

1. Statement of Vision, Goals, and Policies

INTRODUCTION

In the course of preparing the Master Plan, the Planning Commission considered the needs and desires of residents and property owners, the feasibility and potential impacts of various land use alternatives, and regional and local land use and population trends. The culmination of this Master Plan process is the following statement which communicates the Planning Commission's vision for growth and development of the Township for the next ten years:

Williamstown Township strives to preserve the rural qualities that are central to its image and identity, provide conditions suitable for the continued operation of a variety of agricultural uses, and provide an appealing residential environment.

The Township endeavors to retain its wealth of natural features, prime farmlands, and open spaces, while allowing limited well-planned, low-density residential and commercial development.

The Township seeks to direct most residential development to the Grand River Avenue corridor and around the City of Williamston, and commercial development to the City of Williamston, where more urban services are available.

Williamstown Township strives to plan for and provide parks and other services, consistent with the needs generated by population growth.

GENERAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. **Balance of Land Uses:** Provide for a balance and variety of land uses to meet resident's needs in locations that will not negatively impact existing and future residential areas or the overall rural character of the Township.
2. **Regionalism:** Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with surrounding communities to promote regional compatibility.
3. **Master Physical Planning:** Maintain complementary land use relationships that promote a harmonious, attractive community; preserve natural resources and the rural character; promote a sound tax base; and provide for manageable traffic conditions.
4. **Preservation of Natural Features:** Williamstown Township is fortunate that it is well-endowed with natural features, such as wetlands, woodlands, open spaces, and farmland. Preservation of these natural features should be a prevailing objective in all future development.

5. **Preservation of Cultural and Historic Resources.** Significant cultural and historic resources, such as historic buildings, sites, roads, and natural features such as important trees should be preserved intact. New development must be designed with respect to these cultural and historic resources.
6. **Roads and Transportation:** Develop an orderly program for improvement, maintenance, and expansion of the road system in order to meet increasing traffic demands, provide safe movement of traffic, and provide proper access to all properties in the Township. Plan road system improvements with goal of protecting the rural character of the community. Coordinate road improvements with surrounding townships and the City of Williamston. Promote the development and use of the public transit system.
7. **Property Maintenance:** Encourage owners to maintain their properties, and work toward removal of blighted structures.
8. **Fiscal Stability:** Promote the development of a financially secure community that can continue to provide all necessary services (municipal, educational, etc.) to its residents and businesses in an efficient manner.
9. **Urban Design:** Promote development that is consistent with the urban design concepts described in the Master Plan, especially along Grand River Avenue.
10. **Planning Innovation:** Permit innovation in land use planning where innovation would:
 - more effectively implement the goals set forth in the Master Plan,
 - achieve a higher quality of development than would be possible under conventional regulations,
 - result in better use of the land in accordance with its intrinsic character (for example, preservation of rural open space),
 - result in development that is compatible with surrounding uses, and
 - produce recognizable and substantial benefits for the community that would not otherwise be achieved.

Innovation should not be encouraged as a means to increase the intensity of development or to simply develop land in a manner that otherwise would not be permitted.
11. **Implementation:** Adopt or amend policies and regulations necessary to implement the Master Plan. Toward this end, prepare a natural resources inventory and plan, and adopt appropriate amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and adopt environmental regulations, such as energy efficient design guidelines, to guide the development of the Township.
12. **Mapping Tools:** Upgrade the quality of planning tools, particularly maps of land use, natural resources, and other pertinent features, while making use of geographic information systems (GIS) and other computer applications.

RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES _____

1. **Density:** By and large the Township should be developed as an agricultural and low density single family residential community. Generally, maintain agricultural use of land in the northern two-thirds of the Township, and confine single family development generally to the southern one-third of the Township.
2. **Complement Development in the City of Williamston.** It is the intent of this plan to promote low density development in the Township, providing incentive for new, higher density development to occur in the City of Williamston.
3. **Availability of Public Services:** Permit residential development only in accordance with the availability of necessary public services, including road construction and maintenance, police and fire services, governmental administrative services, and educational services. Consider the costs of both construction and maintenance of capital improvements necessary to serve proposed developments.
4. **Potable Water and Wastewater Treatment:** Base the density and location of residential development in part on the adequacy of the potable water supply and wastewater treatment systems.
5. **Land Use Compatibility:** Strive to achieve a land use pattern that separates residential areas from incompatible land uses or require ample buffer zones to alleviate incompatibility.
6. **Preservation of Natural Features:** Design new residential developments to be compatible with the underlying natural features of the site. Preserve significant topographic features, tree stands, wetlands and watercourses, aquifer recharge areas, and other natural features intact wherever possible. Encourage rural open space planning where it would retain the rural character of the land.
7. **Amenities for Housing:** Locate single family housing and multiple family housing in proximity to Grand River Avenue and near the City of Williamston, where adequate public and private services are available.
8. **Capital Improvements in Residential Neighborhoods:** Continue to work with residents and County agencies to identify and implement needed capital improvements in residential areas, such as drainage and road improvements.
9. **Housing Alternatives:** Work toward providing a sufficient supply of affordable housing alternatives in the Township or nearby communities to meet the needs of all population segments, including the elderly.
10. **Farmland Preservation:** Encourage continued agricultural activity. When reviewing development plans, explore alternative layouts to minimize conflict with nearby farming operations. Promote rural open space zoning, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and other programs to preserve farmland. Discourage piece-by-piece splitting up of farmlands into smaller, less productive parcels.

11. **Residential Open Space.** Promote the inclusion of preserved open space in new residential development.
12. **Coordinate Road Patterns:** Require road connections between adjoining residential developments, and coordinate road patterns to prevent cut through traffic in residential neighborhoods.

COMMERCIAL (RETAIL AND OFFICE) DEVELOPMENT POLICIES _____

1. **Future Allocation of Commercial Land:** Base the future allocation of commercial land in Williamstown Township on resident’s actual needs for shopping and office facilities. It is not intended that the Williamstown Township commercial sector serve a regional market.
2. **Commercial District Development:** Permit commercial development along Grand River Avenue only, primarily in the vicinity of Zimmer Road and in the Mixed Use Overlay area on the east side of the City of Williamston, so as to prevent undesirable strip development.
3. **Design:** Encourage the design of commercial uses to reflect thorough and careful analysis of the site and to improve aesthetics, consistent with the urban design concepts set forth in the Master Plan.
 - a. Encourage architecture that is clean and uncluttered, provide that the buildings have “character.” Implementation of traditional design concepts is encouraged.
 - b. Prohibit large or garish signs.
 - c. Require loading, parking, and storage areas to be located behind buildings or screened, preferably with landscaping or a combination of landscaping and walls.
 - d. Require parking areas to be landscaped to provide visual relief to large paved areas.
 - e. Emphasize pedestrian access on every site.
4. **Linkages between Commercial Developments:** Encourage construction of service drives or access easements and pedestrian/bicycle linkages between adjoining developments for the purposes of traffic safety and reduction in conflict between vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
5. **Screening and Transitions:** Contain the impacts from commercial uses within the commercial district itself. Require commercial developments to be screened from adjoining residential areas. Plan for transitional uses between commercial uses and adjoining residential uses.
6. **Code Enforcement in Commercial Areas:** Closely monitor and stringently enforce building and maintenance codes in commercial areas. Encourage deteriorated buildings, signage, landscaping, and parking areas to be renovated or repaired on a timely basis. Monitor changes in business use to be certain that new uses are in compliance with Township building and zoning codes.
7. **Relationship to the Williamston Commercial District:** Commercial development in the Township should not be encouraged at the expense of the Williamston commercial district.

The community's retail and service needs can best be served through the coordinated growth and development of the Township's and City's commercial districts.

8. **Mixed Use Development.** Encourage mixed use development on Grand River Avenue on the east side of the City of Williamston consistent with the developed character of Grand River Avenue in the City of Williamston. Mixed use development will allow for better utilization of parcels in this area, permitting the parcels to take advantage of frontage on Grand River as well as scenic Red Cedar River views.

