

Clayton Township

Master Plan

Review & Update

2025

Clayton Township, Arenac County, Michigan

**Clayton Township
Arenac County, Michigan**

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Lapham Project # U-240359

The Clayton Township Planning Commission has undertaken this review and update of the township’s existing 2008 Clayton Township Master Plan. The 2008 plan remains in effect, but up to date information, analysis, and new recommendations are put forth here for at least the next five years.

Table of Contents

Vision.....2

Section 1 - Highlights of Land use Events Since 2008 Clayton Township Master Plan.....3

Section 2 - Physical Profile of Clayton Township4

Section 3 - Social and Economic Profile of Clayton Township7

Section 4 - 2024 Analysis and Determinations..... 11

Section 5 - Goals..... 13

Section 6 – Policies, Strategies and Actions..... 14

Section 7- Future Land Use 16

Vision

The Clayton Township Planning Commission sees the township staying much the same in the foreseeable future as it is now. A major portion of the township's land will be farmland, even if owned and worked by non-residents of the township. More owners of cottages or second homes may take up residence in the township. The population will likely increase with these homeowners and with the continuing influx of Amish newcomers. The Amish are also starting small businesses in the community. The only possible change not desired by the commission members is the installation of renewable energy systems. These systems now can cover hundreds of acres and would drastically change the landscape of the township.

Section 1 - Highlights of Land use Events Since 2008

Clayton Township Master Plan

Dairy farms (+/- 50) are now gone from the township and there are only four large dairy cow operations in the county.

Agriculture in the township is now crop farming.

Existing sawmills (3) have grown in size.

Bars, small convenience stores, gas stations are all gone.

ADS Auto Repair and Ezra Heatwole, shed builder, began business.

There is a large trucking company in the township

A new distillery is operating in the township.

Amish families have moved into the township and have started new businesses:

- Natural Log Home Products
- Yoder Warehouse and Distributing

Oil production sites are still operating in the north of the township.

There is more vehicle traffic through the township.

There are more campers at the campgrounds and more use of the Rifle River.

Although not a large source, the township milage of one mil has contributed to keeping township roads in good shape.

Both the masterplan and the zoning ordinance are being revised.

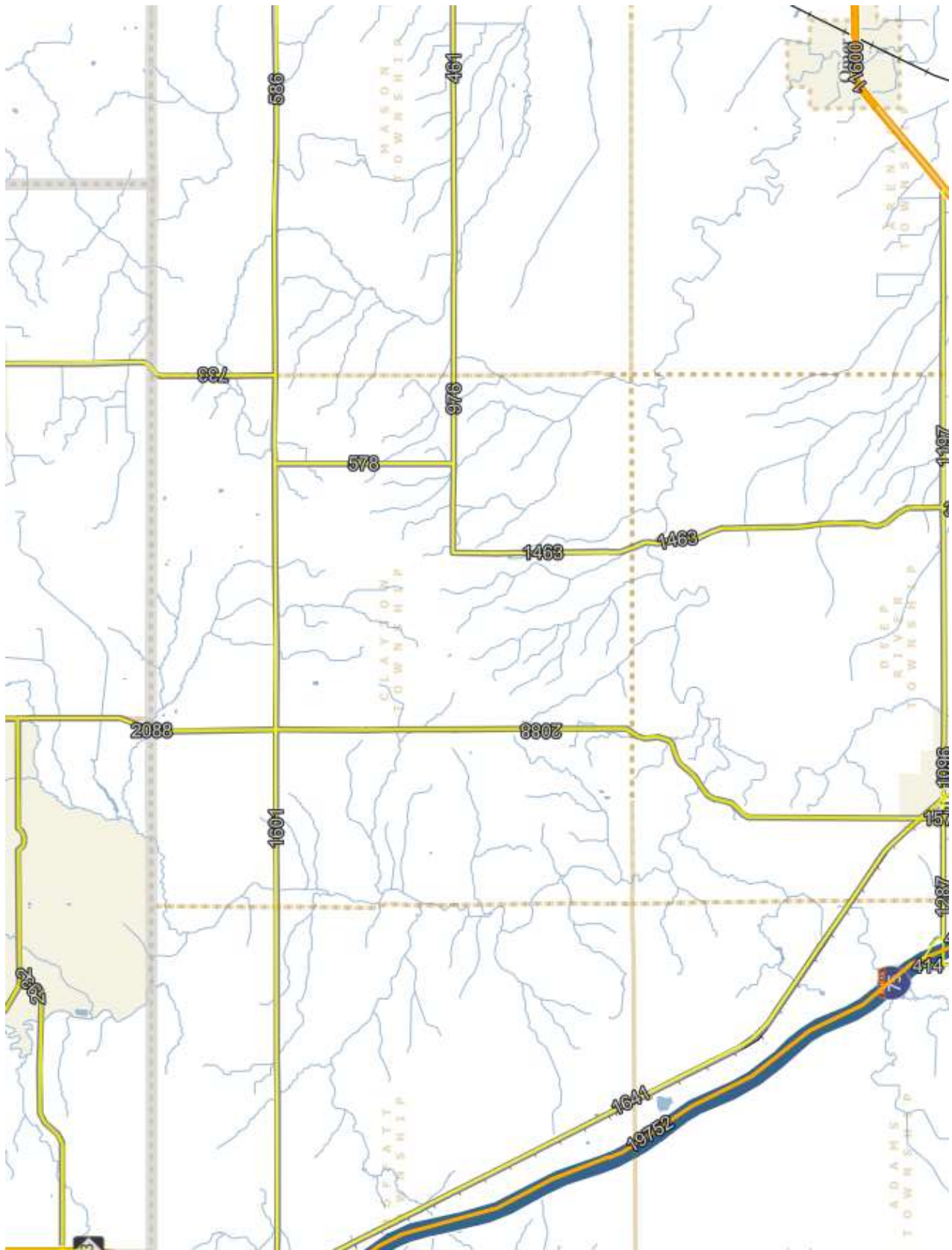
Section 2 - Physical Profile of Clayton Township

