

## INTRODUCTION

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The Morton Township Master Plan is intended to guide the future growth and development of Morton Township over the next ten (10) to fifteen (15) years. The primary impetus for the development of this plan is the Township's desire to ensure that the community continues to be a place which exemplifies all of the desired characteristics associated with a resort, rural and agriculturally based lifestyle while simultaneously providing for measured growth and economic development.

Morton Township is located in the NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Mecosta County and is one of the fastest growing townships in the County. It lies within the bound of 12 Mile to the north, 6 Mile to the south, 60th Avenue to the east and 120th Avenue to the west.

Morton Township is home to three resort and recreational areas, targeting retirees and recreational enthusiasts alike. These include the Canadian Lakes development, School Section Lake area, and the Tri-Lakes (Blue, Mecosta & Round Lakes) area. These natural and recreation areas (including the associated residential developments) dominate the western half of the Township.

The Village of Mecosta is located in section 11 and 12 (northeast corner) of Morton Township where Michigan state highway M-20 crosses the east branch of the Little Muskegon River.

The development of this Master Plan will help Morton Township continue to be pro-active in their approach to planning by coordinating their efforts with those of the Mecosta County Planning Commission and the surrounding property owners associations.

The Master Plan will first define those issues most important to a community. An analysis of the existing features and defining characteristics of the Township will be identified. The analysis will include a map of existing land uses in Morton Township, population, economic, and housing statistics, a description of the physical constraints and resources and circulation patterns of the community. Based on all gathered information and input from the citizens, goals and objectives will be created which outline the growth and development patterns for the community over the next ten (10) to fifteen (15) years. These goals and objectives will help create a future land use plan and circulation for the Township. Finally, the implementation section will present some key strategies the Township can use to meet its Master Plan goals and objectives.

By providing an outline for the development of Morton Township, the citizens are attempting to preserve, protect and enhance the desirable attributes of the community for the future residents of the Township.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The most comprehensive source of data for Morton Township's demographic profile is the updated 2000 Census figures:

	<u>Count</u> <u>2000</u>	%	<u>Count</u> <u>1990</u>
TOTAL POPULATION_____	3,597		2122
SEX			
Male_____	1,783	49.6	1036
Female_____	1,814	50.4	1086
AGE			
Under 5 years_____	166	4.6	133
5 to 9 years_____	180	5.0	121
10 to 14 years_____	172	4.8	116
15 to 19 years_____	137	3.8	105
20 to 24 years_____	109	3.0	88
25 to 34 years_____	263	7.3	241
35 to 44 years_____	333	9.3	221
45 to 54 years_____	455	12.6	237
55 to 59 years_____	339	9.4	150
60 to 64 years_____	392	10.9	237
65 to 74 years_____	704	19.6	342
75 to 84 years_____	292	8.1	110
85 years and over_____	55	1.5	21
Median age (years)_____	54.5		47
RACE			
One Race_____	3,499	97.3	
White_____	3,409	94.8	2021
Black or African American_____	58	1.6	69
American Indian or Alaska Native_____	11	0.3	24
Asian_____	9	0.3	3
Hispanic or Latino_____	40	1.1	
Two or More Races_____	98	2.7	
RELATIONSHIP			
In Households_____	3,584	99.6	1869
Householder_____	1,618	45.0	
Spouse_____	1,067	29.7	
Child_____	666	18.5	
Own Child under 18 years_____	539	15.0	
Other relatives_____	92	2.6	
Under 18 years_____	41	1.1	
Non-relatives_____	141	3.9	
Unmarried partner_____	79	2.2	
In group quarters_____	13	0.4	
Institutionalized population_____	-	-	
Noninstitutionalized population_____	13	0.4	
HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE			
Total Households_____	1,618	100.0	
Family Households_____	1,216	75.2	
With own children under 18 years_____	280	17.3	

