

## **ALAMO TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN 2013 REVIEW**

In 2013 the Alamo Township Planning Commission completed its periodic review of the 1998 Alamo Township Land Use Plan, last reviewed in 2010. The review was accomplished through Planning Commission meetings as well as the work and research of several Planning Commission subcommittees.

The 2013 review includes new information from the 2010 census as well as updated maps. The 2013 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 2013 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 continue to have an increasing influence and impact on the Township. The M-89 corridor through Plainwell-Otsego has developed markedly since 1998 creating a commerce alternative in the Kalamazoo-Portage metropolitan area. The construction and opening of the Gun Lake Casino in Wayland has also impacted traffic and commerce in Alamo Township. The greater Grand Rapids influence has grown as local jobs have become scarcer and longer distance commuting becomes more common. Additional housing development has increased as many households require a location situated in the Kalamazoo/Grand Rapids area to accommodate both working individuals.

### **Basic Studies: Existing Land Use** (1998 Land Use Plan, Pages 9-12, 2003 Review, 2010 Review)

The residential lot configuration in the Agricultural district of the Township is reflective of the agricultural roots of the Township. The size was designed to [reserve 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 intended consequence of requiring landowners to split their land in a fashion that leaves expanses of agricultural acreage buffered by multiple shallow lots along roadways.

### **Basic Studies: Environmental Resources** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 23-28; 2010 Review)

#### Mineral Resources

The gravel mining operation on the south side of C Avenue has been closed and a portion given to the Township for future use as a park. The gravel mining operation on the north side of G Avenue is operating at full capacity. The Township maintains an Operations Agreement with the owners of the gravel operation. Targeted closure and reclamation of this operation is set for no later than 2038.

**Basic Studies: Population** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 28-32, 2003 Review, 2010 Review)

Table 2: Total Population Alamo Township

Table 4: Alamo Population by Age and Sex

Table 7: Labor Force by Industry

Table 8: Commuting to Work

**Basic Studies: Housing** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 34-38, 2003 Review, 2010 Review)

Table 11: Housing Units in Structure

Table 12: Housing Tenure

Table 13: Age of Housing

Table 14: Residential Building Permits

Table 15: Median Home Values

**Basic Studies: Infrastructure** (1998 Land Use Plan, pages 38-42)

## TRANSPORTATION

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

Gravel roads constitutes 4.75 miles in the Township. The Township is responsible for 38.59 miles of local roads. Four (4) portions of Township roads were rated a “poor” in road studies completed by the Kalamazoo County Road Commission in January 2010. A section fo Hart Drive between 6<sup>th</sup> and Owen Drive, F Avenue between 6<sup>th</sup> and Far Hills – which has since been resurfaced, a section of B Avenue 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%) percent of persons responding to the 2009 community survey rated road repair as important (top 3 ratings of a possible 7); fifty-two (52%) percent 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%). The Alamo Township Board had appointed a citizen’s committee to review and prioritize future road improvements.

On May 13, 2013, upon recommendation from the Planning Commission, the Alamo Township Board approved Resolution 5-2013, a Resolution Approving the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Complete Streets Initiative as outlined in Public Act 134 and Public Act 135 of 2010. Resolution 5-2013 states that, to the extent feasible, the Township of Alamo will incorporate Complete Streets design considerations and practices as a routine part of infrastructure and planning implementation and supports the ease of use, safety, and accessibility for all users within the Township of Alamo. A certified copy of Resolution 5-2013 is attached and made a part of this Land Use Plan update.

## UTILITIES

### Electricity

Consumers Energy practices a power line tree trimming 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 G 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)

## PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Residents of Alamo Township are basically part of two public school systems – Otsego Public Schools and Plainwell Public Schools. Situated in Alamo Township is the Alamo Elementary School, part of the Otsego Public School system. Although not in Alamo Township, a new Otsego High School was completed in the fall of 2007. Plainwell Public Schools has recently completed two major capital improvement projects to their facilities including improvements to all buildings, technology improvements, a new administration building and a new auditorium. None of the Plainwell buildings are situated in Alamo Township.

In 2012 a log home with approximately 60 acres of forest, fields, ponds and marsh was bequeathed to the Kalamazoo Nature Center. The Nature Center will conduct high

school credit courses in the environment and conservation fields with students from the Otsego, Plainwell and Kalamazoo area.

## TOWNSHIP HALL

In 2011/2012 improvements were made to the Township Hall including office dividers for the Supervisor, Clerk and Treasurer. Offices for the Fire Chief and the Assessor were added to the rear of the Community Room/Township Board Room.

## FIRE PROTECTION AND RESCUE

As of 2013, the Alamo Fire Department has 19 firefighters (all Medical First Responders). 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 continues in mutual aid agreements for the benefit of Alamo Township and surrounding communities. 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

The Alamo Township Community Park is an eighty (80) acre facility located off DE Avenue, just west of Sixth Street. Twenty (20) acres of the Park are dedicated to Alamo Little League Baseball fields, (eight fields in all).

Over the past several years, a Park's Board was formed; and, as a result, many improvements have been completed. Two major, four-star trails have been completed. These are The Rector Trail and The Stoneburner Trail, which offer hiking, biking, and cross country skiing. They travel through hardwood forests and across Sand Creek.

Through a continuous joint effort between the Parks Board and Trouts Unlimited many trout structures have been constructed in Sand Creek. The Creek has also been stocked with brown trout.

Currently, two bridges (the main bridge being named Newt's Crossing, and the other, named Eagle Bridge) connect both trails.

Through joint efforts of private donations, Alamo Foundation donations and donations from Alamo Township citizens, a Pavilion was built to honor military personnel and first responders.

Phase I of a children's play area has been completed. This includes an elevated playhouse, sand play area, climbing wall, and two swing sets. Many more improvements are planned.

Another block of approximately twenty-six (26) acres, located on C Avenue just west of Sixth Street, has been earmarked for another Park, for future development.

## LIBRARY

A new eco-friendly library, Otsego Public District 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 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 expanded in 2004 adding 256 plots.

Total lots for the three cemeteries – 1,325

Total plots for the three cemeteries – 3,681

Total cremains lots for the three cemeteries – 48

As of December 31, 2013

## **Basic Studies: Maps (1998 Land Use Plan)**

All of the maps contained in the 1998 Land Use Plan were reviewed and updated if necessary. Maps 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 contain changes/updates which were approved by the Planning Commission at its regular meeting held November 5, 2012. Copies of these maps are attached and included in this review.

## **ANALYSIS AND FUTURE PLANS: 1998 Land Use Plan and 2010 Review**

**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 2010. For the purposes of this review it is recommended that “Effective” enforcement mechanisms be instituted to reduce blight including dilapidated buildings and accumulated refuse.

**Agricultural – Conserve existing farmland in Alamo Township**

The size of residential lots 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. For the purpose of this review it is recommended that consideration be given to 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 U.S. 131/D Avenue corridor has long been designated the commercial center of, and gateway into Alamo Township. Capitalizing on land not currently developed and hidden from view provides an opportunity for sustainability while preserving the rural nature of the Township.