The climate in Clayton Township has remained about the same and is as stable as it was in 2008. In 2023, as reported in Standish by NOAA, the highest average daily temp was 77° F in July, six degrees cooler than in 2008. The average daily temperature in January, the coldest month, was 26° F which was 4° F warmer than in 2008.

The average rainfall in Arenac County in 2023 was 29.42 inches, 0.58 inches more than reported in 2008. Snowfall was approximately 40 inches, close to the established average of 43 inches per year.



Aerial Photo with Parcels



2023 MDOT Traffic AADT Map

The township collects one mil for township road repair and maintenance.

The Lake State Railway Company acquired all the lines of the Detroit and Mackinac Railroad in 1992. The railway now operates in the Saginaw Valley at the northeast quadrant of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and has lines running through Arenac County. The railroad moves large quantities of aggregate and limestone, as well as coal, grain, and chemical products. Some of the company's largest customers include Dow Chemical Company, S.C. Johnson & Son, Lafarge, ConAgra Foods, Archer Daniels Midland, Conrad Yelvington Distributors, and Consumers Energy.

There is an old unused Detroit and Mackinaw right-of-way that crosses near the north part of the township that may be of interest to renewable energy developers for grid access.

A review of the land use permits issued over the last five years shows little change from 2008 in overall use in the township. Permits have been largely for pole buildings, sheds and additions to homes, including decks and porches, and storage or farm buildings. Quite a number of cargo shipping containers are being brought into the township for storage structures. Roughly four new dwellings were built or moved into the township each year, and 1-2 new businesses per year were established. About forty total land use permits were issued each year.

