

# **Introduction**

## INTRODUCTION

The character of the rural township is changing rapidly throughout southeast Michigan. Greater mobility has created developmental pressures in areas which previously were primarily held in agricultural or vacant land uses. Places long enjoyed by only a few have now taken on new dimensions. Physical amenities such as water bodies, rolling countryside, and major wooded areas have recreational potential never before realized, and are also becoming prime centers for residential development where recreation and home life may be combined.

With these and other trends in mind, Freedom Township has undertaken a planning process to prepare for these developmental pressures and, in turn, plan for that development in a manner which would most equitably benefit their community.

The process for updating the 1997 plan for Freedom Township was initiated in August 7, 2001 by the Freedom Township Planning Commission. The process began with a review of the 1997 Plan text and background information of the Township. This included review of goals, policies, land use strategy, population forecasts, and natural features of the Township. The base information within the 1997 Plan and previously adopted amendments were reviewed to reflect the current character within the Township. Therefore, this planning process is centered upon an update of the 1997 Growth Management Plan, adopted November 4, 1997. The review and updating this Plan has resulted in the document entitled "The Freedom Township Growth Management Plan".

The Growth Management Plan (GMP) is a comprehensive long-range statement of policy for future growth and preservation of natural resources. It considers those elements necessary to promote public health, safety, and general welfare, and encourages the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability. The GMP includes policies designed to:

- Preserve the agricultural character of Freedom Township.
- Preserve the natural resources and sensitive lands of Freedom Township.
- Limit unwarranted use of Freedom Township's natural resources.
- Avoid overcrowding of land.
- Lessen congestion on public roads.
- Provide for recreation and other public improvement; and
- Consider the character of Freedom Township; and its suitability for particular uses in light of past and current trends and activities.

The GMP is intended to direct development in a coordinated and harmonious manner and related to current and future needs and desires of the Township. The GMP is long-range and comprehensive in scope, firm in concept, yet flexible and adaptive to changing conditions. Further, it is the basis for decision-making on developmental proposals and the preservation of natural resources.

After adoption of the GMP, a major revision of the Township Zoning Ordinance and Map will be prepared to complement and reflect the conclusions of the GMP.

## Township Setting

Freedom Township is located in the southwest quadrant of Washtenaw County approximately eight miles southwest of the City of Ann Arbor. The Township boundaries are only two miles from the Village of Manchester and five miles from the Village of Chelsea.



## Regional Influence

In recent years Washtenaw County has experienced considerable growth, particularly in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti urbanized area. This growth has not been totally dependent upon the effect of the outward growth of the Detroit Metropolitan area; however future expansion of this large metropolitan area is expected to have an increasingly significant impact on growth trends in the County in years to come. While the growth pressure Freedom Township will experience will be significant from the Township's perspective, it is not expected to be of a significant nature in terms of population or developed area. Access to the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti urbanized area is limited due to lack of direct access to I-94 which is located approximately three (3) miles to the north of Freedom Township. Pleasant Lake Road is the only hard-surface road extending through the

Township. It runs east-west and is currently classified as a "Class B" road by the Washtenaw County Road Commission. Plans are currently underway to improve Pleasant Lake Road to "Class A" status as funds become available for reconstruction.

The Township's relative location to the regional transportation network, giving arterial access to the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti urban area, and rural character, are significant locational attributes of the Township which will make it increasingly attractive for residential development. Also the Township's pertinent location to the Village of Chelsea and Manchester Village is advantageous for residents living within the Township.

