

## **PART 7**

### **AGRICULTURAL LAND USE**

#### **7.01 Introduction**

It is a goal of this Master Plan to maintain existing agricultural activities in designated areas of the Township and to retain the agricultural use of prime agricultural soils in recognition of the importance of the sustenance and economic benefits provided by the agricultural industry to the residents of Lodi Township and to the region. This view was strongly expressed in citizen surveys and the futuring session which serve as the basis of this Master Plan.

#### **7.02 Washtenaw County**

Agriculture in Washtenaw County has been subjected to numerous physical and economic changes since settlement began in the County. Over the past several decades, Washtenaw County has experienced considerable loss in both farm acreage and the total number of farms as agricultural lands have been converted. However, the average farm size has steadily increased, implying some consolidation of farms. SEMCOG land use acreage figures for 2000 state that 43.3 percent of Washtenaw County's acreage is classified as active agriculture. This was a 29.6 percent loss from 1990.

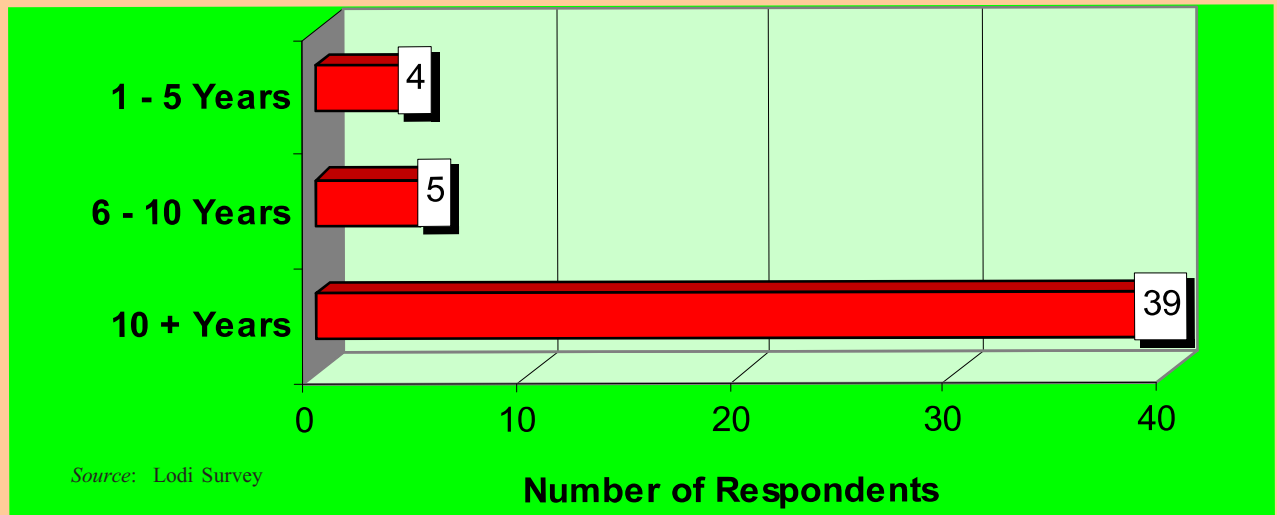
#### **7.03 Lodi Township**

Active agricultural lands within Lodi Township are prominent with contiguous concentrations in the central, western, and southern portions of the Township. These areas contain large, stable, and cohesive agricultural parcels on highly productive Class II soils (Map#8) which have the highest productivity for growing of agricultural products of any soils in Washtenaw County. The accompanying Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands Map (Map #9) depicts agricultural lands within the County. It is evident, when viewing this map, that not only Lodi Township, but adjoining townships to the north, west and south also contain productive agricultural lands. Lodi Township is an integral part of this large agricultural region.

Map #10 delineates P.A. 116 applications within Lodi Township and Map #11 depicts large parcels that are within agricultural areas, implying long term agricultural commitment by farmers. It is evident that there is a positive correlation between active agricultural operations on productive soils, location of P.A. 116 applications and large parcels existing in the same general area. It is noted that the northern portion of Lodi Township, adjacent to Scio Township and the eastern border of Lodi Township, adjacent to Pittsfield Township, contain non-agricultural land uses and are represented accordingly on the Master Plan.

A citizen survey, conducted as a basis upon which this Master Plan update is founded, distinctly points out the intent of large land owners within Lodi Township regarding land ownership. A citizen survey question asked: "If you currently farm or lease 40 acres or more, how long do you plan to keep the land in agricultural production? As seen from Chart 8, out of 48 respondents, 4 stated 1 – 5 years, 5 stated 6 – 10 years, and 39 stated over 10 years. This survey demonstrates the stability of 40 acre or greater

**Length of Time 40 Acre or Greater Parcels to  
Remain in Agricultural Production  
Chart 8**



parcels within Lodi Township and that they should continue as rural with ongoing agricultural activities remaining.

SEMCOG figures for 1990 indicated that there were 14,548 acres of active agriculture within Lodi Township which amounted to 66 percent of the Township land area. In the year 2000 there were 13,169 acres of active agriculture within the Township representing 60 percent of the Township's land area. Much of this 10 percent loss was seen in the northern and southern portions of the Township, outside of the central and western portions of the Township which remain stable and productive.