RESEARCH AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES _____

1. **Balanced Research and Industrial Development Strategy:** Strive for balance between the economic benefits of research and industrial development and the amount of industry that is compatible with the Township's environmental objectives and overall future development pattern. Do not sacrifice the goal of preservation of the rural character of the Township to build an intensive research and industrial base.
2. **Allocation of Research and Industrial Land:** Confine research and industrial development generally to the Grand River Avenue corridor near the City of Williamston, where there is adequate road access and availability of public water and sanitary sewer services.
3. **Environmental Capability:** Monitor the type of research and industrial development to be certain it is in keeping with the Township's overriding goals for preservation of the natural environment and resources, and protection of its residential areas. Light manufacturing and research firms would be best suited to Williamstown Township, because such firms generally produce low levels of waste, noise, traffic, air and water pollution, and other undesirable impacts.
4. **Availability of Public Services:** Permit future research and industrial development only in accordance with the ability to provide required utilities and public services, including adequate road construction and maintenance, police and fire protection, and general municipal administrative and regulatory services. Consider the ongoing cost of providing such services as well as the cost related to initial construction.
5. **Industrial Design Standards:** Review the design and layout of industrial development proposals to encourage high quality design.
6. **Aesthetics:** Research and industrial development in Williamstown Township should be aesthetically attractive. Sites should be well-landscaped and storage areas, loading areas, and trash disposal areas should be screened from view.
7. **Industrial Regulatory Enforcement:** Strictly enforce codes and regulations applicable to industrial areas, particularly for industries that use or store hazardous or toxic chemicals.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

1. **Protection of Natural Features:** Wise use of natural resources and preservation of wooded areas, groundwater recharge areas, roadside trees, wetlands, scenic views, farmlands, and unique wildlife and bird habitats are planning priorities that serve as the basis for all other planning and development goals and policies. The Township must strive to protect from development the features that give the community its appealing rural character, including woodlands and woodlots, wetlands, rolling terrain and rural vistas.
2. **Pollution Control:** Take all reasonable steps to prevent surface and ground water pollution, contamination of the soils, air pollution, light pollution and noise pollution. Toward this end, prepare a natural resources inventory and plan and adopt up-to-date performance and environmental standards and diligently implement them throughout the Township.
3. **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** Continue to cooperate with federal, state, and county agencies for the purposes of enforcing environmental regulations that are under the jurisdiction of outside agencies, such as wetlands and soil erosion control regulations.
4. **Flood-Prone Areas:** Discourage development in areas that are known to be flood prone.
5. **Energy Conservation:** Promote energy-conserving subdivision and building development, and reduce reliance upon automobile transportation to the greatest extent feasible.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

1. **Road and Street Classifications:** Maintenance of a rural road network, consisting of an inter-connected system of local and collector roads, thoroughfares, and arterial roads, is a primary objective of transportation planning in Williamstown Township.
2. **Coordination with Other Units of Government:** Coordinate with surrounding townships, the City of Williamston, the County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Transportation on development of the road system.
3. **Upgrade the Existing Road System:** Upgrading the existing roads takes precedence over new road construction as a means of increasing capacity and improving traffic safety.
4. **Need for New Roads:** Work toward construction of new roads only where there is a documented need for the purposes of traffic safety or to alleviate traffic congestion. Locate and design new roads to minimize impact on significant natural features and to reduce the loss of rural open space land.
5. **Transportation Demand Management:** When possible, control traffic through “transportation demand management” by promoting measures to reduce auto dependence.
6. **Land Use/Transportation Relationships:** Strive toward a balanced relationship between the Township’s transportation system and overall land use pattern. Analyze new development proposals to determine the amount of traffic that will be generated and how the increased traffic will affect the transportation system.

7. **Land Use/Transportation Friction:** Alleviate the friction between land use and traffic through careful planning and scrutiny of development proposals. Encourage the use of service drives or access easements to provide access to adjoining properties in commercial and industrial districts, and to limit the number of driveways onto main roads.
8. **Road Aesthetics:** Roads should be visually pleasing to motorists, pedestrians, and persons who view the roads from adjoining land. Preservation of rural character should be a primary consideration in any road construction project. Require ample landscaping along the frontage of all roads. Encourage commercial uses to maintain their driveway approaches.
9. **Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation:** Develop pedestrian/bicycle safety paths that link residential areas with schools, recreation areas, commercial districts, and other attractions.