*Morton Township Master Plan- Adopted 07/13/2004*

Married-Couple Family_____	1,067	65.9
With own children under 18 years_____	184	11.4
Female Householder, No Husband present_____	95	5.9
With own children under 18 years_____	61	3.8
Non-Family Households_____	402	24.8
Householder living alone_____	349	21.6
Householder 65 years and over_____	193	11.9
Households with individuals under 18 years_____	305	18.9
Households with individuals 65 years & over_____	695	43.0
Average Household Size_____	2.22	
Average Family Size_____	2.50	2.69
<b>HOUSING OCCUPANCY</b>		
Total Housing Units_____	2,794	100.0
Occupied Housing Units_____	1,618	57.9
Vacant Housing Units_____	1,176	42.1
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use_____	1,050	37.6
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)_____		2.4
Rental vacancy rate (percent)_____		21.8
<b>HOUSING TENURE</b>		
Occupied Housing Units_____	1,618	100.0
Owner-occupied housing units_____	1,482	91.6
Renter-occupied housing units_____	136	8.4
Average household size of owner -occupied units_____	2.18	
Average household size of renter-occupied units_____	2.59	

Population Trends and Age Characteristics

The total population going from 2,122 people in 696 families in 1990 to 3,597 people in 1,618 families in 2000 is a 59% increase. This shows a rapid ten year growth for the Township. While Mecosta County was one of the slowest growing counties within a five County Region, Morton Township was the fastest growing township. From the 1990 U. S. Census information, it is known that nearly 30% of the Mecosta County population was under the age of twenty, while Morton Township's population showed 23% under the age of twenty and 34% over the age of sixty. The 2000 Census shows that Morton's population under the age of twenty had dropped to 19% and the population over the age of sixty had risen to 39%. This shows a definite trend towards a Morton Township population reaching retirement age.

Educational Attainment

The population of Morton Township is well educated. Over 72% were classified as high school graduates. More than 12% have a bachelors degrees, 191 have Master's Degrees and 24 have P.H.D.'s. In 2000 there were 585 citizens of Morton Township in school.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

It is important to examine the housing stock in Morton Township because it serves as an indicator of the quality of life for residents in the community. Furthermore, housing information also acts as an economic gage for the community and surrounding areas.

Morton Township has 6,098 parcels of land with 2,767 total housing units. Of this amount 1,730 (45.38%) were occupied full time, 1,050 (50.12%) were for seasonal, recreation or occasional use and 126 (4.5%) vacant. Higher occupancy is generally desirable as it suggests a stable population base, viable neighborhoods, and sufficient tax base. As the figures show, over half of Morton Township's housing units are either second homes or vacation homes.

The median year structure built is 1979 with two hundred built in 1939 or earlier. The 1940's showed 136 new residences, the 1950's show 214, the 1960's show 246, the 1970's show 632, the 1980's show 517 and from 1990 until 1997 there were 195 new residences constructed. The trend for the last five (5) years is showing a slow down in the building, with a higher construction value.

Permits	New Residences		Mobile Homes in Parks*		Mobile Homes on Private Lots		Totals	
	Count	Value	Count	Value	Count	Value	Count	Value
1997	104	9,508,606	4	128,665	0	0	108	9,637,271
1998	87	9,237,390	13	514,860	3	122,550	103	9,874,800
1999	79	8,634,285	8	388,875	11	732,370	98	9,755,530
2000	63	6,838,300	10	542,740	7	335,130	80	7,716,170
2001	69	7,568,795	4	187,865	11	544,935	84	8,301,595
5 Year Total	402	41,787,376	39	1,763,005	32	1,734,985	473	45,285,366

\*Includes Sunset Shores

The median dollar value in 1990 was \$70,700 with 2000 showing a median dollar value of \$127,000 for all owner-occupied housing units. The median asking price on vacant-for-sale-only housing is \$139,300. There are twenty (20) housing units in Morton Township that are less than \$10,000 and two (2) that are \$1,000,000 or more.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

A major focus of economic development in Morton Township in the last 10 to 15 years has been tourism and resort business.

