



REGIONAL ANALYSIS

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What to Take From This Section

OVERVIEW

The Master Plan for Clay Township was last adopted in 2002 (an amendment to the Master Plan). Since that time the Community has determined that a new Plan is necessary to take the Township into the next decade. In addition, the State now requires that Master Plans are reviewed every five (5) years to ensure that the goals and objectives of the community are still accurately portrayed.

This Section is the first Section of the Plan. The remainder of the Plan will include sections on demographics, existing land use, physical features, goals and objectives, residential areas, nonresidential areas, community facilities, and transportation among others.

Clay Township Facts

- Clay Township became a Township in 1828.
- The 37 square mile township includes Harsen's Island, Russell Island, Dickinson Island, Out Islands and Flats, and St. Johns Marsh.
- Ferry Service connects Harsen's Island with the Mainland.
- Clay Township is a center of water recreation and a public pier is located off M-29 at Pearl Beach.
- The Colony Tower, at the southwest corner of Clay Township, has been a registered landmark since the 1920's.
- At one point, the 136 foot Colony Tower housed a 60,000 gallon water tank. It provided water to the Colony's residents.
- Harsen's Island and the St. Clair Flats combine to create one of the largest inland fresh water deltas in the world.
- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains two access sites on Harsen's Island, One on the South Channel and one on the Middle Channel.
- St. John's Marsh is also managed by the DNR and sports an access site and areas for fishing.
- As of 2000 Clay Township had a population of 9,822 at the time being the second highest populated Township in St. Clair County.

Adapted from the Clay Township website

REGIONAL LOCATION

Clay Township is located at the southern tip of St. Clair County. The Township shares a boundary with Ira and Cottrellville Townships along Genaw and Angling Roads, surrounds the City of Algonac and contains approximately 37 square miles of upland.

The Township is approximately 23 miles south of Port Huron, 7 miles from the City of New Baltimore, and approximately 40 miles to downtown Detroit.

M-29 GROWTH CORRIDOR

Clay Township lies within the M-29 (Dixie Highway) growth corridor which runs the length of St. Clair County essentially along the coastline. The corridor is made up of a total of twelve (12) communities. These twelve (12) communities account for approximately sixty (60) percent of the total County population.

While I-94 provides the main access in and out of the Township and County on a regional level, M-29 provides the main local access to many of the County's shoreline communities.

As shown in the following text, the County recognizes the importance and impact of the presence of M-29 by establishing the M-29 corridor as the main growth area of the County over the next twenty (20) years.

INFLUENCE OF STATE OWNED LAND

Clay Township has three (3) major State owned and maintained land holdings and/or parks. These three (3) areas account for well over 7,000 acres of land within the Township. The Algonac State Park is approximately 1,450 acres according to State records (1,300 in Clay Township), the St. Clair Flats consists to approximately 3,400 acres while the St. Johns Marsh is approximately 2,500 acres in size. While these acreages reduce the impacts typically associated with residential or commercial development and also preserve naturally significant areas along the coastlines, the Township receives taxes from these properties, however the rates at which the State pays taxes on these properties are lower than a privately owned parcel of land.



Community	2000	2008
Ira Township	6,966	7,265
Clay Township	9,822	9,662
Algonac	4,613	4,355
Cottrellville Township	3,575	3,931
Marine City	4,652	4,422
East China Township	3,630	3,990
City of St. Clair	5,802	5,879
St. Clair Township	6,423	6,945
Marysville	9,684	10,147
City of Port Huron	32,338	31,229
Fort Gratiot Township	10,691	11,300
Burtchville Township	3,956	3,960
M-29 Corridor Total	102,152	103,085
St. Clair County	164,235	171,214
Percentage Total of Entire County	62%	60%

IRA TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Rural Conservation

The Rural Conservation District encompasses the largest portion of the Township, including the north, central and eastern sections of the Township and envisions lots of 3.5 acres or greater. This is consistent with the current development patterns of the area. This is also the most sparsely developed portion of the Township. It is the area of the Township in which public sewer service is never expected to be available. Finally, most of the Township's remaining farmland is confined to this area. The majority of these farms are typically hobby or recreation farming activities. This is the predominate land use within that area which abuts Clay Township on the east side of M-29. The majority of that land area which abuts both Ira and Clay Townships is part of the St. Johns Marsh and will likely not be developed.

Urban Moderate Density

The Urban Moderate Density designation plans for densities consistent with 7,200 square foot lots. This is the Township's most dense single family designation. These areas are planned where public sewer and water infrastructure is existing along the water side of M-29 or Dixie Highway. The plan envisions redevelopment of this area due to higher land values along the waterfront. Finally, the Plan does recognize that several existing businesses are located throughout this area as well.

Planning Influence

As noted above, with the presence of the St. Johns Marsh there will likely be very little influence from a land use planning perspective from Ira Township on Clay Township.

COTTRELLVILLE MASTER PLAN

Agriculture and Rural Residential

The Agriculture and Rural Residential category establishes those areas where crop farming, animal raising, and rural residential estates can coexist in a very low-density setting. Densities in these areas are not planned to exceed 0.2 unit per acre. In most instances, individual lot sizes would be 5 acres or more in area. Cluster or open space development techniques are encouraged where large tracts of land can be maintained in their natural state by clustering home sites on smaller lots. Open spaces should be connected by undeveloped natural corridors that allow wildlife to move safely between the large open areas. In order to qualify for clustering of smaller home sites, natural open spaces must be set aside in perpetuity. Dedication of these areas to the Township, the County parks authority, or to a local land conservancy are just a few examples of preservation mechanisms that are possible.

Waterfront Residential

The Waterfront Residential land use group is intended to promote the historical importance of the St. Clair River in the development of the River Road corridor's residential areas. Densities in this area are expected to be in the range of 1 – 3 units per acre, in recognition of the available sanitary sewer and water service. The character of this area is also very important, and the historical "resort" or "vacation" orientation of the development should not be lost.

Open Space

Areas designated as open space on the Land Use Plan are primarily dominated by significant natural features such as woodlands, wetlands and floodplains. The intent of this category is the preservation and enhancement of existing natural features to the maximum extent possible. Uses should be very low-impact, such as passive recreation and conservation areas, as more intense development of these areas would likely be constrained by the natural features of the site. While development in surrounding areas should be designed to exert minimal impacts on sensitive natural features, open space areas should be appropriately incorporated into adjacent residential development as well as utilized as natural buffers between land uses of different intensities.

State Park

The Township anticipates the continued use of the Algonac State Park and recognizes this as an important resource for residents inside and outside of Cottrellville Township.

Above text taken from the Cottrellville Township Master Plan

Planning Influence

The vast majority of the boundary between Clay Township and Cottrellville Township is planned for Agriculture and Rural Residential which envisions lots of at least five (5) acres in size. Two other land uses can be found along the mutual boundary. Those include the State Park as well as Waterfront Residential. The Waterfront Residential designation anticipates the preservation of the current character in this area. Therefore it does not appear that the planning policies of Cottrellville Township will greatly impact Clay Township.

CITY OF ALGONAC

One Family Residential

The City of Algonac Master Plan does not provide any specific density expectations. It does however anticipate a total of approximately 4,839 dwelling units within the entire City. Of which a total of 2,843 of them would be single and two family residences. It can be assumed that the existing single family residential densities were envisioned by the Master Plan. One Family Residential is the primary land use designation found along the City and Clay Township's mutual boundary.

Multiple Family Residential

As a part of the overall calculations for future swellings within the City, a total of 1,996 dwelling units were foreseen as being multi family units. Aside from this total, no mention was made in the Plan in terms of overall multiple family residential. Those areas between Fruit and Summer Streets were shown as Multiple Family Residential as was the land area behind the commercial development on the north side of Pointe Tremble Road.

Marina Residential

The Master Plan calls for the development of these areas with boating facilities, boat orientated commercial and some multiple family residential to further promote Algonac as a tourist areas which would add to the tax base. This area is located to the south of M-29 or Pointe Tremble Road as one enters the City.

General Business

The Master Plan recognizes that the land area on the north side of Pointe Tremble was already developed for commercial purposes such as auto sales, auto service stations, etc, and in an effort to allow such uses the right to expand planned the area for such.

Planning Influence

The City of Algonac has a long established land use pattern which will likely not have a drastic impact on the land use decisions of the Township. The outlying areas of the City have a slightly different character than those in the immediate downtown which more closely match those within the surrounding Township properties

Urban and General Services - 10 Years and Urban and General Services - 20 Years

The Urban and General Services District (UGSD) is along the eastern and southern shore and in inland communities of Adair, Allenton, Avoca, Berville, Capac, Goodells, Memphis, Rattle Run, and Yale. These are areas of existing higher residential, commercial, and – in several cases – industrial use densities. Investing in public infrastructure will lead to even higher densities which are capable of supporting infrastructure and a full-range of public services. With planned developments and proper provision of public services, the UGSD has more than sufficient land area to accommodate all of the residential, commercial, and industrial growth expected within St. Clair County between 2008 and 2030. The UGSD anticipates a 20-year planning period during which higher density development and public services will be focused and directed. The 10-year and 20-year boundaries closely approximate the differences between existing water and sewer service areas and planned water and sewer service areas. By directing growth toward this district, the County hopes to preserve the rural character and agricultural quality that exists in the northwest part of the county.

Sensitive Environments

Sensitive Environments are the county's wetlands, floodplains, forests, and stream corridors. These areas are sensitive because of the land and vegetation, and they are valuable as habitat for the animals that live there. They also have economic value. People like to live in areas where birds chirp and deer leave tracks in the snow. Tourists like to visit pleasant places where quiet abounds. These are the characteristics of sensitive areas. It is important to remember that the influence of these Sensitive Environments goes beyond their immediate physical boundaries. Animals that live within Sensitive Environments require adjacent buffer zones to roam without danger from humans and to avoid being considered pests.

Forest Preservation Areas

St. Clair County was once home to vast forests. Only six general forested areas still exist within the county, but they are neither large nor contiguous. In some places, woodlots within these Forest Preservation Areas are separated by several acres of open land. Forest Preservation Areas are like roses near the county's most developed urban centers. As such, they are greenbelts that buffer dense development from less-dense development, help define rural character, and provide a refreshing get-away for city dwellers and rural residents.

Sand and Gravel Resources

Sand and Gravel Resources are areas where sand and gravel deposits still exist in the county. These deposits are currently being mined in small quantities and are in danger of being taken for granted. However, as populations grow in St. Clair County, sand and gravel resources will become important assets for use in private septic systems, for building foundations, and as roadbeds.

Transit Corridor

Between 2007 and 2020, the major employment center within St. Clair County is expected to shift from the Port Huron/Marysville area to the southern part of the county. However, the primary residential centers will remain in Port Huron and Marysville. Therefore, a public transportation corridor will be desirable, if not necessary, to help people travel from their homes to places of employment and to regional shipping and educational centers. Buses would likely be the primary public vehicles on this corridor, but other forms of public or non-motorized transportation could also be possible.

