

AGENDA

RAVENNA TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

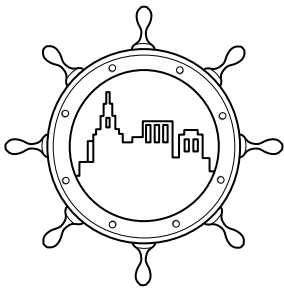
Monday, February 16, 2026

7 P.M.

Ravenna Township Hall

3770 Blackmer Rd, Ravenna, MI 49451

- Call to Order
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Additions or Corrections to Agenda
- Minutes of December 15, 2025, Regular Meeting
- Public Comment (for items on the agenda)
- Business Items
 - A. Public Hearing: A-2 Lot Size and Development Standards Restructuring Amendment
 - B. Public Hearing: Driveway & Private Street Regulations Review
 - C. Master Plan – Review of proposed changes per Legal Counsel Review
 - D. A-1 Sliding Scale Review
- Public Comment (for items on or not on the agenda, three-minute time limit)
- Commissioner & Staff Comment
- Adjournment



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MEMORANDUM

To: Ravenna Township Planning Commission
From: Kevin Yeomans
Date: 12/19/2025
Re: Master Plan – Legal Review and Edits

The updated Ravenna Township Master Plan (the “Plan”) has been reviewed by legal counsel. Based on their comments a few minor changes have been made to the Plan. The Planning Commission should review these changes and decide on whether to accept the proposed changes.

Additionally, once the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed changes you’ll need to make a recommendation to the Township Board on whether to distribute the Master Plan for the required 63-day comment period.

Changes

The Following is a list of changes made since your last review. They are listed in the order they appear in the attached redlined document.

1. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the resolution of adoption is placed within the front cover of the Master Plan. A placeholder for this future resolution has been added.
2. Page 1: Minor changes to the preface and community description have been made.
3. Page 2: Minor changes have been made to the general goal regarding agricultural preservation.
4. Page 3: A definition for Prime Farmland has been added.
5. Page 4: A chapter has been added to provide context for the demographic and survey reports included in the appendix.
6. Chapter Numbering and Title. Chapter numbers have been updated to reflect the addition of the Community Demographics and Preferences chapter. Also the titles have been slightly changed i.e. Agricultural Uses has been changed to Agricultural Policy
7. Page 5: The goal “Protect Prime Agricultural Areas” has been expanded to be consistent with the Prime Farmland Soils map included within the plan.
8. Renewable energy has been added to the recommendation regarding encroachments into prime farmland.
9. Page 7: The goal “Provide people with a range of residential styles and densities has been expanded to better capture the intent of the Commission.
10. Page 11: The goal “Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains and potential groundwater supply areas” has been expanded to include wetlands and reference the floodplain and wetlands map that is included in the plan.
11. Page 21: The title and structure of the appendix has been updated.

Next Steps

Following are a list of steps that must be taken before the Planning Commission can adopt the updated Plan.

1. Board approves for distribution/63-day required public comment period.

2. Completion of required public comment period.
3. Planning Commission review of any comments received.
4. Public Hearing
5. Planning Commission adoption.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Kevin Yeomans

Planner

Attachments

CC: Steve Patterson, Township Supervisor

Ravenna Township 2026 MASTER PLAN

Planning Commission:

Matt Crowley – Chairperson

Andy Snoeyink – Vice-Chairperson

Jeremy Vandenbrink – Secretary

Stan Wagner – Member

Bruce Yonker – Member

Board of Trustees:

Steve Patterson – Supervisor

Penny Sherman – Clerk

Sonja Patterson – Treasurer

Leslie Bonter – Trustee

Stan Wagner – Trustee

With Assistance By:



Fresh Coast Planning

Ravenna Township – 3770 Blackmer Road

Ravenna – Michigan – 49451

Muskegon County

Placeholder: Resolution of Adoption

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INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

Preface

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008 (“MPEA”), as amended, this Master Plan was created to serve as a guide for development within Ravenna Township. The fundamental purpose of the Master Plan is to enable the Township Planning Commission to establish a future direction for the Township’s future development. The Master Plan is a policy tool used by township officials to coordinate growth and to serve as the basis for zoning. It guides the location and future arrangement of agricultural, industrial, residential, commercial, and recreational areas. These locations must consider a multitude of factors such as utilities, existing land use, physical characteristics of the land, traffic volumes and traffic routes, as well as environmental limitations.