The Mecosta County labor force consists of 17,828 workers, with 3,043 from Morton Township. Morton Township's employment status for the population 16 years of age and over shows

SEX	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	NOT IN LABOR FORCE (Retired)	TOTAL
MALE	680	48	760	1,488
FEMALE	590	24	941	1,555
TOTAL	1,270	72	1,701	3,043

While there is not one employer in Morton Township who employs a large number of people, there are 133+ employers who employ two or more people. These employers have been classified in 14 different categories. The classification categories are as follows:

- 24 Building Contractors
- 1 Child Care Center
- 5 Golf Courses
- 4 Government Offices
- 3 Hotel/Motels
- 5 Insurance & Financial Institutions
- 3 Manufacturing Establishments
- 6 Medical & Dental Offices
- 10 Real Estate Offices
- 5 Recreational
- 10 Restaurants & Bars
- 27 Retail Services
- 32 Service Establishments
- 3 Wholesale Establishments

Income and Poverty Status

Morton Township reports a median household income of \$41,422 on the 2000 Census with a breakdown of householders by age:

AGE GROUPS	MEDIAN INCOME BY AGE GROUPS
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE	26,250
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 25 TO 34 YEARS OF AGE	37,132
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 35 TO 44 YEARS OF AGE	48,542
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 45 TO 54 YEARS OF AGE	55,795
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 55 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE	52,500
HOUSEHOLDER UNDER 65 TO 74 YEARS OF AGE	40,536
HOUSEHOLDER 75 YEARS AND OLDER	30,781

Thirty-seven households reported being on public assistance income.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTER - NATURAL FEATURES

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The physical elements which make up Mecosta County and Morton Township are its natural resources. They include the geology, soil, topography, wetlands, water bodies, farms and forested lands as well as other characteristics of the County. Morton's agricultural history, abundant lake and river resources, recreation opportunities and existing natural features are some of the attributes which must be preserved and protected in the development of this plan. An analysis of these resources is basic to planning, because each of these resources provide both the opportunities and constraints on land use development. Understanding these resources and managing them wisely is the key to sound land use planning. It is the intent of this section to provide that understanding by reviewing the characteristics of the County's, and subsequently the Township's natural resources.

## CLIMATE VARIABLES

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Morton Township enjoys a relatively moderate climate. It seldom experiences prolonged periods of either hot or humid weather during the summer or extremely cold weather during the winter. The Township's growing season, important to its agriculturally based economy, typically lasts 128 days on average.

During the summer, the average minimum temperature is 56 degrees F and the average maximum daily temperature is 82 degrees F. Average rainfall during the year is 32 inches with 18.6 inches or 58% of this amount distributed during the typical crop season of May to October.

During the winter, the average minimum temperature is 11 degrees F and the average maximum daily temperature is 28 degrees F. In fact, 90% of the minimum temperatures between November and March fall below 32 degrees F. The average snowfall during the winter is 71 inches or 180 centimeters. The prevailing wind is from the southwest and averages ten (10) to (11) mph.

## SOIL TYPES

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture has mapped the location of various soil types found throughout the County and has created the Soil Survey of Mecosta County, Michigan. This book is a valuable resource of identifying the general characteristics of soils found throughout the Township. Features include the descriptions of the various soil classifications, yields per acre of crop, woodland management and productivity, sanitary facilities and physical chemical properties of the soils are identified.

## WETLAND & FLOOD PLAIN AREAS

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Wetlands, when viewed from a development and agricultural standpoint, are generally considered unproductive, useless, or wasted areas. They are actually extremely important to the Township's environment. The various bogs, marshes, potholes and ponds serve as natural systems for pollution mitigation from agricultural runoff and urban development. In addition, wetlands serve as the primary means of groundwater aquifer recharge. This is important due to the fact that all of Morton Township gets their drinking water from underground wells. Furthermore, wetlands provide necessary habitat for a diverse array of wildlife which are essential for breeding, nesting, feeding and providing protective cover. Finally, wetlands serve as an ecosystem's regulator of surface water by absorbing water during very wet periods of the year and releasing water during the dry periods. Wetlands over five (5) acres in size are protected by law and regulated by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Small sized wetlands should also be protected through appropriate land management, site design, site plan review, and environmentally sensitive development.

