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Hillsdale County Location Map

Hillsdale County Base Map

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Plan has been prepared and adopted by the Hillsdale County Planning Commission at a public hearing held on December 12, 2002. The Region 2 Planning Commission at the request of the Hillsdale County Board of Commissioners provided assistance with the Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to serve as a guide and rationale for decision-making regarding the growth and development of Hillsdale County over the coming 20 years.

The County's Plan was prepared after review and careful consideration of existing local plans already adopted by local units of government in Hillsdale County. Every attempt was made to incorporate local plans into the County's Plan wherever possible. **It is not the intent or purpose of the County's Plan to preempt or replace local plans or planning efforts.** Rather, it is the intent of the County's Plan to coordinate local plans and planning efforts and to encourage intergovernmental cooperation on common issues and problems that face the entire community on a day-to-day basis. The Plan also encourages the sharing of knowledge, information, and resources among and between all units of government whenever possible. The data contained in this Plan represents the most current data that was available at the time the Plan was prepared.

The preparation of this Plan has included a broad public involvement process that was the basis for visioning, formulating goals and policies, and implementing a strategy. It also addresses some of the action items the Planning Commission hopes to accomplish in the coming years. Consequently, this Plan represents to a large degree a statement of the County's citizen's own vision of its future.

After considerable study by the Planning Commission and input from a variety of community leaders during the public meetings, two fundamental concepts emerged that are the basis for this Plan. First, as development occurs in the coming twenty years, the inherently attractive rural character of the County should be retained and protected wherever possible. Second, development should be arranged to minimize the costs associated with the delivery of public services and capital investment in infrastructure, thereby protecting the interest of the taxpayer and the fiscal health of the County.

As discussed in more detail in the Land Use section of this document, development densities and intensity should be encouraged in those areas where public services and other infrastructure already exists. Typically, these areas have preexisting development patterns that are currently relatively dense. Lower density development and intensity should be reduced as distance from the current urbanized areas increases and where services and infrastructure are either not available or are insufficient to accommodate more intensive use of the land.

It must be emphasized that no plan can be effective if it remains a static document. Circumstances and trends change in unforeseen ways over time. For that reason, this Plan should at a minimum be reviewed at least every five years with a significant update occurring within 10 years.

PART ONE: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES FOR CONTROLLED GROWTH

SUMMARY

The development of a useful comprehensive plan involves an understanding of the many factors that inhibit and/or encourage growth. By understanding these factors, it helps the Planning Commission and the community at large, understand why some areas seem to develop naturally, while other areas almost seem immune from development. Understanding these factors also allows us to utilize certain factors to improve the planning process.

Early in the planning process, it is important to consider those issues that are perceived to be obstacles to rational land development so that a methodology can be created to address the problem and ultimately a means of implementing some identifiable solutions. Planning at the countywide basis is a difficult task. The land area that must be considered is much greater than the area local plans must deal with. In addition, there are many more intergovernmental and multi-jurisdictional concerns that must be considered during this process.

Since the task of identifying opportunities and obstacles can be a large one, the Hillsdale County Planning Commission explored a number of options that it could use to help identify some of the concerns that have seemingly impeded development or those issues that are associated with conflicting land uses. This exercise was designed and intended to develop an understanding of the many factors that tend to impede or encourage development of the countryside.

Rather than “re-inventing the wheel”, the Planning Commission looked to various studies or reports to begin its collection of information. In 1998, an extensive study was completed and published identifying a general list of challenges and opportunities. That document was titled “*Hillsdale County - A Look At Challenges And Opportunities Facing Hillsdale County*”. It is a report prepared by “stakeholders”. These stakeholders assembled in several meetings and created focus groups for the purpose of discussing and identifying problems and opportunities. The stakeholders consisted of almost 70 people representing a cross section of people and agencies in Hillsdale County. They included leaders from government at all levels and interested citizens of Hillsdale County. It is not the intent of the Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan to incorporate all issues and recommendations that were identified in the stakeholders plan. It is the purpose of this Comprehensive Plan to build upon some of the issues identified as well as other issues raised by the Planning Commission during the planning process as they relate to the use and development of land in Hillsdale County.

The Planning Commission was given a comprehensive list of issues and concerns identified in the stakeholders report and were asked to rank each problem from 1-3 with a 1 signifying a problem of highest concern or priority and a 3 having the least concern or priority. The information was then collected and tabulated with an average ranking assigned to each issue or concern.

Four issues of the 35 identified emerged as having a very high priority for the purpose of this Plan. All four received an average score of 1.0, which means that every Planning Commissioner independently ranked the issue as one of highest concern. The following four issues are listed in no particular order:

1. The number of farms has decreased 25% between 1982-1992. There were 1,354 farms in 1982. By 1992, that number had dropped to 1,018 farms (a loss of 366 acres). However, the total number of acres in farms dropped from 264,630 acres in 1982 to 231,557 acres in 1992, a loss of 33,073 acres or a loss of 12%.
2. Approximately 54% (203,117 of 378,515 total acres) of soils in Hillsdale County are classified as Class II soils. Capability Class II soils are classified as prime farmlands although they do require careful soil management to prevent deterioration. These soils should be identified and encouraged to be preserved.
3. A land use plan is needed to assure that development is orderly and does not adversely impact the land resource base.
4. There are 29 contaminated sites with any one or a combination of hazardous substances.

A listing of the remaining issues and concerns as they were identified and the average ranking are listed in the Appendix.

Upon completing an assessment and ranking of problems identified in the stakeholders report, the Planning Commission continued discussion and refinement of issues associated with planning and development in Hillsdale County. The purpose of this problem identification process was to not only identify issues, but also to begin to develop policies and strategies that will assist in the development of tools designed to address some of the concerns later in the implementation portion of the plan. A comprehensive list of issues and concerns is summarized in the remainder of this section. Discussion of each issue follows the identified concern displayed in italics.

Lack of Planning

- *Hillsdale County is in need of a Comprehensive Development Plan.*

Several decades ago, Hillsdale County completed a comprehensive land use plan map for the County. However, without an appointed planning commission to carry out the objectives of the plan, the map that was generated was not an effective tool to assist in coordinating land development in the County. In fact, few commissioners of the County or Planning Commission appointed by the County Board were aware of its existence. Adoption of this plan will address and resolve this first problem identified.

- *Less than half of the townships in the County have land use plans or zoning ordinances.*

The most effective tool for managing and controlling growth and development is local zoning ordinances. The Rural Township Zoning Act and the City or Village Zoning Act specifically authorizes townships, cities, and villages to implement zoning ordinances. The purpose of these zoning ordinances is to divide the areas of a local unit of government into zoning districts and within these districts, provisions may be adopted designating the location, the size, and the uses that may be made of these predetermined areas.

In certain cases, a county may administer a local unit of government's zoning ordinance. While this may be an alternative for those local units of government in the County that do not have zoning ordinances, **it is not the intent of this plan or county government to initiate county administration of local zoning.**

Less than half of the townships in Hillsdale County have master/land use plans or zoning ordinances. This will ultimately reduce the effectiveness of the County's planning efforts. The lack of local control may also result in the continued sprawl of residential uses and other conflicting land uses into the countryside with no means of controlling sprawl and associated problems that unplanned development can cause.

- *A coordinated plan for development is needed on a countywide basis.*

The County Board of Commissioners established the Hillsdale County Planning Commission in 1999. Prior to this, planning was done on a sporadic, as-needed basis to address specific issues such as solid waste planning.

While several local communities have prepared and adopted land use plans, planning efforts at the County level has been non-existent until this Plan was adopted.

No single agency, group, committee, commission or board has been designated the authority for coordinating infrastructure so that the proper infrastructure is in place in appropriate locations at the right time to meet the community needs.

- *Intergovernmental cooperation needs to be improved particularly with the outlying communities.*

There is a need to strengthen ties between governmental units. One of the purposes of this plan is to bridge the gap between County and local governments, but it is also the intent to encourage intergovernmental cooperation between local units of government.

- *Education on planning related topics should be coordinated between all political jurisdictions.*

Slow growing communities do not feel the growing pains that rapidly growing communities experience. However, the long-term results are the same. One way to minimize the negative

effects of future growth is to plan for it at all levels of government. No single agency has taken a lead role in the education process until now.

Agricultural Issues

- *Until recently, prime farmlands were not identified.*

Before a program can be implemented in an attempt to preserve prime farmlands, those areas with soil characteristics that can be classified as “prime” soils now have been classified and mapped.

- *Between 1982-1992, the number of farms in the County decreased by 25%.*

Since the County has been identified as a rural, agricultural community, it is alarming that the County has lost a quarter of its farms in a single decade.

- *The total number of acres devoted to farming has dropped from 264,630 acres in 1982 to 231,557 acres in 1992, a loss of 33,073 acres (-12%).*

Equally alarming to the loss of total farms is the loss of total acreage once devoted to farming. The one-decade loss of 12% of land once used for active farming suggests that at least a portion of the loss is land being converted for uses other than agriculture, although some land may simply be fallow.

- *A countywide plan is needed to encourage the protection and preservation of farmland.*

Until recently, there has been little effort to attempt to preserve farmland, which would protect the rural character of Hillsdale County.

- *Residential sprawl into the countryside is contributing to:*

- ✓ A loss of farmland
- ✓ A loss of rural character of the County.
- ✓ An increase in demand for municipal services.
- ✓ Future increases in the expenditure of public funds to meet the demand of sprawling development.
- ✓ The rapid increase of lot splits contributes to the fragmentation of the rural countryside.