**7.04 Land Parcel Size**

As the County Planning Commission pointed out in its 1981 agricultural lands study, the size of land parcels in areas suitable for agriculture can affect the long term viability of these areas for farming purposes. Small parcels and a trend of splitting larger parcels can make large scale farming difficult or provide opportunities for intrusion of rural, non-farm residences.

As can be seen from the accompanying map 11 there are significant parcels of land 40 acres or greater. As stated previously, the majority of the owners of these parcels intend to remain in agriculture. These large parcels are generally contiguous to other large parcels, currently in agricultural production and generally comprise Class II soils which are the most productive soils within Washtenaw County.

**7.05 Agricultural Preservation**

Map #12 depicts lands that are designated for agricultural preservation and serves as the basis for property owners to be considered for PDR agreements in Lodi Township. As stated previously this designated area contains the largest concentration of stable ongoing agricultural operations, highly productive soils, large tracts of land, few non-agricultural land uses, and several farms participating in P.A. 116 programs.

Based upon Washtenaw County guidelines, the “*agriculture preservation*” area was selected in a manner:

- A. To be non-exclusionary for potential interest by landowners in a PDR or other agricultural preservation option;
- B. Where the Township demographics indicate the lands contained inside the agricultural preservation overlay district provide the most potential for on-going or new agriculture activities;
- C. To recognize that lands contained within the agricultural preservation overlay district are highly sought-after tracts for development; and
- D. To underscore continuity with adjoining communities which have also designated “agriculture preservation” goals.

## 7.06 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

**Goal A: Support viable agricultural operations in appropriate areas and maintain the continuation of long-term agricultural activities within Lodi Township.**

**Objective 1:** Support existing agricultural operations in areas designated in this Master Plan as agricultural lands.

### Strategies

- a. Maintain zoning provisions which promote agriculture as a permitted principal use.
- b. Support Public Act 116 Farmland/Open Space Preservation applications if located within areas designated for agricultural uses.
- c. Encourage farmers to make long-term improvements which will enhance the agricultural productivity of their land.
- d. Discourage the fragmentation of land parcels within agricultural areas. Where parcels are split, encourage zoning and platting techniques which minimize the effect on land consumption.
- e. Encourage Township assessment and/or other policies that reflect the agricultural value of land in agricultural use. Work with County, Region, or State agencies to adopt guidelines, legislation, or other methods that support long term agricultural preservation including, but not limited to, use value assessment, expanded purchase of development rights authority, transfer of development rights authority, and authority to create agricultural security districts.
- f. Actively encourage farmers in the Township to apply for PDR funds from the federal, state and/or county governments.
- g. Amend the Township Zoning Ordinance where necessary to incorporate additional agricultural protection based upon the policies of this Plan.

**Objective 2:** Minimize the conflict between agricultural activities and land uses of an urban or suburban nature.

**Strategies**

- a. Limit the extension of municipal services, (sewer and water) to only those properties located within an adopted or currently planned municipal service area.
- b. Establish zoning language which highlights the incompatibility of residential sprawl and agricultural operations.
- c. Consider reducing allowed residential density levels within the agricultural district.
- d. Where possible, establish permanent buffers of open space between urban/suburban areas and planned agricultural areas.
- e. Discourage residential development that may occur within the Agricultural District, except through Planned Unit Development (PUD) clustering concepts as provided within the Zoning Ordinance. Clustered housing shall:
  - 1) establish a lot size of between one to two acres while maintaining a maximum overall density of one dwelling unit per two acres;
  - 2) require that the housing sites be positioned to allow continued agricultural use of the portion of the acreage suited to agricultural use;
  - 3) require that a buffer of existing and/or new natural features be created between housing sites and agricultural acreage so that residential use will not interfere with agricultural activities;
  - 4) require that a buffer of existing and/or new natural features be created between housing sites and roadways, of adequate size to preserve and/or enhance the visual character of rural roadways; and
  - 5) permit only agricultural or open space use of the acreage outside of the residential cluster through zoning and deed restrictions.
- f. Review permitted and special uses within Zoning Ordinance to reduce the potential conflicts between agriculture and other uses.

**Objective 3:** Educate residents regarding land use activities that may potentially have negative impacts on the agricultural economy.

**Strategies**

- a. Promote and organize community wide forums which address relevant land use and environmental issues.

- b. Establish an information network between local officials and residents with, or through, news letters, bulletins, mailings etc.

**Objective 4:** Support various programs and methods for agricultural preservation.

**Strategies**

- a. Utilize cluster development techniques with appropriate design standards, implemented through planned unit development procedures.
- b. Deed Restrictions.
- c. Land Trusts.
- d. Purchase of Development Rights Program.
- e. Purchase and Leaseback Program.
- f. Fee Simple Acquisition.
- g. Land Swaps.
- h. Land Donations/Reserved Life Estates.

**Goal B:** Provide for agricultural related commercial/office activities, outside the defined Lodi Central area, that are compatible with the scale and character of Lodi Township and are required by the rural and residential lifestyle existing within the Township.

**Objective 1:** Permit agriculturally orientated commercial/office land uses associated with agricultural operations.

**Strategies**

- a. Update the zoning ordinance to establish a comprehensive list of permitted and conditional uses under the commercial/office zoning district.
- b. Re-evaluate permitted and special uses, allowed in agricultural districts, to ensure they are indeed compatible with rural areas versus being more suited to commercial/office or technology orientated zoning districts.