RECREATION FACILITIES POLICIES

1. **Coordination with Other Agencies:** Continue to cooperate with other public and private organizations, such as Red Cedar Recreation Association (RCRA) and school districts, in providing recreation services and facilities.
2. **New Park Development:** As the Township develops, acquire additional land for future recreation development to supplement the system that is under the jurisdiction of RCRA and to provide more uniform geographic distribution of facilities.
3. **Riverfront Access:** Securing riverfront access for passive use through acquisition or easements is a primary objective of the recreation program.
4. **Trail Development:** Join with the adjoining communities to develop a multi-jurisdictional trail system, like the Van Atta trail system in Meridian Township.
5. **Environmental Compatibility:** Preserve distinctive natural features on park sites wherever possible, and design parks so they contribute to the aesthetic quality and rural character of the Township.
6. **Funding for Parks and Recreation:** Base the development of recreation facilities and programs on sound fiscal policy. Consider and implement various methods of funding and/or cost-reduction, including the use of volunteers, state and federal grant programs, user fees, fund-raising committees, and other methods.
7. **Recreation Areas within Residential Developments:** Use the site plan review and Planned Development review process to encourage the preservation of common open land areas and significant natural features as an integral part of new residential development.
8. **Recreation Facilities Evaluation:** In cooperation with RCRA, periodically survey residents to determine their leisure needs and interests, and to acquire information to adjust the recreation programs to meet the changing needs of residents.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES POLICIES

1. **Municipal Services:** Provide quality municipal services to satisfy the needs of the Township's residents and businesses, commensurate with the Township's financial and administrative resources.
2. **Public Safety:** Provide the facilities necessary for high quality police and fire protection. Work with the Northeast Ingham Emergency Service Authority (NIESA) to reevaluate fire facilities on a regular basis as new development occurs to determine if modifications or additions to facilities are needed to serve the new development.
3. **Capital Improvements Program:** Prepare a six-year capital improvements program, as required by Michigan Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended, to plan for the expenditure of capital funds in an orderly manner, consistent with available funding.
4. **Historic and Cultural Resources:** Promote identification and preservation of buildings and sites that have historic or cultural significance, and encourage the preservation of these resources when new development is proposed.

2. Population Analysis

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

From a regional perspective, Williamstown Township is one of several rural townships surrounding the Lansing/East Lansing urban core. Current Census data indicate that approximately eighty percent of the county's population is concentrated in Lansing, East Lansing, and the three townships adjacent to the urban center.

Even though Williamstown Township is still considered "rural" based on overall population density, the Township has experienced a rapid rate of growth in the decades following 1950. This was largely a result of in-migration of non-farm households (see Table 1). Until the 1990's, most of the population growth was accommodated through the completion of lot splits that made new homesites available in the rural parts of the Township. Since the beginning of the 1990's, however, most of the population growth has occurred in new subdivision developments.

In order to accurately assess Williamstown Township's place in the region, demographic data was compiled for Williamstown Township, Meridian Charter Township, the City of Williamston, and the Tri-County Region as a whole.

Population

Between 1990 and 2003, the population of Williamstown Township increased by 631 residents to 4,916 residents (a 14.73% increase during the period) (see Table 1 and Table 1a). Compared with surrounding communities and the region over the same period, Williamstown Township experienced a higher rate of population growth than Meridian Township and the region, but a lower rate of population growth than the City of Williamston.

Based on the 2003 population estimates, Williamstown Township accounts for 1.1% of the total population of the region, however, Williamstown Township accounted for 2.7% of the overall population growth for the region during the period from 1990 to 2003. Thus, Williamstown Township is growing at a faster rate than the region as a whole.

Table 1
TOTAL POPULATION
WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP (1950-2003)

Year	Population	Numerical Change	Percent Change
1950	1,175	--	--
1960	1,963	+788	+67.1%
1970	2,847	+884	+45.0%
1980	3,972	+1,125	+39.5%
1990	4,285	+313	+7.9%
2000	4,834	+549	+12.8%
2003	4,916	+82	+1.7%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce (1990 and 2000 data)
**Tri-County Regional Planning (2003 estimates)*

Table 1a
REGIONAL POPULATION (1990-2003)

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2003*</u>	Numerical Change (1990 - 2003)	Percent Change (1990 - 2003)
Williamstown Township	4,285	4,834	4,916	+631	14.73%
Meridian Township	35,644	39,116	39,129	+3,485	9.8%
City of Williamston	2,922	3,441	3,784	+862	29.50%
Tri-County Region	432,684	447,728	455,836	+23,152	5.35%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce (1990 and 2000 data)

**Tri-County Regional Planning (2003 estimates)*

From a historical perspective, Table 1 indicates that population growth in the Township has slowed since 1980. Between 1950 and 1980 the population of the Township increased by an average of 50.5% each decade, and a total of 238% over the 30 year period. The rate of growth has since slowed, with a 7.9 percent increase during the 1980's and a 12.7% increase during the 1990's. By contrast, Meridian Township experienced a high rate of growth during the 1980's (24%), but has since slowed. Williamstown Township is currently growing at a higher rate than Meridian Township.