Local units of government, without County input, frequently approve lot splits. However, the problems associated with a population widely distributed have a negative impact on County government by increasing demand for various community services and facilities provided by the county.

- *The suburbanizations of the County’s agricultural areas contribute to conflicts between agricultural and residential uses. Agricultural noise, dust, and odors are often times objectionable to adjacent suburbanites.*

Mega-farming in Hillsdale County has created awareness of how certain agricultural activities can cause conflicting land use problems. However, it doesn't necessarily take a mega-farm operation to increase the odor and dust problems that frequently irritate some adjacent residential uses. Higher density and concentrations of people nearest to the farm operations are frequently the people most often associated with making complaints to local and county government.

Residential and Housing Issues

- *There is a need for additional single-family residential subdivisions that might help attract and meet the housing needs of future labor pools of skilled workers.*

Very few subdivision housing developments have been constructed recently in Hillsdale County. Instead, most of the housing outside the urbanized areas is single-family dwelling built in the countryside. This contributes to a fragmented and dispersed population and makes it more difficult to provide community and public services in the future.

- *There has been an increase in lot splits to help satisfy the demand for suburban residential uses leading to the fragmentation of the countryside.*

The seemingly unregulated splitting of land and the associated problems it can cause may suggest that some type of plan including policies and regulations needs to be explored to control the number of splits that threaten the rural character of Hillsdale County.

- *There is an unmet demand for a variety of alternate and affordable housing.*

With the demand for subsidized housing so high, the needs of certain groups of people, including the elderly and low to moderate-income families are not being met. The urbanized areas are best equipped with public services to provide for this type of alternative and/or affordable housing. There appears to be an unmet need for alternative and affordable housing in Hillsdale County even though there is sometimes a perception that there is no demand for this type of housing.

Perceptions are often difficult to change and a major obstacle in exploring how this type of housing can be accepted across the County. The challenge will first be to get communities to understand that there is a need for all types of housing. This assumes these alternative forms of housing can be provided in areas that can minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses.

- *A portion of the County's housing stock is older and in need of repair.*

An older housing stock that has not been maintained properly can result in a significant number of demolitions in the future. When this occurs, there is a need for additional land to meet the housing needs of an expanding population, which in turn, compounds the problem of suburbanization.

Commercial Issues

- *The population of the County is insufficient to attract certain retail chains.*

It is desirable to have a wide variety of shopping alternatives for a growing population. This allows the community's population to spend dollars locally and significantly reduces the miles driven to satisfy a demand for specific goods or services.

Although the City of Hillsdale and the Village of Jonesville are the largest urban areas, the two incorporated areas still only comprise approximately a quarter of the total population. The remainder of the population is distributed roughly evenly with smaller satellite hubs distributed across Hillsdale County.

- *There is a need for a coordinated commercial development plan.*

An agency responsible for attracting and promoting commercial development in the County could prepare a commercial plan.

Several agencies have a role in promoting Hillsdale. However, a single agency designed to meet the needs of prospective developers might be able to provide "one stop shopping" and attract new commercial businesses into the area.

Industrial Issues

- *Future industries will require workforce skills and training not currently available.*

This can be a complex problem with its impact similar to a double edge sword. On one hand, the existing population is not large and is compounded by the issue of a younger population that is either not receiving or completing advanced technical training in fields that would be attractive to new industry, or they are often times not completing their basic education. Without an in-migration of a skilled labor pool, the County will have a difficult time attracting the amount and type of industry it would like to.

- *There is no four-lane road running through the County connecting with one of the freeway systems.*

This challenge of the lack of a major road network will not be an easy issue to solve.

Environmental Issues

- *Environmentally sensitive lands require a program or a set of policies in place to assist in natural resource conservation and protection.*

The Hillsdale Conservation District has been designated by the County to take the lead in a natural resources conservation program that works with local units of government in proper planning and development of policies and regulations.

- *Animal waste application needs to be accomplished so that it meets the needs for targeted crop nutrients, but does not compromise the integrity of the environment.*

The introduction of the “mega-farm” to Hillsdale County brought to light some of the environmental issues of farm operations. The Michigan Right To Farm Act defines policies and/or programs at the County level.

- *The County should promote wetlands, floodplains, and ground water recharge areas as natural filters and storm water retention areas.*

Wetlands are numerous in the County and an asset worth protecting for the future. The County needs a comprehensive policy for the protection of wetlands, floodplains, and groundwater recharge areas.

- *Elevated sediment loads and agri-chemicals are particularly present in the Maumee River and its feeder tributaries.*

The Hillsdale Conservation District has the responsibility to work with landowners to implement conservation measures to address these water quality issues.

- *A countywide plan is needed to address the 30 known sites that are contaminated by one or more hazardous substances.*

These known sites could potentially threaten surrounding properties and groundwater as well as the health and safety of the residents of the County.

- *A countywide policy or plan should be adopted and implemented encouraging the protection of surface water systems.*

Surface water provides many benefits related to habitat, groundwater, scenic beauty, etc., and can be impacted by much development or use.

- *Lakes with residential development should be encouraged to install public sewer systems to protect the water body from environmental degradation.*

The Plan encourages, in high-growth areas, public water and sewer systems.

Recreation Issues

- *The County has a five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.*

Having an adopted and approved Parks and Recreation Plan qualifies the County for grant funds that could be used for land acquisition and facility improvements.

PART TWO: HILLSDALE COUNTY GOALS AND POLICIES

Planning goals are essentially policy statements that express Hillsdale County's long-range desires. They are the County's vision of how the landscape will be shaped, what components should be preserved and protected, as well as how and where development should occur. In general, the goals stated here attempt to do two things:

1. *They are simple enough to provide guidance without detail.*
2. *They have been designed to be realistic, achievable and to inspire people into action.*

Following are the stated goals and policies that guide the Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan:

Mission Statement

To implement a policy that will guide future development in a manner consistent with the natural attributes of the land, the preservation of open spaces, the rural character, and provide necessary public facilities and services.

General County Goals

- ✓ The goals of this Comprehensive Plan are to encourage all units of government to work together to develop policy, plans and zoning ordinances consistent with one another so that all the people and uses of the land can co-exist in a manner that protects the environment, the people who live in the County, and businesses and industries that conduct operations within Hillsdale County.
- ✓ Encourage well-planned intensive development in existing urban areas or existing growth corridors that have public services available.
- ✓ Encourage the preservation of the County's agricultural base, its open space, and natural resources by supporting growth in and around existing urbanized areas.
- ✓ Promote Hillsdale County as a place with individual identity while maintaining a rural character; keeping the diversity of people and environment in balance and encouraging orderly community growth.
- ✓ Support the establishment of a sound economic base through a combination of industrial and commercial establishments.

General County Growth Management Policies

1. Encourage local units of government to expand public facilities and services such as public water and sewer or paved roads, particularly where the intensity of development requires such services or where the public health, safety, or welfare are at risk.
2. Assist townships that do not have land use plans or zoning ordinances to prepare and adopt these documents.
3. Encourage townships to adopt and implement ordinance provisions that are consistent with one another, while at the same time, maintaining and preserving agricultural land.
4. Provide a framework for preservation of open spaces by coordinating local land use plans and related documents.

Natural Resources and Open Space Goals

- Encourage the preservation and protection of natural resources
- Preserve watershed areas, surface water and groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and woodlots
- Protect the open space and rural character of the County from encroaching sprawl.

Natural Resources and Open Space Protection Policies

1. Local units of government are encouraged to adopt programs and tools specifically designed to preserve open space.
2. Protection of groundwater resources, natural features, and other environmental features are a primary consideration of the County when reviewing zoning development proposals.
3. Implement a program that fosters intergovernmental coordination in growth management and planning decisions.
4. Maintain a meaningful communication program with all of the townships, villages and cities in Hillsdale County.
5. Continually provide opportunities for public input on growth and development issues facing local and county government.
6. Serve as a resource to the townships in implementing the land division process.
7. Facilitate the education with regards to the County's reliance on its water resources and the potential negative affects that irresponsible land use can cause.

8. Assure that new intensive types of developments comply with applicable local, county, state and federal regulations.
9. Protect open spaces, including environmentally sensitive lands, woodlots, fields and farmlands, while at the same time providing landowners a reasonable use of the land.
10. Encourage the preservation of open space within planned intensive developments.

Farmland Goals

- Protect and preserve agricultural areas within the County that have prime agricultural soils.
- Preserve major farms, Centennial Farms, and lands enrolled in PA 116 or other conservation programs or easements.
- Protect designated farmland from speculation for non-agricultural development without support from an up-to-date local plan.
- Consider the potential future negative impacts on the County as a whole, prior to extending or improving infrastructure services into and through rural and agricultural areas.
- Promote adoption of township zoning standards that discourage haphazard residential sprawl into the rural agricultural areas.

Farmland Policies

1. Review of land uses and zoning changes at the County level will include consideration as to how the proposed development preserves the agricultural and rural character of the countryside.
2. Develop model zoning regulations that are designed to protect farming activities in agricultural areas from nuisances associated with incompatible adjacent uses.
3. Where residential development must occur in agricultural areas, encourage that the land be divided and subsequent structures built on less productive farmland.
4. Recognizes the potential conflicts that can occur between agricultural and residential uses. Support farming operations and practices when those farm activities meet Michigan Department of Agricultural (Right To Farm Act) Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAMPS).

Residential Goals

- Promote residential development in and around existing urbanized areas where community facilities and services can be both effective and efficient.

