

What is a Master Plan?

A master plan is a comprehensive plan to guide a community's future growth and development, with its purpose, according to the Michigan Townships Assn, "To express the township's vision of its future and provide a guide to accomplish that vision." It is the responsibility of the Calvin Planning Commission, under the direction of the Calvin Township Board, to update the master plan every ten to twenty years, thus enabling the township to be proactive rather than reactive.

The Calvin Township Master Plan represents one of the most important commitments to securing its future well-being. Every community experience provides an opportunity for change. It may be positive or negative, rapid or gradual. Whatever changes a township experiences, the challenge is to manage that change in a manner that improves quality of life in the township. This plan will be the fundamental tool used by the planning commission as a guide to fulfilling the commission's responsibilities over the next 10 years; therefore, the planning commission has four specific functions:

- Make and adopt a basic plan
- Approve public improvements
- Act as the zoning board
- Review plats.

Legal Basis for the Master Plan

The Township Planning Act of the State of Michigan (Public Act 168 of 1959), (MCL 125,321, *et seq*) authorizes township boards to establish by resolution a planning commission. The Act permits and mandates the planning commission to regulate and subdivide land. The Act further requires that this plan, at a minimum, addresses certain specific issues.

Township Planning Commission Focus in Master Plan development:

- Promote public health, safety and general welfare;
- Encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- Avoid overcrowding of land by buildings or people;
- Lessen congestion on public roads and streets;
- Facilitate a transportation system, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements;
- Consider the township's character and suitability for particular uses (MCL 125.322);
- Anticipate problems and develop solutions;
- Identify and utilize opportunities.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Calvin Township Comprehensive Plan of 1996- 2006 is outdated, but remains a legal document until replaced.

On October 4, 2006 the planning commission met, discussed and invited planning consultants and county level professionals to share concerns and give input regarding county economics and to share their thoughts as to the future of Calvin Township. That panel presentation took place on February 27, 2007 and consisted of six area professionals. The planning commission was overwhelmed with meeting the needs and demands anticipated by this panel. The consensus was thus to hire a professional consultant to update the master plan.

Due to funding constraints, the Calvin Planning Commission Board was challenged to move forward using the skills comprised by the present planning commission members. The 1996-2006 Calvin Township Comprehensive Plan would be used as a template and updated with new demographic information and mapping per the 2000 census data and other sources.

Letters were mailed out on November 27, 2007 to adjacent townships, any active businesses within the township, and the Cass County Planning Commission, informing all that the Calvin Planning Commission Board was beginning the process of updating its 10 year master plan. All were invited to give input, feedback and participate in the planning process.

In April, 2008 the Calvin Planning Commission began meeting twice monthly, reviewing and updating the old Comprehensive Plan, page by page,.

With the assistance of the Calvin Community Advisory Committee, a community needs survey was developed by the Planning Commission, approved by the Calvin Township Board and mailed with the annual township clean-up notices in May 2008. Approximately 1600 surveys were mailed to the Calvin Township Residents, (see appendix for an example of the survey) with 135 surveys, or 8%, returned.

COMMUNITY QUALITIES

A scan of the community's assets of which the participants were proud and wished to preserve revealed a combination of natural and human resources. It showed that everyone enjoys the inherent beauty of their surroundings. A strong value on the area's citizenship and a positive attitude toward the future of the community emerged. The qualities most mentioned were:

- Location
- Water resources, lakes, creeks
- Topography and landscapes
- History and historical properties
- People and their diversity
- Township board
- Township hall and park that are available for public use
- Churches
- Low property taxes
- Change in philosophy
- More pride
- Great potential and heading in the right direction
- Rural atmosphere

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Most of the concerns related to a desire to maintain a sense of community and the appearance of the township. Frequent comments were as follows

- People don't interact with and know their neighbors
- Lack of neighborhood concern for its value
- What is coming into the township: junk and unlicensed businesses
- Run-down properties and abandonment
- Too many rental properties of low quality and low maintenance
- Trash dumping
- Abandoned cars everywhere
- Conditions of roads
- No police enforcement
- Lack of local small businesses
- Little or no industry
- Little Job Availability
- Preserving the area's natural beauty

PLAN UPDATE CONSIDERATIONS

- Population shifts
- Building permit activity
- Special land use and variance requests coming before the planning commission
- Increased attendance at township meetings and public hearings
- Increased complaints about blight or zoning violations
- Demands for community services such as better roads, high speed internet
- Deteriorating building conditions
- Vacant homes

- Plant closings or major layoffs
- Minimum wage jobs
- Growth in adjoining communities
- No local community retail businesses
- Community needs assessment
- History
- Emergency Services
- Police protection
- Economics
- Stability of the township
- Safety
- Zoning
- Public improvements
- Plat reviews

HISTORY

An area's history influences its character, leaving elements of time that a community may desired to preserve throughout its changing nature. Calvin Township is located within the State of Michigan, County of Cass. It was established in 1835 and named for Calvin Britain, who was considered a territorial legislator and early surveyor.

Calvin Township witnessed the influences common to rural Michigan townships, with its open spaces, farms, a few local businesses, and limited scattered residential land uses. It also displayed attributes unique to its own history. Its numerous lakes and natural beauty made it attractive to visitors. It was once known as a resort community, particularly for African-Americans from the Chicago area. This influence led to the township's strong racial ethnic heritage and identity. The patterns of development resulted in the immigration to the area of many persons who were relatives of residents. The community enjoyed the openness where everybody knew everybody. It thrived on friendly and helpful neighbors.

The township experienced cultural changes as the population continued to grow in diversity after the impact of civil rights legislation. Lower than average property costs also contributed to the area's attractiveness for population increase.

Although the township continues to welcome new residents, it no longer contains the number of businesses and other structures that supported the community during its resort period.