Even though Williamstown Township has recorded high rates of population growth over the last five decades, the total number of residents added was small when compared to the more urbanized neighboring communities. Numerically, the largest ten-year increase in population was recorded in the 1970's, with the addition of 1,125 residents. Only 313 residents were added in the 1980's, and only 549 were added from 1990 to 2000. In comparison, Meridian Township added almost 5,000 residents in the 1970's, almost 6,700 in the 1980's and 3,472 from 1990 to 2000. Notwithstanding the high growth rate, with a 2000 population of 4,834 demographers would still consider the Township to be a low-density rural or semi-rural community.

Housing Units and Household Size

Consistent with national and global trends, broad changes in household composition have been recorded in Williamstown Township. Of greatest significance is the reduction in average household size. In 1980, 1990, and 2000 the average household size in the Township was 3.27 persons per household, 2.93 persons per household, and 2.85 persons per household, respectively.

The decrease in household size is related in part to the age structure data presented later in this chapter, to the overall aging of the population, and changes in life-stage development for married couples. As the proportion of residents in the upper age brackets increases, the proportion of one and two-person "empty-nester" households also increases. The decrease in household size can also be attributed in part to the trend among younger married couples to delay or avoid having children or to have smaller families and single parent households.

The type of housing recently constructed in the Township also affects household size. There are few subdivisions with affordable housing for young families, and large lot single family development typically appeals to more mature families that are more financially secure.

The decrease in household size has had a substantial impact on total population. If not for the in-migration of residents due to new construction, Williamstown Township would have experienced a

population decrease of about 124 persons during the 1990's. However, 14.4% increase in housing units was needed to produce a 12.8% increase in population.

In terms of the number of housing units constructed, Williamstown Township experienced a higher rate of housing unit growth than the region as a whole during the 1990's, but a lower rate of growth than Meridian Township and the City of Williamston. In particular, growth rates were similar for Meridian Township and Williamstown Township.

**Table 2
HOUSING UNITS (1990-2000)**

	Housing Units 1990	Housing Units 2000	Numerical Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 1990-2000
Williamstown Township	1,509	1,726	+217	14.4%
Meridian Township	14,811	17,101	+2,290	15.5%
City of Williamston	1,268	1,533	+265	20.9%
Tri-County region	165,018	181,804	+16,786	10.2%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce

**Table 3
HOUSEHOLD SIZE (1990-2000)**

	Household Size 1990	Household Size 2000
Williamstown Township	2.94	2.85
Meridian Township	2.54	2.36
City of Williamston	2.41	2.33
Tri-County region	2.76	2.48

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce

The following preliminary observations can be made, based upon review of the above data:

- While Williamstown Township retains a rural character, demographic data indicates that it is located on the leading edge of development, and may be more accurately described as an exurban community. Most of the residents of the Township commute out of the community to work elsewhere in the greater Lansing region every day.
- The 2000 Census showed that the levels of in-migration in the 1990's were greater than the levels in the 1980's, and there has been a real growth in population over that time period.
- Housing units constructed grew at a higher rate than the population in Williamstown Township and Meridian Township from 1990 to 2000, however, the population grew at a higher rate than housing units in the City of Williamston over the same period. This indicates that the population growth in Williamstown Township and Meridian Township was likely the result of people moving into the Townships from more urbanized areas of the region, while the population growth in the City of Williamston is likely due to real growth -

i.e. families having children.

- One way to view population and housing is to assume that each community should accommodate its proportionate fair share of regional growth. Based on this principal, Williamstown Township carried more than its “fair share” of both housing unit growth and population growth. This supports the assertion that Williamstown Township is at a leading edge of growth in the region.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Age Structure

In a community such as Williamstown Township, which has experienced high growth rates, one might expect that the median age of residents would be relatively low, reflecting an influx of young families. The population statistics presented in Table 4 reveal a somewhat different picture. In 1980, the Census recorded a median age of 30.5 years. This increased to 35.6 by 1990, and to 40.9 by 2000. In comparison, the estimated 1990 and 2000 median age for residents of Meridian Township was 32.3 years, and 35.4 years, respectively. In the State of Michigan the median age was 28.8 years in 1990 and 35.5 years in 2000.