- Assist communities in the adoption of flexible zoning techniques such as Planned Unit Developments (PUD) and Open Space Ordinances that promote clustered developments.
- To provide for alternative and affordable housing developments particularly in the urbanized areas where adequate services needed to support those developments already exist.
- Plan for residential developments that will minimally encroach or encourage sprawl into agricultural areas.

Residential Policies

1. Develop a uniform system to assemble information from applicants for land development projects to ensure that utilities, infrastructure, and services are adequate to serve the proposed uses.
2. Develop model ordinances that townships can adopt whose purpose is to foster the establishment of residential developments that maintain rural character and preserve agricultural land.
3. Discourage residential development in areas where public services and/or natural conditions are inadequate to support the proposed density.
4. Assist townships, cities, and villages in their efforts to adopt ordinance regulations that incorporate the preservation of natural resource systems and open space.
5. Encourage local units of government to seek alternative types of housing.

Commercial and Industrial Goals

- Commercial development should be supported in urbanized areas and where high intensity uses already exist.
- Encourage clustered commercial uses that minimize curb cuts and driveways.
- Support new commercial development and redevelopment so that residents can meet their needs for goods and services locally.
- Utilize office uses as transition areas between commercial development and residential uses.
- Encourage development of a training infrastructure that will support a highly skilled work force.
- Encourage industrial development in existing industrial parks where roads, water and sewer exist.
- Encourage redevelopment of abandoned industrial sites.

- Encourage the development of infrastructure that will support high tech services.

Commercial and Industrial Policies

1. Commercial development should be designed to reflect the rural character of Hillsdale County.
2. New commercial and industrial development should only be permitted in areas where public sewer and water are available.
3. Ordinance regulations should require adequate landscaping, open space, or other means to limit conflicts between uses.
4. Implement a plan that prevents the premature conversion of land to uses other than their long-termed planned use.
5. Provide opportunities for home-based occupations.

Public Facilities and Services Goals

- Expand County public facilities and services as necessary for protection and maintenance of the public health, safety, and welfare, provided improvements are consistent with this Comprehensive Plan's future land use pattern.
- Identify communities that may be in need of improved public services.

Public Facilities and Services Policies

1. Prioritize a schedule of improvements that addresses timing, cost and possible funding sources
2. Develop and maintain regular and meaningful communication programs with local units of government. This encourages regional agencies to discuss and plan for infrastructure and non-infrastructure based public facilities and services. Additionally there should be opportunities for shared facilities and services incorporating alternative strategies for contracted services versus individual local unit of government-operated services.
3. Maintain meaningful communication with other jurisdictions to discuss and plan for infrastructure and non-infrastructure based services; opportunities for shared services, and alternative strategies.

Transportation and Roads Goals

- Develop and implement land use polices that foster a safe and efficient transportation network.

Transportation and Roads Policies

1. Develop a priority review system for paving streets and roads that considers land use and appropriate elements
2. Support intensive uses and developments along major roadways that reduces the number of access points.
3. Expand alternative transportation facilities, including walkways and bicycle paths.
4. Encourage input into the local process so that the potential for traffic congestion and hazards can be minimized.

Parks and Recreation Goals

- Encourage, maintain and update the County's five (5) year Parks and Recreation Plan including an inventory of existing facilities and services.
- Identify deficiencies in its recreational facilities and services and encourage development where these programs are not available.

Parks and Recreation Policies

1. Develop and utilize recreation programming that covers all ages, all program areas, and all seasons.
2. Develop cultural interest programs.
3. Develop programs for special populations.
4. Encourage County Parks and Recreation to work with the County ISD to provide environmental education programs.
5. Develop plans that promote fitness and wellness.
6. Develop a program plan to increase park usage, incorporating existing and future facilities.

PART THREE: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Summary

The Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan establishes policies that address how future growth should ideally take place within the County. By developing policies, the County can assist local units of government identify how and where land development should occur. Implementation of the policies may result in improvements to the road network and level of emergency services; expansion of the economic base, and new employment opportunities while preserving prime agricultural lands and open space.

The land use Plan and map prepared and adopted by Hillsdale County Planning Commission considered uses and the impact of certain uses and development on a countywide basis. Although there is a need to recognize political boundaries and jurisdictions in the planning process, there is also a need to consider the impact of land development on a multi-jurisdictional level. This is one of the primary purposes and roles of County government in the land use planning process.

The County Planning Commission compiled all of the land use plans adopted in Hillsdale County and consulted each plan independently during the planning process. It was not the intent of the Planning Commission to duplicate the local township's land use plans. In most cases the County's plan has incorporated some of the larger areas suggested for certain uses by the townships. Where very small areas are suggested for a certain use, the County's plan may not reflect the Township's proposed use.

Basis

The Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan has been adopted with a vision of the future over the next 20 years. The plan has been designed to be a flexible document that may change over time as the landscape of the County changes due to development and redevelopment. The plan is also designed to provide latitude in interpretation. It may be necessary to consult a local unit of government's plan to assist the County Planning Commission in making a decision.

Fundamental considerations used in the planning process include:

- ✓ Natural and cultural characteristics,
- ✓ Existing local transportation network,
- ✓ Public infrastructure,
- ✓ Soil constraints, and
- ✓ Environmentally sensitive lands.

The amount, type, and location of development should not outpace the ability of the local unit's, as well as the County's, ability to provide facilities and services.

Pattern of Development

Hillsdale County can be considered a rural community. The majority of County residents live outside one of the nine urbanized cities or villages. With approximately 600 square miles in the County and almost 2/3 of its population situated in one of the townships, the average density of housing is only approximately 34 dwellings per square mile.

The main strategy of the Plan is attempting to protect the rural character of Hillsdale County, including the preservation of its agricultural lands and open space, while at the same time providing growth opportunities. To accomplish this, the County's rural areas would have to continue to develop slowly in a land use pattern that is characterized predominantly by agriculture, low-density residential development, and natural open spaces that would include woodlots, wetlands, and other natural drainage areas.

The County has been fortunate that it has not experienced uncontrolled growth of its rural countryside. Most of the development has occurred around the nine cities or villages. Hillsdale County is experiencing the bulk of its commercial growth within or just outside the City of Hillsdale and the Village of Jonesville. The most important reason the County has not grown faster is the fact that there is no interstate freeway. This may help the County preserve and protect its rural character, but at the same time, it may hinder economic development.

To protect the rural character from the negative effects of over development in the more rural areas of the County, the following objectives to the planning process should be used:

- ✓ Encourage the protection of the County's natural resources, open space, and rural character.
- ✓ Discourage random encroachment of residential developments into agricultural areas
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the conversion of non-prime farmland soil areas to residential use.

Components of the Land Use Plan

The Plan is essentially a map and accompanying text that describes how this Planning Commission envisions the County's growth pattern to take place, and how and where they will encourage growth based upon policies and planning principals that have been previously described. The Plan has a horizon of 20 years into the future and should be periodically reviewed as development changes land use patterns. It should be understood that the Plan is a flexible document and is essentially a collection of policies that can be interpreted. By comparison, zoning ordinances adopted by local units of government are not flexible documents. They are the tools most often used to carry out the policies identified in local plans. The County, working in partnership and association with the local units of government, must rely on the local units of government to assist in carrying out the policies stated in the Plan.

It is not the intent of the Plan or County government to become involved in the administration of local zoning or planning in those communities that have zoning ordinances. Local plans have been incorporated into the County's Plan. The county's role in the zoning and

planning process is advisory in nature. County government does not have a regulatory role in city, village, or township zoning issues unless requested by the entity.

Agriculture/Open Space

As the Land Use Plan map indicates, a vast area of agriculture and open space is planned for Hillsdale County. Not all land identified in this category is suitable for agricultural production. Some land is wooded; other lands are wet while still others are simply fallow fields. There may be occasions when it may be necessary to evaluate the actual type of use found at a site to assist in a site analysis.

Very low-density residential developments may be suitable uses within the Agriculture/Open Space classification. The Plan's ultimate goal is to support preservation efforts in these areas, as it is not always possible to preserve every acre of farmland in the County. Ultimately, farmland can be protected along with the rural character if the landscape can avoid numerous splits and road frontage lots.

The Subdivision Control Act was intended to preserve farmland, but instead resulted in agricultural lands being subdivided into parcels too big for residential purposes and too small to farm. If development occurs for residential purposes by using minimum lot sizes, clustering can be achieved within the same area. The demand for housing may be satisfied by allowing smaller lot sizes than has been traditional. Low-density residential uses may be developed in the countryside that will not permanently destroy the rural character of Hillsdale County.

Clustering is a technique that can be used and is encouraged in the countryside to provide housing and at the same time preserve open space. For example, instead of building ten homes along the road frontage, a secondary road or private road could be constructed perpendicular to the main road with two homes built on the main road and eight more back on the private road. This technique will help preserve the character of the area and fulfill a demand for housing.

Open Space Communities are developed by concentrating the buildings on one part of a site. These types of developments retain large portions of the site for recreation, common open space, and preservation of environmentally sensitive features. Open Space communities can be constructed almost anywhere and still be compatible with surrounding uses if properly built.

Local units of government are now required to provide this type of development as an alternative to more traditional improvements. Minimum standards for open space development have been set forth in recent statewide planning acts. Local jurisdictions may adopt regulatory ordinances that subject this type of development to more strict procedures and requirements than those in the planning acts. Incentives to create this type of development can also be built into those ordinances and should be encouraged.