Section 3 - Social and Economic Profile of Clayton Township

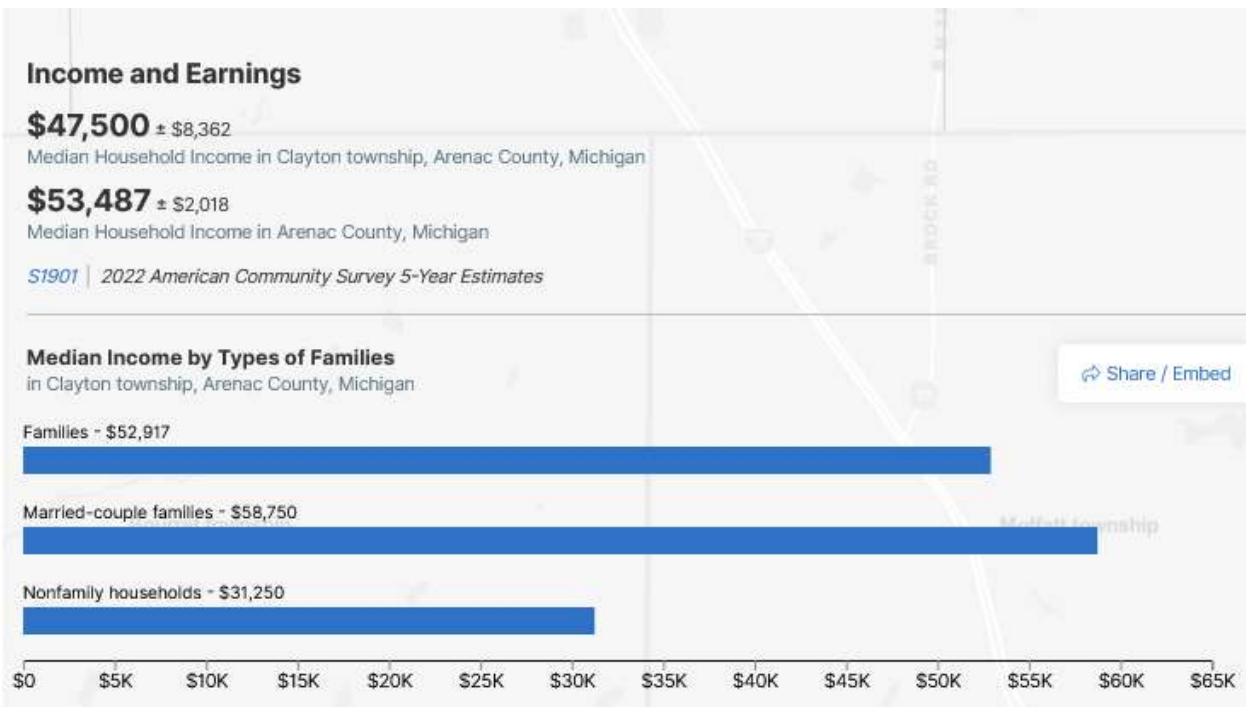
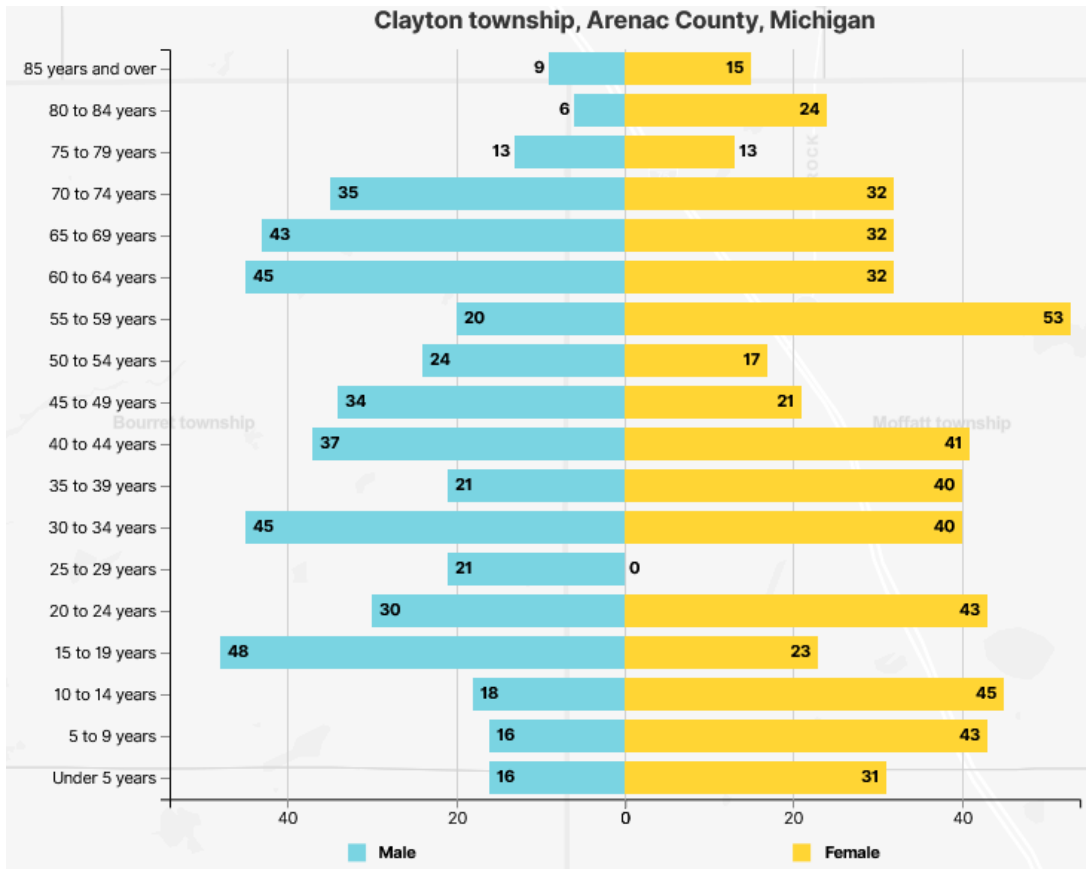
The population of Clayton Township has been declining over the last two decades as has the county's and region's. The numbers of housing units have also declined correspondingly. The population decreased from 1,097 in the 2010 Census to 1,001 in the 2020 Census. The median age in the township from the 2022 American Survey is 42.6 with 342 households and a median household income of \$47,500.