Flood plains are located adjacent to rivers, streams, creeks, and lakes and are areas that are inundated with water during times of heavy rains or annual snow melt runoff. Flood plains serve as natural protection against flooding and are a safety valve for the collection and removal of storm water and excess surface water within a watershed. Development in flood plains should be discouraged or prohibited if at all possible in order to minimize potential property damage and loss.

## SURFACE AND GROUND WATER RESOURCES

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Approximately seven (7) percent of the surface area of Morton Township is covered with water in the form of lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, and creeks. This percentage increases to approximately eleven (11) percent if wetlands are included in the calculation. The major water resources are the Canadian Lakes, School Section Lake and the Tri-Lakes. There are 1,536 acres of lakes in Morton Township.

Seven-hundred and twenty-three acres is in the Canadian Lakes chain which includes East Canadian Lakes, Canadian Lakes, West Canadian Lakes, Far West Canadian Lakes, Lake of the Clouds, Dukes Lake, Lake Laura, Fawn Lake, Lake Tullymore, Killkenny Lake, Swan Lake and Sunset Shores Pond. Most of these lakes are man-made and are fed through springs and private water wells. These lakes are all private and open only to residents and their guests. Water is drawn from these lakes to irrigate the neighboring golf courses.

Blue Lake has two-hundred and thirty-five acres and has depths going from 10' at the shore to 50' in the center of the lake. It flows to the West Branch of the Muskegon River and channels into Lake Mecosta.

Lake Mecosta has two-hundred and ninety-seven acres of water with depths going from 5' at the shore to 39' in the center. Lake Mecosta is the only lake in Morton Township that has a public access site.

Round Lake has one-hundred and fifty-five acres of water with depths going from 5' at the shore to 45' in the middle of the lake.

School Section Lake is the other large lake located in Morton Township, covering one-hundred and twenty-six acres of water. The southern end of the lake starts at 5' depth then goes to 19' in the center, but the upper/middle portion goes from 5' to 33' in depth.

The Dead Stream, Schrader Creek, Dye Creek, Gilbert Creek, Burden Creek, Cole Creek and the East and West Branches of Little Muskegon River run through the Township. There are also some smaller lakes and ponds found throughout the Township.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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### Morton Township Hall

Located at 290 W. Main Street in the Village of Mecosta, the current hall was constructed in 1982 and was enlarged in 1999. The Township Hall provides office spaces for the elected officials and support staff. This includes the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, Trustees, Assessor and Building Official. The Township Hall is used for the monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees, Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

### Morton Township Library

On November 8, 1966, the citizens of Morton Township voted to approve a tax millage to support a local library. The first library was opened at 212 W. Main Street and on October 1, 1991 they moved to their present building at 110 S. Main Street in the Village of Mecosta. This new building has 5,000 square feet. Their current (2002) program offers over 24,000 books, along with books on tapes, C.D.'s, videos, and DVDs. They offer computer classes, along with services for computers, FAX, and copying. A children's program which includes a weekly "The Story Hour" and a summer reading program. There are also adult educational/recreational programs offered throughout the summer months.

### Mecosta County Commission on Aging/Senior Center

The Mecosta County Commission on Aging is a Township service supported through a millage tax. The agency provides various activities, programs and assistance to senior residents of Mecosta County/Morton Township 60 years of age and older. The agency is located in the Senior Center facility located at 12954 80th Avenue.

