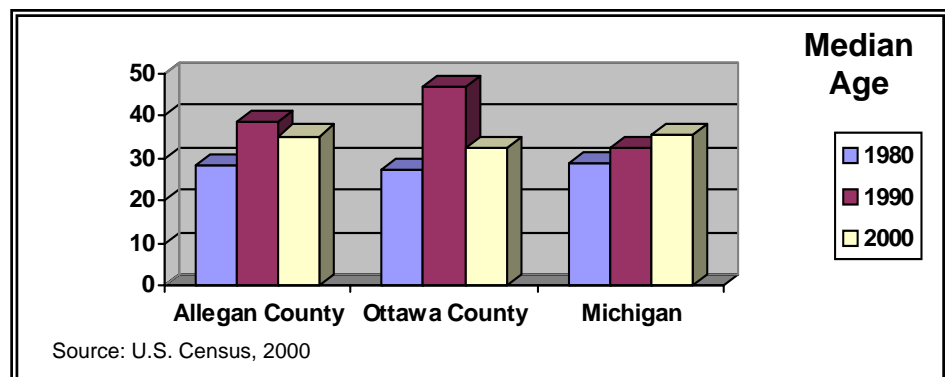
The age of township residents provides an indication of economic, transportation, recreational and community needs for all age groups. Sensitive community planning can help Laketown maintain its high quality of life, while providing the opportunity for housing and services which benefit every segment of the population.

LAKETOWN AGE DISTRIBUTION						
Age Groups	1980	% of Total Population	1990	% of Total Population	2000	% of Total Population
Under 5	334	7.71	348	7.12	314	5.65
5-14	783	18.07	773	15.81	892	16.04
15-24	892	20.59	675	13.81	682	12.26
25-34	875	20.2	967	19.78	544	9.79
35-44	556	12.83	947	19.37	994	17.87
45-54	291	6.72	540	11.05	937	16.85
55-64	322	7.43	286	5.85	572	10.28
65 and over	279	6.44	352	7.2	626	11.26
Total	4,332	100	4,888	100	5,561	100

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

In 1980, nearly 59 percent of the population was between the ages of 5 and 34, the two largest groups being 15-24 and 25-34. In 2000, these two age groups comprised 38 percent of the total population. Between 1990 and 2000, residents in the 45 and over age group increased by 14 percent. A notable change occurred for the 25-34 age groups between 1990 and 2000, decreasing by 10 percent.

The median age in Laketown Township in 2000 was 38.9, which is slightly higher than many of the surrounding communities, except for Saugatuck Township at 44. In a 20 year period, Laketown has



increased from 26.5 years to 38.9 years of age. As retirees and older residents with established incomes move into the area, attracted by Lake Michigan property, this aging population is likely to continue. Higher median age groups also tend to have smaller households, due to empty nesters and retirement lifestyles.

Population Summary

The township has seen a steady increase in growth from 1980 to 2000, on average increasing 14% throughout each 10 year period over the past 20 years, and projections indicate that growth will continue throughout the next 20 years. While population growth is steadily rising, overall population densities are still much lower than the surrounding urbanized communities of Park and Holland Townships.

HOUSING

Lakefront residential, traditional subdivisions, agricultural lands and horse farm estates enrich the residential fabric of the community. In 2000, year round housing units accounted for 90.2 percent of the total housing stock, versus 92.7 percent for Allegan County, indicating only a small seasonal population. A large majority, 75 percent of all units in the township, are owner occupied. These two factors indicate a stable, full time population rather than a transient or seasonal population.

