

Chapter 10.0 Future Land Use

10.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of the Master Plan provide an overview of the existing conditions in Republic Township. A future land use plan is representative of the “preferred future” of how the community would like to grow and includes recommendations on how development will be carried out. It is based on analyses of environmental opportunities and constraints, existing trends and conditions and projected future land use needs. Future land use planning establishes the desired amounts and locations of residential, commercial, and industrial development; public facilities; open space; environmental conservation and recreational areas; and changes or improvements to the local traffic circulation systems. This Chapter also presents the Zoning Plan, which along with the rest of the relevant parts of this Future Land Use Plan, is intended to guide the implementation of and future changes to the Township’s Zoning Ordinance.

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) requires in Sec. 203 (1) that zoning be based on a plan. Similarly, Sec. 7 (2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) sets forth the purposes for which a master plan must be created. In order for a master plan to serve as the basis for zoning, it should promote the purposes in the MZEA and MPEA. The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed for each district. Current zoning districts utilized in the Township zoning ordinance and any potential modifications to the districts will also be discussed in this chapter.

Map 10-1, Future Land Use, reflects the assumption that land use patterns in Republic Township will continue to be influenced by transportation corridors, particularly along M-95 as well as the Township’s natural features, such as the Michigamme River. Other major considerations which helped shape the future land use map are a desire to establish appropriate uses and to develop consistent land use patterns throughout the Township.

Determining future land use in Republic is problematic at best. The Township is at a crossroads: will it move forward with new businesses, industries and technologies or try to maintain the rural character of the Township, and concentrate on recreation and tourism? Is it possible to do both? Should development be consigned to certain areas, and if so, where would those areas be? As a Planning Commission, many discussions have been held on these questions and the consensus is that there just isn’t enough information available to make any hard-and-fast conclusions. Instead, a more generalized version of what we’d like to see happen in our Township will be presented, leaving the details of who, what, when and where to be decided as opportunities arise. In this way, we hope to leave open any and all appropriate options in regards to economic development.

10.2 Mission Statement

The mission statement for Republic Township may be summed up as follows:
We will encourage and support activities and economic development that make the most of our central location, natural resources, habitats and heritage while minimizing environmental impact on the natural beauty of the area.

10.3 Policies

In particular, future land use planning should:

- Protect natural resources and features of the township from inappropriate and incompatible land use
- Provide appropriately zoned land areas for future growth of all land use types (for example: create a new commercial zone that allows for a cluster of businesses to be developed, as opposed to “strip” or “pocket” development)
- Support efforts to reunite the areas of north and south Republic, to provide for a stronger sense of community
- Allow for continued residential growth of waterfront areas at densities appropriate for minimizing ecological and visual impacts, in order to preserve the unique environment of Republic Township
- Promote and encourage the diversification of the township’s economic base
- Require that all development projects be presented to the Planning Commission for review before implementation
- Promote the development and use of green technologies, including wind and solar energy, biomass production (both agricultural and forestry products)
- Encourage and support efforts of citizens to become more self-sufficient (as in the development of home gardens and hobby farms)
- Encourage negotiation before, and remediation after, mineral extraction takes place
- Ensure that recreation and tourism remain viable, as these are assets we currently have and which represent an economic base on which we can build.

10.4 Issues and Opportunities

There are several main issues that confront Republic Township. A main concern is the separation of north and south Republic, both physically and socially. At times it seems the two communities are mutually exclusive. Development of a scenic roadway and bike path between the communities may encourage a stronger sense of community, but giving folks a *reason* to travel from one area to another is an issue that remains unresolved.

Another issue that remains unresolved at this point is the status of the Michigamme River Basin. Efforts to maintain an historic water level are ongoing, but whether these efforts will succeed remains to be seen. Certainly, the opportunity to develop the basin is improved if

a level can be maintained, but how and at what cost? Again, it is impossible to forecast what types of future land use should be encouraged on the basin until this issue is resolved.

10.5 Current Zoning Districts

The Township is currently divided into twelve zoning districts. The intent and general purpose will be depicted for each district. A review of the current districts is pertinent to the discussion of any updates to the Zoning Ordinance.

R-1 Single Family Residential

The purpose of the R-1 district is intended to promote residential uses on smaller parcels of land, thus maintaining a high density residential district. The district regulations are also designed to restrict incompatible development such as apartment complexes, offices or commercial establishments from locating in this zoning district.