The MPEA specifically provides townships the authority to prepare and officially adopt a Master Plan. The Master Plan functions as an official advisory policy statement for the orderly and efficient use of land. The Master Plan provides the coordination of land uses with other land uses, with streets, and with other necessary public infrastructure. The Master Plan also provides the legal and logical basis for local zoning, subdivision design, and public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Planning Commission and Township Board. It is also a means of communicating to surrounding communities, private organizations, and individuals about how they need to relate their future development plans and building projects to the official plans of the Township.

Despite its purpose as a policy document, it is important to recognize that the Master Plan is general in scope. It is not always intended to establish the precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future uses. Rather, the Master Plan is an organized approach to analyzing development issues and proposing strategies to address these issues. Its function is to guide growth, providing a framework to ensure that future detailed decisions can be made based on a community-wide perspective. Given that the needs and desires of the community change over time, the Master Plan must be regularly reviewed and periodically updated. The Master Plan projects more than twenty years into the future and must be revisited at least every five years to ensure its legitimacy.

As part of preparing this plan the Township sought feedback from the Village of Ravenna and other adjacent communities.

Community

Founded in 1849, Ravenna Township has traditionally been a rural agriculture community. With rail service being discontinued in 1989 and the Township’s distance from major transportation routes, along with other factors, the Township has not faced a significant amount of development pressure. However, with the continued growth in Ottawa County and the City of Muskegon area, along with other economic factors impacting housing prices, the Township may see more request for residential development.

Ravenna Township is approximately 36.4 square miles in area, with approximately 36.2 square miles of land and 0.2 square miles of water. The Township surrounds the Village of Ravenna, which is located in the northeast of the Township.

Additionally, much of the land in Ravenna Township is considered to have Prime Farmland soil. A relatively small portion of the Township is not considered to have prime farmland soils. Areas that are not considered prime farmland are typically located near the Crockery Creek Watershed and/or areas characterized by steep slopes.

Based on feedback received from a community input survey, respondents identified the preservation of natural areas and farmland as a top priority. It also appears that respondents are supportive of the current rate of residential development within the Township, with single-family neighborhoods being the preferred method of residential development. However, as previously stated the preservation of natural areas and farmland is a clear priority. As such, the Township may want to review strategies that would cluster residential development near existing densely populated areas.

Physical and environmental conditions establish limitations on how some areas of the Township will develop. The physical and environmental makeup of the Township influences the population, housing, economic, and labor force composition of the community. Given potential future efforts to convert farmland to residential properties and accompanying demands for additional infrastructure, the Township will need to balance these demands with the priority of preserving the natural environment. The Master Plan must therefore establish future residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational areas within the township in order to adequately address the needs of the community as a whole and prevent incompatible uses.

How to Use this Plan

For each land use or attribute chapter, the Master Plan provides a purpose statement, general description of appropriate uses, goals, and recommendations which are the basis for future development. The purpose statement, general description, goals, and recommendations are designed as follows:

- Purpose Statement – Identifies the purpose and intent of the land use classification or community attribute.
- General Description of Appropriate Uses – Provides examples of uses that may be appropriate within each land use classification.
- Goals – Identifies the goals in list format for ease of use when reviewing land use and zoning ordinance amendment proposals.
- Recommendations – Provides recommendations on how the Township may help promote and create the desired future state of the land use as identified in the Purpose Statement.

General Goals and Objectives of Land Use Policy in Ravenna Township

The listed items below are the overarching goals and objectives of future land use development within the Township. They are intended as a way to tie the individual land use classifications and community attributes together and are used as part of the foundation for the creation of other content within this plan.

- Develop policies and regulations designed to coordinate development with the protection of the natural and rural assets of the community.
- Develop policies and regulations designed to encourage the concentration of development.
- Coordinate with surrounding communities to develop public safety services, as needed.
- Ensure natural areas are protected to provide safe recreational opportunities and protect natural habitats.
- Protect and preserve the lands most suitable for farming in the Township for agricultural use.

