

**ALAMO TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN**  
2010 Review

In 2010 the Alamo Township Planning Commission completed its periodic review of the 1998 Alamo Township Land Use Plan, last reviewed in 2003. The review occurred through Commission meetings as well as through the work and research of several Planning Commission subcommittees. The 2009-2010 Planning Commission consisted of the following individuals:

Paula Baker  
Karen DeVries  
Ron Feniger  
Helen Goyings  
Belden Smith  
Al Sweitzer  
David Veenstra

Appreciation is expressed to the following individuals for providing information contained in this review.

Travis Bartholomew (General Superintendent, Kalamazoo County Road Commission)  
Kim Finkbeiner (Supervisor, Land Water & Wastewater Section, Environmental Health Division, Kalamazoo County Health & Human Services Department)  
Lotta Jarnefelt (Director, Kalamazoo County Department of Planning & Community Development)  
Kalamazoo Chamber of Commerce (website)  
Heather Nicholas (Groundwater Specialist, Land Water & Waste Section, Environmental Health Division, Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department)  
Garilyn Sportel-Bogard (Clerk, Alamo Township)  
Jon Start (Executive Director, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study)  
Terry Tilley (Area Superintendent, Kalamazoo County Road Commission)

The Planning Commission extends its appreciation to the Township Deputy Supervisor, Barbara Fisher, for the provision of research, data analysis, drafting documents and general staff support.

The review slated for completion in 2013 will include information from the 2010 census and permit a more thorough and longitudinal analysis than was available for this review. Still, the 2010 review demonstrates that the 1998 Land Use Plan remains relevant for the future development of the Township and existing patterns of development remain consistent with those set forth in the 1998 Land Use Plan. The 2010 review maintains the focus on the community envisioned for 2020.

**Basic Studies: Regional Location** (1998 Land Use Plan, page 7)

Patterns of growth in the surrounding regions have had an increasing influence and impact on the Township. The M-89 corridor through Plainwell-Otsego has developed markedly since 1998 creating a commerce alternative to the Kalamazoo-Portage metropolitan area. The under-construction casino in Wayland is anticipated to have an impact though it is unclear to what degree and in what form this may take. It is additionally contended that the greater Grand Rapids influence has grown as local jobs have become scarcer and longer-distance commuting becomes more common. Additionally, vibrant commerce, education, entertainment and the arts have made Grand Rapids a destination point.

**Basic Studies: Existing Land Use** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 9 – 12 & 2003 Review)

The Royal Estates Mobile Home Park (located to the north of the Ravine Road/D Avenue intersection) previously reported that density would increase from 162 lots/homes to 285 shortly after 2003. Although space exists, the planned expansion did not occur and there are no current plans for expansion. Public recreation areas listed in this section continue with the exception of the Slide-a-Way water park/mini-golf/go-cart establishment which is no longer in business.

The residential lot size in the Agricultural district of the Township is reflective of the agricultural roots of the Township. The size was designed to preserve agricultural land and prevent development that would create the type of sprawl depicted in Map 3 of the 1998 Land Use Plan. The ordinance has had an unintended consequence of requiring landowners to split their land in a fashion that leaves expanses of agricultural acreage buffered by multiple small lots along roadways, detracting from the rural appearance of the Township.

**Basic Studies: Environmental Resources** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 23 - 28)

*Mineral Resources*

The gravel mining operation on the south side of C Avenue has been mined out, closed and reclaimed. The north side of the C Avenue mining company’s holdings has been shuttered for future possible mining once its holdings on G Avenue are exhausted, closed and reclaimed (targeted for no later than 2038).

*Groundwater Resources*

Nitrates have been found in 183 water samples since 2004. Ten of the samples (9 wells) contained over the maximum concentration. Twenty contained levels between 7 and 10. Samples were not, generally, clustered in any one location of the Township. Sodium was detected in 330 samples with 110 representing more than 20 mg/l. There is no standard; however, the guideline of 20 mg/l is thought to be too low.

**Basic Studies: Future Population Growth** (1998 Land Use Plan, page 33 & 2003 Review)

Alamo Township joins many municipalities in the general and immediate vicinity to show declines in the projected population.

Table 10: Population Projections (2003 Review)

	1990	2000	2008	2009	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
2003 Review	3,276	3,820			4,454		5,194			
2010 Review			4,046	3,993	3,973	3,957	3,945	3,936	3,932	3,927

2010 figures provided by the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study.