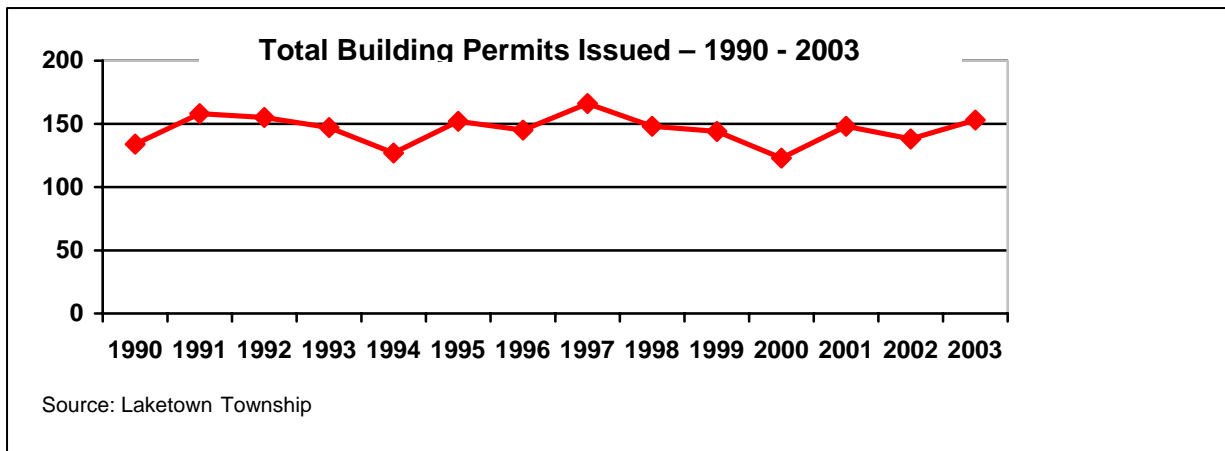
Housing Characteristics -Laketown Township and Allegan County, 2000				
Characteristic	Laketown Township	%	Allegan County	%
Year-round Housing Units	2141	90.2	40138	92.7
Seasonal, Recreational, Occasional	232	9.8	3154	7.3
Total Housing Units	2373	100	43292	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, General Housing Characteristics, 2000.

Ten percent of the housing stock is classified as 'seasonal' in use, slightly higher than the County average of seven percent. As lakefront property values continue to rise and older residents decide to convert their seasonal homes into year-round housing, it is expected that the amount of seasonal housing will decrease.

Construction Activity for Laketown Township					
Year	Total Building Permits	Single Family	Duplex	Condo Units	Other
1990	134	35	1	26	93
1991	158	37	1	17	116
1992	155	52	0	35	95
1993	147	37	0	27	101
1994	127	36	1	25	83
1995	152	37	0	7	112
1996	145	44	0	0	101
1997	166	46	1	3	116
1998	148	36	0	13	104
1999	144	41	0	12	97
2000	123	31	0	11	88
2001	148	35	1	9	107
2002	138	31	0	14	100
2003	153	32	1	14	114
Total	2,176	520	6	213	1437

Source: Laketown Township



2000 Median Value for Owner-Occupied Housing Units

Park Township \$162,200	Holland Township \$127,700
Laketown Township \$158,800	Fillmore Township \$127,200
Saugatuck Township \$161,700	Manlius Township \$140,200

While construction activity in Laketown Township has remained somewhat constant between 1990 and 2003, there has been some modest residential activity within certain years, such as in 1992 when 52 single family residential permits were issued, and in 1996 and 1997, with an average of 45 permits issued each year.

The housing values of Laketown and other 'lakeside' communities illustrates the impact that Lake Michigan property values can have on median housing values. On average, lakeshore communities within the Laketown area see anywhere from \$34,500 to \$21,500 difference in housing stock from inland communities. This can be expected to

exponentially increase as lakefront properties continue to convert seasonal homes into primary residential dwelling units, and a shrinking supply drives prices higher.

Laketown and Saugatuck Township have distinctively smaller household sizes than neighboring communities. Laketown's average household size has been steadily decreasing since 1980, from 3.13 persons to the current occupancy of 2.66 persons.

Township	Average household size
Laketown Township	2.66
Saugatuck Township	2.20
Holland Township	2.87
Park Township	2.87
Fillmore Township	2.91
Manlius Township	2.93
Source: U.S. Census, 2000	

ECONOMY

Median incomes across the entire area have seen a steady increase from 1979 to 1999 with the relative rank among Townships remaining the same. Park Township has remained the highest in median income and Laketown remains second in the region. The more significant increase among Laketown, Park and Saugatuck Townships in dollar amounts is attributable to the influx of new residents with established incomes as a result of a higher median age group, as compared to Holland Township, Allegan County or the State.