The economic base of the county includes recreation, agriculture, manufacturing and government employment. The largest economic sectors in the county are transportation and utilities, producing annually \$42,250,000 and \$78,553,000 respectively (2019). Manufacturing and health care are the two largest employers in the county, employing approximately nineteen percent and twenty percent of the workforce respectively. The largest employers in the county are the Standish- Sterling Community Schools, the MyMichigan Hospital, and First American Healthcare, Inc.

Farming is among Arenac County's most important economic sectors. It accounts for 48% of the county's land use. According to the 2011 Arenac County Master Plan, 70,165 acres are in prime farmland, 8,710 total acres are in additional farmland of local importance, and 1,468 total acres are in unique farmland, other than prime. Agriculture generates approximately \$35,000,000 annually versus \$32,000,000 for manufacturing (2019).

Arenac County is predominantly a rural, farming and forested area. It is about 30 to 40 minutes north of the Michigan industrial tri-city region of Midland, Bay City and Saginaw. It borders Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay and is considered part of the northern recreational area of Michigan.

According to the 2020 census, the population of Arenac County is 15,002, a decrease of approximately 6% since 2010. Approximately 84% of the county's population is of work age, 16 years or older. The current workforce includes 6,446 people, of which 5,945 are employed, giving Arenac County a 7.7% unemployment rate. Of those that commute to work, 84% drive alone, and the average commute time is 28 minutes. Only 346 employees in the county work from home. Approximately 89% of Arenac's residents over age 25 have high school diplomas compared to 75% in 2010 and now around 15% have bachelor's degrees versus the 2010 estimate of just over seven percent. The median income in Arenac County is \$28,881 (2020).



Industry

Industry for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over
in Clayton township, Arenac County, Michigan

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Manufacturing - 26.7%

Educational services, and health care and social assistance - 15.7%

Public administration - 10.1%

Transportation and warehousing, and utilities - 9.9%

Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services - 8.5%

Retail trade - 6.1%

Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services - 6.1%

Construction - 5.8%

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining - 3.8%

Wholesale trade - 2.2%

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16% 18% 20% 22% 24% 26% 28% 30%

Housing Units

487

Total Housing Units in Clayton township, Arenac County, Michigan

9,504

Total Housing Units in Arenac County, Michigan

H1 | 2020 Decennial Census

Housing Occupancy

in Clayton township, Arenac County, Michigan

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Occupied housing units - 401

Vacant housing units - 86

0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450

Property Assessed Values			
	2008	2024	% Change
Clayton Township			
Real	\$40,072,500	\$60,023,400	+49.8%
Personal	\$2,786,300	\$2,065,500	-25.9%
Arenac County			
Real	\$755,517,523	\$1,035,306,200	+37.0%
Personal	\$29,743,466	\$58,365,700	+96.2%
Sources: State of Michigan Department of Treasury			

Section 4 - 2024 Analysis and Determinations

Clayton Township remains a desirable northern Michigan farming and recreational community. Slightly more than twenty percent of the township are forested lands. The Rifle River skirts the west boundary of the township and then runs to just south of the township then turns east toward the Saginaw Bay. The bay and Lake Huron are only about 25 miles to the east of the township.

The Township is connected to the rest of Michigan by excellent and well-maintained highways that provide access for residents to employment services and shopping that are not available in the township and for visitors and vacationers to travel to the area.

The sparse township population has plateaued and is aging significantly (residents and probably in-migration of retirees). Commercial activity has diminished over the entire time since the 2008 Master Plan. And there has been increased activity in the last five years. Residential activity is still positive, and property values continue to increase. More than two-thirds of land use in the township is agriculture, although no operating dairy farms remain.

Since the writing of the 2008 Master Plan, Clayton Township lost most of the businesses existing there. But as indicated earlier, oil wells continue pumping, sawmills have grown, and new businesses, including the distillery and log home businesses have been established. A communication tower is under construction in the township, so wireless communication should improve.

Both the City of West Branch to the north and the City of Standish to the south have active manufacturing/ industrial enterprises advertising for employees. But the only county economic sectors predicting growth in the future are various services and healthcare.

The local roads are in good condition due in part to the township one-mil tax and participation by the Arenac County Road Commission. The soils of the township are generally good for most uses including farming and housing. The only soils poorly suited to development are along the Rifle River on the west and south side of the township.

