

Where are We?

Planners and sociologists have always been aware that communities are not just a single unit in a geographic collection of municipalities, but that they are tied to areas and regions of which they are a part of with significant interdependence. That is even truer today as the world has become smaller through technology and individual units have minimal control over development forces in their own metropolitan area.

Rural communities often possess a degree of economic, social, cultural and political self-sufficiency. This is due to an agricultural economic base and to their unique spatial characteristics with a small and diverse, but complete economic system. Similarly, central cities may maintain a high degree of self-sufficiency through specialization of economic activities and economies of scale.

The role of the suburban communi-

ty amid this economic system is not as clearly defined. Suburban communities such as Holland Charter Township may have a mutual relationship with both the urban core cities and rural areas. In the case of Holland Charter Township, there is a high degree of interdependence. Our land use is dictated not only by the needs of our citizens, but the economic requirement of our neighbors. The City of Holland, City of Zeeland, and the City of Grand Rapids influence how our community develops.

*"The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom."
Isaac Asimov*

The present age is one of uncertainty, involving transition from an industrial to a post-industrial era, or "information age." Consumption patterns have shifted toward the purchase of personal services, health care, recreational services, and information technologies. It is anticipated that service activities will command a larger portion of

employment than manufacturing, although manufacturing remains a strong component of the Holland area economy.

What Has Been Happening Lately?

The interdependence of Holland Charter Township and of the surrounding region requires that we are aware of the impact of regional development forces and their influences on the Township. From a planning perspective, these development forces give an indication of the "roles" Holland Charter Township may assume in the metropolitan area. They may also indicate possible opportunities for development beyond those which are currently developed or considered.

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance (a regional planning and economic development agency) defines the region in which Holland Charter Township belongs as the "West Michigan Metro Tri-Plex". This area consists of the greater Grand Rapids,

Muskegon, and Holland areas. The region is shaped by national and international forces which directly impact the Township. It is essential, therefore, to identify and discuss the development forces derived from a national and global scale as they apply to the entire region, and to the surrounding urban areas and suburban communities. The forces that shaped the greater Holland area are those of the industrial-era characterized by steady economic growth and economic efficiency. Holland Charter Township has grown as a result of the economic success of the greater Holland area; and because of the investment in infrastructure which ultimately attracted both large and small commercial and industrial operations to locate in the Township.

Rapid urban growth, industrial development, transportation facilities, and the expression of anti-urban sentiments (including the desire to be close to nature), led to the emergence of suburbs, which were generally located adjacent to core cities. Between 1910 and 1945, technological developments such as electrical distribution, automobiles, telephones, radios, and septic tanks, increased the appeal of outlying are-

as. Such technologies made the “city conveniences” available to widely scattered subdivisions. After the Great Depression and World War II, expansion of the money supply, through mass credit, provided families with the means to purchase their own homes. Government-sponsored highway construction opened vast areas of land to residential development. Factors such as zoning, multiple jurisdictions, and federal home loan policies just fed the growth in outlying areas around the central city. The development of Holland Charter Township during this time was certainly a result of these factors.

Social and economic changes will continue to transform the American workplace. The work routine and meshing of work with family life and leisure – will continue to change under the weight of a better educated, more affluent, and more mature **workforce. People’s attitudes toward life and work are changing, precipitating a desire for more rewarding careers and a life style with more leisure.**

*“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough”
Mae West*

National trends will continue to have a significant impact on the Holland area. Society will become more diverse, complex, and sophisticated. Political demands and human rights will multiply, and tradition will have less of an importance than it had in the past. This is exemplified by the increasing role of women and minorities in skilled and professional work roles, the rise of the two-income household, the drop in the birth rate, and increases in cohabitation and non-traditional forms of family units. Ethnic diversity will lead to varied neighborhood patterns and alterations in the type of housing and neighborhoods developed in the community. Changes in lifestyle may also change the type of housing in demand from the typical suburban home to denser development with less maintenance and locations close to urban services.

The present employment revolution from industrial/manufacturing-oriented to

service-oriented, while not as profound as the shift from agriculture to the industrial age, will produce significant impacts. Some of the potential impacts include: shifts in job opportunities toward service-sector employment, a decline in manufacturing employment, continuing pockets of unskilled, chronically unemployed persons, longer work life, more part-time jobs and job-sharing, more mid-life career changes, increased leisure time, and a significantly greater role for women in the work force.

While the rate of overall urbanization is expected to slow, metropolitan areas like Holland will continue to expand, creating a sprawling region of complex activity

What Would We Like to Change?

Traditional land development has led to the extensive use of our valuable land resources. Holland Charter Township has not been exempt from developments which have promoted spacious residential communities, which use up significant land resources. Our society now realizes that so-

cial, economic and natural systems must be carefully regulated and monitored to ensure proper resource use and preservation. The fact that natural systems are limited in their capacity to assimilate pollutants and/or renew themselves makes the development of policies, procedures and plans most important. It also demands more efficient and innovative approaches to dealing with a limited resource base.

*“Insanity is doing the same thing,
over and over again, but expect-
ing different results.”*
Unknown

Suburban communities were formed with the intent of preserving the freedom to pursue their own image of a “charming community”. Utilities, infrastructure, state and federal policies and expenditures, pressure of growth from development interests, and neighborhood groups concerned with change, all combine to make local governance complex and the task of having coordinated development occur in a metropolitan area difficult. As the costs of past development location decisions, and as counter-urban migration trends begin to

surface in cities and suburban locations, the affected governmental units must be prepared to finance the demand for services.

Development location decisions of the distant past, both residential and non-residential, were consistent with values based on efficiency in terms of closeness to work, to transportation, and the market. **The values of a “post-industrial” society in the information age, in particular the quality of life ethic, will continue to considerably alter the nature of the demand for lifestyles and living quarters.**

Community planning and development efforts should be directed towards urban efficiency, economic development ventures that support a health employment base, and having residential neighborhoods which are pedestrian friendly and complemented with open spaces and conveniently located services. With the trend toward higher transportation costs, location decisions of people may change and we may see the type of housing and housing density change significantly.

Where Would We Like to Be?

*"I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I need to be.
Douglas Adams*

The new economy and the most recent economic downturn has had an impact on both the location and amount of development. Migratory trends indicate a strong movement of people into the greater Holland area and Ottawa County. In the last ten years, Ottawa County has experienced the third fastest population growth of the 83 counties in Michigan (according to the Census). Demographic indices also reveal that the population is aging, families are smaller, households have multiple wage earners, and there has been an upsurge in the number of one or two person households. These indices must be monitored in terms of their social, political, and economic consequences. In analyzing the growth characteristics of the Township, it is important to note that many new residents relocate from other

neighboring urban areas. New residents have indicated their move to Holland was prompted in part by a desire to enjoy a small community with a neighborhood-like setting. In other words, to seek so-called "green fields" away from urban problems and congestion.

The transition from an industrial/manufacturing-oriented society to a service-oriented society requires a shift to flexible and innovative forms of development and control. New forms of planning which account for diversity, new services, leisure opportunities and the like must be developed. Our community will also have to provide a more diverse housing stock and begin to concentrate on infilling the vacant area to accommodate the needs of tomorrow.

*"If you don't know where you're going, any road'll take you there."
George Harrison*

What is next?

The preceding discussion of trends in urbanization, economic growth and social change should alert us that the challenges ahead will not be easy to provide land uses to address these opportunities in our community. The goals, policies and physical plans contained in this Plan are intended to provide development guidance, assist in resolving conflict and result in a high quality of life for residents of Holland Charter Township.