Calvin Township is the only township within Cass County that has access to fourteen (14) lakes; lakes that flow within the township boundaries. In 1996 the Township's **Chain Lake Cemetery** became a stop on the **National Underground Railroad** tour.

The population density was 59.3 per square mile (22.9/km). An increase in density is an indicator of how residents are likely to perceive the rate of growth.

Population 2,041	Number	Percent
White	1,417	69.4%
African American	474	23.2%
Am Indian & Alaska Native	11	0.5%
Asian	14	0.7%
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Hispanic, of any race	51	2.5%
All other races, alone & Combination	125	6.1%

RACE AND ETHNIC ORIGINS

An analysis of a population’s race and ethnic origin is useful for grant seeking and land use policies, as well as for growth and development planning. Such an analysis can also indicate those areas where needs and desires of specific groups may need consideration. The above graph shows the 2000 racial and ethnic population breakdown.

For the 2000 Census, respondents were allowed to respond by indicating more than one race. For Calvin Township, that was 6.01 % of the population. While this result may or may not be significant, its impacts for planning and development are minimal. At a minimum, efforts should be made to assure that their voices are heard during the planning and development processes.

AGE STRUCTURE

The age of the Township’s population is important to planning in several basic ways. A township with more school-age children will face education issues. Those with more elderly residents will face issues such as property tax and housing maintenance, as well as accessibility of services.

Year 2000: Township Population Age Spread:

Under the age of 18	6.7%	30.5%
From age 18 to 24	29.0%	
From age 25 to 44	26.4%	
From age 45 to 64	11.6%	
Over 65	11.6%	9.6%
Median Age	38	31.1%

Median age is that age at which one-half of the population is older and one-half is younger. For every 100 females there were 102.3 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 101.5 males

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The population as a whole and the percentage in certain age groups can impact the nature of services. It is the collection of individuals into households that pose issues for the physical development of the Township.

Households by Type	2000	1990	Difference
Total Households	784	639	+145
Family households (families)	560	482	+78
With own children under 18 years	236	274	-38
Married-couple family	431	372	+59
With own children under 18 years	162	205	-43
Female householder no husband present	88	84	+4
With own children under 18 years	54	57	- 3
Non-family households	224	157	+67
Householder living alone	168	130	+38
Householder 65 years and over	68	48	+20
Households with individuals under 18 years	276	283	- 7
Households with individuals 65 years and over	173	133	+40
Average household size	2.60	2.84	- .24
Average family size	3.03	3.26	- .23

The number of single-parent households increased by 4 households between 1990 and 2000. The proportions of non-family households increased by 67 households in that period.

HOUSING ANALYSIS

An understanding of the people who reside in the Township is fundamental to understanding growth and development issues.

A housing unit is a single, individual dwelling, whether it is a single-family detached house, a single apartment in an apartment building, or mobile home. A housing unit is the basic unit of analysis in the housing assessment.

Housing Occupancy	2000	1990	Growth/Decline
Total housing units	1003	874	+129/14.5%
Occupied housing units	784	639	+145
Vacant housing units	215	235	-20
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use	167	146	+21
Homeowner vacancy rate %	1.1%	1.4%	-0.3%
Rental vacancy rate %	3.4%	2.6%	+0.8%

Rental housing accommodates larger families than owner occupied.

This information shows that Calvin experienced an increase in total housing from 1990 to 2000. Calvin Township was listed as one of the townships that contributed to the largest increase in total housing units of the county and one of the highest growth rates state-wide. (Source: Cass County Master Plan for Land Use, pg 29).

The growth in total housing units is important because it indicates to the county the areas where the most land is being converted into residential use. The rate of growth also has important implications for planning.

There was an increase of 21 seasonal, recreational or occasional use housings. The population who use these houses for seasonal recreational can be considered tourists and the money they spend in the county is of great benefit to the local economy. However, as seasonal houses are converted into retirement homes, there is the potential for substantial future population increase.

HOUSING

- Units for seasonal use increased between 1990 and 2000.
- The number of mobile homes has decreased between 1990 and 2000 while other categories had only slight increases.

- There were decreases in percentages of 1-2 bedroom houses and increases in the percentages of 3- 4- bedroom houses.

Housing value is not increasing proportionally with the rest of the county, with values in the middle range. With median rent low, the market may not support development of new rentals.

HOUSING TYPES

A housing unit is a single, individual dwelling.

	2000	1990	Differ	Percent
Total housing units	1003	874	+129	
Units in structure				
1-unit, detached	711	595	+116	
1-unit-attached	5	7	-2	
2 units	12	2	+10	
3 or 4 units	9	4	+5	
5 to 9 units	15	13	+2	
10 to 19 units	0	0	0	
20 or more units	0	0	0	
Mobile Home	251	NA	0	
Boat, RV, van, etc	0	NA	0	

Mobile homes are more prevalent in Cass County than in the region as a whole. Calvin Township has 251 in the count of the 2,565 that are within the county. At times there appears to be a generally poor perception of manufactured housing. However, in recent years the quality of both the housing units themselves as well as manufactured housing developments has greatly exceeded public perceptions. Manufactured housing can be a high quality, safe, and affordable housing option. Regardless of public perception, manufactured housing will continue to be a significant and growing component of Cass County's housing stock as well as Calvin. Thus, planning and development should take such housing into account.

A substantial increase in the number of building permits occurred over the last ten years, due to the increased population county-wide.

There has been a \$10,000,000.00 increase in housing growth in Calvin Township in the last 10 years.

DISABILITY

Nearly 10 % of persons age 16-64 and over a third of persons age 65 and over have a mobility or self-care limitation or disability.