Even though Williamstown Township has a higher median age than Meridian Township, the 2000 Census indicated that Williamstown Township had a higher proportion of residents under the age of 19. Also, Williamstown Township has a lower proportion of residents over the age of 65 (see Table 4). In 2000, 31 percent of the population in Williamstown Township was under the age of 19, whereas in Meridian Township the number was 26 percent.

Table 4
AGE STRUCTURE (2000)

	Williamstown Township		Meridian Township	City of Williamston	Tri-County Region
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Under 5 years:	266	5.5%	5.3%	8.0%	6.4%
5 to 19 years:	1,234	25.5%	20.7%	21.6%	22.8%
20 to 34 years:	472	9.8%	23.6%	22.7%	23.8%
35 to 44 years:	838	17.3%	15.1%	15.8%	15.1%
45 to 64 years:	1,582	32.7%	25.4%	19.6%	21.8%
65 and over:	442	9.1%	10.0%	12.5%	10.1%
TOTAL:	4,834	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce

Based upon the above age structure, the following statistics are significant:

- A higher proportion of Williamstown Township residents are under 19 years of age when compared to Meridian Township, the City of Williamston, and the region as a whole.

- The proportion of residents between the ages of 20-34 is much lower in Williamstown Township than in surrounding communities or the region as a whole, indicating that younger residents leave the Township during early adulthood and their family-forming years. One potential reason for this is that the existing housing stock may not be accessible to young singles or younger families.
- The proportion of residents between the ages of 45 and 64 is much higher in Williamstown Township than in surrounding communities, indicating that the housing stock and large lot development pattern in the Township likely attract older residents with more financial resources. These types of households are more likely to be “empty-nester” households with grown children.
- Households moving into the Township consist of mature families and older residents.

Racial Composition

The population of Williamstown Township is homogenous with respect to racial composition. In 1980, 98.3 percent of the population was white. The 1990 Census indicated that 98.2 percent of the population was white, and the 2000 census indicated that 98.5 percent of the population was white.

Education and Employment

Williamstown Township's residents are well-educated according to Census statistics. 50.4% of the residents over the age of 25 have attained a college education, and 96.3% have a high school education (see Table 5). Table 5 also indicates that the residents of Williamstown Township are significantly better educated than the residents of the region as a whole, and are comparably educated with the residents of Meridian Township.

**Table 5
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2000)**

	Williamstown Township	Meridian Township	City of Williamston	Region
High School:	15.6%	11.7%	23.1%	26.6%
Some college, no degree:	21.0%	17.0%	27.0%	25.6%
Associate degree:	9.3%	7.1%	9.7%	8.1%
Bachelor’s degree:	27.8%	29.3%	19.5%	16.9%
Graduate or professional degree:	22.6%	30.6%	11.3%	11.5%
High School graduate or higher:	96.3%	95.6%	90.5%	88.6%
Bachelor’s Degree or higher:	50.4%	59.9%	30.8%	28.4%

**Population over 25 years of age
Source: Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department Commerce*

Residents’ occupations naturally reflect their educational attainment. Williamstown Township has a highly skilled labor force, consisting of primarily managerial, professional, technical, sales, and administrative support positions (see Table 6). The employment statistics indicate that most employed residents of the Township commute into the Lansing/East Lansing area for work.

It is interesting to note that, even though agriculture is still an important facet of the local economy, only 0.2 percent of Township residents are engaged in this profession - a lower percentage than the City of Williamston and the region as a whole. It is also notable that a small proportion of Township residents are employed in low skill positions, such as operator or laborer positions.

Table 6
COMPOSITION OF THE LABOR FORCE (2000)

	Williamstown Township	Meridian Township	City of Williamston	Region
Management, professional, and related occupations:	52.0%	56.0%	35.0%	34.6%
Sales and office:	24.9%	23.5%	30.9%	27.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving:	8.2%	6.1%	14.8%	14.3%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance:	5.9%	3.2%	10.0%	8.2%
Service:	8.8%	11.1%	9.1%	15.3%
Farming, fishing, and forestry:	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department Commerce

Income

As would be expected based on the education and employment data cited above, households in Williamstown Township generally enjoy a relatively high standard of living. Table 7 summarizes median household income data from 1989 and 1999. The 1989 median incomes have been adjusted into 1999 dollars to permit an analysis of real income change over that time period.