## Township Character

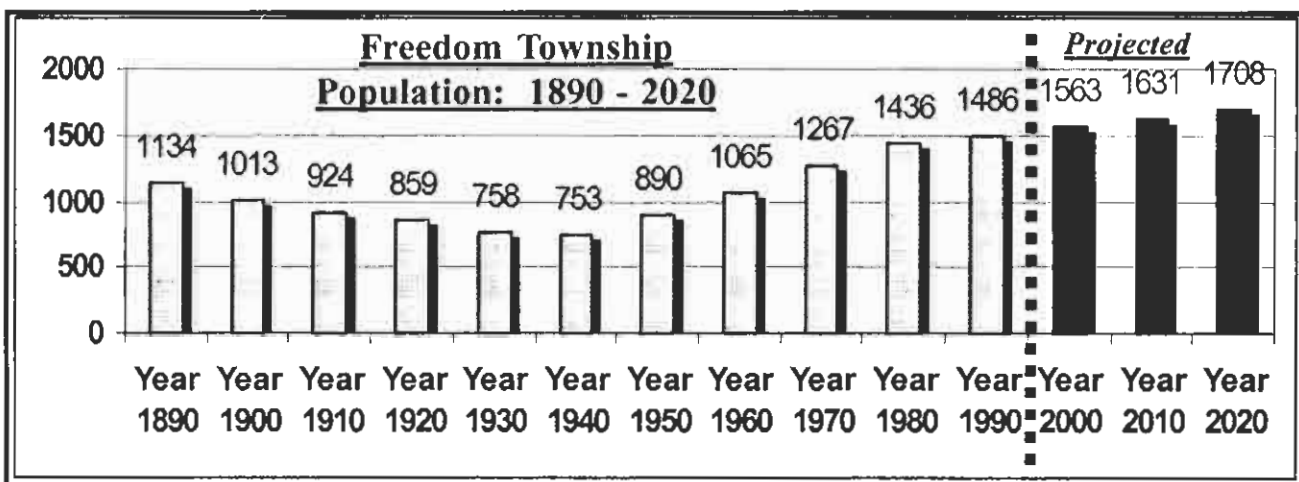
A unique rural character is seen throughout Freedom Township. This character is made up by stable agricultural enterprises, significant natural resource areas consisting of woodlands and wetlands, and rolling topography with notable topographic features. This uniqueness has predominated over the years with little adjacent urban influence from urban areas within the region. Some of the Township's attributes, however, may begin to serve as catalysts for accelerated growth. The close proximity to urban centers, quick access to regional transportation systems, the desirability of the rural lifestyle, and unique physical characteristics found within Freedom Township are becoming increasingly desired by homeowners.

Through meetings and discussions with Township residents, in the compilation of this GMP, numerous comments constantly focused on desirable Township attributes such as:

- High quality farms throughout the Township.
- Rural atmosphere, peace and quiet.
- Presence of natural resources including forests, marsh lands, and wildlife.
- Roads not stripped with houses.
- Availability of various types of sports including hunting, fishing, bike riding, skiing, and hiking.

The evaluation of a communities physical characteristics, including natural resources and agricultural lands, is the foundation upon which this land use planning program is based. Recognizing the unique physical features and the role they play in the environment is the first step in preservation of these resources and formulating policies by which they can be protected and enhanced. When these resources are unprotected, misuse or total destruction can take place. Once destroyed, many of these resources can never be replaced.

This GMP recognizes specific natural resources within Freedom Township. The analysis of these resources will serve as the basis to direct land use policies to preserve natural resources for economic, quality of life, and for environmental reasons.