**Basic Studies: Housing (Age of Housing)** (1998 Land Use Plan 36 – 37)

*Age of Housing*

Table 14: Township Residential Building Permits (1986 – 2009)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Single Family Units</b>	<b>Multiple Family Units</b>	<b>Total Units</b>
2009	4	0	4
2008	3	0	3
2007	6	0	6
2006	10	6	16
2005	18	4	22
2004	15	0	15
2003	28	0	28
2002	13	0	13
2001	14	0	14
2000	26	2	28
1999	1	0	1
1998	40	0	40
1997	26	0	26
1996	24	0	24
1995	16	0	16
1994	25	0	25
1993	18	0	18
1992	26	0	26
1991	25	0	25
1990	26	0	26
1989	14	4	18
1988	32	8	40
1987	25	0	25
1986	19	4	23
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>482</b>

**Basic Studies: Economy** (1998 Land Use Plan, page 38 & 2003 Review)

Reflecting a more regional approach, the chart included in the 1998 Land Use Plan has been expanded to regional employers. If a particular employer was listed in 1998, the number of employees is included in parenthesis followed by the rank in 1998).

Table 16: Top Employers in the Greater Kalamazoo County Region (2009)

<u>Employment Entity</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Product/Services</u>
Borgess Medical Center	5,300 (2,488 – #5)	Healthcare
Bronson Methodist Hospital	4,100 (2,670 – #3)	Healthcare
Western Michigan University	4,045 (2,666 – #4)	Education
Pfizer	3,200 (6,267 – #1)	Pharmaceuticals, chemicals, urethanes
Whirlpool	3,000	Major/portable home appliances
Perrigo	2,400	Pharmaceuticals
Denso	2,225	Automotive heating/cooling systems
Kalamazoo Public Schools	2,100 (2,100 – #6)	Education
Stryker	2,073	Surgical and hospital equipment
PNC (National City)	2,000 (2,922 – #2)	Banking and financial Services
Hart-Doyle-Inouye Center	1,805	Disposal services (Excess from military services)
Summit Polymers	1,616	Injection molded thermoplastics
Meijer	1,252 (2,100 – #7)	Retail, goods & household products
MPI	1,200	Toxicology – research lab
County of Kalamazoo	1,158 (1,100 – #10)	Government services
JBS Packerland	1,100	Beef packaging plant
Portage Public Schools	1,000	Education
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	1,000	Education

Source: Kalamazoo County Chamber of Commerce website

**Basic Studies: Infrastructure** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 39-42)

*Transportation*

In 2008, Kalamazoo County voters passed a countywide millage to support the Care-a-Van service which provides transportation services throughout the County on a pay-per-call basis.

Gravel roads constitute 5.49 miles in the Township rather than the 6.5 noted in the 1998 Land Use Plan. The Township is responsible for 38.59 miles of local roads. Four (4) portions of Township roads were rated as “poor” in road studies completed by the Kalamazoo County Road Commission in January 2010. (A section of Hart Drive between 6<sup>th</sup> and Owen Drive, F Avenue between 6<sup>th</sup> and Far Hills, a section of B between 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets and 12<sup>th</sup> Street between C and AB Avenue (shared with Cooper Township). Twelve additional roads or road segments were determined to be in fair condition and require structural improvements to prevent failure. Eighty-two (82%) of persons responding to the 2009 community survey rated road repair as important (top 3 ratings of a possible 7); 52% rated road repair as very important (top 2 ratings of a possible 7). Respondents to the 2010 survey noted support for a millage to repair roads (51% to 49%).

## *Utilities*

### Electricity

Consumers Energy practices a power line tree timing rotation that has increased reliability of the power supply during severe weather. A substation was built in 2005 that has improved service to the northeast section of the Township.

### Water and Sewer

Kalamazoo City Water was brought to the corner of H Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street in 2006 and included lying of dry, inactive sewer lines. In 2007, the Kalamazoo City Water line extended to the Alamo Township boundary when water was extended to the corner of D Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

### Cell Phone Towers

There are three towers in the Township with approval having been issued for two additional towers to serve the area.

**Basic Studies: Community Facilities** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 42-44 & 2003 Review [Recreation only])

### *Public School System*

An addition to Alamo Elementary School was completed in 2006 adding 2 classrooms and 2 small rooms as well as playground improvements. Although not residing in the Township, a new Otsego High School began service in the fall of 2007. The former high school building became the Otsego Middle School, and the previous middle school building began use as Washington Street Elementary. The Plainwell school district completed one capital improvement project and is underway with a second since the last review. Upgrades were made and are planned for all buildings, technology improvements were made, a new administration building was constructed, and a new auditorium is underway. None of the actual buildings are located within Alamo Township.

### *Township Hall*

In 2007, office space for the clerk and deputy supervisor was added to that of the Supervisor with the building department being added in 2008. Office hours were tripled.