Public/Quasi Public Lands

Public and Quasi Public lands are those areas in public ownership (such as County parks or state game areas) or large areas in ownership other than by private individuals or corporations (such as scout or church camps). Generally, these areas are conservation districts with large public lands within the County. They provide important environmental benefits including habitat for wildlife, flood control, groundwater recharge and discharge, and surface water purification. They also provide opportunities for passive and active recreation and contribute greatly to the County's overall rural character. Intensive development close to the County's public/quasi-public areas could threaten the quality and quantity of these resources. The type of uses that should be allowed around these areas should be limited to natural resource based land uses such as agriculture, wildlife management, and very low-density residential development.

Residential Lands

This Plan does not differentiate between the various types of residential uses. It should be noted there is only one residential classification on the Plan map. Residential uses can be divided into categories based upon density, type, or both density and type. Low-density residential development simply means any type of dwelling at a density of approximately 1 dwelling per acre. Very low density might imply a density of 1 dwelling per 5-10 acres. High-density residential developments range from 4-6 dwellings per acre and moderate density residential developments might have an average density of somewhere between low and high density.

It is not the intent of this Plan to make a distinction or land use residential classification based on the type of residential unit. The Planning Commission will base its considerations on density. The higher the density of residential development, the closer a development should be to an urbanized area where public services can most efficiently and cost effectively be provided.

Developing a **specific** plan that includes several residential land use classifications based upon density is best addressed at the **local** level of government. However, this Plan has identified **general** areas suggested for residential development. These areas are located around existing residential areas and they extend outward from more urbanized areas and corridors into areas that are currently more rural. The intent is to encourage denser developments within these predetermined residential areas. High-density uses, such as mobile home parks and multiple-family uses like apartments, are encouraged to locate closest to the urbanized areas and in areas where public water and sewer are available or where they can be economically extended.

Commercial Lands

The existing and future residential population will continue to have increasing needs for retail establishments of all types. Ideally, redeveloping our existing downtowns could satisfy the commercial development needs. The second most logical area to accommodate a bulk of the demand for commercial goods and services is along the M-99 corridor between the City of Hillsdale and the Village of Jonesville. Here, land is available and traffic volumes are sufficient to meet the needs of many retail establishments.

Even though the M-99 and U.S. 12 corridor seems the logical location for new business, the demand for commercial goods and services will continue throughout the County. One of the problems for satisfying retail demand is the fact that the County's population is geographically dispersed in low concentrations or densities making it difficult to provide all the commercial goods and services from a large central location. For this reason, various other commercial strips have been suggested. They are located primarily along major corridors and adjacent to existing commercial areas. Although not large, these areas are geographically distributed across the County.

Industrial Lands

Industry provides the jobs and income for many people who live in the County. It is an important land use, and expansion of the County's industrial base is good for the continued viability of Hillsdale County. It is also considered the most intensive type of land use classification with the greatest potential for conflicts with adjacent land uses.

Locating industry and minimizing conflicts are a goal of this plan. Fortunately, the cities, and villages throughout the County had the foresight to develop industrial parks with public water and sewer systems. These parks scattered across the County are sufficient to meet the industrial needs of the community for years to come. This Plan encourages the continued development of these existing industrial parks.

LAND USE PLAN MAP

PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Summary

The Hillsdale County Planning Commission has identified and analyzed a host of challenges and opportunities related to the use of land and land use planning. They have also developed policies designed to address the problems that seem to impact the ability of various units of government to control growth in a logical manner. Coordinated planning efforts between all units of local government may help implement the ultimate goal of this Plan which is to “...implement a policy that will guide future development in a manner consistent with the natural attributes of the land, the preservation of open spaces, the rural character, and the provision of necessary public facilities and services”.

A number of issues were identified earlier in this plan and goals and policies formulated to address these problems. Some of the policies identified in the plan are action oriented, others are not. Policies can be used to assist the Planning Commission in its day-to-day operations. Daily activities by the County Planning Commission will include an advisory role in the zoning and planning process at the township level. Implementation of the goals and policies that address local zoning and planning issues will take place as needed and as issues arise from local unit of governments.

The Hillsdale Comprehensive Plan goes beyond the traditional land use plan adopted by many local units of government. It has raised issues that affect the various units of government and now challenges all units of government to join together in a partnership that will coordinate planning efforts intended to make Hillsdale County a well-planned and desirable community to live and work for decades to come.

It is not anticipated that the changes proposed in this Plan will take place overnight. Likewise, the plan is ambitious and comprehensive. Many of the action oriented goals and policies identified will take time to implement. How the Plan is implemented will help determine what the accepted role the County’s Planning Commission will be with the various local units of government that comprise Hillsdale County. The County and its newly created Planning Commission proposes an active role in the planning process. Further, it proposes to use both its resources and leadership to initiate a coordinated and cooperative effort in uniting all units of government toward the ultimate goal stated in the Mission Statement of this plan. On the following pages, the Hillsdale County Planning Commission outlines its strategy for implementation of the Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan.

Projects

- *Sponsor an annual joint planning brainstorming meeting with all units of government in Hillsdale County.*

The Planning Commission will sponsor and host a meeting or meetings annually for the purpose of sharing ideas, discussing various topics of interest, and formulating solutions to address concerns.

- *Utilize the County newsletter to inform local units of government on planning topics of interest and updates on County Planning Commission activities.*

Articles might discuss some of the technical aspects of zoning and land use planning. Other articles could address areas or topics of special interest. The newsletter may foster cooperative arrangements between the County and local units of government by allowing access to the newsletter so they may write articles from their own perspective.

- *Sponsor planning workshops designed to inform local units of government and other agencies on planning-related topics.*

The workshops proposed here are different than the annual joint planning brainstorming session. The workshops would be available to individual communities or countywide.

- *Develop model ordinances that local units of government can use.*

The Planning Commission proposes to develop modern, model language addressing specific issues or techniques used in zoning today. Farm land preservation, site condos, cell towers, mobile home parks are all issues that have surfaced recently and are examples of some issues model zoning language might address. In addition, the Plan strongly supports the use of flexible zoning techniques. These techniques are a mechanism to encourage more efficient use of the land. Examples of flexible zoning language might address clustered housing, open space districts, overlay districts and planned unit developments to name a few.

- *Develop a practical approach and program to address farmland preservation.*

What is necessary is a sensible and practical approach to farmland preservation; one that discourages scattered haphazard development and, at the same time, rewards the farmer for not dividing his land. The challenge of preserving and protecting farmland represents the fundamental theme of the Hillsdale County Comprehensive Plan.

PART FIVE: INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND HISTORICAL FEATURES

History of Development

Chief Topinabee opened south central Michigan to early settlers with the signing of the Treaty of Chicago in 1821. A peaceful tribe of Potawatomie Indians lead by Chief Baw Beese inhabited Hillsdale. They welcomed the white man because they helped the tribe survive. The name Hillsdale was derived from the local topography of hills and dales.

The Sauk Trail went through the heart of the area connecting the areas of what is now Detroit with points in Illinois. It was Captain Moses Allen and his family in 1827 that were the first white people to settle in the County. They built their home in Allen's Prairie. Later this area was shortened to Allen.

A year later, W.P. Jones III settled five miles to the east of Captain Allen with his family on the St. Joseph River. The small settlement was called Jonesville and became the first trade center, the first county seat, had the first hotel, the first general store, the first gristmill, and was an overnight stop on the Sauk Trail between Detroit and Chicago.

Hillsdale County has within its borders, the headwaters of five of Michigan's major rivers. These rivers and the water-powered mills along them provided the County with its first industrial base. The first mill was built in 1832.

Jeremiah Arnold who migrated here from De Peyster, New York settled the area that is now called the City of Hillsdale. He built a home on the land that is now the County Fairgrounds and Racetrack. A year later, the area was officially platted and settlement followed.

By 1843, this growing community became the western terminus of the first railroad from Toledo to the northwest. In this same year, the city became the county seat.

Adam Howder built a tavern in 1853 and the area began to grow rapidly. Detroit, Hillsdale and Southern Railroad came to Hillsdale in 1871 making the city an important rail center. The railroad provided substantial employment for many years because the division headquarters were located here.

The County continued to grow and prosper. Baw Beese Lake became a major resort area around the turn of the century. Oil was discovered in 1957. Presently, industry and agriculture continue to expand and marginal lands are being converted to recreational uses.

NATURAL FEATURES

Surface Geology

The surface geology of Hillsdale County is primarily the result of glacial activity. General structure and texture including topography, drainage, soils, and vegetative conditions are influenced by the surface geology that was laid down by

advancing and retreating glaciers. Today's indirect influences of the glaciers include erosion and sedimentation characteristics, wildlife habitat, and various hydrological characteristics.

Three geological formations are primarily responsible for shaping the terrain and formation of soils. Those formations are the *moraines, till plains, and outwash plains and glacial channels*. These formations are described below:

Moraines: Moraines were formed when the glacier was moving forward as the ice at its front melted. As this occurred, the debris left by the melting water was piled up and pushed into a line of irregular hills by the advancing ice.

Till Plains: When the glacier was stagnant, ice melted and the debris being carried was deposited where the ice had stood, leaving a mantle of glacial drift with a flat undulating surface. These areas are called ground moraines on till plains because of the good tillable land they provide.

Outwash Plains and Glacial Channels: These formations were created when the glacier melted very rapidly and great streams of water cut across the till plains and moraines. They consist of sorted glacial drift deposits including boulders left near the moraines and gravel, sand, and clay that were deposited further down stream by the flow of water.

In general, Hillsdale County can be described as gently rolling to moderately hilly because of the glacial activity. The southeastern portion of the County is gently sloping or nearly level. Elevations here (expressed in elevations above sea level) are 800 feet. The central, western, and northern

portions are more diverse with lakes, peat swamps, patches of sand and gravelly plains pitted by depressions are found. In these areas, elevations vary from the highest point of 1,300 feet in Wheatland Township to the average elevation of 1,000 to 1,200 feet.