### Mecosta County Drain Commissioner

The Mecosta County Drain Commissioner's office is located in the Mecosta County Courthouse building in downtown Big Rapids and has jurisdiction for the maintenance and management of all of Morton Township's lakes and sewer systems.

### Hospitals

While there is not a hospital facility located in Morton Township, the Mecosta County General Hospital is located in the City of Big Rapids which is 20+ miles to the north of Morton Township. Located to the east about 30+ miles is the Mt. Pleasant Hospital and to the south about 15+ miles is Kelsey Care Center/Hospital in Lakeview.

## SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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### Chippewa Hills School District

All of Morton Township is located within the Chippewa Hills School District. A consolidation of smaller districts, Chippewa Hills covers the north-central and eastern section of Mecosta County.

The only school building located in Morton Township proper is the Mecosta Elementary School located at 555 E. Main Street in the Village of Mecosta. This school houses grades Kindergarten through 5.

The Chippewa Hills Intermediate School located on Arthur Road in Sheridan Township is the newest addition to the school system, with new classrooms housing grades 6 to 8, opening in the fall of 2002. This building was funded by a millage voted on in 2000.

The Chippewa Hills High School located at 3226 Arthur Road in Sheridan Township was opened in 1971 and has had several renovations through the years.

### Intermediate School District

The three Mecosta County based school districts belong to the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District which operates a Career Center within Mecosta County serving high school juniors and seniors. The intermediate school districts were created to provide specialized instruction on a regional level that could not otherwise be provided by an individual school district. These services include instructional opportunities for gifted and disabled children, Head Start and Preschool Programs, vocational and career related programming.

### Colleges & Universities

While there are no schools of higher learning located in Morton Township, Ferris State University is located in Big Rapids and Central Michigan University is located in Mt. Pleasant. Both of these universities offer several educational programs, including associates, bachelor's and master's degrees and some doctorate's in specialized fields. Mid-Michigan College also has a branch in Mt. Pleasant offering selected subjects.

## MECOSTA COUNTY/MORTON TOWNSHIP PARKS SYSTEM

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### School Section Lake Park

Located two miles west of M-20 at the intersection of 9 Mile Road and 90th Avenue, School Section Lake Park provides 85 acres of recreational activities. The park includes 167 modern campsites and five camping cabins. The park has a large picnic area with shelters and a sandy beach. The park also hosts a youth camp with six rustic cabins and a main lodge, housing a kitchen and dining area.

### Village of Mecosta Parks

There are two municipal parks in the Village of Mecosta, Pine Tree Park which is located east of M-20 and south of Hayes Street. The second park, Bromely Park is located south of Main Street (M-20) between the Little Muskegon River and Cedar Street.

### Private Parks

Both Canadian Lakes and the Tri-Lakes have several private parks located throughout their areas, but they are only for the residents of these individual communities.

## UTILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

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### Electric

Consumers Energy provides electrical service to all those properties north of Buchanan Road in Morton Township. South of Buchanan is serviced by Tri-County Co-op of HomeWorks.

### Natural Gas and Propane

Consumers Energy provides the natural gas service to most of Morton Township Communities. There are, however, some areas that still depend on propane gas. The propane users get their supply from a number of propane companies in the area.

### Communications

CenturyTel is the main local telephone service provider in Morton Township. With the deregulation of long distance telephone service, many different national carriers service Morton Township for long distance service.

### Transportation

There are four airstrips in Morton Township. The only public airstrip is owned by the Village of Mecosta located at the northeast corner of M-20 and 90th Avenue. This airstrip has grass runways for small planes only. The other three airstrips are all privately owned. The largest one is located at northeast corner of 100th Avenue and 7 Mile Road and is owned by the Canadian Lakes Property Owners. This one too has a grass runway. Then there are two smaller, privately owned landing strips.

The only public transportation offered in Morton Township is the Mecosta/Osceola Area Transit Authority which offers an on-demand "Dial-a-Ride" public transportation system operating in both Mecosta and Osceola counties. The system operates from 4:30 A.M. until 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, utilizing a fleet of seventeen (17) vehicles.

## PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

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### Mecosta/Osceola Central Dispatch (Emergency 911) System

A central dispatch system for Mecosta and Osceola Counties is located on Northland Drive, north of the City of Big Rapids in the Village of Paris, and is operated by a full time director and staff providing central dispatching of all law enforcement, fire, and medical services within the two counties.

### Mecosta County Ambulance Service

Mecosta EMS also maintains ambulance dispatch facilities at two satellite facilities, one on M-66 between Remus and the Village of Barryton and the other one on 5 Mile Road near the Community of Altona.

### Morton Township First Responder Team

Morton Township has a volunteer First Responder Team with two (2) fully equipped vehicles which are housed at the two Morton Township Fire Stations. There are eleven (11) fully trained and certified volunteers on the First Responder Team and a trained first responder is on call 24/7.

### Morton Township Fire Department

There are two (2) fire stations located within the Township of Morton. Station Number 1 is located in the Village of Mecosta at 200 E. Hayes Street, behind the Mecosta Post Office. Station Number 2 is located on 100th Avenue just south of Buchanan Road. There are twenty-one (21) volunteer firemen who man two (2) pumper trucks, 5-1 and 5-3; two (2) water tenders, 5-2 and 5-8; two (2) grass rigs, 5-6 and 5-7; and 1 utility van. There is one of each vehicle at each station with the utility van being housed at Station Number 2. The volunteer firemen are on call 24/7 and are doing a great job!

### Morton Township Law Enforcement - Mecosta County Sheriff's Department

Morton Township's law enforcement is provided through the Mecosta County Sheriff's Department, whose mission is to provide the highest quality of law enforcement that it can provide to the residents of Mecosta County with professional, courteous and compassionate service. The Sheriff's Department maintains a fleet of nineteen (19) vehicles including ten (10) patrol cars, four (4) unmarked units, two (2) four wheel drive vehicles, one (1) animal control vehicle and two (2) vehicles utilized by the Dive/Rescue and Fire Investigation units.

### Michigan State Police Department

Though the State Police does not operate an actual post in Mecosta County, this area of Mecosta County and therefore, Morton Township is served by a post located in the City of Lakeview just south of Mecosta County in Montcalm County. These officers utilize the Morton Township fire stations to write their reports.

### Canadian Lakes Security

The Canadian Lakes Property Owners Corporation has two (2) security vehicles that patrol the roads in Canadian Lakes. They employ two (2) full time and five (5) part-time security guards who man these vehicles, seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day. If and when an emergency arises, they call 911 at Central Dispatch who respond with either a Sheriff or State Police Patrol or DNR, depending on the nature of the call.

## CIRCULATION PLAN

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**East-West Routes** - While there is not one road in Morton Township that goes all the way from east to the west, the most direct east-west routes are 7 Mile from 70th Avenue going west to 100th Avenue, 9 Mile from M-20 going west to 90th Avenue, Pierce Road from 100th Avenue going west to 120th Avenue and on in to Stanwood and Buchanan Road from 80th Avenue going west to 120th Avenue and beyond. All of these roads are paved.

**State Highway M-20** - As the primary east-west corridor between Big Rapids, Remus and further east into Mt. Pleasant, M-20 handles a high volume of local and commercial traffic as it takes a meandering course northwest through the County from Remus to Big Rapids.

**Morton Township Roads** - State highway M-20 traverses through the northern third of the Township including the Village of Mecosta where it has developed into the Village Main Street. Much discussion and controversy has taken place with the Michigan Department of Transportation's plan to relocate and reconstruct M-20 further south through the center of the Township. M-20 serves as the primary east-west corridor through the Township. Buchanan Road, 7 Mile Road and Pierce Road also serve as east-west transportation corridors through the central and southern sections of the Township. 70th Avenue is the only road which runs almost the entire length north and south through the Township, ending at 11 Mile Road to the north.