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Definition of Terms

Given the value the Township places on preserving agricultural and natural areas in the community, the following terms are recognized as defined below, in order to streamline the content of the Master Plan.

- *Rural Character* – is recognized as the natural features of the earth that minimize the visual exposure of buildings, structures, or other man-made features and which create scenic character. It is also recognized as the natural features of the earth that provide environmental buffers and/or habitat that is characteristic of the Township. Features are found to include:
 - Woods, woodlots, forest areas, and trees
 - Wetlands
 - Natural vegetation
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Natural field areas
 - Scenic vistas

Rural Character also includes farmland, which is recognized as part of the natural features that are organized and managed by people.

- *Open Space* – is recognized as areas of land unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features, which are preserved to be unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features within a project. Open Space is not intended to include displays of art or other cultural features; bridges, signage, utilities, and other essential service structures; or grade level features such as ponds.
- *Prime Farmland* - is land with the best physical and chemical traits for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops economically, requiring minimal inputs and causing least environmental harm, possessing good soil, adequate moisture/growing season, and favorable conditions like permeability and acidity. It's land that's suitable and available for farming, not urbanized or water, and can be cropland, pasture, or forest. A Prime Farmland Soils map is included in the community mapping section of this plan.

CHAPTER ONE: COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND PREFERENCES

In addition to feedback from adjacent communities, the Planning Commission considered demographic trends for the Township and surrounding communities, existing and forecasted housing demands, and results from a community feedback survey conducted by the Township.

A summary of the findings are provided below. More detailed reports are included within the Appendix of this plan.

Demographics

From 2010 to 2020, Ravenna Township saw a smaller population growth rate than the surrounding area. The smaller growth rate may, in part, be due to a lack of housing availability.

From 2010 to 2020 Ravenna Township saw an approximate 0.7% increase in available housing units. With the average housing growth rate for the surrounding community being 4.5%. This slower than average growth may be due, in part, to availability of land and personal preference. For example, during the same time period, the Village of Ravenna saw an approximate 6.5% growth in available housing units.

An apparent result of these trends appears to be an aging population and rising housing costs within the Township.

Housing Demand

As mentioned above, the availability of housing appears to be an issue for the Township. Given this, the Township has included goals within the Agricultural and Residential chapters of this plan which are intended to increase land available for housing, in balance with the goal of protecting and preserving prime farmland.

Community Feedback

In preparing this plan the Township sought feedback from property owners and residents through a community survey. The following community priorities were established based on the results of the survey.

- Preservation of Natural Areas, Farmland, and Rural Character
- Improved condition of roads
- Development of affordable single-family housing

Given this, the Township included goals throughout this plan which are intended to achieve these community priorities.

CHAPTER TWO: AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Purpose Statement

The primary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect prime agricultural areas based on farming best practices and farming operations. Farmland and farming operations play a key role in the economy and heritage of the Township and are relied upon to feed our community, State, and Country both now and for future generations. The suitability of land for farming should be a key factor in determining which areas are appropriate for inclusion in the agricultural land use classification.

The secondary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use classification is to protect and preserve Open Space and the Rural Character of the community.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

The primary or principal uses intended for Agricultural lands are cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, and other similar uses. Any other uses within agricultural lands should be designed to promote and facilitate the primary intended uses. Further, any non-farm use should be located and designed so as to protect Farmland and the rural character of these lands.

The Township recognizes that agritourism is a growing trend and neither encourages nor discourages these types of uses.

Goals

- Encourage the continuation of agriculture and agricultural related activities and to protect the lands identified as suitable for agricultural use and production.
- Protect prime farmland, farmland of local importance, and farmland of unique importance as depicted within the Prime Farmland Soils Map include in the Community Mapping section of this plan.
- Protect Farming Operations from the encroachment of uses that would inhibit their ability to operate.
- Protect and preserve Open Space and the rural character of the community.