Climate

The Hillsdale County Soil Survey indicates that the average winter temperature is 24.8°F and the average daily minimum temperature is 16.7°F during the cold season. Data on climate used in the Soil Survey was collected over a 30-year period between 1951-1980. The average summer temperature during the 30-year period was 80.6°F with the highest recorded temperature on July 14, 1936 when it was 107°F.

Hillsdale County receives on average 37.75 inches of precipitation. Approximately 58% (21.71 inches) falls from April through September. Summer precipitation falls below 18.51 inches in only 2 of 10 years. The annual average snowfall is 57.3 inches with the record snowfall during the 30-year period of 19 inches. Average relative humidity in the County is 64%. The sun shines 67% of the time in the summer, but only 37% of the time in the winter.

Drainage and Surface Water

Hillsdale County has 15 lakes that are 100 acres or more in size. The largest lakes are Baw Beese Lake, Lake Lee Ann, Lake Somerset, Long Lake, and Lake Diane. Lakes Lee Ann, Somerset, and Diane are private lakes created by man while the remainder are natural lakes. The surface water and drainage system in the County

were either created or influenced by glaciers retreating. Huge ice blocks that broke off the main retreating glacier left large depressions in the ground that filled with water.

Hillsdale County is the headwaters of five major rivers that flow through Michigan and Ohio. In the northern portion of the County, the Kalamazoo River, and Grand River begins its flow to the west ultimately terminating at Lake Michigan. The Lake Erie Watershed drains the southern and eastern portion of the County with the St. Joseph, Maumee, and the Raisin Rivers. The major creeks found in Hillsdale County are Sand Creek, Hog Creek, Bean Creek, Silver Creek, Laird Creek, and Bird Creek.

Assessment of Land Productivity

Until recently, the preservation of prime soils for farming has received little attention, particularly here in the United States. In the past, agricultural production has been so plentiful that the federal government has paid money to farmers not to plant. However, inherently productive land is becoming increasingly more important, especially those productive lands nearer to urbanized areas. The problem in this situation is that generally, agricultural land that is prime for the production of crops is ordinarily easy to develop.

Over the past century, soil scientists have developed and refined a number of accurate techniques for the classification and assessment of soils. The task of both detailed and general soil assessment is carried out by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS).

The NRCS evaluates a variety of soil characteristics. Among the ratings it regularly assigns is an estimate of the *capability* of the soil to support agricultural production. Eight capability classes are used ranging from the most productive to the least productive. These classes are based on such factors as slope, moisture holding capability, erosion characteristics, texture, structure, and drainage characteristics.

In some planning exercises, lands that are classified as *prime farmlands* are identified and automatically labeled for preservation on the future land use plan map. In other cases, consideration is given to the proximity of vacant developable land to the urbanized areas. The theory with this second scenario is that by clustering higher concentrations of population closest to the urban areas, haphazard sprawl can be better controlled and this will ultimately reduce the need to expand public services farther into the countryside. This will eventually reduce public expenditures to expand those services.

The NRCS recently identified and mapped soils in Hillsdale County. None of the mapping units or soil clusters for Hillsdale County had a capability Class I. A Class I soil is one that has very few limitations for most uses and requires no artificial drainage. As shown in Table 1, 54% of the soils in the County are Class II soils, meaning the soils in this class require careful soil management, including conservation practices to prevent deterioration or to improve air and water relations when the soil is cultivated. Soils within this classification are considered *prime farmlands* in Hillsdale County although many comprehensive plans consider only Class I soils as prime farmlands.

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pasture land, rangeland, forest land or other land, but not urban built-up land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no stones. They are

permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. Examples of soils that qualify as prime farmland are Miami loam, 0 to 6% slopes; Brookston silty clay loam, drained; and Emmet sandy loam, 0 to 6% slopes.

Soils Map

TABLE 1
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSES AND SUBCLASSES
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 1999

Class	Total Acres	% of Total	Acres Major Management Concerns		
			Erosion	Wetness	Soil Problems
I	---	---	---	---	---
II	203,117	54	161,245	39,885	1,987
III	108,191	29	80,103	11,466	16,622
IV	23,815	6	17,889	---	5,926
V	27,462	7	---	27,462	---
VI	15,110	4	8,265	2,604	4,241
VII	820	.02	---	---	820
VII	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL	378,515		267,502	81,417	29,596

* Source: Soil Survey of Hillsdale County

Class III soils comprise 108,191 acres (29%) in the County. These soils have more development or use restrictions than Class II soils do. Physical constraints limit the intensity of use. Lands in this classification are generally less productive and less profitable than Class I or II soils. Nonetheless, they do have farm potential as long as good agricultural practices are adhered to.

The remainder of soils in Class IV, V, VI, and VII have increasingly restrictive limitations, particularly from Class V soils on. Eventually, soils become best suited for woodlands, wildlife, and recreational uses. The higher class soils, such as Class VI and VII may be wetlands or flood plains that have high water holding capacity, act as filters to surface and subsurface areas, and as water recharge basins for aquifers below.

The soils map on the previous page depicts the soil classifications found in Hillsdale County.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

Population analysis and projections are the basic elements of a community plan. All other plan elements depend on the current and expected future population. Population information enhances the capability of the local government to prepare for the impact of future growth on land use and community facilities and services. In addition, many state and federal assistance programs rely on population projections.

Several methods and models can be used to project population. The simplest and most basic is the *linear/trend* method. In this model, historical data is collected and growth rates calculated for those historical periods. The growth rates are then applied to the existing estimated population and projected into the future with the assumption that the growth rate being used today continues into the future. Growth rates can be manipulated and modified to fit the needs of the projection for the community. The *linear/trend* method is the model that was used in this plan to project population.

The five-year growth rate for Hillsdale County was 4.6% (.092%/year). The 2000 population figures in the table are estimates based upon the individual local unit of government's annual growth rate. The local unit of government's growth rate was calculated and a projection made based upon its own growth rate. Note, however, that the cumulative sum of all the local units of government's population does not exactly equal the County's total. This is due to rounding errors.

With the exception of three local units of government, most of the townships, villages, and cities have growth rates relatively close to one another. The exceptions are the City of Hillsdale (0.3%), Moscow Township (-0.8%), and Somerset Township (12.0%). In the City of Hillsdale, the annually low growth rate may be in part due to an aggressive demolition program of multiple-family dwellings that have not been brought up to minimum building codes coupled with a relatively low number of new homes being built. Somerset Township's proximity to Hillsdale and Jackson and its lakes make it an attractive residential community. It is unclear why Moscow Township's population actually declined in the 1990's.

TABLE 2
**HILLSDALE COUNTY AND LOCAL
POLITICAL JURISDICTIONS - POPULATION (1970-2000)
AND PROJECTIONS TO 2020**

Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Hillsdale Co.	37,171	42,071	43,431	46,527	51,625	57,890
Cities						
Hillsdale	7,728	7,432	8,170	8,233	8,414	8,599
Litchfield	1,167	1,353	1,317	1,458	1,579	1,710
Reading	1,125	1,203	1,127	1,134	1,137	1,140
Townships						
Adams	1,275	1,695	1,827	1,984	2,351	2,786
Allen	986	1,235	1,211	1,406	1,606	1,834
Amboy	844	936	978	1,224	1,408	1,619
Cambria	1,880	2,326	2,372	2,546	2,846	3,182
Camden	914	1,020	1,114	1,152	1,252	1,361
Fayette	852	943	907	1,013	1,077	1,145
Hillsdale	1,608	1,873	1,786	1,965	2,110	2,266
Jefferson	2,290	2,920	3,083	3,141	3,531	3,969
Litchfield	2,183	1,027	957	969	973	977
Moscow	1,093	1,396	1,353	1,445	1,600	1,771
Pittsford	1,548	1,550	1,595	1,600	1,618	1,636
Ransom	860	949	911	982	1,028	1,076
Reading	1,194	1,653	1,768	1,781	2,073	2,413
Scipio	1,173	1,352	1,479	1,822	2,157	2,554
Somerset	1,886	3,142	3,416	4,277	6,086	8,660
Wheatland	1,074	1,255	1,225	1,258	1,330	1,406
Woodbridge	1,026	1,115	1,160	1,337	1,472	1,621
Wright	1,219	1,295	1,228	1,198	1,197	1,196
Villages						
Allen	385	266	201	225	234	243
Camden	405	420	482	550	616	689
Jonesville	2,081	2,172	2,283	2,337	2,433	2,533
Montgomery	404	408	388	386	385	384
North Adams	574	565	512	514	513	512
Waldron	564	570	581	590	599	608

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and Region 2 Planning Commission

Race

Hillsdale County is a very homogeneous community with over 97% of its population white. By comparison, the state's 2000 breakdown by race was 80.2% white, 14.2% black, 1.8% Asian, 0.6% American Indian, 1.3% other.

**TABLE 3
RACE
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000**

RACE	POPULATION	% OF POPULATION
White	45,391	97.6
Black	201	0.4
American Indian	163	0.4
Asian	154	0.3
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	6	0.0
Other	158	0.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Age/Sex

Of the total County population of 46,527 persons in 2000, 23,151 (50%) were male and 23,376 (50%) were female. The median age of the population was 36.5 years. Almost 30% of the population was under the age 19 while over 13% were 65 years and over. The age structure is displayed in the following table.