Non-institutionalized population:

	2000	1990	
Population 5 to 20 years	443	NA	
With a disability	30	NA	
Population 21 to 64	1236	NA	
With a disability	258	NA	
Percent employed	62.4	NA	
No disability	978	NA	
Percent employed	81.5	NA	
Population 65 years and over	240	NA	
With a disability	84	NA	

FARM POPULATION

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTIC

INCOME

	2000	1990	Percent Change
Households	814	625	30.2
Less than \$10,000	65	114	-43.0
\$10,000-\$14,999	55	57	-3.5
\$15,000-\$24,999	101	146	-30.8
\$25,000-\$34,999	109	112	-2.7
\$35,000-\$49,999	143	116	23.3
\$50,000-\$74,999	201	51	294.1
\$75,000-\$99,999	64	17	276.5
\$100,000-\$149,999	48	7	585.7
\$150,000-\$199,999	7	NA	NA
\$200,000 or more	21	NA	NA

FAMILY INCOME

	2000	1990	Percent Change
Families	559	479	16.7
Less than \$10,000	14	58	-75.9
\$10,000-\$14,999	30	43	-30.2
\$15,000-\$24,999	53	116	-54.3
\$25,000-\$34,999	66	90	-26.7
\$35,000-\$49,999	119	100	19.0
\$50,000-\$74,999	170	46	269.6
\$75,000-\$99,999	46	16	187.5
\$100,000-\$149,999	46	5	820.0
\$150,000-\$199,999	7	NA	NA
\$200,000 or more	8	NA	NA

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (dollars)

	2000	1990	Percent change
Median household income (\$)	\$42,171	\$24,679	70.9
With earnings	675	522	29.3

Mean earnings (dollars)	52,759	31,093	69.7
With Social Security income	195	147	32.7
Mean Social Security income (\$)	11,466	7,662	49.7
With Supplemental Security Income	45	NA	NA
Mean Supplemental Income (\$)	7,046	NA	NA
With Public assistance Income	45		NA
Mean Public assist income (\$)	1,186		NA
With retirement income	124	83	49.4
Mean retirement income (\$)	26,213	7,254	261.4

POVERTY STATUS

Poverty Status	2000	1990	Percent Change
Families	49	56	-12.5
With related children under 18 years	49	46	6.5
With related children under 5 years	29	24	20.8
Families with female householder no husband present	27	20	35.0
With related children under 18 years	27	20	35.0
With related children under 5 years	10	14	-28.6
Individuals	328	292	12.3
18 years and over	173	170	1.8
65 years and over	39	32	21.9
Related children under 18 years	142	117	21.4
Related children 5 to 17 years	109	78	39.7
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	107	74	44.6

INCOME ANALYSIS

The median income for a household in the township was \$42,171.

The median income for a family was \$48,750.

Males had a median income of \$33,289 versus \$25,472 for females.

The per capita income for the township was \$21,387.

Approximately 8.8% of families and 16.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 28.5% of those under age 18 and 16.3% of those age 65 or over.

BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS LOCATED IN THE TOWNSHIP

Agricultural

Weaver's Nursery 66850 Bulhand Rd

Industrial

B&L Pole Barn & Concrete 64551 Spaniola Drive

Richards Products Co. (woodworking) 16967 Chain Lake St.

Universal Casket Co. 17664 Chain Lake St.

Service

Bert's Body Shop 65235 Calvin Center Rd

Carter Electric Service 63474 Union Rd, Vandalia

Homestead Realty Group PC 19506 Brownsville Street

Peachey's Garage 67076 Bulhand Road

Vaughn Excavating 19307 Northrup St.

Turner's Excavating 19736 Mt Zion St

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

There are a number of natural resources to enjoy in Calvin. The community survey responses were clear in that those natural resources are a high priority to the survey respondents (See Appendix). The natural environment creates both opportunities for and constraints to growth and development.

Forest

The 24 percent of the area that is forested is entirely comprised of small, privately owned wooded lots scattered throughout the township.

SURFACE WATER AND WETLANDS

There are numerous lakes, streams and creeks in Calvin Township. These natural resources are widely valued throughout the community. Equally as important as the surface waters are the wetlands that serve to protect the quality of waters in the township.

Small lakes dominate the landscape of the township. In alphabetical order they are:

- Chain Lake (public access),
- Curtis Lake (public access pending),
- Day Lake,
- Diamond Lake (shared by La Grange, Penn and Jefferson townships (public access),
- Juno Lake (shared by Mason and Jefferson Townships),
- Leninger Lake,
- Long Lake,
- Painter Lake (shared by Jefferson Township),
- Paradise Lake (public access),
- Puterbaugh Lake,
- Robinson Lake,
- Round Lake
- Tharp Lake

The lakes accommodate mostly recreational uses with only Diamond, Juno, and Paradise Lakes experiencing dense residential development and public access. The township also contains 7 percent of its land area in wetlands. Most of the Township lies within the Christiana Creek watershed, for which a non-point (run off water) pollution prevention study was completed in 1991.

Ground Water

All residents are served by wells, drawing their supply from ground water. According to a 1981 groundwater mapping study of the Southwestern Michigan Commission, depth to the water table averages 44 feet in Calvin Township with a maximum of 140 feet and a minimum of 1 foot. The average well depth is 78 feet, with wells ranging from 25 to 202 feet. Inadequate clay protection is a problem in several sections of the township.

Soils

Soils are a key component in determining the types of development suited to a particular property. Some soils require special foundations and thus increase the costs of developing a property. Other soils have high clay content and are not very permeable, or are permeable but have a very high water table. These soils are generally not well suited for on-site septic drain fields.