R-2 Multiple Family Residential

The purpose of the R-2 district is established to provide medium density, semi-rural or suburban living on moderate size lots in areas not expected to be served by public water and sewer in the near future. Care should be taken to not place this zone district where general soils information, if available, indicates severe development limitations for on-site waste disposal systems.

RR-Rural Residential

The RR district is intended to promote lower density, semi-rural living in areas neither requiring nor anticipating the provision of public water and sewer services, while allowing limited development compatible with the principal, residential use.

WR-1 Waterfront Residential

The WR-1 district is intended to provide a moderate level of residential and recreational use which is compatible with the water resource.

WR-2 Waterfront Residential

The WR-2 district is intended to provide for a more intensive use of waterfront areas which are already, or would be further, developed with public services.

C-1 General Commercial

It is the intent of the C-1 district to provide a compact business area for the location of offices and retail stores.

C-2 Highway Commercial

The C-2 district is intended to provide a district that will allow the location and/or expansion of business operations providing retail goods and services to the motoring public. Uses would be primarily highway oriented, providing compact and convenient shopping areas that will not impair the traffic-carrying capabilities of abutting roads and highways.

RP Resource Production

It is the intent of the RP district to establish and maintain for low intensity, those areas which, because of their location, accessibility and natural characteristics, are suitable for agricultural, forestry and recreational uses.

I Industrial

It is the intent of the I district to create industrial areas which will be attractive and compatible within the Township, and will not adversely affect adjacent land areas. Industrial establishments should be either those whose operations are relatively free from objectionable influences, or those whose objectionable features can be minimized by design and landscape treatment.

MR Mineral Resources

The purpose of the MR district is to establish and zone land areas for the reservation, protection and extraction of minerals for the long-term future, to provide for the orderly economic growth of Marquette County and Republic Township and to provide for proper environmental management during the site planning, operational and reclamation stages of the mineral extraction process.

MP Mineral Production

The purpose of the MP district is to establish and zone land areas for the reservation, protection and extraction of minerals, to prevent non-compatible land uses from denying the use of minerals, to protect mineral deposits near urban centers, to provide for the orderly economic growth of Marquette County and Republic Township and to provide for proper environmental management during the site planning, operational and reclamation stages of the mineral extraction process.

10.6 Potential Zoning Ordinance Amendments

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the Planning Commission is open to any compatible economic development in Republic Township. The Township currently uses twelve zoning districts to effectively zone the Township. Modifications may be made to several zoning districts as well as the consolidation of districts and the addition of new districts.

The potential to consolidate the two districts dealing with mining exists. The Mineral Resources and Mineral Production districts have nearly identical purposes and similar regulations. The districts could easily be combined into one which may help clarify the zoning districts.

A commercial/light industry district could be added. This district would be designed to accommodate establishments where the finished product generally consists of small machine parts, small electronic equipment or similar items. Wholesale or retail services may also occur in this district. Educational activities such as commercial driving, heavy equipment operation, construction trades and other skills would also be permitted. This district would cover industry generally less intense than that in the industrial district as well as providing for commercial activity. Buffering/screening requirements may be included with the new commercial/light industrial district to preserve the appearance of the area.

Commercial uses are currently split into two districts, C-1 and C-2. These districts could be combined into one commercial district that also permits light industrial uses. The intent of the new district is as follows: It is the intent of the C-1 district to provide a compact business area for the location of offices and other commercial development. Uses for the district shall remain as is, with the exception of adding the wording “including but not limited to,” which will allow the Planning Commission to provide for compatible uses in the district that may not be specifically listed.

The C-2 zone along M-95 should be changed to the new combined commercial zone and enlarged and a new commercial zone will be created at the intersection of M-95 and River Road.

The large Mineral Resources district identified on the land use map could be rezoned to Resource Production. Resource Production would be a suitable district for this land area to establish and maintain low intensity uses such as agricultural, forestry and recreational uses.

A zoning overlay district for waterfront development could also be established. The overlay district would cover approximately 500’ on either side of the Michigamme River. Overlay zoning is a regulatory tool that creates a special zoning district, placed over an existing base zone(s), which identifies special provisions in addition to those in the underlying base zone. The overlay district can share common boundaries with the base zone or cut across base zone boundaries. Regulations or incentives are attached to the overlay district to protect a specific resource or guide development within a special area. The overlay zone could regulate building architecture, orientation and setbacks as well as landscaping, signage,

utilities, waste storage and driveways. The waterfront development overlay district would provide for compatible uses to develop along the river.