Recommendations

- Review the Zoning Map to ensure lands that are suitable for farming are zoned appropriately.
- Periodically review Agricultural District regulations to ensure there is an appropriate relationship between allowed uses and the intent of the district.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance regulations to ensure they are not negatively impacting the safe, efficient, and financial feasibility of farming operations on lands with prime farmland.
- Create development boundaries or other limiting provisions that protect prime farmlands by generally restricting residential neighborhood development, commercial development, renewable energy development, and industrial development within that area.
- Review the Agricultural and Agricultural/Recreational Districts and allow farming only in areas where appropriate.
- Review and develop area, width, depth, and other regulations to ensure parcels are developed and oriented to protect the rural image and blend development with the natural landscape.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.

- Encourage soil conservation practices, the prudent use of fertilizers and pesticides and other means of conserving wildlife habitats, wetlands, and woodlands.
- Consider adopting regulations which require the preservation of a natural vegetation filtration strip along lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Develop zoning regulations which make lands which are less suitable for agriculture use more attractive to develop than prime agricultural land.
- Encourage those farms currently preserved through the Farmland Preservation Act (P.A. 116) to remain as part of the Act.

CHAPTER THREE: RESIDENTIAL POLICY

Purpose Statement

The primary intent and purpose of residential land uses is to provide people with a range of residential living styles that provide individuals and families the opportunity to live in a way that meets their needs and wants in a manner that is safe, affordable, and enhances a sense of community.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Residential land uses range in terms of densities and intensity of land use. The denser a residential land use is the more intense its use of the land and the land's resources. As such, denser residential uses such as apartments and multi-family housing should be located where public utilities are available, with less dense residential uses being located in areas that are not near public utilities and private well and septic systems are able to safely be installed and maintained.

Goals

- Provide people with a range of residential styles and densities, by encouraging single family housing within the Township and coordinating with the Village of Ravenna to encourage more dense housing such as senior housing, multi-family, and mixed uses to occur within the Village.
- Ensure that residential land uses are organized in such a way that they are harmonious with agricultural areas, natural areas, and the existing character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure that new residential land uses are located so as to provide for the orderly expansion and use of existing utilities.
- Encourage and concentrate residential growth in appropriate areas near the Village of Ravenna.
- Ensure that residential land uses are designed in conjunction with agricultural and commercial land uses to create a sense of community.
- Encourage the preservation of open space, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities.

Recommendations

- Require higher density housing on lands that have the capacity to support such development by means of adequate public roads, connection to public water and public sanitary sewers, and other available infrastructure.
- Encourage creative design of neighborhoods to enhance desirability by including sidewalks, bike paths, pedestrian paths, open space, parks, and playgrounds.
- Provide development incentives within the Zoning Ordinance which require the preservation of natural features and open space accessible to all persons in site development design. Such as the preservation of public access to lakes in the Township.
- Require that development layouts blend with the natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Establish general density limits with range to guide future zoning decisions.
- Encourage, where appropriate, light pollution regulations to preserve the night sky.
- Encourage groundwater preservation practices for new development.
- Encourage the creation of wildlife corridors throughout residential developments and areas.
- Coordinate with property owners to rezone lands that may be inconsistent with the Township Master Plan Map.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMMERCIAL POLICY

Purpose Statement

The intent and purpose of commercial uses is to provide residents and visitors with the goods and services they need or want. The purpose of commercial areas within the Township is to encourage diversified businesses that offer people a variety of goods and services in convenient locations.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ranging from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and automotive repair facilities, there are a variety of appropriate uses that can provide goods and services to individuals. Recognizing that different commercial uses place varying levels of demand on public infrastructure (roads and utilities), more intense commercial land uses should be designed and located in areas where the appropriate public infrastructure exists.

Goals

- Encourage the Village of Ravenna to continue as the commercial service center for the community.
- Encourage retail, restaurants, and other similar commercial uses to take place within the Village of Ravenna.
- Allow for commercial uses that support agricultural uses to take place within appropriate areas of the Township.
- Allow for commercial uses that do not require connection to public utilities to take place in areas adjacent to the Village of Ravenna.