Median Income 1979-1999						
Median Income	1979	Relative Rank	1989	Relative Rank	1999	Relative Rank
Laketown Township	\$22,197	2	\$39,898	2	\$60,893	2
Saugatuck Township	\$15,740	4	\$30,023	4	\$43,771	4
Park Township	\$23,581	1	\$47,220	1	\$65,328	1
Holland Township	\$19,815	3	\$35,523	3	\$49,458	3
Allegan County	\$17,906	NOT APPLICABLE	\$30,596	NOT APPLICABLE	\$45,813	NOT APPLICABLE
Ottawa County	\$20,232		\$36,507		\$52,347	
State of Michigan	\$18,596		\$31,020		\$44,667	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

The median household income was \$60,893 in 1999. Approximately 18 percent of the total population has median household incomes of \$100,000 or more. As median incomes continue to rank higher than surrounding regions, Laketown can expect more investment in their community, related to housing and other residential related services.

Range of Median Household Income		
Income Range	Households 1999	% of All Households 1999
Less than \$10,000	77	3.7
\$10,000 to \$24,999	255	12.3
\$25,000 to \$49,999	527	25.6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	510	24.8
\$75,000 to \$99,999	319	15.4
\$100,000 to \$149,999	252	12.2
\$150,000 to \$199,999	58	2.8
\$200,000 or more	67	3.2
Total	2,065	100

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use map displays land use patterns, determined in 2004 through the use of a field survey and aerial photography. While a large portion of the community maintains its rural character with large lots and woodlands, residential land uses are in almost every section of the township; with just over 43 % of the township’s land area.



2004 Land Use	Acreage	
	# of acres	% of total
Residential – Multi-Family	19.0	.10%
Residential-Mobile Home Park	10.6	.07%
Residential-Platted/Subdivision	893.3	6.4%
Residential-Single-Family	5,087.6	37%
Highway Right-of-Way	442.9	3.0%
Commercial	108.7	.8%
Industrial	70.4	.5%
Public	1,580.5	11.4%
Agriculture	2,490.6	18%
Horse Farm	649.7	4.7%
Grasslands/Scrub	302.5	2.2%
Woodlands	2,169.7	15.7%
TOTAL	13,825.5	100.18

Residential

While residential use is the most dominant use in the township, the character of the area remains rural and serene. Single family residential homes are classified in four categories:

- higher residential densities, such as mobile home parks and multi-family establishments;
- small and concentrated in a prime location, such as a view of Lake Michigan or a residential subdivision;
- and single-family residential on individual rural estates.



According to the 2004 Existing Land Use Survey, single family residential occupied just over 6,000 acres of land. With 2,373 housing units (U.S. Census), Laketown averages roughly 2.5 acres per household.

Housing stock in Laketown has benefited from the rising median housing values of the Lake Michigan shoreline and existing housing is well maintained.



Commercial

Commercial land uses exist primarily along Blue Star Highway and covers approximately .8% of the township. While not considered a large contributor to the local economy, existing commercial uses cater to local residents in the form of private recreational facilities, art galleries and a bank.

Industrial

Industrial land within the township is also quite limited due to the surrounding industrial centers of Holland and Grand Rapids; only 70 acres or .5% of Laketown's land base. These uses can be found along primary transportation corridors, such as Blue Star Highway and near the US 31 and I-196 interchange.

Agricultural and Horse Farm

Agricultural lands dominate the eastern portion of the township, where there are large parcels and minimal residential development. While agriculture is not a major source of employment in the area, with the decreasing population base employed in that sector, agricultural uses are a major contributor to rural character.



Lands that occupy territory in the northern regions of the township, close to Holland, suffer the highest risk of conversion from active agricultural production to suburban residential.