**TABLE 4
POPULATION BY AGE/SEX
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000**

AGE	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
0-4	3,006	6.5
5-9	3,241	7.0
10-14	3,734	8.0
15-19	3,851	8.3
20-24	3,069	6.6
25-34	5,365	11.5
35-44	7,119	15.3
45-54	6,348	13.6
55-59	2,471	5.3
60-64	2,131	4.6
65-74	3,409	7.3
75-84	2,077	4.5
85+	706	1.5
Total	46,527	100
Median Age	36.5	

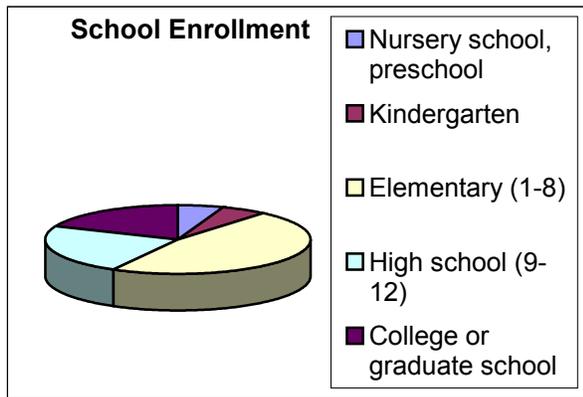
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Education

In 2000, there were 12,176 persons 3 years and older that were enrolled in school.

The following table summarizes school enrollment in Hillsdale County.

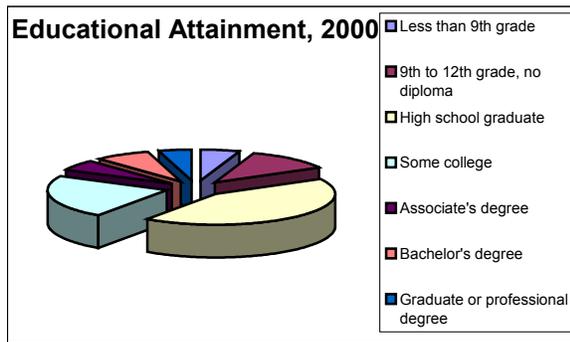
TABLE 5
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
Hillsdale County, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

In 2000, 29,595 persons were 25 years and over. Of those persons, 83.1% were high school graduates or higher, and 12% had a bachelor's degree or higher. The state average was 83.4% and 21.8% respectively. The following table summarizes the County's educational attainment.

TABLE 6
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Hillsdale County, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Education is one of the keys to future progress of Hillsdale County. Schools in Hillsdale County provide an outstanding education that will be needed to link future generations with an industrially based economy. Today, education of our youth often begins before kindergarten. A number of pre-school opportunities are available to Hillsdale County residents.

Head Start and Michigan School Readiness programs provide a pre-school service at no cost to those who qualify for these services. To be eligible for Head Start, 90% of the families enrolled must meet the U.S. Health and Human Services Poverty guidelines. Under the Michigan School Readiness Program, at least 51% of the families must meet income eligibility requirements to qualify for a reduced or free lunch program. Head Start sites are located in Hillsdale, Reading, Jonesville, Waldron, and Camden. Michigan School Readiness sites are located in Hillsdale, Jonesville, Waldron, and Camden.

Pre-school opportunities are also available from the private sector. Private opportunities on a fee basis are as follows: Karen Jenkins, Teaching Learning Center, Step By Step, Marilyn Reigle, Mary Randall, and Kids Korner.

Currently, Hillsdale County has ten public school districts, including two public school academies, plus several private or denominational schools. The ten public school districts are united through the Hillsdale County Intermediate Schools District, which acts as a liaison between state and local districts as well as a provider of some special education and vocational education services. All of the public school districts are governed by elected Boards of Education, with a superintendent of schools

hired by each board. The public school districts and their administrative offices are listed on the following page.

- Camden Frontier Schools
K-12
4971 Montgomery
Camden, MI 49232
(517) 368-5255
- Hillsdale Community Education
K-12 & Alternative Ed
30 Norwood
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-4401
- Hillsdale County Intermediate Schools
310 W. Bacon
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-0990
- Jonesville Community Schools
K-12 & Alternative Ed
136 Concord Street
Jonesville, MI 49250
(517) 849-7304
- Litchfield Community Schools
K-12
210 Williams
Litchfield, MI 49252
(517) 542-2388
- North Adams-Jerome Public Schools
K-12
4555 Knowles Road
North Adams, MI 49262
(517) 287-4214
- Pittsford Area Schools
K-12
9304 East Hamilton
Pittsford, MI 49271
(517) 523-3481

- Reading Community Schools
K-12
519 West Elm
Reading, MI 49274
(517) 283-2166
- Waldron Area Schools
K-12
13380 S Waldron Rd
Waldron, MI 49288
(517) 286-6251

The above school districts participate in a “school of choice” program that allows any student to attend any school district in the county. The public school academies are:

- Sauk Trail Academy
K-8
160 Mechanic
Hillsdale, MI
(517) 437-7990
- Will Carleton Academy
K-10
2001 W. Hallett Rd
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-2000

In addition to the public school districts, several private or denominational schools are available. They are as follows:

- Bird Lake Bible
K-12
7880 South Bird Lake Road
Osseo, MI 49266
(517) 567-8635
- Freedom Farm Christian Schools
9400 Beecher Road
Pittsford, MI 49271
(517) 523-3426

- Hillsdale Academy
K-8
100 Barber
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-0145
- Manor Foundation
K-12
115 East Jonesville
Jonesville, MI 49250
(517) 849-2151
- Prattville Seventh Day
Adventist Church School
K-12
10040 Burt Road
Pittsford, MI 49271
(517) 383-2237

The Hillsdale County Intermediate School District offers special education services as does each public school district and the public school academy. Special education programming includes some of the following:

Learning Disabled - Programs for children who have average intelligence but have some identifiable learning problem that requires adaptations in curriculum or teaching methodology.

Emotionally Handicapped - Students who possess the ability to learn, but must learn at a slower pace than usual.

Trainable Mentally Impaired - Students who can be trained to live and work in society, but may never acquire the more complex skills necessary for skilled work.

Multiply Impaired - Students who have more than one educational handicap.

Autistically Impaired - Students who meet the complex criteria for the label autism. These students have difficulty relating to others in real world situations. Autistic people range widely in abilities and achievements.

Physical And Other Health Impaired - Students who have a physical handicap that demands special services or curriculum adaptations.

Severely Mentally Impaired - Students whose mental impairment prohibits them from learning or being trained to perform successfully in society.

The Intermediate School district also offers specialized vocational training programs.

Adult education is available in Hillsdale County for those who have not finished high school or want enrichment courses to improve themselves or their skills. Hillsdale Community Schools offer the following opportunities:

1. High school completion
2. Preparation for and taking of the G.E.D.
3. Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Post high school education classes are available through Hillsdale College, Jackson Community College - Hillsdale or Jackson Centers, Spring Arbor College, and Michindoh Conference Center.

The ten public school districts in Hillsdale County are presently using 22 school buildings. Only two of these buildings have been built relatively recently. The remaining buildings are all over twenty years old. Five buildings are over 50 years old. All of the districts have made good

efforts to keep their facilities in good repair, but modernization is needed. Litchfield, Reading, North Adams, Camden Frontier, and Hillsdale have all been involved in remodeling projects within the past 10 years.

SCHOOL DISTRICT MAP

**TABLE 7
AGE OF FACILITIES BY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

SCHOOL	AGE OF BUILDINGS														TOT.	
	5 YEARS OR LESS		6-10 YEARS		11-15 YEARS		16-20 YEARS		21-25 YEARS		26-50 YEARS		OVER 50 YEARS			
	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.	ELEM.	SEC.		
CAMDEN-FRONTIER												1	1			2
HILLSDALE												1	1	2	1	5
JONESVILLE		1										1			1	3
LITCHFIELD										1	1					2
NORTH ADAMS			1										1			2
PITTSFORD									1				1			2
READING									1						1	2
WALDRON									1	1						2
ISD									1							1
SAUK TRAIL							1									1

Source: Hillsdale County ISD

NOTES:

- Camden Frontier has remodeled some of its building within the last 5 years.
- Hillsdale has built an addition to Gier Elementary within the last 7 years.
- Jonesville has built a new alternative high school within the last 3 years.
- Jonesville will be in their new high school in 2003.
- Litchfield is in the process of remodeling at the High School.
- North Adams has remodeled and added on to the High School building within the last 10 years.
- Reading has remodeled the High School and Elementary School within the last 5 years.
- The ISD also has a Business Technology Center located in the Hillsdale Industrial Park.

Most of the school buildings in Hillsdale County are quite old (over 25 years) and in need of remodeling. Some buildings, usually those over 50 years, are in need of replacement.

