

Meridian Township Master Plan: The Next Big Thing

This Plan was approved by the Meridian
Township Planning Commission on
December 11, 2023



Christina Snyder, Planning Commission
Secretary
Charter Township of Meridian

This Plan was approved by the
Meridian Township Board on
February 6, 2024



Deborah Guthrie, Clerk
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires communities to review their Master Plan every five years after adoption to determine whether or not to commence the procedure to amend the Master Plan or to adopt a new Master Plan. Meridian Township adopted our current Master Plan in 2017 and in August of 2022, the Planning Commission issued a Notice of Intent to Plan, leading to this update to the 2017 Plan.

The Master Plan is a culmination of planning efforts within the community with a focus on land use and development policy. It is not intended to be a retelling of the other plans within the community but instead act as a conduit to bring the information together and help implement the other specialty plans that cover a wide variety of topics. The Township's other plans are referenced in the Master Plan and should be consulted for details on their specific topic and how they potentially interact with land use and development.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Charter Township of Meridian's 2023 Master Plan represents the vision, values, goals, and objectives for the future of the Township. The Master Plan is intended to provide a snapshot of potential future development for anyone from a current resident to a potential future business owner. The Master Plan acts as the official land use policy document of the Meridian Township Board and Planning Commission, establishing a cohesive decision-making strategy for the community.

The Plan is focused on preserving and enhancing the best characteristics of the Township. At the same time, it recognizes that there are opportunities for improvements in the future and makes recommendations on how to make those improvements happen. The goals and objectives are written to be measurable and achievable and provide the Township Board, Planning Commission, and Staff guidance when future decisions need to be made. The plan proposes the modernization of the Future Land Use Map with only minimal changes proposed to the designations on the Future Land Use Map and the Urban Service Boundary, as the community saw two years of stunted implementation of the 2017 plan as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This update builds on many of the principles established in the 2017 Master Plan, which was a major overhaul of the Township's planning efforts. This update also acknowledges that we still don't fully know the results of some of the behavioral changes in the general public that have resulted from the pandemic and how they will affect local development, so major change is not prudent at this time. Additionally, development in the Township is starting to focus more on redevelopment opportunities, which are both more complicated and time consuming, but also can have a much greater impact on the Community.

This Update represents a bridge for the next five years, which will lead to a new Master Plan. In the intervening five years, we hope to prepare Small Area Plans for each of the PICAs established in 2017 (see Page 26), in addition to adding the Meridian Mall area to this group. We hope to make progress on housing diversity and affordability, in light of the current cost of housing throughout the United States. And we hope to continue making our ordinances and processes more user-friendly, as we move towards larger redevelopment projects. All in all, we hope to lay the groundwork for The Next Big Thing in Meridian Township.





GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of any Master Plan is the establishment of clear goals and objectives. These are the fundamental statements of the Township's values and act as the bedrock for future policy decisions. The goals and objectives can be viewed as a road map for the work of the Community Planning Staff and the Planning Commission for the next five years and beyond.

Supported by input from the general public, Staff developed an initial list of goals for the Planning Commission to discuss, mold, and add to. Staff then worked the commentary and input into the five primary goals and the subgoals under each main heading. Additionally, a series of specific recommendations have been developed, incorporating action items that were brought up during the discussions and maintaining the direct nature of the recommendation.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Preserve the character of existing single-family residential neighborhoods.

Encourage the development of new mixed-use developments to direct residential density towards existing development nodes.

Help to create better engagement between residents and neighborhoods by strengthening coordination with existing and future homeowner associations.

Continue the restoration of housing and neighborhoods in the Lake Lansing area by designating the area surrounding Lake Lansing as a special land use area and adopting zoning standards specific to conditions in the Lake Lansing area.

Support the increasing work-at-home population by evaluating the home business standards to ensure that the regulations for home occupations are changing appropriately as society is changing.

Ensure that the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Ordinance allows for a range of residential densities that will ensure diversity of housing to meet the needs of residents of all household types and income levels.

Evaluate the potential for inclusion of accessory dwelling units on owner occupied, single family properties.

Determine whether or not minimum house sizes continue to be a necessary requirement for new construction, specifically outside of new subdivisions.

Evaluate potential programs to help keep existing homeowners in their existing homes, allowing them to age in place.

Work towards increasing the affordability of housing for both new and existing residents.

Evaluate the balance between varying residential typologies and what that balance should look like going forward.





GOAL: ENHANCE VIABILITY OF TOWNSHIP BUSINESSES

Work with Michigan State University Corporate Research Park to ensure that any potential expansion or relocation of the Van Camp Incubator + Research Labs occurs within Meridian Township.