Williamstown Township had the highest median income in 1999, nearly \$25,000 higher than Meridian Township and over \$35,000 higher than the region as a whole. It is also of note that during the 1990's, real incomes in the Township increased 18.1%, while real incomes in Meridian Township decreased by 1.1%, increased by 3.5% in the City of Williamston, and increased by 2.9% in the region as a whole.

Table 7
REAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 1989-1999
WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP and REGION

	1989*	1999	Percent change 1989-1999
Williamstown Township	\$67,550	\$79,778	18.1%
Meridian Township	\$55,798	\$55,203	-1.1%
City of Williamston	\$38,400	\$39,727	3.5%
Tri-County Region	\$43,203	\$44,441	2.9%

** 1989 figures adjusted for inflation to 1999 equivalent dollars*
Source, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce

FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

Future population growth will be determined chiefly by four sets of variables:

1. **Physical Parameters.** Several physical variables will affect future population growth in Williamstown Township, including the amount of vacant land available for residential development, land use restrictions placed on such land, the capacity of the soils to accommodate septic systems or the use of engineered septic systems, and the type of housing that is constructed in the future.
2. **Regional Growth.** The economic health of the region is the most significant external variable that will affect population growth.
3. **Characteristics of the Existing Population.** Characteristics of the population, such as age structure, propensity to move, and propensity for families to have children will affect population growth in Williamstown Township.
4. **Preferences of Residents.** Existing and prospective residents' preferences in terms of a living environment will have an impact on population growth. The type and affordability of housing, characteristics of the environment, and availability of public facilities and services affect people's desire to live in a community.

Each of these sets of variables are discussed in greater detail in the following sections:

Physical Parameters

Vacant land on which new housing units can be constructed is a key variable that determines the absolute maximum population of the Township. A 1991 existing land use survey revealed that 5,050 acres of vacant, potentially developable land existed in the Township. In addition, there were 12,553 acres of land used for agricultural purposes.

In 1991, there were about 16,100 acres of land in the Township zoned for residential or agricultural uses.

Based on the density standards set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, a maximum of approximately 5,500 housing units could be built in the Township. Using an average of 2.84 persons per household from the 2000 Census, the maximum population of Williamstown Township if all vacant and agricultural lands are eventually developed is calculated to be about 15,620 persons. This estimate does not take into account several other variables that will affect population growth, including the following:

- Zoning Regulations. Most vacant and agricultural lands in the Township are currently zoned to permit low density development. Minimum parcel size ranges from 20,000 square feet to 40 acres. In developing rural communities adjacent to an urban center, rezoning requests to permit higher density development are not uncommon, particularly as increasing land values encourage the development of agricultural land. Rezoning of agricultural and vacant lands to accommodate higher density development would increase the maximum population potential of the Township. It is, however, improbable that rezoning to permit lower density development will occur on a widespread basis in the future.
- Other Land Use Regulations. Other land use regulations, particularly lot split and private road regulations, will affect the development potential and subsequent population growth of the Township. Past land use regulations resulted in single family development occurring along the main roads in the Township, leaving the interior of most sections undeveloped. More recent development is characterized more by subdivision development.
- Septic Systems, Availability of Water. Except for parcels adjacent to the City of Williamston, most of the Township has no access to public water or sanitary sewer facilities. According to the Soil Survey for Williamstown Township, soils in most of the Township have severe limitations with respect to septic system use, however, engineered septic systems may permit development of land with severe limitations for a traditional septic system. Engineered systems are gaining acceptance at the State and County levels, and will impact the demand for development in the Township.

In the past, a key determinant in establishing land use regulations and permitted development densities was the minimum site area needed to be reasonably certain that there is sufficient land area for operation of a traditional septic system in an environmentally safe manner. The suitability of the land to support septic systems must still be a consideration in establishing land use regulations and permitted densities, however, the impact of engineered systems must also be considered.

- Wetlands, Woodlands, Farmlands. Wetlands, woodlands, and farmlands, to the extent that they are protected by local, state, or federal regulations, will affect development and population growth. Michigan Department of Natural Resources maps reveal that large portions of the Township, particularly along the drainage courses, are covered by wetlands. The Soil Conservation Service maps indicate that prime or unique farmlands occupy much of the land not covered by wetlands.
- Type of Housing Constructed. Large lot single family detached housing is predominant in Williamstown Township. However, there are existing zoning classifications that permit other types of development, usually at a higher density, including conventional subdivision development at a density of about two units per acre, multiple family development, and manufactured housing development. The development potential of the Township will be

affected by decisions to permit development of a greater variety of housing types in the community.