### *Fire Protection and Rescue*

An addition to the apparatus bay was completed in 2004 adding 1,200 square feet to the fire station. As of 2009, the Alamo Township Fire Department has 23 firefighters (all Medical First Responders) and one (1) radio operator. Current fire and rescue equipment includes:

- 2007 Ford Expedition #151 – Medical First Response Unit
- 2003 Piece Engine #111 – 1,000 gallon capacity with 1,250 gallons per minute pump
- 1990 Piece Engine #121 – 1,000 gallon capacity with 1,250 gallons per minute pump
- 1991 International/McCoy Miller #181 – Medium Duty Rescue
- 1996 International/U.S. Tank #161 – 3,000 gallon tanker with 1,250 gallons per minute pump
- 1987 Chevrolet Brush Truck #171 – 200 gallon capacity with 250 gallons per minute pump

The Department has instituted mutual aid agreements for the benefit of Alamo Township and surrounding communities. Response time has been cut to an average of 7.94 minutes. The Department participates in a number of fire prevention/community activities for the benefit of the Township.

### *Police Protection*

Alamo Township does not contract with the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department for dedicated/regular patrol service; however, the Sheriff's Department is a presence in the Township and responds to law enforcement needs. Residents responding to the 2009 Planning Commission survey ranked police protection as a high priority with 40% stating they would be willing to support a millage to permit the Township to contract for dedicated law enforcement protection.

### *Recreation*

An all volunteer Parks Committee was established in 2005 and became a Board when the Parks Ordinance was established in 2007. The largest organized user of the DE Avenue Township Park, Little League, has expanded and improved the playing fields and through a working relationship with Trout Unlimited, Sand Creek has been rehabilitated for trout. Two maintained walking trails (1.5 total miles) were established (Rector [2006] and Stoneburner [2007]). A large, pedestrian bridge with observation deck was constructed in 2007 to connect the north and south sections of the park over Sand Creek. As a result of the Consent Judgment entered into to settle a lawsuit, the Township will gain a minimum of 60 additional acres of parkland. Land on C Avenue will be deeded to the Township in 2010 and 40 acres will be deeded to the Township following the close of the G Avenue mining operation (slated for 2038). Additionally, \$10,000 is provided on an annual basis under the Consent Judgment to an endowment fund to ensure funding for Township parks in perpetuity.

### *Library*

A new eco-friendly library was constructed (in Otsego) and opened in 2009 following the approval of a millage in 2008.

### *Cemeteries*

The largest of Alamo's three cemeteries, Alamo Center, was most recently expanded in 2007 (adding 288 plots to the northwest addition) and its main road rebuilt in 2008. Additional capacity at Green Bauer is available should expansion be necessary. The Liberty Street Cemetery was most recently expanded in 2004 adding 256 plots.

In June of 2009, the Planning Commission invited all Alamo Township residents to provide input through the use of a survey mailed to each household and business. The 2009 survey was sent to 1,643 residents with 209 households/businesses responding. The survey included questions from the 1998 survey to permit comparisons and also asked for several more contemporary responses. The results of the survey are represented below.

**How long have you lived or operated a business in the Township?**

YEARS	NUMBER	%	1990 %
1 - 5	23	11.3	24
6 - 10	34	16.7	18
11 - 15	28	13.8	9
16 - 20	31	15.3	11
21 - 25	19	9.4	9
26 - 30	16	7.9	29
31 - 40	20	9.8	
41 - 50	17	8.4	
51 - 60	9	4.4	
61 - 70	3	1.5	
71 - 80	1	0.5	
80 +	2	1.0	
26+ years %		33.5	

**Which classification best describes your location.**

ZONE	NUMBER
Agriculture	35
Commercial/Industrial	2
Residential	167

**List the number of household members next to each applicable age range.**

	UNDER 18	18-25	26-45	46-65	OVER 66	TOTAL
# of Families	57	31	43	119	67	317
# of People	105	51	69	200	110	535
% of # of People	19.6	9.5	12.9	37.4	20.6	100%
% from 1990 <sup>1</sup>	26.7	6.6	31.4	22.4	12.9	100%
% from 2000 <sup>1</sup>	28.2	3.3	25.8	27.2	15.5	100%

<sup>1</sup>Caution should be used in forming opinions: 1990/2000 data was from the census rather than a sample; age ranges, across years, are not exact. Households for 1990 were noted as 1,129; 1,378 for 2000 and 1,610 households are listed in the Township for 2009.

Please rank the following items in order of importance to you with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the least. (All respondents did not rank each area and may have used a ranking number more than once.)

RANK	AGRICULTURE	COMMERCIAL	INDUSTRIAL	MULTI-FAMILY	SINGLE FAMILY
1	82	10	8	7	119
2	58	24	6	22	47
3	38	58	19	63	18
4	10	55	52	34	8
5	10	49	109	70	9

Please rank the following items in order of importance to you with 1 being the highest priority and 7 being the least. (All respondents did not rank each area and may have used a ranking number more than once.) “Yes”/”No” represent responses to voting “yes” on a millage.