Woodlands and Grasslands/Scrub

The lands occupied by woodlands and grasslands, approximately 2500 acres, or 18% of the land base, serve as a source of wildlife habitat and residential screening from traffic, noise and other homes. Woodlands are a valuable asset to Laketown due to the many benefits they provide such as clean air, flood control, open spaces, wildlife habitat, rural atmosphere, recreational and educational opportunities, and others. An important section of woodland for the community is located right on the shores of Lake Michigan, north of 142nd and west of 66th. This area offers pristine coastal habitat for animal and plant species, while providing excellent erosion control for the critical dunes.

Natural Features and Recreation

The natural features of Laketown Township are a highly valued resource to all residents as expressed through both public work sessions and surveys. Issues addressed in both updates of the Master Plan still resonate today, with active discussion regarding conservation, agricultural preservation, water quality, sand dune protection and public access to the lakeshore.

Land Cover - Natural Features	Acreage	
	# of acres	% of total
Shrubland/Pasture	2637.0	19%
Forested Areas	3778.3	27%
Cultivated Land/Parks	2215.5	16%
Sand Dunes	509.6	4%
Wetlands	1926.6	14%
Other	2758.5	20%
Total	13,825.5	100%

Sand Dunes

The dunes along Lake Michigan cover a small fraction of the community, yet they create an attraction for tourism, provide natural aesthetics and increase home values. A large portion of the existing exposed sand dunes, which are extremely sensitive to any development impacts, is protected in the Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

This dunal area, which includes both private and state park lands, totals almost 300 acres and is located in sections 28 and 33 of the township. This 1 mile area along the Lake Michigan shoreline contains open dunes, large blowouts, interdunal wetlands, and wooded dunes. Pitcher's thistle, listed as threatened by the state and federal governments, occurs within this area. In addition, migrating birds use the red oak dominated forested dunes in the spring and fall.

Wetlands

Pockets of wetlands are found throughout the area, and specifically adjacent to the streams and water bodies. Wetlands are complex ecological systems that reduce flood hazards by providing storm water storage, as well as recharging groundwater resources. Roughly 1,900 acres, or 14 percent of the land base, is composed of wetlands.

Shrubland/Pasture and Cultivated Land/Parks

Covering approximately 35 percent of the township, these lands include areas that are actively farmed and/or remain in an open state. Previously referred to as "vacant land", this category can include grass lands, open fields dominated by shrubs or scrub vegetation, pasturelands, and even some wetlands or lawns. The various types of grass and shrub land can also have a significant range of ecological quality. The eastern portion of the township has large proportions of this land cover, which correlate to the existing land use of Agriculture and Horse Farms.

Forested Areas

Encompassing the largest portion of land cover in the community, forested and wooded areas total approximately 27 percent of the township. Prior to European settlement, Beech-Sugar Maple-Hemlock forests were the primary land cover. While intensive residential and agricultural development have augmented the natural cover, a large proportion of wooded areas remain,

mainly comprised of deciduous trees. The composition varies considerably with changing elevations within dunal systems, as well as through residential neighborhoods. Woodlands are a valuable asset to Laketown by providing clean air, flood control, open spaces, wildlife habitat, rural atmosphere, recreational and educational opportunities, and other and others.

Waterways

Waterways include the lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and in some cases, wetlands. The land surrounding the township's waterways is often the most sought after due to the environmental, aesthetic and recreational benefits that are associated with local waterways.

Small inland lakes such as Gilligan and Kelley Lakes are somewhat secluded from current development and benefit from being located within large parcels and surrounded by woodlands. Because of their limited development, their condition is pristine. If residential development were to occur, a greenbelt in the form of a natural vegetated buffer is encouraged.



Lake Michigan property that lies vacant is more often viewed as a financial residential investment than either for conservation easements or low impact development such as parks or public access points. These areas, if not currently developed, such as is the case directly north of the Saugatuck Dunes State Park, will need continued attention as ownership or land development intentions change.

INSERT IN FUTURE LAND USE SECTION

Manufactured Housing Park- The Manufactured Housing Park District supports the existing park located on Blue Star Highway in Section 36, with room available for additional development.