Recommendations

- Review and develop strategies to encourage tourism, particularly on land along Crockery Creek.
- Coordinate with surrounding municipalities to ensure unified commercial districts.
- Coordinate with farmers and local- business owners to develop a diversified local economy.
- Review regulations for commercial development to ensure regulations are not overly prohibitive to the development of local businesses.
- Review and, if appropriate, amend regulations for home-based occupations.
- Review and, if appropriate, amend regulations for “value-added” agricultural operations, such as farm markets and agri-tourism.
- Encourage the clustering of commercial uses to concentrate commercial and retail traffic to concentrated areas.
- Review regulations for vehicular and pedestrian access in order to limit curb cuts and ensure safe and orderly access to commercial sites.
- Review existing provisions and investigate the development of zoning provisions that would allow for the development of mixed uses.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.
- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Purpose Statement

Industrial uses may produce odors, smoke, noise, traffic, and other similar byproducts that can be disruptive to the health, welfare, and safety of individuals. As such the primary intent and purpose of the industrial land use classification is to identify uses that may negatively impact nearby properties and provide appropriate locations for industrial uses.

Additionally, industrial uses can play an important role in a community's economy by providing jobs, providing opportunities to diversify the local economy, and creating a ripple effect that can extend to existing local, regional, and state businesses. As such, the secondary intent of the industrial land use classification is to capitalize on the positive impacts industrial uses can have.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Industrial uses provide for the manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and distribution of products and materials.

Goals

- Encourage industrial development to occur in areas that are able to connect to public utilities and have easy access to major roads.
- Encourage industrial development to occur in a centralized manner.
- Ensure that industrial development occurs in a manner that protects ground and surface waters, air quality, and the environment.
- Balance industrial growth with the preservation of Open Space and the rural character of the community.
- Coordinate industrial development so that local businesses and residents are able to participate in economic growth that can come from industrial development.

Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna for the development of an Industrial Center.
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna, the Muskegon County Road Commission, and other agencies as appropriate to ensure that the transportation network necessary to support industrial uses is developed and maintained.
- Differentiate between light and heavy industrial uses, what utilities are necessary for each, what transportation infrastructure is necessary for each, and develop standards to ensure they are properly located.
- Engage with local farmers and business owners to determine what, if any, industrial uses would be beneficial to their existing operations.
- Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that existing regulations are encouraging industrial uses to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals of the master plan.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.

- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

CHAPTER SIX: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

Purpose Statement

Recreational facilities, both public and private, are vital components of a community. Recreational facilities create shared spaces which allow space to be used economically and provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their neighbors and the outdoors.

Further, based on the feedback received from the 2024 Master Plan Survey the preservation of natural areas and development of recreational opportunities are top priorities for the community. Natural areas and recreational opportunities provide an essential element which both enhance and protect the quality of life in the Township. Availability and access to recreational facilities and natural areas can increase an individual's overall health and welfare, among other benefits.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Recreational facilities can take many forms. They can be natural areas (such as lakes and woodlands) or developed spaces (such as playgrounds), or a mix of natural areas and developed spaces. The following list identifies some types of developed spaces and natural areas, but is by no means exhaustive: trails, playgrounds, sports fields, pools, lakes and other bodies of water, beaches, picnic areas, forested areas and many more.

Goals

- Encourage the development of recreational facilities and areas to ensure all residents have convenient access to recreational opportunities.
- Encourage and support the expansion and improvement of the County Park system.
- Encourage the development of national and state facilities for the use and enjoyment by Ravenna residents.
- Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains and wetlands, as depicted in the FEMA Floodplain and National Wetlands Map included in the Community Mapping section of this plan.
- Protect and preserve potential groundwater supply areas.
- Encourage the development of neighborhood recreation facilities within residential areas.
- Encourage interconnection between recreational facilities and areas.
- Create and preserve public access to bodies of water and other natural areas in the Township.
- Preserve and enhance access to safe drinking water from groundwater sources.
- Preserve the aesthetics (views, serenity, rural nature, etc.) available in the Township.

Recommendations

- Develop a Recreation Plan for the Township.
- Maximize the utilization of public buildings and grounds for multi-functional services.
- Review and develop regulations that require developments (residential, commercial, and industrial) to include pathways and other recreational amenities.
- Review and develop regulations that require developers to set aside suitable portions of land for parks, scenic viewsheds, and public access to water bodies and natural areas, where practicable.
- Identify ecologically unique areas for possible use as a Township recreation area or preservation area.