RANK	CURBSIDE RECYCLING		FIRE & RESCUE		POLICE PROTECTION		RECREATION FACILITIES		ROAD REPAIR		MUNICIPAL SEWER		MUNICIPAL WATER								
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No							
1	15		126		42		5		65		4		5								
2	14		56		53		13		41		1		2								
3	31		14		37		22		61		4		3								
4	40	46	145	6	120	76	27	76	113	50	22	166	20	96	94	9	15	176	15	16	174
5	39		1		14		52		9		18		21								
6	8		0		9		15		3		67		52								
7	44		1		15		37		4		87		93								

Should the Township actively seek commercial/industrial development along the D Avenue corridor?

YES	NO
111	87

Are there other areas within the Township suitable for commercial/industrial development?

YES	NO
38	132

Representative of “Yes”: 6<sup>th</sup> Street and D Avenue & Ravine Road and D Avenue  
 Representative of “No”: People move here to be in a country setting.



Single family homes in residentially zoned areas (excluding plats and multi-family residential) require a lot size of 2.5 acres with a minimum of 250 feet of road frontage. Should the lot size:

LEVEL OF CHANGE	NUMBER
Increase	18
Stay the Same	130
Decrease	50

Representative of "Increase":

Retain rural atmosphere.

Representative of "Stay the same":

Retain rural atmosphere

Representative of "Decrease":

High degree of variety. Range:

Large lots waste land; 2 acres are too hard to mow.

Reason for living/doing business in the Township.

RANK	FAMILY IN AREA	NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS	POPULATION DENSITY	SCHOOL SYSTEM	TAX BASE	OTHER
1	51	91	56	28	41	18
2	12	57	57	28	27	1
3	25	27	44	32	40	6
4	28	15	20	45	29	7
5	32	8	15	36	41	8
6	30	1	1	16	9	4

Representative of "Other": location and rural atmosphere.

Would you like to see the rate of growth in the Township?

LEVEL OF GROWTH	NUMBER	%	1990 %
Accelerate	27	14.1	14
Stay the Same	97	50.5	49
Slow Down	68	35.4	37

Do you use the Alamo Township website ([www.alamotownship.org](http://www.alamotownship.org)) or read the Township newsletter?

	YES	Meets Needs	Does Not Meet Needs	NO	Meets Needs	Does Not Meet Needs
WEBSITE	68	52	6	102	1	10
NEWSLETTER	184	167	8	11		

**List the three most positive (367 total comments listed) and negative (269 total comments listed) characteristics about Alamo Township.**

**Most Representative of Positive:**

Country Living **(#1 from 1998)**  
Convenience/Location **(#2 from 1998)**  
People **(#3 from 1998)**  
Low taxes  
Schools  
Park/Kal-Haven Trail

**Most Representative of Negative:**

Trash/Blight/Junk **(#2 from 1998)**  
Leadership  
Gravel Mine  
Roads **(#1 from 1998 – roads/plowing)**  
**(#3 from 1998 – no access to library. Survey completed in 1/1996 before access was granted in 1997)**

## **ANALYSIS AND FUTURE PLANS**

The Goals and Objectives and the Future Land Uses contained in the 1998 Land Use Plan plus the 2009 community survey were diligently reviewed with the following results. A number of the objectives listed for each goal require modification in order to more fully reach the goal.

### **Community Character (Maintain the existing rural character of Alamo Township, which is primarily an agricultural and residential community)**

It is noted that blight has ranked prominently as a negative in both 1998 and 2009. Objective #1 is modified to read "Institute **effective** enforcement mechanisms to reduce blight including dilapidated buildings and accumulated refuse.

### **Agriculture (Conserve existing farmland in Alamo Township)**

Although all objectives remain relevant, the size of residential lot sizes in the Agricultural district has had an unintended impact creating a series of small lots along roadways, detracting from the rural appearance of the Township.

Add Objective: Consider alternate lot sizes in the Agricultural district.

### **Commercial and Industrial (Provide for commercial and industrial development as driven by the needs of the community).**

The objectives remain relevant but impractical for the long term sustainability of the Township due to the limited amount of land available for development. The 131/D Avenue corridor has long been designated the commercial center of and gateway into the Township. Capitalizing on land not currently developed and hidden from view provides an opportunity for sustainability while preserving the rural nature of the township.

Add objective: Designate the easternmost portion of Section 24 (west of 131) from E Avenue to D Avenue to encourage the development of commercial and industrial.

Add objective: Actively work to encourage development of commercial enterprises that complement the Township.