In conjunction with the Meridian Township Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA), identify potential targets for use of the growing Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund.

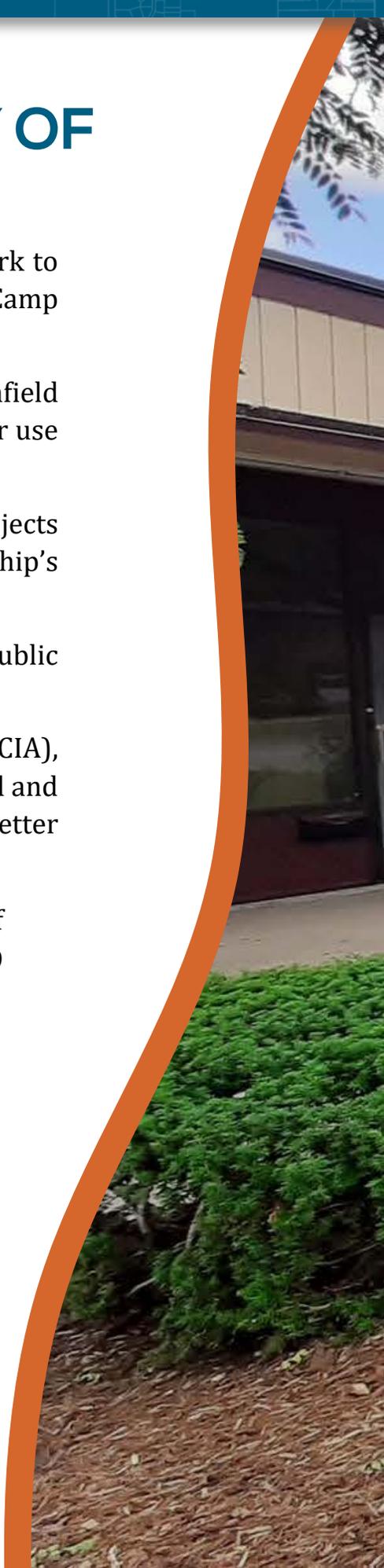
Implement walkable design principles in redevelopment projects to help change the auto dominated nature of the Township's commercial corridors.

Partner with the private sector to provide opportunities for public art throughout the Community.

In partnership with the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA), study the West Grand River corridor between Park Lake Road and the Township border to implement policies that will better achieve the goals of the Authority and the Community.

Evaluate the M-78 corridor for more detailed analysis of future land use, given market changes since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analyze the impact of the Michigan State University Campus Master Plan on the Hagadorn corridor and make potential changes to the future land use and zoning of the area as necessary.







HASLETT HIGH SCHOOL

OFFICE



GOAL: MAINTAIN OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICES

Work with Haslett and Okemos Public Schools on the construction, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of their buildings and properties throughout the Township.

Continue to eliminate inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations to further streamline the Zoning Ordinance and make it more easily used by the public.

Coordinate with the Capital Area Transit Authority to evaluate their services within the Township and in conjunction with large scale development proposals.

Pursue pedestrian/bicycle/pathway linkages that best connect parks and facilities to residential neighborhoods.

In coordination with the Haslett and Okemos Public Schools, help implement Safe Routes to Schools principles that are identified for the districts' buildings.

Create greater accessibility in all aspects of Township operations to ensure that every resident can participate in civic life.

Collaborate with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office on future projects to ensure that public input is incorporated into drainage plans.

Work to ensure that planning and land use decisions consider equity and inclusion.

Implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in land use decisions, where appropriate.

Study how to invert the transportation planning process by changing the goal from a higher level of service to reducing vehicle miles traveled.

Enhance public safety during development design to ensure that CPTED principles are met.





GOAL: ENCOURAGE POTENTIAL INTENSITY CHANGE AREA (PICA) DEVELOPMENT

Add the Meridian Mall and surrounding areas as a PICA.

Develop Small Area Plans, as addendums to the Master Plan, for each of the PICAs, in anticipation of future development.

Work with the property owners of the Carriage Hills shopping center to determine how the Township can support jumpstarting redevelopment in that area.

In conjunction with the Economic Development Corporation, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Corridor Improvement Authority, conduct a market study to support future commercial redevelopment of the PICAs.

Coordinate with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office on potential stormwater management enhancements in the area between the Downtown Okemos PICA and the potential Meridian Mall PICA.

Update the Downtown Development Authority's Integrated Plan and the Corridor Improvement Plan for the post Covid pandemic atmosphere.

GOAL: BALANCE STRATEGIC GROWTH & ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Focus growth onto previously developed sites to ensure efficient land use patterns within the Urban Service Boundary.

Continue to expand opportunities for cluster developments to preserve environmentally significant areas.

Promote infill development along the main vehicular corridors in the Township, reusing existing developed land for new uses.

Update the Township's 2004 Greenspace Plan to be a more effective tool.

Aid in evaluating the potential shift of the Land Preservation program's focus away from acquisition.

Review the wetland setback requirements, which have created a two tiered system of land ownership in the Township.

Continue to support efforts from the Environmental Commission to educate the public on wetland regulations and benefits.

Incorporate Low Impact Design standards into the Zoning Ordinance wherever possible.

Investigate the possibility of developing a woodlands ordinance to protect woodlots.

Improve walkability throughout existing neighborhoods and developments whenever site updates or road projects allow.





GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

In establishing goals and objectives, there are often specific items that don't neatly fit under a broad goal or are a direct action statement that can and should be implemented directly. These items form the beginning of the implementation of this Master Plan. They advance goals, but are also more directly achievable than some of the broader statements made in the goals and objectives. Additionally, the Planning Commission can utilize these recommendations as a beginning to their work over the upcoming years.

- Update the landscape ordinance to create low impact design standards.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to allow for an increase in missing middle housing development, such as duplex units.
- Analyze the entire Township to align the Future Land Use map with the existing, established land uses, outside of potential redevelopment areas.
- Consolidate Future Land Use categories in the next Master Plan update.
- Increase the Township's Bike Friendly Community status to at least Bronze level.
- Develop standards to require electric car charging stations in new commercial development.
- Update alternative energy generation ordinances to address changes in technology.
- Create a bicycle/pedestrian plan to complement and help implement the Pathway Master Plan.
- Eliminate split zoned parcels in the Township.
- Refine the build out analysis to take into account natural features, uniquely shaped lots, and other specific factors to create a more accurate picture of future growth.
- Support the development of broadband service throughout the Township.
- Improve coordination with outside agencies during the plan review process.
- Consider a Purchase of Development Rights program for the Land Preservation program.
- Work with the Department of Public Works to determine if a green burial program is appropriate for the Township's cemeteries.
- Create inclusionary zoning standards for affordable housing in future developments throughout the Township.
- Enhance road maintenance on newly paved roadways.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Map is the graphic representation of the vision for land use in the Township. The Goals and Objectives outlined previously work in harmony with the Future Land Use map to create a pattern of development that the community desires. The Future Land Use map divides the Township into different categories and lays out the location of each land use type.

Michigan State University

Michigan State University owns and operates this land and uses it for research and living classrooms.

Rural Residential

These areas, characterized by agricultural fields, natural settings, wetlands, and stands of vegetation, and are generally found in the eastern third of the Township. No water and sewer services are intended to be extended to these locations.

Suburban Residential

The most prevalent residential category in the Township, these areas are characterized by planned aesthetics, proximity to retail and cultural centers, and personal vehicle-centric transportation.

Mixed Intensity Residential

This single-family residential category is similar in feel and function to the Suburban Residential category, but has the additional benefit of proximity to the PICAs. Accessory dwelling units, prioritization of pedestrian movement, and higher density should be encouraged in these areas.

Multiple Family Residential

The multi-family residential category provides housing options of varying intensity, often located between high-intensity commercial uses and low-intensity single-family housing.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Commercial

A variety of retail/office/service opportunities exist throughout the community, from large, national retailers and restaurants mixed with regional draws, indoor malls, and smaller strip malls.

Business/Technology

These areas serve the community and regional need for research facilities, light industrial opportunities, or corporate campuses and are major employment centers.

Institutional

Publicly or privately owned facilities providing recreational, educational, religious, governmental, and other services to the community.

Parks/Land Preservation

Properties owned by the Township or other governmental agencies, intended for active and passive recreation, open space, and similar outdoor uses for the benefit of the entire community.

MUPUD Mixed Use

Areas envisioned for mixed uses containing engaging and walkable streetscapes with varied storefronts and activities and multiple residential housing types mixed throughout.

Potential Intensity Change Area (PICA)

These distinct nodes in the community are recommended for redevelopment and higher density uses.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying economic impact, many development projects in the past three years have been delayed, slowed, or postponed. Work on major projects in the Potential Intensity Change Areas (PICAs) has been slow, but steady. Additionally, several residential projects that were conceived pre-Covid have not yet broken ground. With this backdrop, only limited changes to the Future Land Use map are proposed at this time.

Several relatively minor changes are proposed to align the future land use map with the current use of the property. These include:

- The property at 3215 County Line Road is currently designated as parkland, but is privately owned. The designation for the property is proposed to be switched to Rural Residential, consistent with the surrounding properties.
- Along the same vein, even numbered properties in the 6200 and 6300 blocks of Porter Avenue, even numbered properties on Margate Lane, and odd numbered properties in the 6200 and 6300 block of Skyline Drive are designated as parkland, but are privately owned. The designation for these properties is proposed to be switched to Suburban Residential, consistent with the surrounding properties.
- The Schultz Veterinary Clinic at 2770 Bennett Road is currently designated for Suburban Residential use, as vet clinics are special uses within certain residential zoning districts. However, there is no viable use of the site beyond a vet clinic, therefore the property is proposed to be changed to the Business/Technology designation, to allow for potential rezoning and long term viability of the building on the site.
- As discussed elsewhere in this document, the Meridian Mall area is recommended to be designated as a Potential Intensity Change Area, to facilitate redevelopment of the site.

The full Future Land Use map can be found at
www.meridian.mi.us/futurelanduse

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

There are also three larger changes proposed in this Master Plan update. Each is consistent with the use of the property currently or the surrounding properties.

- The vacant land to the east of the Copper Creek subdivision is currently designated Rural Residential. Copper Creek's developer was required to install stub streets to the adjoining property and further phases of Copper Creek are expected. The proposed change would designate the vacant property Suburban Residential, consistent with the first portion of Copper Creek and the existing residential subdivisions in the nearby area.
- The driving range on Grand River Avenue, just east of Powell Road is currently designated Rural Residential, despite the commercial nature of the business and the northern portion of the property having been split off for a single-family subdivision. The property is zoned CR, Commercial Recreation, one of the only properties with this classification. The property represents a prime redevelopment opportunity and utilities are now available, given the development on Powell Road to the north. The proposed change would designate the property as Commercial, which is consistent with its current use and provides a gateway to potential redevelopment.
- The northern 1/3 of the Faith Lutheran property at 4515 Dobie Road is currently designated Institutional, consistent with past practice for all schools, churches, and similar facilities. The Church has requested the Township change the designation of the northern 1/3 of the property only to Multiple Family Residential, consistent with the development to the north. This would allow potential redevelopment on the vacant 1/3 of the site.

The full Future Land Use map can be found at
www.meridian.mi.us/futurelanduse



ZONING PLAN

The Zoning Plan is one of the required elements of any Master Plan and directly ties the Future Land Use map and its designations to the community's Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary tool used to implement the Master Plan and within the Master Plan, the Future Land Use map is the primary guide of implementation. This makes the Zoning Plan the key nexus between the documents.

Future Land Use and Zoning Map correlation

<u>Future Land Use Designation</u>	<u>Zoning Districts</u>
Michigan State University	AG, RR
Rural Residential	AG, RR
Suburban Residential	RAAA, RAA, RA
Mixed Intensity Residential	RA, RB, RX
Multiple Family Residential	RX, RD, RDD, RC, RCC, RN, PRD, MP, PUD
Commercial	C-1, C-2, C-3, PO, CR
Business/Technology/Industrial	PO, RP, I
Institutional	All districts
Parks and Land Preservation	All districts
Mixed Use	PUD, CPUD, MUPUD
Potential Intensity Change Area (PICA)	MUPUD

ZONING PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In reviewing the Master Plan/Zoning Ordinance interface, several items were raised that would benefit further review and potential change. These recommendations expand on the changes proposed in the 2017 Master Plan, some of which were implemented in recent years.

- Consolidate the C-1, C-2, and C-3 districts into a single zoning district.
- Consolidate the four multiple-family zoning districts into a single district.
- Continue reducing the number of single-family zoning districts.
- Simplify and potentially consolidate the three different PUD districts.

POTENTIAL INTENSITY CHANGE AREAS

During the 2017 Master Plan update, there was substantial discussion and public input about the historic commercial nodes throughout the Township and the desire for redevelopment in several of those areas. This led to the Potential Intensity Change Areas designation being created for these three areas:

- Haslett Village, the area around the intersection of Haslett and Marsh Roads
- Downtown Okemos, the area around the intersection of Okemos and Hamilton Roads
- Carriage Hills, the shopping area at the intersection of Lake Lansing and Hagadorn Roads

Since the 2017 plan, both the Haslett Village and Downtown Okemos PICAs have seen projects begin to emerge, but only one site in either area has started substantial construction. Additionally, the Economic Development Corporation, seeing the nationwide changes in traditional enclosed malls that have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has recommended that the Meridian Mall area be added as a PICA as part of this Plan Update.

To further spur redevelopment in these areas, additional focus should be given to the PICAs, beyond the two page descriptions in the previous plan. Staff and the Planning Commission will develop a Small Area Plan for each of the four PICA areas, over the next several years. This will put direct focus on planning efforts in those areas and will serve as potential marketing materials in attracting development to the sites.

Details on the Potential Intensity Change Areas can be found at www.meridian.mi.us/PICAs



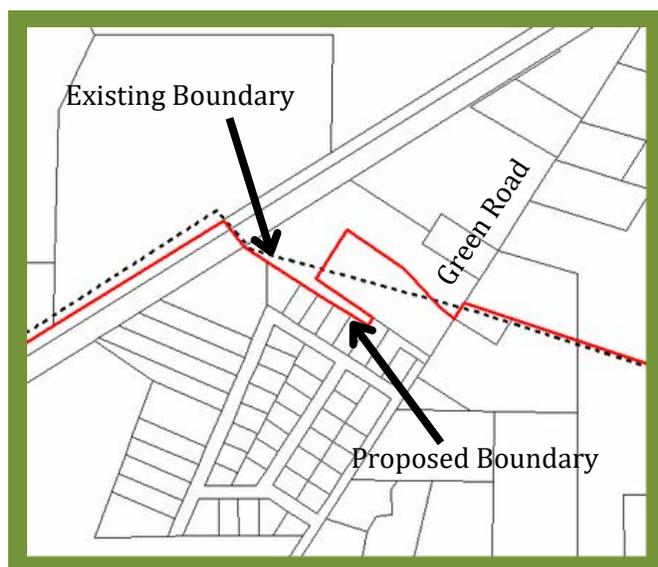


URBAN SERVICE BOUNDARY

The 2017 Master Plan included, for the first time, a formal Urban Service Boundary (USB). The intention of the USB is to indicate to the public where public utilities are intended to be provided. The Township is roughly separated 2/3 to the west of (or within) the USB and 1/3 to the east of it.

The Urban Service Boundary is intended to be a 'living line' that is reviewed regularly and modified when circumstances are appropriate. It should allow the Township to focus its development efforts inside the Boundary, where infrastructure already exists and we can improve the land use in the western 2/3 of the Township through a variety of redevelopment opportunities.

Any changes to the USB should be based on the development surrounding the USB, the lack of development opportunity in the western portion of the Township, the economic benefit vs. burden of modifying the boundary, or a compelling public health or safety issue requiring an amendment to the USB. After review, two changes are recommended to the Urban Service Boundary at this time.



The first proposed change is a 'housekeeping' type of change. Staff noted that a property on Green Road, at the far northeast corner of the Township was split by the USB. To avoid any confusion in the future, the USB has been modified to include the property within the USB. This corrects an obvious error in the original map.

The full Urban Service Boundary map can be found at www.meridian.mi.us/urbanserviceboundary

URBAN SERVICE BOUNDARY

The second change to the USB is a modification to include all of the properties on the east side of Powell Road inside the boundary. Previously, the Boundary included some, but not all properties along Powell, even in situations where there were stub streets built to continue development to adjacent parcels. There was an exception built into the previous plan, allowing potential utility expansion to properties that were part of a previous Special Assessment District. Lastly, a portion of the already developed frontage on Grand River Avenue was included, but the immediately adjacent parcel, with an active land use on it, was not.

This change will allow the properties at Grand River and Powell to all be treated similarly and will create a 'firmer' edge on the eastern 1/3 of the Township, by eliminating previous exceptions to the boundary.



The full Urban Service Boundary map can be found at
www.meridian.mi.us/urbanserviceboundary

BUILD OUT ANALYSIS

The Township created an Urban Service Boundary in the 2017 Master Plan to direct growth inward to areas already served by public utilities. The Urban Service Boundary does not prevent development, it limits where public services will be provided. The public services, notably water and sewer, are what increase the density yield for any given property. One question this inevitably raises is 'How many potential residential units remain to be built within the Township, given the current zoning and the Urban Service Boundary Limitations?' With this in mind, Staff started analyzing what the full build out of the Township looks like.

Meridian Township is nearing a point where all of the buildable land of any substantial size has been utilized for development, so we can begin to predict more accurately how many new residential units remain to be constructed, under current ordinances. As this number gets smaller, the focus of any growth moves towards redevelopment and infill opportunities. Redevelopment takes existing developed sites and removes or repurposes the existing buildings for a higher intensity of use on the site. Infill projects are generally small scale, utilizing small pieces of property that have never been developed and have small potential development yields.

To start, Staff took a high level review of all vacant property in the Township and analyzed its development potential under current circumstances. This can help us plan for utilities, guide corridor studies or PICA analyses, and helps us to understand where our remaining growth may occur and what we need to do to prepare for it.

Conservatively, Staff estimated a 75% yield for any vacant residential parcel. This number varies widely from parcel to parcel depending on natural features, parcel shape, and other existing conditions. But it acts as a good baseline to start. This led us to the following estimates for build out potential in the Township:

- There are 375 residentially zoned parcels that can support the development of one or more dwelling units. Under the current zoning of each parcel, this would account for approximately 3,441 dwelling units. As of the adoption of this plan, 998 of those dwelling units have been approved, but are not under construction yet.
- There are an additional 87 parcels that are extremely small, but could theoretically support a dwelling on them. This brings the total theoretical number of future dwelling units to 3,528 units.

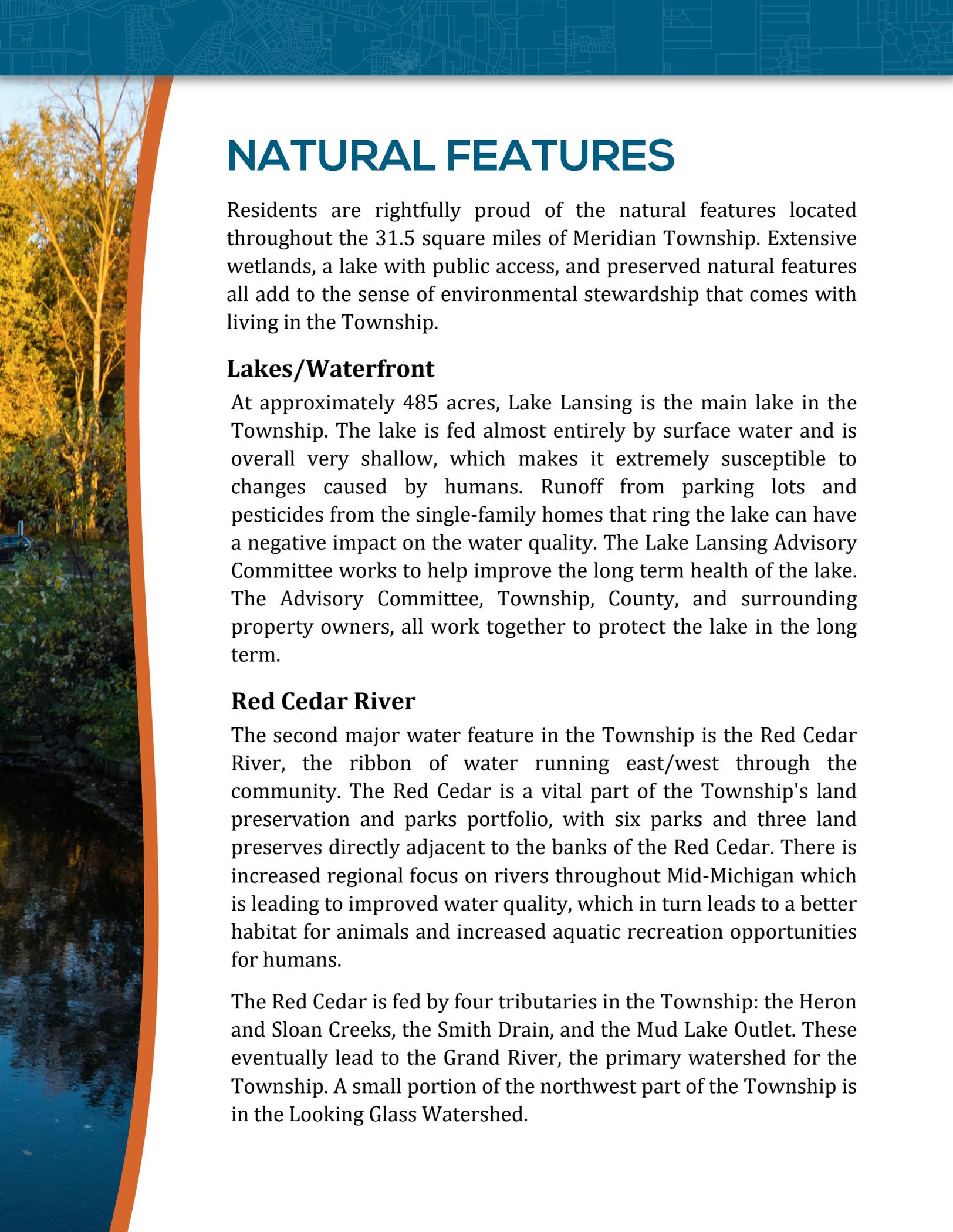
BUILD OUT ANALYSIS

In relation to the current Urban Service Boundary, approximately 606 of the potential dwelling units are located outside of the existing USB, with 1,837 located within it. Additionally, there are 998 potential dwelling units that are within already approved developments, both inside and outside of the Urban Service Boundary.

As part of the Community Planning and Development Department's work in the next five years, we hope to further refine this analysis. This will involve analyzing the 58 vacant commercially zoned properties in the Township and determining how mixed-use developments and changing commercial demand could potentially increase residential capacity. We will also take the opportunity to do a more detailed analysis of natural features and parcel shape to determine if reductions in yield are warranted in our above calculations.

Of note from the build out Analysis, there are 620 'vacant' parcels in the Township that are owned by homeowners' associations, churches, schools, governmental agencies, utilities, or other tax-exempt organizations. There is no way to account for potential residential density on these properties, as there is no anticipation for development on them. For planning purposes, these parcels are not considered developable.





NATURAL FEATURES

Residents are rightfully proud of the natural features located throughout the 31.5 square miles of Meridian Township. Extensive wetlands, a lake with public access, and preserved natural features all add to the sense of environmental stewardship that comes with living in the Township.

Lakes/Waterfront

At approximately 485 acres, Lake Lansing is the main lake in the Township. The lake is fed almost entirely by surface water and is overall very shallow, which makes it extremely susceptible to changes caused by humans. Runoff from parking lots and pesticides from the single-family homes that ring the lake can have a negative impact on the water quality. The Lake Lansing Advisory Committee works to help improve the long term health of the lake. The Advisory Committee, Township, County, and surrounding property owners, all work together to protect the lake in the long term.

Red Cedar River

The second major water feature in the Township is the Red Cedar River, the ribbon of water running east/west through the community. The Red Cedar is a vital part of the Township's land preservation and parks portfolio, with six parks and three land preserves directly adjacent to the banks of the Red Cedar. There is increased regional focus on rivers throughout Mid-Michigan which is leading to improved water quality, which in turn leads to a better habitat for animals and increased aquatic recreation opportunities for humans.

The Red Cedar is fed by four tributaries in the Township: the Heron and Sloan Creeks, the Smith Drain, and the Mud Lake Outlet. These eventually lead to the Grand River, the primary watershed for the Township. A small portion of the northwest part of the Township is in the Looking Glass Watershed.

NATURAL FEATURES

Wetlands

Meridian Township is home to a substantial amount of wetlands and has long had a wetland protection ordinance in place to protect these vital natural resources. The Township has gone one step further and has an ordinance that limits ground disturbance adjacent to wetlands in some circumstances. These natural features provide habitat for native species, help regulate flooding, and mitigate the urban heat island effect in developed areas. The Township's land stewardship and environmental programs have focused on retaining and restoring wetlands, along with educating the public about their positive benefits.

Future development in any wetlands is not viable, due to State and Local regulations. Development adjacent to wetlands must be done in a way that maintains the long term viability of the wetlands, i.e. not flooding it or drying it out. Protecting these natural resources is an important part of creating a Prime Community.

Township Greenspace Plan

Meridian Township contracted for the creation of a Township Greenspace Plan in 2004. That plan has helped guide work in Land Preservation and Development, identifying important corridors and connections. As that plan nears 20 years in age, revisiting and updating that plan, in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, could prove a valuable tool as the Township transitions to more redevelopment and infill development.





TRANSPORTATION

Transportation planning revolves around the modes of transportation, which are the different ways by which people and/or goods are transported. There are numerous modes of transportation, but in most communities, transportation can be broken down between motorized and non-motorized. In Meridian Township, on the motorized side we have automobiles and buses (mass transit) forming the bulk of passenger transportation options in the community. On the non-motorized side, we have both human powered (walking) and human assist (cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, etc.). On a more regional level, there are rail and water transit options available.

There are approximately 153 miles of local roads and 53 miles of primary roads in the Township. However, as a Township, we do not have direct control of our roads. Roads in Meridian Township are under the jurisdiction of either the Ingham County Road Department or in the case of M-78 (Saginaw Highway) and M-43 (Grand River Avenue), the Michigan Department of Transportation. The Township collaborates with both entities to ensure that road maintenance is done regularly to keep our pavement quality ratings as high as possible, within financial constraints. The Township has a dedicated road millage that is being used to reconstruct local roads. This ten year program is nearing its halfway mark and has been very successful thus far.

Since 2012, the Township has followed a policy of Complete Streets, intending to create streets for multiple modes of transportation. Any road built or completely rebuilt since then has followed the Complete Streets Ordinance.

The future of planning for transportation in the Township revolves around both accommodating new technologies and needs for existing modes of transportation while also looking out for opportunities to expand modes of transportation. Planning for the electrification of single occupancy vehicles, the next generation of public transit, and even the use of the Red Cedar River as a water trail are all among the future challenges for the Township to address as transportation needs finish stabilizing from the Pandemic.

TRANSPORTATION

The Community has long supported non-motorized transportation options in the Township. Since its original approval in 1974, voters have continually renewed a dedicated pathway millage that has allowed our pathway/sidewalk system to be expanded and maintained. Work on those facilities is directed by the Pathway Master Plan, most recently updated in 2021. That plan is a comprehensive view of every non-motorized facility in the Township, organized by functional classification, and it was reviewed by multiple Boards and Commissions during its development and approval.

The 2021 Township Pathway Master Plan can be found at
www.meridian.mi.us/pathwaymasterplan



Public Transit in Meridian Township is operated by the Capital Area Transit Authority, or CATA. CATA operates in the Township through both fixed routes and several specialty services intended to support as wide a variety of residents as possible. The Meridian Mall and the Grand River Avenue Meijer store are regional draws and act as hubs in the Township for CATA services. The Township voters approved a millage in 2019 to further support the Redi-Ride service used by many Township residents.

Information about CATA routes and services within Meridian Township and the region can be found at www.cata.org

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure consists of the systems that make a community function. Without one or more of these, the residents of the Township would be severely hamstrung. Some are Township operations, while others are the responsibility of other governmental agencies, outside utility providers, or a blend of all three. Roads and pathways are typically categorized as infrastructure as well.

Water

Meridian Township owns and operates our own water distribution system, i.e. the pipes that bring water to individual homes and businesses. Since 1970, we have partnered with East Lansing as part of the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority (ELMSWA). ELMWSA pumps and treats the drinking water, which they then distribute to the respective communities. As a backup, we have interconnections with the Lansing Board of Water and Light (LBWL) that are used in case of system issues or emergencies.

Sewer

Meridian Township does not have a sanitary sewer treatment facility. We contract with the City of East Lansing and pump all sanitary sewage to East Lansing's Water Resource Recovery Facility where it is treated and discharged to the Red Cedar River.

Electricity

Electrical service in the Township is split between the Lansing Board of Water and Light in the far western portion of the Township and Consumer's Energy over the remaining area.

Information about the Lansing Board of Water and Light can be found at
www.lbwl.com

Information about Consumer's Energy can be found at
www.consumersenergy.com

INFRASTRUCTURE

Storm Sewer/Drains

In a Township setting within the State of Michigan, storm drains are the responsibility of the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office. The Township works with the Drain Commissioner to ensure that maintenance and improvements to the storm water system are done to best support Township residents and businesses and alleviate any flooding concerns, as best as possible.

Floodplain/Floodway

The Township manages a floodplain permitting system with additional permits often required from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Filling in floodplains or floodways is discouraged in most cases, due to the potential increase in flooding that results in fill. Any impacts to the floodplain must be offset by compensating cuts elsewhere nearby, to ensure that the flood storage capacity remains at its current level.

Communications/Internet

AT&T Uverse and Comcast both have video service franchise agreements with the Township, allowing them to operate their cable television franchises within the Township. There are several companies that provide internet services within the Township, including national and regional internet service providers.

ADDITIONAL TOWNSHIP PLANS

There are several other Township plans of note that are important to the development process. Each has its own focus and should be consulted as the expert document for the topic, similar to the Pathway Master Plan mentioned earlier.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department developed and maintains a Master Plan that covers all of the properties under the Department's purview. The current plan was adopted in 2022 and runs until 2026. A parks master plan is often a requirement for grant funding through the State of Michigan, so this plan is regularly updated to ensure that the plans for the parks and land preservation properties are always current.

The 2022 Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan can be found at www.meridian.mi.us/parksmasterplan

Climate Sustainability Plan

The Environmental Commission prepared the Township's first Climate Sustainability Plan in 2017 and is currently in the process of updating it. The Climate Sustainability Plan builds on the Township's commitment under the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement and previous support of the Paris Climate Accords. The document helps guide decision making and processes toward a more sustainable future and lays out specific actions for the Township to take to do its part to battle man-made climate change.

The 2023 Climate Sustainability Plan can be found at: www.meridian.mi.us/climatesustainabilityplan

DDA Integrated Plan

As part of the establishment of the Downtown Development Authority, an Integrated Plan was created, outlining the goals of the DDA and the plan for the expenditure of captured tax dollars. The focus of this plan is entirely on the DDA area, around the Hamilton Road and Okemos Road intersection.

The DDA Integrated Plan can be found at: www.meridian.mi.us/ddaintegratedplan

Economic Development Strategy

The Township developed a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy in 2023 to help development as we transition away from greenfield style development. The plan focuses on creating a resilient, sustainable future for the Township in the post-COVID-19 environment.

The Economic Development Strategy can be found at: www.meridian.mi.us/economicdevelopmentstrategy





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