Regional Growth

The regional economy is largely beyond the control of the Township and its individual residents, but it has a tremendous impact on population growth. It was noted previously that most Township residents work in the Lansing/East Lansing urban center. It is likely that the availability of employment in the Lansing/East Lansing area makes it possible for many residents to choose to live in Williamstown Township. Without the presence of the employment center to the west, it is unlikely that Williamstown Township would have experienced such a rapid rate of growth over the past four decades.

Studies have shown that cycles in the economy is one of the key determinants of population change in Michigan, because of the effect of the economy on migration patterns. A lackluster economy results in a reduction in the number of families that purchase new homes or relocate. Thus, economic vitality of General Motors, state government, Michigan State University, and other large regional employers has a direct impact population growth in Williamstown Township and other communities in the region.

Characteristics of the Population

The earlier review of population data revealed that the number of mature households is increasing. The increase in more mature households portends smaller household size, which is an important consideration with regard to future population growth. A fractional increase or decrease in household size can make a difference of hundreds in total population.

As noted previously, household size continues to decrease, declining to an average household size of 2.84 in 2000. During the 1990's, housing units grew at a faster rate than the population. The result is that more land is being consumed to accommodate a lower proportion of residents.

Residents' Preferences and Perceptions

Variables related to people's preferences in terms of housing and the environment in which they live will affect population growth. Residents have been drawn to Williamstown Township by a variety of features, including the availability of nearby employment, the character of the community, and the unspoiled natural environment.

The ability of the Township to maintain these qualities will affect growth in population. Unfortunately, as more people move into the Township, portions of the natural environment are developed and the remaining natural areas are subject to greater use. A point could eventually be reached where additional development will not only diminish the Township's natural features, but also alter the perceived desirability of the environment and community in general.

Public facility improvements will also affect the desirability of the community. Research in other semi-rural communities in Michigan revealed that newcomers often are accustomed to the amenities of urban living, such as paved roads, water and sewer services, parks and playgrounds, garbage pick-up, and other services. Typically, the demand for these services gradually increases as the proportion of new residents increases. The ability of the Township to meet these demands may affect the stability of the population, since residents who find their demands for public services unmet are more likely to move out of the community.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Current population statistics indicate that the rate of population growth in Williamstown Township has slightly increased. According to the 2000 Census, the population increased by 540 during the 1990's.

The information on the previous pages reveals a number of parameters that could affect population growth in future years. The two most important parameters are likely to be regional growth patterns and local land use policies and regulations. Regional growth patterns will determine if there will be a demand for housing in Williamstown Township. Local land use policies and regulations will determine how much of the demand will be accommodated within the Township.

Forecasts of population growth can be prepared based on the assumption that previous trends and land use policies will continue. Linear regression analysis is one method of making use of previous population data to forecast future growth. Table 8 illustrates the forecast of future growth based on a linear regression analysis of population data from 1980 to 2000, indicating that the population will reach 7,381 by the year 2030.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission has also prepared population forecasts which suggest the level of population growth based on regional demand. The Regional Planning Commission's projections indicate the population will reach 5,119 residents by the year 2030.

Table 8
POPULATION PROJECTIONS
WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP (2005-2030)

	Linear Regression Projection	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Projection
2005:	5,226	4,946
2010:	5,657	4,995
2015:	6,088	5,039
2020:	6,519	5,073
2025:	6,950	5,098
2030:	7,381	5,119

*Sources: Bureau of the Census - 1970 - 2000
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Williamstown Township has had a higher growth rate for both population and housing units than the region as a whole over the period from 1990-2003, indicating that the Township is carrying more than its fair share of regional growth.
2. The average household size in the Township is larger than the region and surrounding communities. However, the 0-5 age cohort in Williamstown Township is smaller than the region and surrounding communities, indicating that there are fewer families with young children.
3. Williamstown Township has a much larger proportion of its population in the 45-64 age group than the region and surrounding communities. This will likely lead to increased demand for services in the future. The demand for housing styles that appeal to seniors and empty-nester households will also likely increase in the area.
4. The residents of Williamstown Township are generally better educated and have higher incomes than the residents of surrounding communities and the region as a whole.