A zoning district regulating recreational structures and activities could also be established. This district would be established for recreational and residential uses. This district would be designed for areas with waterfront or which include lakes or rivers which because of their natural characteristics, accessibility and high cost of providing public services are suitable for low intensity development. This district is intended for recreational or seasonal development. Government services may not be provided on a year-round basis or may not be provided at all. Recreational structures, camps for but not limited to adults, youth or persons with special needs and single family dwellings would be permitted as well as accessory structures associated with camping, boating, hobbies and crafts group activities.

The Township is in need of adding additional language to the Zoning Ordinance regarding Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and revising the current language. Planned unit developments are a way for the Township to permit greater flexibility in the use and design of structures and land in situations where modifications of specific provisions of the Zoning Ordinance will not be contrary to its intent and purpose or significantly inconsistent with the planning on which it is based and will not be harmful to the neighborhood in which they occur. PUDs are a special type of floating overlay district which generally do not appear on the municipal zoning map until a designation is requested. This is applied at the time a project is approved and may include provisions to encourage clustering of buildings, designation of common open space, and incorporation of a variety of building types and mixed land uses. A PUD is planned and built as a unit thus fixing the type and location of uses and buildings over the entire project.

The current zoning language only addresses housing projects of five or more housing units for PUDs and doesn't include language regarding mixed use development. The Planning Commission has created a list of policies regarding future land use in the Township and PUDs including mixed use development meet those criteria, while providing flexibility to both developers and the Township. PUDs may be included in the Zoning Ordinance as conditional uses in all districts excluding Mineral Resource and Mineral Production. The PUD conditional use permit process is described briefly below.

Criteria for PUDs

In order to receive consideration by the Planning Commission, a proposed PUD shall:

- Provide for open space and preservation of natural features; clustered development and similar design methods are encouraged;
- Provide a harmonious and efficient arrangement of all structures and uses in relation to topography, the size and type of plot, the character of the adjoining property and

the size and type of buildings. Arrangements of buildings shall be done in such a way to utilize natural topography, existing vegetation and views within and beyond the site.

The applicant shall meet with the Planning Commission prior to preparing a formal application to discuss the proposed development and the application procedures. Following the preliminary conference and preliminary application, the preliminary site plan shall be submitted to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing to review the preliminary application. Following approval or approval with conditions of the preliminary application, the applicant shall prepare and submit the final application and the Planning Commission shall hold another public hearing. When the Planning Commission determines that the final application is consistent with standards described in the Zoning Ordinance, it shall authorize a PUD conditional use permit for development.

Alternative Energy

With increasing energy costs, there has been a growing interest in utilizing alternative energy resources. Regulations regarding alternative energy sources will continue to be reviewed by the Township and incorporated into the zoning ordinance as appropriate.

Regulations regarding Wind Energy Systems (WES) shall continue to be reviewed by the Township. Language regarding large scale wind farms as well as wind turbines for use on a single property should be considered.

Solar energy systems hold great promise for the future energy needs of the Township because they use a renewable energy resource; they require less capital, land, water and other resources needed for central-station generation of electricity; and because they do not pollute the community's water and air; and the successful use of solar energy systems for such purposes as supplying space heating, water heating or the production of electricity is dependent upon sufficient access to direct sunlight. Regulations could be adopted promoting the use of solar energy systems and protecting access to sunlight for solar energy systems when in compliance with minimum lot requirements and setbacks.

10.7 Conclusion

Predicting the future of Republic Township is challenging. The Township Planning Commission has worked for months to produce the Master Plan and has sought input on the plan from the public as to where residents would like to see the Township progress. Republic Township has the potential for growth and this plan presents a vision for development.

Planning is intended to guide the forces of change in ways that encourage desirable outcomes while striking an appropriate balance with development and preservation. Priorities will likely require periodic review and further study as unforeseen circumstances bring about new challenges. The Planning Commission will be responsible for the review of this plan every five years. Patience, resolve and flexibility are necessary to achieve the goals set forth in this plan. The Master Plan is one of the tools that Republic Township can employ to encourage better land use decisions.