TABLE 8
**HILLSDALE COUNTY SCHOOLS
 10 YEAR ENROLLMENTS**

DISTRICT	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
ADULT EDUCATION	180.63	194.03	195.72	197.98	99.00	67.60	19.60	664.00	28.60	
CAMDEN FRONTIER	726.00	774.30	747.00	725.10	739.00	763.40	774.99	2061.17	667.97	690.00
HILLSDALE COMM.	2502.10	2425.20	2428.90	2446.00	2406.00	2316.48	2250.47	1266.70	1981.13	1867.00
JONESVILLE	1162.90	1194.60	1201.60	1202.80	1180.00	1179.83	1197.64	*****	1302.25	1302.00
LITCHFIELD	567.00	579.50	578.00	588.10	631.20	646.62	660.16		604.97	594.00
NORTH ADAMS	586.00	612.00	598.00	584.40	608.12	622.97	620.97		584.00	568.00
PITTSFORD	820.00	852.00	888.40	867.60	851.80	831.27	845.00		818.97	770.00
READING	949.00	973.00	995.00	1004.00	1025.60	1044.36	1060.46		1037.22	1062.00
WALDRON	503.50	498.50	507.00	477.00	462.00	499.44	466.14		456.00	475.00
MANOR	82.00	94.00	95.00	90.00	92.00	93.00	93.00			
NEW HOPE	93.00	90.00	76.00	88.00	99.00	103.00	108.00			
AMISH	130.00	134.00	160.00	157.00	153.00	129.00	128.00			
BIRD LAKE	40.00	36.00	31.00	39.00	35.00	40.00	40.00			
FAITH MENNONITE	32.00	31.00	18.00	14.00	11.00	9.00	10.00			
FREEDOM FARM	94.00	94.00	106.00	107.00	120.00	113.00	101.00			
HILLSDALE ACADEMY	45.00	54.00	54.00	38.00	61.00	68.00	74.00			
ISD PROGRAMS	156.80	171.70	188.10	183.40	194.30	189.66	197.60			
ADVENTIST	9.00	8.00	7.00	9.00	8.00	4.00	6.00			
CHRISTIAN	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			
TOTALS	8,678.93	8,815.83	8,874.72	8,818.38	8,776.02	8,720.63	8,653.03			

Economy

Between 1995 and 2000, industry invested over 165 million dollars in Hillsdale County and created more than 1,350 industrial jobs. In 1999 alone, industries invested 21 million dollars in new facilities and equipment and created in excess of 100 new industrial jobs and 50 retail jobs for the local area. A loyal, hard working labor force contributes to the confidence that industry has in Hillsdale County and its people and industrial development is also supported by various local units of government.

Unlike many communities who seem to have homogeneous manufacturing based typically around the auto industry, manufacturing in Hillsdale County is mixed and well balanced between a number of different types of industries. That mix includes industries that manufacture: playground and sports equipment, automotive assemblies, gears and components, food products, instruments, electronic equipment, tools and many other products.

The advantages of industrial parks are numerous. Sites in industrial parks typically offer immediate access to paved roads, public water and sewer, natural gas, and heavy-duty electricity and telephone facilities. Hillsdale County has 5 industrial parks with all or some of these amenities. The largest of the industrial parks is the Hillsdale Industrial Park owned and developed by the City of Hillsdale. This 415-acre facility has lots ranging from 3 acres to 5.8 acres. The Litchfield Industrial Park is a 220-acre area owned and developed as an industrial park by the City of Litchfield. Lot sizes vary from 3 acres to 6.8 acres. The Jonesville Industrial Park is 115 acres in size and is owned and developed by the Village of Jonesville. Lots in this industrial park range from 3.9 acres to 6.6 acres. The Reading

Industrial Park is 80 acres owned by the City of Reading. Lot size varies depending on the purchaser's requirements. The Village of Camden owns an 83-acre industrial park where lots range from 1.5 acres to 13.9 acres. Detailed information about these industrial parks and facilities can be obtained by contacting the Hillsdale County Industrial Development Commission.

The following table shows that new industrial development has contributed significantly to the county's economy, both in terms of new investment and through payroll to the employees. Both contributions trickle down through the local economy many times providing opportunities for the retail and service sectors as well as additional tax revenues to the local units of government. Between 1990 and 1999, new industrial development added nearly 250 million dollars. This new investment resulted in the creation of 3,068 new jobs with a payroll of over 101 million dollars during the period.

**TABLE 9
INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT TEN-YEAR
SUMMARY
Hillsdale, County 2000**

Year	New Investment-\$	New Jobs	New Payroll-\$
1990	23,110,000	141	3,000,000
1991	16,700,000	305	5,000,000
1992	23,000,000	525	15,000,000
1993	25,150,000	351	7,500,000
1994	22,100,000	397	7,400,000
1995	33,000,000	571	12,000,000
1996	58,200,000	300	10,200,000
1997	23,100,000	230	5,000,000
1998	30,557,000	150	4,000,000
1999	20,000,000	98	3,140,320
TOTAL	254,940,800	3,068	72,240,320
ANNUAL AVERAGE	2,549,408	307	7,224,032

Source: Hillsdale County Industrial Development Commission

Industry is very important to Hillsdale County. Over 43% of the civilian labor-force (24,900) in mid-2000 was employed in the industrial sector producing both durable and non-durable goods. Industry is important to the local economy because it traditionally offers higher paying jobs with more benefits than many other optional types of employment.

Wholesale and retail jobs do not traditionally pay as well as industrial employment, but is still necessary to provide services to the local population and businesses. Approximately 19% of the labor force was employed in the trade sector in 2000. Another 30% of the county's employment is made up of private services and government jobs. The

following table shows the County's 1999 labor force by industry.

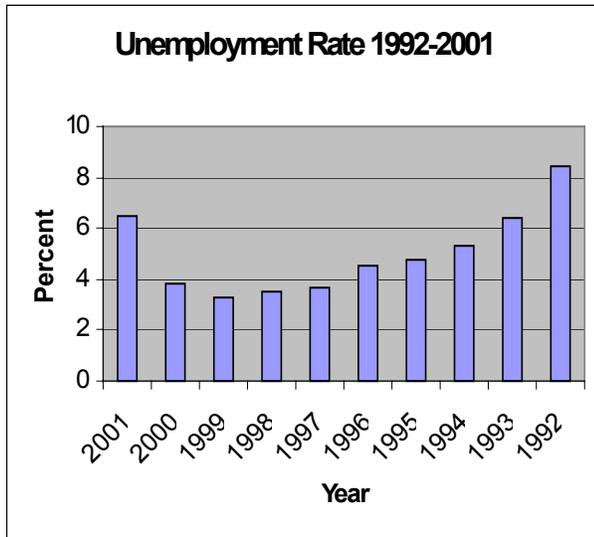
**TABLE 10
AREA LABOR STATISTICS
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000**

2001 Civilian Labor Force (Place of Residence)	24,900
2001 Employment	23,125
2001 Unemployment	1,450
2001 Rate	6.5
2000 Wage and Salary Employees (Place of Work)	16,575
Goods Producing Industries	7,675
Construction and Mining	450
Manufacturing	7,225
Durable Goods	5,750
Non-Durable Goods	1,475
Private Sector Service Industries	6,350
Transportation, Communication, and Utilities	300
Trade	3,100
Wholesale Trade	700
Retail Trade	2,425
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	350
Private Services	2,600
Government	2,550
Federal Government	100
State Government	75
Local Government	2,350

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Another factor indicating a healthy local economy is the unemployment rate. Unemployment dramatically declined during the decade of the 1990's. In 1991, the unemployment rate was 10.6%. By mid-decade, the rate had dropped to 5.0% and most recently has continued to decline to a level below 4%. In 2001, the unemployment rate had climbed back up to 6.5%.

**TABLE 11
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 1991 – 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999

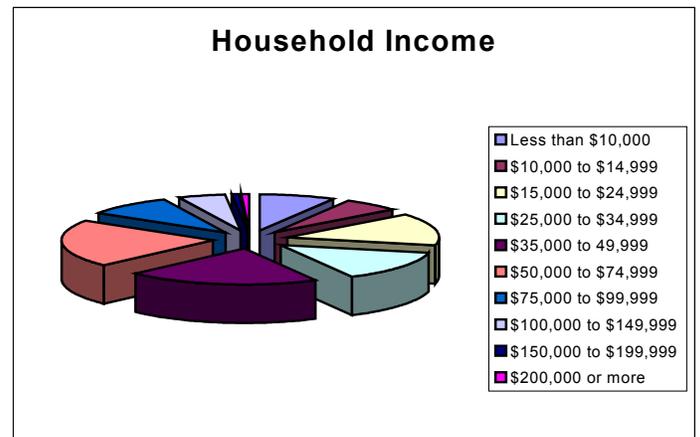
Even though the local economy is strong, healthy, and very diverse with low unemployment, population growth that contributes to satisfying the demand for the expanding industrial sector has been in the 35-65+ year age groups. Between 1990-1998, the county lost 7,183 persons in the 18-24 and the 25-34 age groups. This negative net migration has significant ramifications for the county's labor force. Younger people are moving out of the Hillsdale County area leaving individuals in the 35-54 year age categories to offset the out-migration of the youths.

Income

The 2000 Census indicates that the state's median income was \$44,667. In Hillsdale County, the median income was \$40,396, which is significantly less than the state's median. The County's per capita income was \$18,255 and the state's was 22,168. Even though the County's median income was lower than the state's median, the County's rate of poverty was slightly less

overall than the state's rate. The state's poverty rate was 7.4%, while in Hillsdale County it was 5.2%.

**TABLE 12
INCOME
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

In 2000, the US Census Bureau estimated that 7.4% of the county's population was living in poverty. The percentage was higher for the 65 years and older age category. Approximately 8.6% of this age group was considered living in poverty in 2000. The Census Bureau's definition of poverty involves a complex formula that considers the household size, the percentage of income required for food and income deficits, to name a few. While the definition is complex, the reasons for it and the affect on the people are also very complex and interrelated.

Health

The cost of health care continues to consume a large portion of the community's annual earnings. While complete data is not available, rough estimates have been prepared for planning purposes based upon Medicare and Medicaid data with extrapolations for the private sector based upon the other two data

sets. In 1990's, Health Management Associates estimated that Hillsdale County total health care service equaled \$2,277.97 per person.