Calvin Township includes three soil associations. The Houghton Association, found in the southwest corner and surrounding the “Chain of Lakes” is particularly poor for building, being very poorly drained and mucky. The Cassopolis-Riddles-Teasdale Association varies greatly in slope and in how well it drains. If well-drained and sufficiently level, those loamy soils may be good for farming, including some prime farmland soils, or for building where appropriate for septic. The Kalamazoo-Oshtemo Association, well drained, loamy soils, if sufficient levels, is good for building but also includes the best farmland soils to be found in the area. A total 65 % of the Township contains soils deemed prime farmland.

Based on soil type, 85 % of the township is classified as having severe limitations for septic. When analyzed for suitable building, over half or 52 % of the township shows either moderate to severe limitations. When combined, less than 8 % of the township’s area is appropriate for development.

FLOOD PLAINS

Flood plains are located adjacent to streams, creeks, and lakes and are areas that are inundated with water during times of heavy rains or annual snow melt runoff. Flood plains serve as natural protection against flooding and are a natural safety valve for the collection and removal of storm water and excess surface water within a watershed. Development within a flood plain will result in the further displacement of water and compound flooding problems.

Development in flood plains should be discouraged if at all possible in order to minimize potential property damage.

The Department of Environmental Quality published a Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for the flood plain in Calvin Township. Portions of the following water courses are considered flood plain: Christina Creek, Juno Lake, Painter Lake and Diamond Lake.

The Calvin Township Board approved at its December, 2008 board meeting to become a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in order to provide its residents the opportunity to have lower insurance rates, should the need for flood insurance for Calvin Township become a requirement.

EXISTING LAND USE

Land within the township and county is usually grouped into one of the following land use categories: Public, Agriculture, Commercial, Industrial, Residential, and Undefined.

A brief description of each land use category:

Public – This category includes land that is owned by the federal, state, county, and local governments. It also includes lands that are exempt from taxation, such as churches and church-owned properties, including church camps at some of the lakes.

Calvin Township Public Land - All of the public property is owned by the township, for the township hall, park, and cemeteries. It makes up less than 1 % of the total area.

Agriculture – This category includes those lands that are actively farmed, pastured, or used for timber production. It also includes areas of open space and natural areas that are not used for other purposes. This is the largest land use category in Cass County. In some jurisdictions, the local assessor includes sand and gravel operations as an agricultural use.

Calvin's Agriculture – Over half, or 55 %, of the township's land area is in agricultural use. There are 65 PA 116 (see appendix) Agricultural and Open Space preservation agreements totalling 6,552 acres, or 29 %, of the township.

Commercial – This category includes all properties that are used for businesses other than industry. In most cases, properties that were previously used for commercial purposes, but which are now vacant, are still classified as commercial.

Industrial- This category includes properties used for manufacturing and warehousing. In some jurisdictions the local assessor classifies sand and gravel mining as an industrial use.

Calvin's Commercial/Industrial – Less than 1 % of land use can be found in either commercial or industrial uses. Of the total businesses identified, they are located in the Southwest corner of the township near Cassopolis and Bulhand road, and others are on or near Calvin Center Road, North of Mt. Zion Street, and two industrial firms are nearby on Chain Lake Street.

Residential – This category includes those properties which are used for residential purposes, including single-family detached housing, apartments, and mobile homes. Properties that are used for a residence and which do not generate farm income are generally classified as residential by the local assessors.

Calvin's Residential – Only 2 % of the area is developed by residential uses. Other than the lake areas, the majority of housing is scattered throughout the township with open space between.

Undefined – This category includes a number of properties which are in transition, which are in estates, or for which no information is available.

Calvin's Open Space/Undefined – The township is comprised of 43 % open space, of which 24 % is forested, 9 % is non-forested, 7 % is in wetlands, and 3 % is in lakes.

Lake Residential

The areas classified as lake residential are those lake areas where water and sewer implementation is planned for extension and expansion in the Master Plan for Water and Sewer.

It is the intent of this Master Plan that these areas be built out at higher densities than elsewhere in the Township, in similar patterns and densities as existing development. However, such new development should be contingent upon the provision of water and sewer infrastructure so as to protect water quality. Once again, the boundaries identified on the Future Land Use Map (see appendix) should be considered general, subject to the implementation measures of the various Townships. (Master Plan for Land Use Cass County, Michigan, December 18, 2002, pg 112).

Unlike many areas in Michigan, Calvin Township has thus far not experienced a significant number of land divisions that are allowed without platting. Most parcels remain in 40-plus acre sizes. Small lots are found around four of the lakes (Chain, Diamond, Paradise and Juno) and in Section 26 and 27, north and south of Calvin Hill Street near Tharp Lake Road and spreading west of Calvin Center Road.

To facilitate use of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology, the existing land use review was prepared from the 1978 MIRIS (Michigan Resource Information System) data, the most current to be updated. A visual survey of the township and a scan of more current aerial photos indicate little significant change from that data except increasing residential usage around the lakes.

HISTORICAL FEATURES

The township includes the following sites of historical significance;

Chain Lake Baptist Church and Cemetery– built in 1838

Calvin Community Chapel- built by residents from the stones of adjacent farms.

Black Walnut Tree – on Calvin Center Road, the “Biggest Tree in Cass County” as awarded by the Michigan Arbor Day Alliance.

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICE

Public facilities and services in the Township are important to planning and development. The provision of public services is impacted by growth and development and by the demands that new populations place upon the provision of services.

Infrastructure

Utilities

Electric service is provided by Midwest Energy Cooperative and Indiana Michigan Power. Natural gas service is available via Semco Gas in parts of the township.

Only those households on Diamond Lake adjoining Sail Bay area, and Paradise Lake are served by natural gas and sanitary sewer systems of the Cassopolis Area Utility Authority. The remainder of the township depends on private, individual water wells and septic tank systems. There are no enclosed drainage systems.

Communications

Verizon is the local telephone provider for Calvin Township; the local call area has expanded within the township.