- Coordinate with Muskegon County and other nearby communities to ensure that a variety of recreational activities are developed and accessible to area residents.
- Coordinate with local, regional, and state agencies and officials to identify environmentally sensitive areas.
- Develop policies and overlay districts related to decision making and development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Consider the development of policies for conservation easements, land donation, and the purchase of property.

CHAPTER SEVEN: UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

Purpose Statement

Utilities provide essential services such as heat, power, potable water, waste disposal, and communication to individuals and organizations. Many utilities such as electricity, natural gas, internet, television, telephone, and trash disposal are often provided by quasi-public or private companies. However, other utilities such as water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer are often provided by municipalities or other public organizations.

In order for individuals to have the opportunity to live the highest quality of life, a Township must work with both private and public organizations to build, maintain, and strengthen the facilities and infrastructures that provide these essential services to its community members.

Lastly, when utilities are expanded and strengthened, they can provide economic development opportunities for the community by providing the services necessary to support a more diverse range of commercial and industrial uses.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ravenna Township currently does not provide any public utilities. As the necessary infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to construct, the Township may need to coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to extend and strengthen their existing facilities and infrastructure to serve appropriate areas of the community.

Further, more intensive land uses such as residential developments greater than one unit per acre, restaurants, breweries, processing plants and other uses that have a high demand for water and sanitary sewer should be located in areas where they are able to connect to existing utility systems. This allows for the orderly development of utilities and aids in their long-term sustainability.

The development of utilities should be done in conjunction with the development of roads and other transportation methods.

Goals

- Encourage development to occur within the Village of Ravenna and lands abutting the Village.
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to ensure the orderly development and sustainability of public water and sanitary sewer systems.
- Protect existing wells and access to potable water.

Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to investigate the feasibility of developing the existing public utilities that serve Ravenna Public Schools and the surrounding lands.
- Coordinate with nearby municipalities and agencies to identify the impacts and opportunities created by the construction of the sewer main connecting the City of Coopersville to the Muskegon County Landfill.
- Encourage the extension of natural gas lines into the Township to provide more cost-effective sources of energy.
- Continue to work towards one hundred percent accessibility to internet services.

- Prepare capital improvement plans for things such as roads, parks and recreation, utilities, and other improvements.
- Limit higher densities of development to areas where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided.
- Require residential development proposals greater than one unit per acre to connect to public utilities where feasible.
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to design incentives to encourage private investment in public water and/or sewer expansion.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TRANSPORTATION

Purpose Statement

The road system within the Township serves as one of the backbones for growth and development. By providing a means for internal and external traffic circulation, the road system within the Township influences the shape and intensity of land use.

The road system is limited by the natural features, which pose a significant impediment to convenient traffic movement throughout the community. In many cases, hilly terrain, lakes, wetlands, ravines, and rivers have dictated the locations of roads and in some cases have resulted in the disruption of roads that would have otherwise been constructed in a complete grid pattern.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within Ravenna Township can have distinct functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. For the purposes of this Plan roads are categorized into three types, which are briefly described below.

Primary Roads are generally the county's longer distance, higher volume roadways that connect centers of population and employment and provide access to the state's highway network. Primary roads can be either "all-season" Class A roads or a non-all-season road.

Class A Primary Roads are constructed in such a way that they are not subject to weight restrictions, meaning that legal-load trucks may drive on them year-round.

Non-all-season roads are subject to weight restrictions during the annual thaw period (late winter-early spring) to help prevent damage to the road.

County Local Roads generally collect and distribute traffic to and from higher classification roads. Traffic mobility is usually somewhat sacrificed through additional curb cuts to provide increased access to adjacent property.

Other Roads – The remainder of the roads in the township are either under the jurisdiction of an appropriate governmental agency or are private roads.

Goals

- Maximize the efficiency, safety, and ease of maintenance of the vehicular transportation system and non-motorized pathway (i.e., bike path and sidewalk) system.
- Ensure that necessary road maintenance and improvements are conducted to support existing and future land uses within the Township.
- Ensure that existing roadways can handle projected traffic volumes resulting from new development.

Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Muskegon County Road Commission to review and develop a road maintenance and improvement plan for the Township.

- Through cooperation with the Muskegon County Road Commission, monitor traffic volumes and road conditions as part of a program to establish road improvement priorities.
- Coordinate with the Muskegon County Road Commission in regard to the allocation of money for road improvements.
- Encourage property owners to improve existing driveway and private road designs.
- Review and ensure that setbacks for signs, parking, and buildings are adequate to avoid conflicts with roads or pathways.
- Establish zoning and subdivision regulations that institute access controls intended to reduce traffic conflicts along County Primary and Local Roads thereby preserving their volume and function.
- Create access management provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for commercial and industrial development.
- Limit the number of access points along County Primary Roads by encouraging shared access for commercial establishments through site plan review.
- Strengthen ordinance provisions to require developers to provide road easements for construction of pedestrian/bicycle paths.
- Review and develop regulations to ensure that new roads (public and private) conform to County Road standards.

CHAPTER NINE: IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Ravenna Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and the Township staff. This is done with a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures.

This implementation must come from the decisions of the Township Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures related to the use of land.

The private sector, which includes individual landowners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Zoning and Land Use Regulations

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. Zoning is the process most commonly used to implement community plans. The zoning process consists of an official Zoning Map and accompanying Zoning Ordinance text. The official Zoning Map divides the community into different districts within which certain uses are permitted. The Zoning Ordinance text establishes permitted uses and regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setbacks, lot sizes and accessory uses, among other physical and linear attributes. The Zoning Ordinance also sets forth procedures for special approval provisions and regulates accessory structures such as signs. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as type of development.

The Planning Commission and Township Board should periodically review and make any necessary revisions to the zoning regulations based on the Strategies of this plan to ensure that the Goals and Recommendations of the Master Plan are instituted. Further, the Zoning Ordinance requires systematic and frequent updates to address needs resulting from changing trends, case law and state statutes.

Relationship of Master Plan Classifications to Zoning Districts (Zoning Plan)

Complementing the text of the Master Plan is its map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its map. In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the Zoning Ordinance map, as shown in the table below, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and man-made features of the landscape such as public utilities, topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, and etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, access, and etcetera. Consequently, while the land use

classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a proposed use is determined by the aforementioned, and the Zoning Ordinance with its regulations regarding height, area, bulk, location, etcetera for each of its Zoning Districts.

Table of Master Plan Classification Terms & Zoning Ordinance Map District Terms

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Zoning Ordinance Map Districts
Natural Preservation (NP)	Natural Resources District
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Prime Agricultural District
Rural Preservation (RP)	Agricultural – Recreation District (A-2)
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Low Density Residential (R-1)
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Medium Density Residential (R-2)
Medium/High Density Residential (MHDR)	Medium Density Multiple Family (R-3), Mobile Home Park (MHP)
Commercial (C)	Commercial (C-1)
Industrial (I)	Industrial (I)

Relationship of Master Plan Map Classification Terms to Master Plan Chapters

Several Chapters of this Master Plan identify the goals, recommendations, and strategies regarding future land uses within the Township. While the goals, recommendations, and strategies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan Map terms as provided in the table below.

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Master Plan Chapters
Natural Preservation (NP)	Recreation and the Environment
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Agricultural Uses
Rural Preservation (RP)	Agricultural Uses/Residential Uses/Recreation and the Environment
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Residential Uses
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Residential Uses
Medium/High Density Residential (MHDR)	Residential Uses
Commercial (C)	Commercial Uses
Industrial (I)	Industrial Uses

Master Plan Classification Terms

The following is a description of land use Classifications identified within this Master Plan.

Natural Preservation

The Natural Preservation Classification is intended to preserve and protect unique water and land resources within the Township. This classification encompasses lands along Crockery Creek and its tributary systems, recognizing the importance of long-term protection and conservation of the natural ecosystem, biodiversity, ecological processes, and the resources the water system provides to agricultural uses in the Township. Resource extraction, development, and other activities that significantly alter the natural environment should be prohibited or strictly regulated.