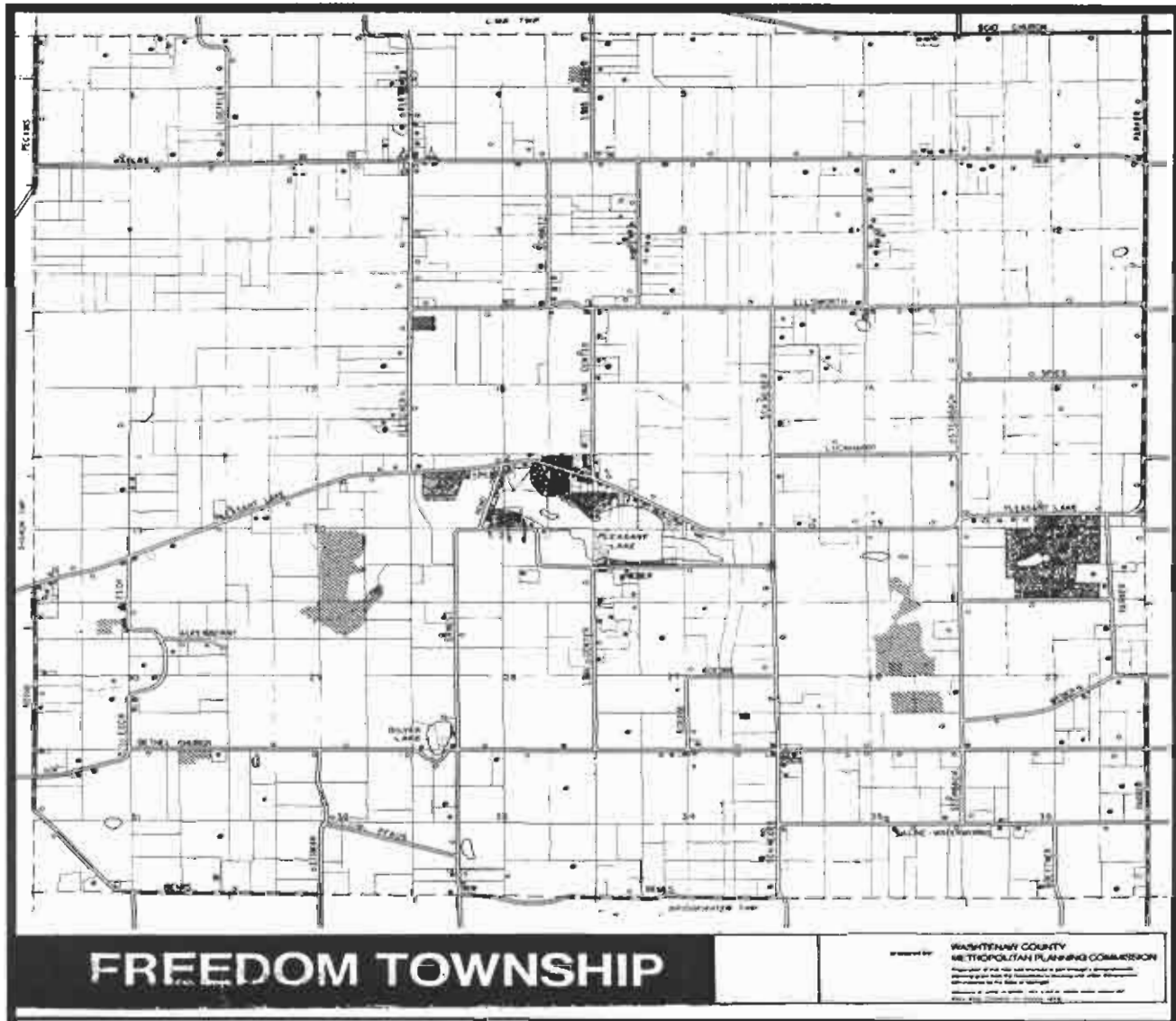
## Historical Growth

Over the past one hundred years, from 1890 to 1990, Freedom township has displayed little growth in terms of actual numbers of population. During this period Freedom's population increased by only 352 persons. The Township's rural location explains much of this slow increase in population and is exemplified by the increase in other units of government which adjoin Freedom. During this same period of time, Manchester Township's population increased by only 752 persons followed by Bridgewater Township with a 220 person increase and Sharon Township which experienced a decrease in actual numbers between 1890 and 1970 from 1,014 residents to 831, a loss of 183 persons. Between 1970 and 1990 Sharon Township increased 535 persons. Although Manchester Village lost population during the early 1900's, its population increased to 1,650 in 1970, 1,686 in 1980, and 1,753 in 1990 an increase of only 562 persons over the 100 year period.

From the turn of this century, Freedom Township's population declined steadily until 1940 when the trend was reversed. Since 1940 and through 1995, the Township's population has increased by 766 persons, from 753 to 1,519. The Township is primarily rural with the exception of the area around Pleasant Lake which has attracted a concentration of urban land uses as seen from the 1995 existing land use of Freedom Township.

The SEMCOG Regional Development Forecast indicates that Freedom Township's population will increase to 1,563 by 2000, 1,593 by 2005, and 1,626 by 2010. This would result in a population increase of 9.4 percent between 1990 and 2010. The

## Existing Land Use: 1995



# FREEDOM TOWNSHIP Update

## Characteristics of the Population

<u>Population</u>	<u>Freedom Township</u>		
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
Total Population	1,267	1,486	1,562
Total Households		536	561
Housing Units		413	612
Household Size	3.3	2.7	2.5
Population Increase	1990 - 1995		2.2%
	1990 - 2000		5.1%
Median Age			36.6
<b>Age</b>			
Under 5 years		117	
5 to 17 years		267	
18 to 20 years		56	
21 to 24 years		46	
25 to 44 years		499	
45 to 54 years		193	
55 to 59 years		53	
60 to 64 years		65	
65 to 74 years		104	
75 to 84 years		66	
85 years and over		20	
<b><u>Median age</u></b>		36.6	
<b><u>Under 18 years</u></b>		384	
Percent of total population	1970 - 16.0%		
	1990 - 34.0%		
<b><u>Persons Per household</u></b>	1970 - 3.3		
	1990 - 2.77		
<b><u>65 years and over:</u></b> 190 Residents			
Percent of total population	1970 - 16.0%	1990 - 12.8%	

median age for the Township in 1990 was 36.6 years old as compared to 28.5 years old in 1970. In 1990 25.8 percent of the Township's population was under 18 years old compared with 34% in 1970. Also the Township's population indicated that 12.8 percent of the total population was 65 years old and over in 1990 compared to 16% in 1970. (See Table 2). The average number of persons per household was listed at 3.3 in 1970 and 2.77 in 1990.

# FREEDOM TOWNSHIP Update

## Characteristics of the Population

### Housing - 1990

<u>Housing - 1990</u>	<u>Freedom Township</u>	<u>Washtenaw County</u>
Total Housing Units 1990	536	111,256
Owner Occupied	458	57,787
% Owner Occupied	85.4%	55.28%
Median Housing Value - 1990	\$93,400	\$96,000

### Year Structure Built

### Number of Units

1989 to March 1990	8
1985 to 1988	24
1980 to 1984	24
1970 to 1979	104
1960 to 1969	57
1950 to 1959	65
1940 to 1949	59
1939 or earlier	220