Cable television is available to the Diamond Lake, Sail Bay and the Paradise Lake area via Comcast. The other areas of the township do not currently have a housing density feasible for service.

Transportation

As part of the planning process, it is important to identify the function of the roadways that make up the Township's system (See appendix). Identification of road classifications assists in the determination of providing recommendations for appropriate land uses and zoning code standards along the various routes.

The township roads are maintained by the Cass County Road Commission. The township has primary and secondary roads. Primary roads are designed to accommodate moderate to large traffic volumes dependent upon their overall design and construction. Primary roads are designated as either Class A (all weather or seasonal) or Class B (seasonal) roads. Primary roads located in Calvin are Brownsville Street, Calvin Center Road, Calvin Hill Street, Paradise Lake Road, Robinson Road and Union Road.

Transportation Improvements

The County Road Commission has instituted and continues a program of reconstruction or resurfacing county roadways each year. The township shares matching funds dollar for dollar for reconstruction or resurfacing. The township budget also provides for brines on township roads twice a year.

In 2007 & 2008 the road commission reconstructed two bridges within the township, one on Chain Lake Street and the other on Northrop Street.

As the county planning commission plans major projects, the township planning process becomes an integral part of the planning in order that development does not lead to traffic congestion that could choke Calvin Township.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Community Facilities

William J Robinson Community Center at 18727 Mt. Zion Road has served as an administration building, housing the elected township officials offices and meetings. The building provides space for a variety of functions.

In addition to this building, in 2006 the Masons and Eastern Stars of Calvin Township donated their lodge to the township. The Granite Lodge adjacent the William J. Robinson Community Center will house the township offices and provide a conference area.

Administrative Services

Management of the township is the responsibility of the Calvin Township Board, with administrative duties served by the supervisor, clerk, and treasurer. The township hall is open on Wednesday from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm and on Thursday from 5:00-6:00 pm.

The township hall, with kitchen and bathroom facilities, is available for and frequently used by residents for various community and social gatherings. All operational township facilities meet ADA compliance requirements

Emergency Services

The township does not administer emergency services or site any related facilities.

Police Service

Police protection is by jurisdiction of the Cass County Sheriff's Department. A central dispatch system for Cass County is located on North Broadway in Cassopolis and is operated by full-time staff providing central dispatching of all law enforcement, fire, and medical services. The Cass County Sheriff's Department mission is to provide the highest quality law enforcement to the residents of Cass County, with professional, courteous and compassionate service. The Sheriff's Department employs the Sheriff, under-sheriff, detectives, sergeants, deputies, corrections officers, animal control officer, marine officers and administrative support staff.

The Michigan State Police Department does not operate an actual post in Cass County, but the county is served by the Niles Post in Berrien County. There are two other state police posts in adjacent counties. One in White Pigeon, Michigan, St. Joseph County, located on US 131 another is in Paw Paw, Michigan, of Van Buren County, located off M-51 near I-94.

Fire Service

Fire protection is provided via contract with neighbouring Penn Township fire department and is paid through a township millage. Penn fire department is located in Vandalia and has a service area of 72 square miles.

Ambulance Service

Ambulance service is provided via contract with Life Care Ambulance and is paid through a township millage.

Solid Waste

Removal of solid waste is the responsibility of individual residents. In addition, the township sponsors an annual clean-up day the third Saturday in May, with dumpsters at the Michiana Solid Waste site in Union, Michigan.

Cemeteries

The township owns and maintains six cemeteries;

- Mt. Zion/Bethel, located on Mt. Zion St., next to the Methodist Church.
- Calvin Center, located on Mt. Zion St., next to the Calvin Township Hall.
- Chain lake, located on Chain Lake St. next to the Chain Lake Church
- Community, located on Mt. Zion St. next to the Community Church
- Schaffer, located on Lamb Road
- Birch Lake, located in Section 1,

Parks and Recreation

The township owns and maintains a four-acre park adjacent to the William J Robinson Community Center. It provides swings, a pavilion, picnic tables, grills, outdoor toilets, basketball court and a baseball field. These facilities are in regular use.

Schools

Calvin Township lies entirely within the Cassopolis School District, the second largest district in the County. One private K-8 educational facility, Lake Region Conference of the Seventh Day Adventists, lies within the township.

Libraries

The Cass District Library, located in Cassopolis, serves the township and is supported by a millage to property owners. Residents also have access to the LaGrange Historical Library in Cassopolis and the Southwestern Michigan College Library in Dowagiac.

INTEGRATION

The following principles to guide land use, infrastructure, and services were developed from the previously presented review of demographic and economic trends, assessment of natural resources and current land uses, evaluation of existing facilities and services, and the needs survey.

General Planning Principles

- To acknowledge the township's past, present, and future diversity.
- To uphold the area's character and culture
- To honor and continue the community's tradition of welcoming new residents and visitors with openness and friendliness.
- To support current and new residents with infrastructure, facilities, and services.
- To keep affordability of living in the township.
- To maintain and improve the township's physical appearance.
- To preserve historical features.
- To access the I80/90 Corridor
- To protect lakes and look at ways to define the value of our lake property
- To preserve natural resources

LAND USE PRINCIPLES

Residential

- To advocate a well-kept appearance of housing, related structures, and adjoining property;
- To encourage housing options for households of all income level;
- To provide a range of alternative for new construction, but with emphasis on middle-range value, low-density development;
- To allow multi-family (duplex) choices.

Commercial

- To allow for residents' economic prosperity without incurring adverse impacts on the rural residential character of the township;
- To ensure adequate road access management.

Industrial

- To direct expansion of industrial business near existing properties or facilities;
- To promote reuse of industrial properties when vacated.

Agriculture

- To sustain existing agricultural production.

Public

- To ensure public access to facilities and natural features such as lakes.

Open Space

- To keep open space proportional to population growth;
- To protect the quality of surface water and groundwater.

Lake Residential

- To build out at higher densities.

INFRASTRUCTURE PRINCIPLES

- To provide for further expansion of water or sewer utilities.
- To advance wherever possible enhancement of telecommunications.
- To fulfill the township's role in supplying adequate funding for maintenance of roadways.
- To permit construction of new roads only at the private expense of the development.
- To protect all roads in Calvin Township.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES PRINCIPLES

- To continue effective provision of services through contracts with the fire and ambulance providers.
- To furnish recreational opportunities within the township

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation strategies determine how the Plan's guideline and recommendations become reality. When implementing goals and objectives, it will be necessary for the Planning Commission to be flexible. As needs and conditions of the community change, various adjustments or additions will need to be made to the Plan.

LAND USE STRATEGIES

Very little of the township land area is appropriate for profuse (abundant) development due to the soils with severe septic and building limitations and the considerable percentage of wetlands. Without plans for provision of water and sewer utilities, these factors influence and support the community's decision to remain primarily in agricultural and low-density residential land uses.

The conclusions of this planning process will be accomplished through adoption of a zoning ordinance to replace the interim ordinance. Successful implementation of the zoning ordinance will depend on diligent and constructive enforcement. This includes clearly defined responsibilities, fair processes, practical application forms, and sound record keeping. The township will also actively work with other agencies having related health and safety enforcement authorities such as the Cass County Health Department.

To complement zoning enforcement, the township should pursue active programs to remove or rehabilitate abandoned or substandard structures.

Agricultural

Agricultural zones will be identified as existing production, which generally matches the delineation of prime farmland soils in the township. A large minimum parcel size should be used to truly protect these areas for the agriculture industry.

Residential

Two zoning classifications will be used. The first is low-density areas designated agricultural/residential in the land use plan. One-acre minimum parcel sizes with required width/depth ratios will keep the rural open character while preventing the accelerated loss of farmland which occurs with 10-acre minimums.

A second classification allows higher density residential around the lakes. Generally these areas are not in agricultural use due to the large wetland tracts surrounding the lakes. Those lakefronts which are relatively more developed—Diamond, Juno and Paradise—will be designated mid-density residential with small lot sizes. Residential use on and around the Chain of Lakes and Robinson/Leninger/Puterbaugh Lakes will be provided by PUD (Planned Unit Development) zoning. This tool allows for the desired options, creativity, and flexibility in housing, including multi-family. With site plan review it can serve to protect the lakes, circumvent the building limitations and wetlands, and cluster housing to keep open space. Road access cost should be at developer expense. All housing located throughout the township must meet designated standards to maintain the township’s physical integrity.

Commercial and Industrial

Planning for location of business activity must protect agricultural use and recognize the need for flexible opportunities to generate income.

The development of small commercial and service businesses will be permitted in locations with historical or current commercial activity. However, the district on Calvin Center Road needs to be limited to protect this road corridor. The zoning ordinance will accommodate home occupation businesses but minimize associated impacts.

Industrial uses can be a conditional use with specified standards in the commercial district.

Public

Public facilities will be included within the Commercial/Industrial zoning district due to their nature as traffic generators and to the small area involved. All existing sites are owned by the township.

Open Space

The township opted for no specified open space zoning district because no large open public areas are present to protect. Similarly, wetland areas will not be identified in the land use plan or zoning ordinance so as not to deny private use of land consistent with the broader zoning district. Continuation of open space is encouraged through low density residential conditions and within PUDs.

Infrastructure Strategies

Provisions of the infrastructure will be limited to maintenance of the existing road system. To generate sufficient funding, the township will pursue voter approval of a modest road millage.

Facilities and Services

To keep taxes low, additional facilities and services will be limited to expansion of those existing to keep pace with demand.

In depending on other local governments as service providers, the township should maintain productive representation on and involvement in available advisory committees or other opportunities for input.

To assist residents in maintaining the health, safety and aesthetic value of the township, the annual clean-up day should be continued.

The township must continue to support its planning commission as an ongoing process.

Future Vision

A bright future for Calvin Township involves maintaining its current resources, welcoming new residents, and expanding opportunities that fit its character. Planning will include:

- Prime farm land preservation
- Improvement of existing properties
- New mid-range housing developments
- Road funding for maintenance and improvement
- Various small service businesses
- More lake public access
- Recreational opportunities, including trails
- Tourism
- New community center with Underground Railroad Museum
- Hunting grounds
- Public Park maintenance and improvement
- Technology expansion
- Improvement of information availability and delivery
- On-going township board education

To achieve this vision, the township undertook a committed effort to prepare a master plan with the intention of implementing it through a zoning ordinance and other appropriate means with the goals of orderly growth and development, protection of property values, and preservation of township character.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Establishing goals determines the destination toward which the township's planning efforts will be directed.

The Master Plan

Goals:

- To provide demographic information to help support the township needs.
- To educate the township so the residents of the township can support the Plan.

Objective:

- To keep the plan updated with correct statistical information to help with grants and to meet the growing needs of the township.

Land Use

Goals:

- To promote the township's rural setting.
- To update the zoning ordinances to support the master plan land strategies
- To have the appropriate language in the master plan to help enforce blight.

Objective:

- To keep the natural beauty of the township as the population of the township grows.
- To strengthen the enforcement of the blight in the township and support those who have removed their blight while enforcing others to do so.
- To remove the stigma of a not so clean township, to a clean, natural and affordable living township.

Agricultural

Goals:

- To protect agricultural land for industry.

Objective:

Capital Improvements Plans

Goals:

Upgrade existing community Center

Remodel the Mason and Eastern Star building given to the Township

Upgrade park, park and playground equipment

To reopen and enhance the nature trail

To connect to Michigan's bike trails.

Objective:

Calvin Township: Background and History
Provided by: Iola Holtz

Calvin Township was named for Calvin Britain who according to one source was a territorial legislator and according to another was an early surveyor. And was surveyed 1826. Calvin Township was established in 1835 from Penn and Porter townships and the first township meeting was held in the log cabin of John Reed, who came to Cass County from Logan County Ohio in 1827 or 1828 to Youngs Prairie where he remained for awhile until he disposed of his Squatter's right to David McIntosh for \$210 and in the fall of 1829 moved to Calvin Township near Diamond Lake. He was the second settler in Calvin Township.

The Calvin Community Chapel was built by its members from boulders collected on their farms. The oldest Friends Meeting House in Michigan was organized in 1836.

Reed was a brother-in-law of Abner Thorp and Nathan Norton. These three men married sisters. Reed came to Cass County first, wrote back to Logan County, Ohio, to his relatives, encouraging them to come too. So four families packed covered wagons with household effects, food to last several days and also brought their live stock. It was hard traveling and they got as far as where Elkhart is now, stopped for a few days rest at a friend's cabin and in the night a marsh fire burned the cabin where the women slept. Their wagons were near the fire, but were not damaged. The live stock was scattered thru the woods and this delayed them for several days. Coming thru Edwardsburg they saw only two families.

Abner Thorp was the first to locate on land in Calvin Township (1829 Sec. 6) near the south side of Diamond Lake on what is now Brownsville Street, about a quarter of a mile west of Eagle Point Road. The Nortons settled in Jefferson Township. I had heard that a Bill Martin had lived here in later years, so I asked Maurice Martin of Cassopolis, who is ninety years old, about Wm. Martin. He said he was his father and his father bought the place from Abner Thorp and Maurice lived there when small, but, was born in Brownsville. The first thing Mr. Thorp did after deciding to locate here was to erect some kind of shelters which was a crude affair and they planted a crop of some kind. Corn was usually planted for food. The Thorps had eight children.

A son Labin, he told of the log cabin his father built. The earth was the floor, a pile of marsh hay in a corner served as a bed for the children. For the parents, a makeshift bedstead was made by boring holes in the logs into which poles were driven, supported by stakes driven in the ground. They had brought many quilts for the beds and one was usually used for a door for the three-sided cabin. For heat and cooking, huge logs were hauled into the cabin and set afire. One fire lasted several days. A cook kettle did service on many occasions. Usually two of these three sided cabins were built facing each other. Their livestock was fed marsh hay from around Diamond Lake and was stored in rail pens. Mr. Thorp died near Brownsville in 1869.

A land office was opened in White Pigeon in 1831 for land entries (from the government). A large portion of the Township was purchased by speculators—John Reed, Geo Redfield and Imlay and Beach who asked high prices for the land, which kept it off the market for several years. Later, when placed on the market, land sold for \$4 to \$5 per acre with terms of ten year credit.

In 1830 the Wm. Grubb family came from Ohio to his father's Andrew Grubb in Sec 8 on the corner of what is now Osborn and Eagle Point Road. Later this was the Findley Chess farm, still later the Leroy Osborn farm, where Lewis Osborn, a son, was wormwood grower in the middle twenties. Robert Woods and the Carter brothers were also wormwood growers at that time.

Wm. East born 1773 in North Carolina came in 1833. He had a large family (were Quakers) and the East Settlement originated. Josiah Osborn came in 1835 with his son Jefferson who was twelve years old. They settle on land that is now corner of Union road and Chain Lake Street and set out 100 apple trees, also four or five hundred seedlings of fruit trees in the woods as they had no mules or horses to help clear the land until later.

Van Buren & Cass Counties are indebted to the Osborn's for their early orchards. Josiah Osborn died in 1862. Jefferson Osborn married Susanna East.

The Quaker line of the Underground Railroad was opened in 1840 and lasted until 1851. In Calvin, not like other townships, in its early days, colored people outranked the whites due to the Quaker friends of the unfortunate race. This was the northeastern part of the township. A Quaker preacher in 1836 brought a fugitive salvaged name Lawson, who was the first colored resident in the township. He raised his family here. In 1838 a fugitive slave, a Guino Negro, Jesse Scott settled on a patch of ground and raised tobacco for a living. In the War of 1812 he was a waiter for General Pinkney. In 1845 or 46 a group of around forty colored people came from Ohio and bought small farms. A southern planter name Sanders, died in Virginia, liberated his slaves by provisions of his will and appropriated \$15,000 with which his administrator was to purchase farms for them in some free state. From that time on, a steady stream of colored people poured in Calvin.

Since 1900 they have held township offices. Ramp town was the name of a cluster of 100 cabins on the Bonine farm south of M60 on Calvin Center Road. Many of the fugitive slaves lived here and continued to live there after the Civil War. Aunt Melissa Brown was the last survivor who was born at Ramp town in Penn Township.

The Friends Church (Quaker) was organized in 1836. Samuel Bonine was the first minister, Chain Lake Church in 1848, Mt Zion Church 1849, Bethel African Methodist Church 1856, Brownville Church in the early 1800's and stood in Brownsville a little community club and was used until 1962 when it was destroyed by vandals. The bell to this church was sold to Matt Tagert of Diamond Lake who donated it to the Daily Church when they rebuilt after a fire.

In the Birch Lake “Friends” (Quakers) Cemetery there are many of the old Quakers buried—many of the Easts and Joshiah Osborn and his descendants. In the Shaffer Cemetery in West Calvin on Lamb Road there are Shaffers, Bells, Reeds, Highleys, Fletchers and Jessups—all early settlers. In Chain Lake, Bethel, Calvin Community and Mt. Zion Cemeteries can be found the names: Curtis, Jones, Vaughn, Byrd, Dungey, Lawson, Calloway, Allen, Artis, Snelling, Brown, Anderson and Stewart. Many were descendants of the old early slave settlers. Many of the runaway slaves were fed, housed and sometimes clothed in the Quaker homes. Much of the land in Cass County was cleared by Negroes who were given five acres of land to a family. Each had a cabin. Those who did not stay were sent on to other stations, one in Schoolcraft at the home of Stanton or S. B. Thomas. Stanton was former grocer in Cassopolis.

It was on the Peter Shafer farm in the cabin kitchen, the first school was established in 1834. Schools were later established and divided into districts. Peter Shafer operated a saw mill and in 1831 sawed the lumber for the courthouse in Cassopolis. Daniel McIntosh and a partner operated a sawmill in 1832 near Christiana Creek in Sec 19, C. H. Bunn in Sec. 22 operated a sawmill, was the former owner of land now operated by the “Muslims.” He built the large house there as well as three houses in Cassopolis and operated a saw-mill in Cassopolis when I was a kid (Mrs. Wooden). Around 1865 there was a woolen factory, later used as a planing mill near Long’s Corners. In early days, Calvin had two bands: the Henderson Cornet Band and the Clipper Band led by Green Allen. Elder Adam Miller came from Ohio in 1830 by oxen in a wagon loaded with his family, bedding, and cooking equipment. He preached the first sermon in Calvin in the vicinity of Brownsville under a burr oak tree. He helped to organize several churches in Cass County, one the old Red Brick Church in Jefferson.

The Crawford Stewart farm, now a “Centennial Farm” was the first Negro owned farm in Cass County to be registered by the Commissions. The deed was record in 1854 to Crawford Stewart who great grandfather, Peterson, came from King Williams domain in 1800.

Wm Lawson operated a general store at Calvin Center in 1920’s. Post office was established here before rural delivery. The southeast corner of Diamond Lake is in Calvin Township. Amos Northrop brought land from the government near here about 1830. Family members still own a part of the original land (1976 Irene Darylmp).)

The Brownsville Store building) in west Calvin is a historic piece of property and was one of the oldest mercantile establishments in the county. It was first started by Aaron Banks in 1850. Later run by Findley Chess and Pegg, Moses Cohen, Elias Dickerhoof, Mark Le Munyon, Sheriff Reagan and again Mark Le Munyon, who was Cass County Inspector, also taught school in Jones and Brownsville. He died in 1953 and his wife, Effie, continued alone, 80 years old she died in 1958; they served the community for 60 years. The grandson, the “Notorious Le Munyon brother”, make their home in the basement of the building now.

Brownsville was never platted. The outlet of Diamond Lake runs thru Brownsville and drains into Christiana Creek. A grist mill was built here by Pleasant Grubb in 1875. He later sold the mill to David and Wm. Browns (brothers) for whom Brownsville was named. There was a population at this time of 150. A post office was established here. Also there was a tannery, 2 blacksmith shops, a cooper shop, a shoe shop, a pump factory, a harness shop and a millers shop operated by Mrs. Jonathan Breed. There were two doctors, Dr. Phineas Gregg and Dr. J. M. Wright. Dr. Otis Newson had an office in his home at Calvin Center in the later years.

There was a murder in Brownsville in 1922 when “Sudie” Shaw, a cripple who sold groceries and gas, was robbed and murdered in the night.

The Brownsville School still stands but Brownsville School District annexed to Cassopolis School District 1956 and was the first District to annex to Cassopolis. James Shepherd of Dowagiac (a member of the historical society) told me his grandfather, James M. Shepherd taught the Brownsville School in his early years. He also has a history of the Brownsville.

In 1967 the "Witness tree", a burr oak stood at the corner of Brownsville St. and Eagle Point Road. It was the last known Witness Tree and marked the corner of Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8. The original stake was in the center of the 4 corners. It was blazed in 1828 by the original government surveyors. The original stake was about 40 feet south east of the tree.

Isaac Hull, born in Pennsylvania 1807, married Mariah Grubb, daughter of Andrew and Martha Grubb of Calvin Township. They bought land north of Brownsville in Calvin Township in 1828. In the fall of 1837 they located on it into a log house, but in time, around 1866 built the present house where we live (Mrs. Treva Wooden). Henry Clay Walker married one of the Hull daughters who lived here for some time then the farm was passed on to their son, T. Mack Walker from whom we first rented in 1929. After a few years the Walkers exchanged land with Dell Adamson, a bachelor, who had land on the south side of Diamond Lake. We rented from Mr. Adamson until his death, then the farm passed into hands of a brother, Ross Adamson. We lived here twenty years and had three land lords and finally bought the land May 27, 1955.

Zachas Wooden was the first white man to come to Calvin Township where he trapped furs, along the outlet of Diamond Lake for John Jacob Astor in the winter of 1813 and 1814. His home was in Saratoga County, New York. He did settle here at the time, but his headquarter were in Elkhart, Indiana. In 1843 he returned to Michigan and bought land on the township line of Calvin and Mason Townships on what now is Calvin Center Road. He made his home in Elkhart where his wife, Amy Teachout Wooded, died in 1876. His son Hiram, my husband's grandfather, came from New York in 1846 with his bride. They built a log cabin at first and later a good sized dwelling in Mason Township where Zachas died in 1881 and Hiram and Martha lived there until their deaths. Mr. Wooden and I went to housekeeping there in 1916 and my daughter, Virginia Springsteen, was born there. We lived there 4 ½ years before moving to the Bonine farm in Penn Township where Richard and Warren were born. Loren Eugene Wooden, grandson of Zachas Wooden and son of Hiram Wooden, was born in Calvin Township. He had five children, four girls and one son, R. Jay Wooden. R J Wooden was husband of the late Treva Wooden.