For future transportation planning, Morton Township supports the repair and resurfacing of the existing M-20 highway corridor as opposed to the relocation of the highway further south along Buchanan Road as previously proposed. In addition, the Mecosta County Road Commission is encouraged to continue its efforts relative to the maintenance and resurfacing of the County primary roads located in the Township. To promote redevelopment efforts within the Village of Mecosta, the Michigan Department of Transportation is encouraged to reconstruct M-20 through the Village of Mecosta and include such urban design features as new sidewalks, curbs and gutters, improved lighting and landscaping along the central business district corridor.

## EXISTING LAND USES

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### Land Use Classifications

The following section outlines in more detail the location of particular land uses and their characteristics within Morton Township. Existing land uses were divided into different categories in order to analyze the existing pattern of development. This analysis will help to define which characteristics the County would like to preserve and enhance.

**Agricultural** - For the purpose of this land use analysis, agricultural land is defined as any land that is used for raising field or tree crops or utilized as a resource in animal husbandry. Agricultural land uses represent the single largest land use within the County.

Morton Township's current zoning figures show 4 parcels of 224.85 acres zoned as A1 and 296 parcels of 9,067.12 acres zoned A2. This shows that Morton Township's agricultural activity occupies approximately one-third of the land area within the Township. The majority of this activity is located in the southeastern quarter of the township, bounded by 9 Mile Road on the north, 90th Avenue on the west, 6 Mile Road on the south and 60th Avenue on the east. It is the primary goal to preserve this land for agricultural (farming) land uses. As prime agricultural land, this area is proposed for little or no development including ribbon or spot residential development along major County roads.

Approximately 44.7% of Mecosta County is forested. This equates to 163,391.46 acres of forested land in the County. While some of this land is included in the Manistee National Forest and the Pere Marquette State Forest, much of it is held in private ownership.

Morton Township includes the forested land in their A2 zoning, but that portion of Pere Marquette State Forest which is in Morton Township, is zoned as Wetlands.

**Wetlands** - Morton Township's current zoning figures show 103 parcels with 912.34 acres zoned as wetlands. There are another 30 parcels with a total of 1,026.95 acres that are zoned as a combination of agricultural, residential, or commercial with wetlands.

**Residential** - Residential land uses have developed in two primary locations. The first is east and south of the business district of the Village of Mecosta. The second is the resort areas and subdivisions adjoining the various lakes within the western half of Morton Township. New residential development is proposed to continue within the Canadian Lakes development as well as in other lake and resort communities of the Township. Nearly the entire western half of the Township is proposed for residential and recreational use. Residential development is discouraged for the southeast quarter because this is prime farmland. In addition, residential development is limited north and south of the Village of Mecosta as a result of the location of the State owned land and numerous wetlands in the area.

Current Morton Township zoning figures show that 5,033 parcels with 4,087.29 acres are zoned as R1; 315 parcels with 2,985.88 acres are R2; 81 parcels with 366.43 acres are R3; and 54 parcels with 57.05 acres are zoned as R4.

The biggest planned resort, residential community located in Mecosta County, with over 90% of it in Morton Township, is the Canadian Lakes Resort Community. This encompasses approximately 5,000 acres. There are 3,819 parcels with 1,78890 acres zoned as R1 in Canadian Lakes. In this R1 zoning, there are currently 1,470+ residences with 1,038 with homesteads. There are 13 parcels with 4.29 acres zoned as R3 not including the 33.97 acres known as Sunset Shores.

Canadian Lakes offers three (3) private golf courses, The Pines, 9 holes; Highland, 9 holes; and the Royal, 18 holes which are open only to residents and their guests. In addition there are two (2) eighteen hole, tournament class courses which are open to the public, St. Ives and Tullymore.

**Commercial** - Morton Township currently has 62 parcels with 83.45 acres zoned C-1; 54 parcels with 197.68 acres zoned C-2; and 26 parcels with 122.55 acres zoned C-3.