Agricultural Preservation

The Agricultural Preservation Classification is intended to preserve a vital component of the Ravenna Township economy, and to preserve an irreplaceable resource in soils that are unique for agricultural production. This classification recognizes lands which are best suited for farming based on soil type, parcel size, areas served by county drains, and active farm operations. In order to preserve productive agricultural lands, preserve natural features, preserve rural character, and minimize encroachment of non-agricultural uses, non-agricultural development should be strictly regulated. Public water and sanitary sewer are not envisioned within this Classification.

Rural Preservation

Lands classified as Rural Preservation are intended to provide a mix of rural residential development, recreational uses, and agricultural uses. This classification recognizes lands that may be limitedly productive for agricultural uses based on soil type, the existence of wetlands, the area is not served by county drains, and other natural features of the land. Due to the proximity to prime agricultural lands and in order to preserve the rural character of the Township, dense non-agricultural development is not envisioned for this area. Additionally, public water and sanitary sewer are not envisioned within this Classification.

Low Density Residential (LDR)

The Low-Density Residential Classification is intended to allow low-density residential development with a rural setting. Lands with the LDR classification are intended to accommodate housing while preserving the rural character and open spaces of the Township. These lands are intended to act as a transition between agricultural and rural preservation lands and the more densely populated areas of the Village of Ravenna. Lands within this classification are not anticipated to require public water and sanitary sewer services.

Open space neighborhoods should be encouraged in Low Density Residential areas to help preserve rural view, wildlife habitat, and natural areas for recreation.

Medium Density Residential (MDR)

Lands within the Medium Density Residential Classification are intended for a mix of single-family and two-family residential housing types. Additionally, these lands should be walkable and be adequately served by

roads, sidewalks, public water, and sanitary sewer. Compared to Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential areas should be more compact and connected to the existing infrastructure of the Village of Ravenna.

Open space neighborhoods should be encouraged in Medium Density Residential areas to help preserve rural view, wildlife habitat, and natural areas for recreation.

Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)

The Medium High Density Residential Classification is intended to provide a mix of housing types within a compact area. Single-family, two-family, multiple family residential developments or mobile home parks are envisioned for this classification. Walkability, access to amenities, and recreational activities are key components of the intended future character of these lands. These lands are intended to be served by roads, sidewalks, public water, and sanitary sewer.

Planned Unit Developments and other similar residential, or mixed residential/commercial developments should be encouraged in MHDR areas.

Commercial

Commercial classified lands are intended to serve the convenience shopping needs of Township residents and the motoring public, as well as provide an area for contractor services and office spaces. These uses typically generate large volumes of traffic and benefit from increased visibility and accessibility. Outdoor display and storage of goods are also common characteristics of uses in this land use classification, although design standards should be developed to manage the intensity, location, and environmental impact of such displays. Commercial planned areas should be designed to be automobile oriented and be served by adequately developed roads.

Industrial

It is recognized that industrial development is important to the economy and tax base of the region. The areas designated within the Industrial Classification are located for easy access to the transportation network and where utilities are either available or are in the process of being established. It is intended that a request to rezone to the Industrial District will be evaluated on the basis of the availability of adequate infrastructure and compatibility with adjacent land uses.

Community Mapping and Appendix

Contents:

Following are community maps as well as their established purpose, which are incorporated as part of the Master Plan. These maps are not intended to be limited to their purposes provided below but rather establish a minimum relationship to the Master Plan.

1. Master Plan Proposed Future Land Use Map – creates future land use classifications and delineates boundaries for certain uses of land.
2. Prime Farmland Soils – Classifies areas of the Township on the basis of soil suitability for general agricultural crop production.
3. Muskegon County Drain System Map- Identifies the county drain system within the Township which provides methods to control flooding, manage stormwater, and prevent erosion.
4. FEMA Floodplain and National Wetlands Map – Identifies lands which are environmentally sensitive and/or lands which may be prone to flooding. The suitability of development within these lands must be considered a case by case basis.
5. Public Ownership Map – Identifies lands which are under public ownership which are set aside for educational purposes, public utilities, and/or public recreation.

The following information can also be found within the appendix:

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary