

## **CHAPTER IV EXISTING LAND USE**

Understanding existing land use patterns and the factors which influence land use trends in the Township is important to the development of realistic, achievable land use plans for the future. The attractive natural features found in Ada Township are the setting for a varied existing land use mix, ranging from agriculture to large scale manufacturing. Following is a summary description of current land use in Ada Township, as depicted on the Existing Land Use map in the Appendix.

### **Agriculture:**

Ada Township has historically not been one of the most important areas of agricultural production in Kent County. Over 500 acres of land in the Township has been removed from the State of Michigan's Farmland and Open Space Preservation program since 1990, for example. However, there still remains a significant amount of land in either active farming use, or that is currently idle but capable of agricultural production.

The majority of the Township's remaining farmland is in the far northeast portion of the Township, primarily in Sections 1, 2 11 and 12. Agricultural land in this area is part of a larger concentration of agricultural lands that extends into the other three townships that lie to the north and east of Ada Township – Cannon, Grattan and Vergennes Township. This broader area has been identified by Kent County as a priority area for permanent preservation of agricultural land through the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights program. There are also several large parcels in agricultural use in the Grand River floodplain, along both Pettis Ave. and Grand River Dr. Agricultural land use in 2003, as mapped by the Grand Valley Metro Council, is identified on the Agricultural Lands Inventory map in the Appendix. This map also identifies lands currently enrolled in the PA 116 Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program, with the expiration date of the PA 116 agreement between the property owner and the State noted. Most of the land enrolled in the PA 116 program is located in the far northeastern portion of the Township.

Agricultural production in the Township includes land in corn and soybeans, forage crops, land used for grazing of livestock, a small dairy cattle operation, and several fruit orchards. Maintaining viable agricultural lands in the Township contributes to the economic diversity of the area, helps lessen the demands on the infrastructure and financial resources of the Township and other units of government that would result from loss of these lands to low density suburban development, and adds to the desirable rural character of the community.

### **Residential:**

Over 96% of all housing units in the Township in 2000 were detached, single-family units, according to the 2000 Census. There has been a slight increase in the diversity of housing types in the Township compared to 1990, when over 98% of the housing units in the Township were detached, single-family units. The construction of 100 attached condominiums in the Clements Mill development is largely responsible for this modest change in the makeup of the Township's housing stock. Plans have been approved and construction is expected for an additional 57 attached condominiums in the Clements Mill development, and 210 apartment units known as Stone Falls, on the east side of Spaulding Ave. south of the rail line.

Residential neighborhoods of an urban character are concentrated in the southwest quadrant of the Township, where public water and sewer service are available. Development densities in this area are typically in the range of 2 to 2.5 homes per acre, on a gross density basis. Older residential neighborhoods on both sides of Cascade Road in the far southwest corner have somewhat higher density of about 3 units per acre. The neighborhood located between Ada Drive and Cascade Rd. consists predominantly of housing constructed between 1950 and 1980. This

neighborhood continues to the west into Grand Rapids Township.

The largest single-family subdivisions in the Township, north of Ada Dr., were developed and built out in the 1970's and 1980's. In the 1990's, most of the housing construction in the urban portion of the Township has taken place in three developments: Clements Mill, a 200-acre development with over 280 single-family homes, 96 attached condominiums, and approximately 280 apartment units to be developed in the future. The condominium and detached single-family portions of the development are now completed; Ada Moorings, located immediately east of the Ada Village area off Grand River Dr., with over 180 homes; and West Village, a 150-home development on the north side of Ada Dr., west of Spaulding Ave.

Residential development north of M-21 and east of the Grand River is more rural in character. Through the end of the 1980's, the Greentree Farms subdivision south of Conservation St. was the only planned residential subdivision of significant size in this part of the Township. The balance of residential land use in this area was on large, multi-acre parcels, a few smaller, 1-acre lot splits along major roads, or farmsteads. Within the last 10 years, several new planned developments have been built, many using condominium form of ownership of single-family home sites, served by private roads owned in common by the homeowners.

Multiple family development in the Township is currently limited to 41 attached condominium units in 4-6 unit buildings in the Country Homes of Ada development, on the north side of Fulton St., west of the Ada Cemetery, 36 rental town home units in the Ada Place Town Homes, on the north side of Cascade Rd., west of Spaulding Ave., and 96 condominium units in the Clements Mill development.

### **Commercial:**

Ada Township experienced little of the rapid commercial growth experienced by other West Michigan suburban communities in the last 20 years. This is due in large part to the expressed preferences of the community for limited commercial growth and the small amount of suitable land for large scale commercial use.

Commercial uses are concentrated in the Ada Village area, which serves as the service and convenience retail center of the community. Major retail and service uses in the Village include banks, hardware store, restaurants, cafes, dry cleaning, dental and optometric services, hair salons, day spas and barber shop, real estate, accounting and insurance offices. There are also several specialty retail shops in the Village area catering to a destination clientele. In addition, a number of small professional offices are located in the Village area.

There are several small commercial nodes on Fulton St., such as the Kulross/M-21 intersection, where a convenience grocery store/meat market/deli and a building materials center are located, as well as the Ada Hillside Center on the north side of Fulton St. Another small commercial node exists east of the Grand River on the south side of Fulton St., where the Ada East Business Center, a tavern and a small office building are located. A self-storage facility and a mini-warehouse development called Ada Landings are also located here.

There are a few other isolated commercial uses in the Township, including the following:

- a small grocery store at the northwest corner of Egypt Valley Rd. and Knapp St. in the north end of the Township
- the Lena Lou restaurant and bar at Honey Creek Ave. and Pettis
- Ada Body Shop, north of Fulton St., west of Carl Dr.
- B. J. Roark's Landscape Center on Fulton St. at the eastern boundary of the Township.

In general, the concentration of commercial uses in the Village Area contributes to the uncluttered appearance of the M-21 corridor, and smooth traffic flow along the highway.

### **Office and Service Uses:**

Office and service uses in the Township are concentrated along both sides of Cascade Rd., from Spaulding Ave. west to the Township line, and along the west side of Spaulding Ave., north of Cascade Rd. Uses in the area include banks, small medical offices, a photographer's studio, mortgage lender's offices and other miscellaneous small professional offices. Several churches are also located along the Cascade Rd. corridor, intermixed with the office uses. There has been a considerable amount of office center development along Cascade Rd. in the last 10 years.

As noted earlier, there are also several small office uses in the Ada Village Area, including the Township Hall. Although the area is zoned Industrial, there are also several office uses along the south side of Fulton St. west of Kulross Ave. The largest concentration of office use in the Township is the Alticor Corporation World Headquarters on Fulton St.

### **Industrial:**

Ada Township has a significant manufacturing/industrial land use base, much of which is the facilities of the Alticor Corporation. Alticor's manufacturing facilities occupy approximately 300 acres between Fulton St. and the Grand River. An additional 100 acres is occupied by the Alticor Catalog Distribution Center on the west side of Spaulding Ave., south of the Grand Rapids Eastern rail line. Aside from Alticor's facilities, a number of smaller industrial land uses are also found along the south side of M-21, from Kulross Ave. west to Alta Dale. Some uses which are more properly categorized as office or service uses are also found along M-21, including an auto repair facility and several contractor's offices and equipment yards.

In 1998, one of the Township's oldest industrial facilities, the Ada Beef Co., a beef cattle slaughterhouse and processing facility, terminated its operations on Grand River Dr. Ada Township acquired the 230 acres of Grand River corridor land formerly owned by the company, and has converted it to Roselle Park. A long-range Master Plan for the property provides for mostly passive recreational uses of the site, with emphasis on enhancement of the site's natural features and wildlife habitat.

### **Public/Semi-Public:**

This land use category includes churches, public and private schools and facilities of local government. It also includes the major overhead power transmission lines and electrical substations in the Township.

About 2/3 of the Township is within the Forest Hills School District, with the remaining nearly 1/3 served by Lowell Area Schools. A very small area west of the Grand River in the northwest corner of the Township is in the Northview Schools district. Only the Forest Hills District has school buildings located within Ada Township.

The Forest Hills Central High School and Middle School, collectively serving over 1,500 students, are located in the southwest part of the Township, between Hall St. and Ada Dr. Forest Hills Central Woodlands School, serving about 600 students in Grades 5-6, is located on Alta Dale Ave., south of Fulton St.

Ada Vista Elementary School and Ada Elementary School, both public schools, are located just south of the Ada Village area. Ada Christian School is a K-8 private primary school located near the southwest corner of Ada Dr. and Fox Hollow Ave.

The Forest Hills Eastern campus, developed in 2002-2003 and first occupied in Fall, 2004 on 100 acres at the southeast corner of Knapp St. and Pettis Ave., includes the Eastern High School and Eastern Middle School.

**Park, Recreation, Open Space:**

Public and private parks and recreation facilities are identified on the Existing Land Use map. A complete inventory map and description of these facilities is contained in the following section of this report.

**Resource Processing:**

Rieth-Riley Construction Co. conducts gravel crushing and screening and asphalt manufacturing at a site on Pettis Ave. Pettis & Associates owns property used for a concrete crushing operation adjacent to the Reith-Riley facilities. Both of these operations have been the subject of litigation between their owners and Ada Township over the lawfulness of these operations.

**Vacant Land:**

Land placed in this category is intended to show parcels of 40 acres in size or more, which are not in current farm use.