There are three commercial centers in Morton Township. One is centered in the Village of Mecosta, a second at the four corners of 11 Mile (M-20) and 90th Avenue and the third at the northwest corner of the intersection of 9 Mile Road and 70th Avenue just north of the Township Industrial Park. A retail area has also developed on Buchanan Road as part of the Canadian Lakes development.

New commercial development is encouraged to locate first and foremost in the existing business district along M-20 in the Village of Mecosta. Secondly, Morton Township has designated the intersection of 9 Mile Road and 70th Avenue as an industrial and commercial center. Finally, the Canadian Lakes development is proposing the development of a neighborhood commercial center along Pierce Road to service the growing resort community's population. Scatter or "spot" commercial activity should be discouraged along major County roads and located only in the previously mentioned districts.

**Industrial** - There is one industrial park consisting of 265.46 acres located within Morton Township. This area is located on 9 Mile Road directly west of highway M-20. This location provides suitable transportation access to the state highway and is arranged in a park like setting. Morton Township references the importance of industrial development to the community's tax base and provides this area for future industrial development as existing sites are still available. There is no additional land zoned for industrial use and no land proposed for future industrial development.

**Campgrounds** - Morton Township has four (4) parcels zoned as campgrounds. Two (2) of these are for Mecosta County Park (School Section Lake Campground) and the other two (2) are for 158.97 acres for the Canadian Lakes Campgrounds.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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In establishing a Land Use Plan, one of the primary components is the formulation of a community's goals and objectives.

Establishing goals determines the destination toward which the community's planning efforts are directed.

Objectives are more specific action oriented activities that are intended to lead to the fulfillment of the stated goals.

Both, goals and objectives, are necessary components of the planning process as they provide the framework within which the plan is developed and the basis for determining future courses of action toward the physical development of the County.

The goals and objectives listed here are for Morton Township's general development for the future physical development of the community. They are intended to reflect the land use priorities of the Township, give direction to land developers regarding the Township's physical environment, establish a stated policy, and to assist the planning commission in assessing the impact of their planning decisions.

There may be some intentional overlap in the stated goals and objectives. This allows the Planning and Zoning Commission to utilize the goals and objectives of a particular category without referring to the entire section and reiterates the importance of the identified policy. In addition, occasionally the objectives may appear to be in conflict. For example, economic development goals may conflict with environmental protection goals. Therefore, in these instances, it is the Planning and Zoning Commission who will balance the importance of the conflicting objectives. The following goals and objectives have several purposes:

- ❖ To guide the Planning and Zoning Commission when considering rezoning requests. The Planning and Zoning Commission should reference the plan's goals and objectives to ensure compliance with the policies and intent of the master plan.
- ❖ To guide the Planning and Zoning Commission when considering and reviewing Morton Township's Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances. The Planning and Zoning Commission should compare the goals and objectives of the Township's Plans with those of Mecosta County to assure coordination and compatibility or to identify differences for discussion.

Finally, a Township's goals and objectives are not to be stagnant. They should be reviewed at a minimum, on an annual basis, by the Planning and Zoning Commission to ensure that the intent and purpose of the goals remain current.

## PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

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A careful and thorough study shows that Morton Township has a big need for land zoned for multiple family complexes. There is now very little land identified for that. There are a lot of concerns about what the extra traffic; sewage disposal, especially around the lakes, rivers and streams; outdoor lighting; and noise would do to the now quiet, rural R-1 and R-2 areas. This seems to be more compatible with commercial areas.

As the community continues to grow, it is felt that Residential-3 and Commercial-2 districts will be the most requested. In order to acquire the needed areas for these districts most of the areas given up would be in Agricultural 2. One acceptable idea was to use only road frontage for commercial area and build residential three complexes behind the commercial areas.

Attached is a copy of the current land use (Zoning Map) and a copy of the Morton Township Guide For Future Land Use.