Medical Facilities

Health services are an important asset to the Hillsdale community to insure proper physical and dental care of its citizens

Hillsdale Community Health Center (HCHC) is a 79-bed acute care facility providing inpatient and outpatient health care services to Hillsdale and Hillsdale County, and has a 21-bed, long-term care facility. Of those admitted to the hospital, 45% are from the City of Hillsdale and 50% are from Hillsdale County.

HCHC has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of patients treated at the hospital. In the 1990's, there were 1,672 admissions and 55,000 outpatient visits; today those numbers are 2,776 and 92,000 respectively. Emergency room visits are currently 23,300 annually, which are nearly 4% over the same period as last year.

Over the last few years, a strong recruiting effort and the development of a Staff Development Plan has brought more Primary Care physicians and specialists into the community. This has resulted in fewer patients being transferred to other hospitals; thus, family members do not have to travel outside the County.

Housing

During the 2000 Census, 20,189 total housing units were listed in Hillsdale County. Of this total, 17,335 units were occupied. Of that total, most were single-family units (76.8%).

Rental units fill a need for housing, particularly for those families with lower income levels. The median monthly rental is \$443 with a vacancy rate of 5.8%. A rate of 10% is desirable to ensure adequate mobility of the population. The following table summarizes the vacancies of subsidized housing in Hillsdale County.

TABLE 13
SUBSIDIZED APARTMENT COMPLEXES
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 1997

Apartment Complex	# of Units	Children ?	Vacancy	Wait List	Rent
Hillsdale Garden	88	Yes	0	50	30%
Spring Meadow	40	Yes	7	-	30%
Hillsdale Place	120	Yes	3	0	30%
Beacon Place	79	Yes	0	50	30%
Hilltop	60	Yes	2	Yes	30%
Friendship Village	40	No	0	Yes	30%
Meadowlands	36	Yes	7	Yes	30%
Parkwood	60	Yes	1	No	30%
Riverside	48	Yes	0	No	30%
Waldron Manor	24	Yes	4	Yes	30%
East Point Camden	20	Yes	4	Yes	30%
Village Green Apartments	96	yes	0	yes	30%
Walnut Junction	24	Yes	4	No	30%

Source: Community Action Agency, 1997

In 2000, the homeowner vacancy rate was 1.6%. Considering the relatively low vacancy rate for rental and owner occupied housing, construction of new units is one way

for housing to keep up with the increasing population. Construction of new housing units since 1990 has primarily been in the form of single-family dwellings. The following table summarizes the number of building permits countywide between 1990-2001. Much of the new construction has taken place outside the City of Hillsdale.

TABLE 14
BUILDING PERMIT DATA
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 1990-2001

Year	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Yearly Total
1990	139	69	208
1991	232	1	233
1992	201	99	300
1993	181	9	190
1994	239	4	243
1995	219	0	219
1996	257	0	257
1997	182	6	188
1998	286	0	286
1999	307	8	315
2000	263	68	331
2001	253	9	262
Total	2,759	273	3,032

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The following table on displays the total housing units played for each local unit of government. Note the number of communities who have a relatively low homeowner vacancy rate. This might suggest a demand for new single-family homes.

TABLE 15
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000

Location	Total Housing Units	% of County Total	Rank	Homeowner Vacancy Rate	Rental Vacancy Rate
Adams Township	1,036	5.0	7	1.3	5.8
Allen Township	708	3.5	12	1.6	8.8
Allen Village	93	0.5	26	--	7.1
Amboy Township	631	3.1	14	1.7	2.4
Cambria	1,264	6.3	5	1.7	4.2
Camden	872	4.3	9	2.0	7.2
Camden Village	214	1.1	23	3.5	7.5
Fayette Township	1,387	6.9	4	1.8	6.8
Hillsdale City	3,274	16.2	1	1.5	5.5
Hillsdale	805	4.0	10	0.7	2.7
Jefferson	1,589	7.9	3	1.0	12.5
Jonesville Village	975	4.8	8	2.1	6.0
Litchfield City	604	3.0	15	3.3	5.0
Litchfield	382	1.9	20	1.8	10.3
Montgomery	148	0.7	25	2.7	12.1
Moscow	554	2.7	16	2.0	--
North Adams	215	1.1	23	0.6	4.8
Pittsford	611	0.3	27	1.2	5.7
Ransom	353	1.8	21	1.7	8.6
Reading City	432	2.1	19	2.0	4.5
Reading	1,147	5.7	6	1.4	7.1
Scipio Township	660	3.3	13	0.8	2.7
Somerset	2,161	10.7	2	1.7	7.6
Waldron Village	249	1.2	22	1.8	--
Wheatland	497	2.5	17	1.5	1.8
Woodbridge	466	2.3	18	3.1	9.1
Wright Township	776	3.8	11	1.4	--
Hillsdale County	20,189	100*	--	1.6	5.8

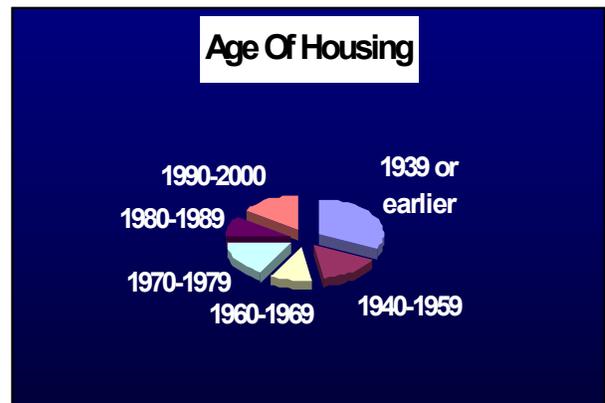
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

* Totals greater than 100% due to rounding errors.

In the following table, the dwellings recorded by the Census Bureau were tabulated showing the number of housing units by period.

In Hillsdale County, 32.1% of the housing stock was built in 1939 or earlier. By comparison, the state average was 16.9%. The County has a relatively high percentage of its housing stock more than 50 years old. When considering the age of the housing stock with the median income for the County, housing is an issue that may need addressing in the future.

TABLE 16
AGE OF HOUSING
HILLSDALE COUNTY, 2000



Source: US Census Bureau

TABLE 17
SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC HOUSING ISSUES

STRATEGIC ISSUE	HILLSDALE	JONESVILLE	LITCHFIELD	READING	WALDRON
<i>Lack of Subdivisions</i> -Community lacks buildable lots in subdivisions. Only available resources are infill lots.		X		X	X
<i>Housing production</i> -Community is not producing housing at levels consistent with projected demand.	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Shortage of Higher Value Housing</i> -Community has an unmet demand for higher value housing for professional and managerial staff.	X	X			
<i>Affordable New Housing</i> -Community is not producing housing that is affordable to production staff and low/moderate income households.	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Preservation of Existing Housing Stock</i> -Sufficient amount of housing requires some form of moderate rehabilitation.	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Lack of Development Capacity</i> -Community lacks adequate numbers of builders and developers involved in the housing market.	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Intergovernmental Cooperation</i> -Community has disagreements or competition with townships on annexation and growth issues.	X				
<i>Transitional Housing</i> -Community has a need for transitional housing for new arrivals in the community arranging permanent housing.	X				
<i>Economic Constraints</i> -Low value of rents makes construction of higher cost housing economically unfeasible or difficult.	X	X		X	X
<i>Downtown Development</i> -Community is addressing revitalization of town center districts.	X	X	X	X	
<i>Lack of Rental Housing</i> -Community has a significant lack of available rental housing. Available rentals are marginal in condition.	X	X			
<i>Community Value and Marketing</i> -Other non-housing actions are needed to add value to community and attract economic and other growth. Marketing efforts may be needed to promote community as a place to live.	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Hillsdale County, 1998

Transportation - Roads

The variety of soils and topography that makes Hillsdale County unique, also affect the road network. From the flat lands of the south to the rolling hills in the north, the soils that make up the composition of the landscape varies as much as the topography itself.

Historically the road network in Hillsdale County was built to accommodate two-ton trucks. Development should be encouraged in areas where the least amount of damage will be done and where roads can be built or improved with minimal costs.

The Hillsdale County Road Commission has almost 1,202 miles of roads under its jurisdiction and responsibility for maintenance. Of this, 50.3% (604.94 miles) are paved and 49.7% (597.75 miles) are gravel. The Functional Road Classification Map on the following page shows the road network in Hillsdale County. Of the 604.94 miles of paved road, 365 miles are classified as primary roads and 239.94 miles are local roads. Paved primary roads are important for planning purposes because they receive a higher priority for maintenance than do local roads. They are also generally designed to handle larger volumes of traffic. Most of the gravel roads are classified as local roads.

Transportation – Public Transit

The City of Hillsdale's Dial-A-Ride has been in operation since 1975. Today, the service provides an average of 300 rides per day from points within the city limits. Buses are available on a

call-in basis. Most are wheelchair accessible.

Efforts are being made to evaluate the current system with the goal of improving ridership, times of day, and routes.

Transportation - Air Service

The Hillsdale Municipal Airport servicing the greater Hillsdale County area opened in its current location in 1963. It is owned and funded by the City of Hillsdale. The airport is licensed by the State of Michigan as a General Utility Airport with one east/west runway 4,000 feet in length and 75 feet in width. The last economic impact study completed for the airport estimated that the level of activity at the Hillsdale Municipal Airport contributed in excess of \$800,000 annually to the local economy. Enhancing safety and utilization of the airport has been the focus of management

**FUNCTIONAL ROAD
CLASSIFICATION
MAP**