
Section 4 - Existing Land Use

Land Use Categories

One of the most basic and essential studies made for any planning program is the Existing Land Use Inventory. This study provides the key to understanding existing conditions and relationships between various land uses. It also reveals predominant uses as well as desirable and undesirable situations. Furthermore, land use data provides basic information upon which logical and practical decisions can be made concerning proposals for future residential, commercial, industrial and public uses of land.

The procedure utilized in developing the Existing Land Use Map involved the use of aerial photographs, USDA Crawford County Soil Survey, pre-existing maps and information received from the Township. This information was finalized and mapped at a scale of 1" = 3,168'. **See Section 7, map 7-2.**

The various observed land uses were categorized in accordance with a predetermined land use classification system consisting of following groups:

- 1). **Residential** - Residential structures were classified into one of two categories according to type and density of the housing units. There are three primary types of residential structures in the Township: standard or "stick-built", multi-unit or duplex units and mobile home or seasonal trailer.
- 2). **Commercial** - All establishments engaged in the sale of goods or services.
- 3). **Industrial** - An area where raw or unfinished materials or commodities are used to produce a product or service.
- 4). **Public** - Includes all publicly owned lands including schools/institutions, utilities, waste disposal sites, and outdoor recreational lands.
- 5). **Extractive-Wells and Open Pits** - Land where primary activity is the extraction of raw materials to be used in the manufacturing of goods.

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- 6). **Cemetery** - An area used for the burial and memorial of the deceased.
- 7). **Forested Land** - Lands that are predominantly covered with different deciduous and coniferous tree species.
- 8). **Agricultural and Open Fields** - All lands used primarily or as an accessory use to agricultural production or open land primarily free from trees and shrubs.

Analysis of Land Use Patterns

The total land use for each classification was tabulated and is displayed in Table 4-1, (page 4-6), these numbers are estimates based on best available data and may not equal 100 percent.

Residential

Residential land use in Beaver Creek Township is typical of most rural townships, with scattered residential pockets through out the Township. Residential uses are predominately concentrated between US-27 and I-75 north of North Higgins Lake Drive and the northeast corner of the Billman Road and W. Pioneer Road Intersection. **See Section 7, map 7-3.**

The actual number of acres in residential use within the Township is difficult to determine, however approximate acreage is around 780 acres. Aside from subdivided plats, many homes are situated on five and 10 acre parcels in a linear configuration along local roads. Larger parcels of land are being subdivided or site condos created, particularly along N. Higgins Lake Drive with a mix of full time residences and seasonal residences being built.

There is currently very little existing multi-family development within the Township. Given the rural, low density nature of the area it is not surprising as the current demand for multi-family housing is low.

Commercial

There are very few commercial business land uses in Beaver Creek Township. Commercial business makes up about 25 acres or .05

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percent of the Township land area. The primary commercial businesses existing in the Township are service providers, a private lodge at the intersection of Old US-27 and South Grayling Road, a golf course/restaurant on W. Four Mile Road, and a golf course, ski area & restaurant at the end of Skyline Rd.

A modern truck terminal facility, R&L Carriers, is located on 9.24 acres on Federal Highway at I-75 Exit 244. R&L Carriers is a major truck transport in the U.S. with the terminal in Beaver Creek serving much of Northern Michigan.

Industrial

Industry within the Township is limited by the current lack of public utilities and services necessary for industrial operation. There is, however, a nonconforming wood products plant manufacturing pallets on about 5 acres, in the southeast corner of the Township at the corner of Federal Highway and Billman Roads. In addition, two sizable industrial corporations, with facilities in Beaver Creek Township, situated off W. Four Mile Road in the northwest portion of the Township are Weyerhaeuser, an OSB manufacturer and Georgia Pacific, a chemical/resin manufacturing facility. They occupy approximately 130 acres of 527 acres owned by the two plants, or one percent of the Township's land area. A rail line serves both Weyerhaeuser and Georgia Pacific industrial facilities.

Utilities and Extractive

Consumers Power provides electric service to 95 percent of the Township with the exception of a small area in the northeast corner served by Top of Michigan utilities. Limited public gas service lines are available in the Township. Bottled gas is available by tank placement on private property. Public sewer and water systems, while planned, do not currently serve Beaver Creek Township.

There are three sand and gravel pits throughout the Township, primarily in the northwest and eastern portions of the Township. They are relatively small with the exception of a 200 acre site in the east portion of the Township owned by R.E. Glancey, Inc. A large oil field is located in the western portion of the Township. The field is productive and pumping is expected to continue.

Recreational

Beaver Creek Township is sparsely developed, therefore has very

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few indoor recreational opportunities available, with the exception of the Beaver Creek Community Center. There are however an abundance of campgrounds and outdoor recreational opportunities within the Township comprising about 359 acres or .8 percent of the Township.

The primary recreational area in the Township is the North Higgins Lake State Park which contains 210 campsites and a trailer sanitation station. The park offers access to Higgins Lake, fishing, nature trails, a museum and pavilions. The park is located east of US-27 on the southern edge of the Township.

The 36-acre Beaver Creek Township Park is located on South Grayling Road north of the fire station behind the Township Hall. Facilities at the park include a basketball court, two tennis courts, a community center building, a softball diamond with bleachers and dugouts, two playgrounds, soccer fields, horse shoe courts, a volleyball court, walking trail, 2 pavilions, picnic area, and paved parking. The parking area for the park can accommodate up to 100 automobiles.

Located in the northeast corner of the Township, the Four Mile Trail Campground offers users 50 campsites and a horse camp. For snowmobiling, there are 15 miles of groomed DNR trails available in this area of Beaver Creek Township.

The Skyline Ski Area is located on 298 acres just east of I-75 and offers downhill skiing to residents and visitors alike. The ski area offers terrain for skiers of all abilities from beginners to the more advanced skier, with rental equipment available.

Higgins Hills RV Campground and Snowshoe Center is a 60 acre privately owned campground featuring snowshoeing in the winter months.

Forested Land (See Section 7, Table 7-4)

Throughout the Township there are some 37,000 acres of forested land, much of which is Federal or State land. Forest use within the Township comprises 80 percent of the total land area. The vast tracts of forested land also attract hunters to the area during the year, generating additional revenue for the Township. The Township's woodlands should be viewed as a valuable resource which, through proper forest management, could provide an

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additional source of income for residents as well as maintaining a sound environment for wildlife to thrive. The vast majority of forested lands in Beaver Creek Township are under State and Federal ownership.

Wetlands and Bodies of Water

Wetlands or hydric soils make up nearly 2,000 acres, or 4.4 percent of the Township; lakes, creeks and small unnamed ponds make up another 52 acres or 0.1 percent of the Township. Wetlands provide another valuable natural resource as an environment and refuge for countless wildlife species. Due to the low development density in the Township, most of the wetlands are assured of protection into the near future. Wetlands are now, by state law, protected from development. The majority of the wetlands are located in the southern and eastern portions of the Township. Wetlands by nature, in rural areas, provide their own means of protection from development through the high costs of drainage. It should be noted that any development adjacent to the wetlands should be properly constructed, operated and maintained to avoid potential pollution problems.

Portions of Higgins Lake and all of Mud Lake are the Township's two water bodies. Beaver Creek, the Township's only flowing stream located in the southern portion of the Township, south of Fletcher Road, is a segment of the Federal Wild and Scenic River Act under the AuSable River Watershed. Any development around Mud Lake and Beaver Creek should be limited and carefully monitored to ensure that adjacent uses are not adding pollutants to them.

Open Land, Forest, Agricultural Activities

Open land and agricultural activities comprise about 4,750 acres, or 10 percent of the Township's total land area, while forest land is 37,000 acres, or 80 percent of the land area of Beaver Creek Township.

Those lands represent an important natural asset in Beaver Creek Township for present and future generations. The preservation of those uniquely suited lands is an objective which contributes to the physical, economic and social well-being and to the long-term

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needs of the citizens of Beaver Creek Township. The retention of essential open lands for forest or agricultural activities is a proper public goal. Agriculture activities are principally tree growing and horse raising.

Much of the open land, forest and agricultural activity occur in the northern half of the Township on larger parcels of 40 to 80 acres, of which the majority is in State or Federal ownership.

TABLE 4-1 - EXISTING LAND USE IN BEAVER CREEK TOWNSHIP

| | Acres | % of Beaver Creek Township |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| Residential | 780 | 1.7 |
| Commercial | 25 | 0.05 |
| Industrial | 527 | 1 |
| Utilities & Extractive | 546 | 1.2 |
| Recreational | 350 | 0.8 |
| Forested Lands | 37,000 | 80.0 |
| Wetlands & Water Bodies | 2,000 | 4.3 |
| Agriculture and Open Land | 4,750 | 10.0 |

SOURCE:Gove Associated 1999