Residents in Clayton Township are connected to the world by various internet services, and they can obtain the same plentitude of information and entertainment that only residents of urban areas had easy access to in the past.

Despite Clayton Township's remoteness, it is still affected by national and world events. The state of the world now seems much less stable and predictable than the times of the previous Clayton Township Master Plan. Uncontrolled immigration, significant inflation, shifting power centers and international conflicts, declining educational standards,

corruption of the country's medical sector, overreach by governments and institutions (U.N. / W.H.O, the World Economic Forum, and the major on-line providers), and the resurgence of Marxism, especially in academia, are affecting communities throughout the world.

Thankfully, Clayton Township had not been overtly or overly affected by these things. Township officials must remain aware, though, of these factors and exercise its own powers to provide its services in the best manner possible and not to allow these elements to gain any purchase in the township.

The strengths of Clayton Township include its location and its stable, upstanding population. The township is in a beautiful, agricultural and forested place. It is in a county with over 27 miles of Saginaw Bay coastline. It is within commuting distance of active industrial and commercial enterprises. The township residents are friendly and there is almost no crime.

The challenge of Clayton Township is to protect and maintain these assets and to remain open to residential development similar to existing development. The township should plan to budget for needed infrastructure (mainly roadways and storm water controls). It should take advantage of its location for farming and continued small scale commercial activities.

Section 5 - Goals

In order to carry out this plan of managed growth, the following goals, policies, strategies and actions are put forth:

- ▶ To maintain the rural character and natural resources of the township.
- ▶ To protect and encourage farming
- ▶ To maintain and improve existing primary and local roads and provide adequate storm drainage where required.
- ▶ To provide areas for working families to establish homesteads and for various needed types of housing and to ensure that dwellings are properly constructed and maintained.
- ▶ To support high quality communication systems in the township and county.
- ▶ To promote and support activities for youth and high-quality education for all.
- ▶ To provide high quality, necessary services for township residents.

Section 6 – Policies, Strategies and Actions

The policies, strategies and actions set out in the 2008 Master Plan (pg. 3-2, 3-3) are still valid. They are restated here with a change for a potential commercial center at Melita and Maple Ridge roads.

Commission proposed the following policies, strategies and actions.

Retain the Township’s rural character.

- Use a zoning ordinance that sets out the types of land uses and development, e.g. forested and farm areas, that will foster the maintenance of these Township characteristics.
- Ensure that high intensity uses are limited and located properly.
- Allow and encourage home-based businesses compatible with the quiet, rural community.

Retain the high quality of the Township’s natural resources.

- Ensure that proper setbacks, buffers, and restorations are a part of the project site plan reviews.
- Ensure greenways and links between natural areas.
- Keep high-density and intensity uses away from valuable natural resource areas.
- Provide for native plant species landscaping as project performance and developmental standards.

Promote and support high-quality education for all.

- Work with the local school districts (K-12, ISD, community colleges) to ensure that the best possible education is available at all levels and to all citizens who wish it.
- Support bond issues where needs are appropriately targeted with fiscal responsibility.

Continue to provide needed services and facilities for Township residents, part-time residents, and visitors.

- The Planning Commission and Township Board shall continue to monitor the needs of the Township and to plan to meet future expectations.
- Work with Arenac County and Regional Planning Agencies to promote township needs, e.g. job creation in regional cities and towns, modern communication systems, good roads, and other services.

Develop and maintain good township road system.

- The Clayton Township Planning Commission and Township board should continue to examine the needs for road improvements and to cooperate with the county and surrounding Townships where appropriate, to maintain and improve its Township road system

Promote the continued development of high-quality health care in and for the region.

- As a major regional employer and important component of a healthy and aging community, especially for retirees, the Township should work with the local health providers to ensure that it is helping to foster the continued expansion of this sector.

Promote a high-quality communication system for the Township, county, and region.

- In order to foster small local businesses and to create conditions that may help to establish job opportunities, services, and infrastructure to support a good system of information technology should be available within the Township and region. Therefore, the Township should work with the county, other regional and state agencies, and private providers to develop and maintain such services.

Promote the development of a Township commercial center

- As the Township evolves in the fairly near future, with dairy farms changing to large crop farming operations and with more new immigrants to the Township likely being retirees, the opportunity for a commercial center providing services to local residents appears advantageous. A commercial future land district set out at Melita Road and Maple Ridge Road reflects this potential eventuality with zoning changes to follow as appropriate and needed.

Section 7- Future Land Use

Based upon the goals of this plan, the lands of Clayton Township are divided into future land use districts. Each district has a primary intent and purpose, as the names suggest, yet the uses and landscape of the districts may overlap and vary regardless of the boundaries set forth. The districts are:

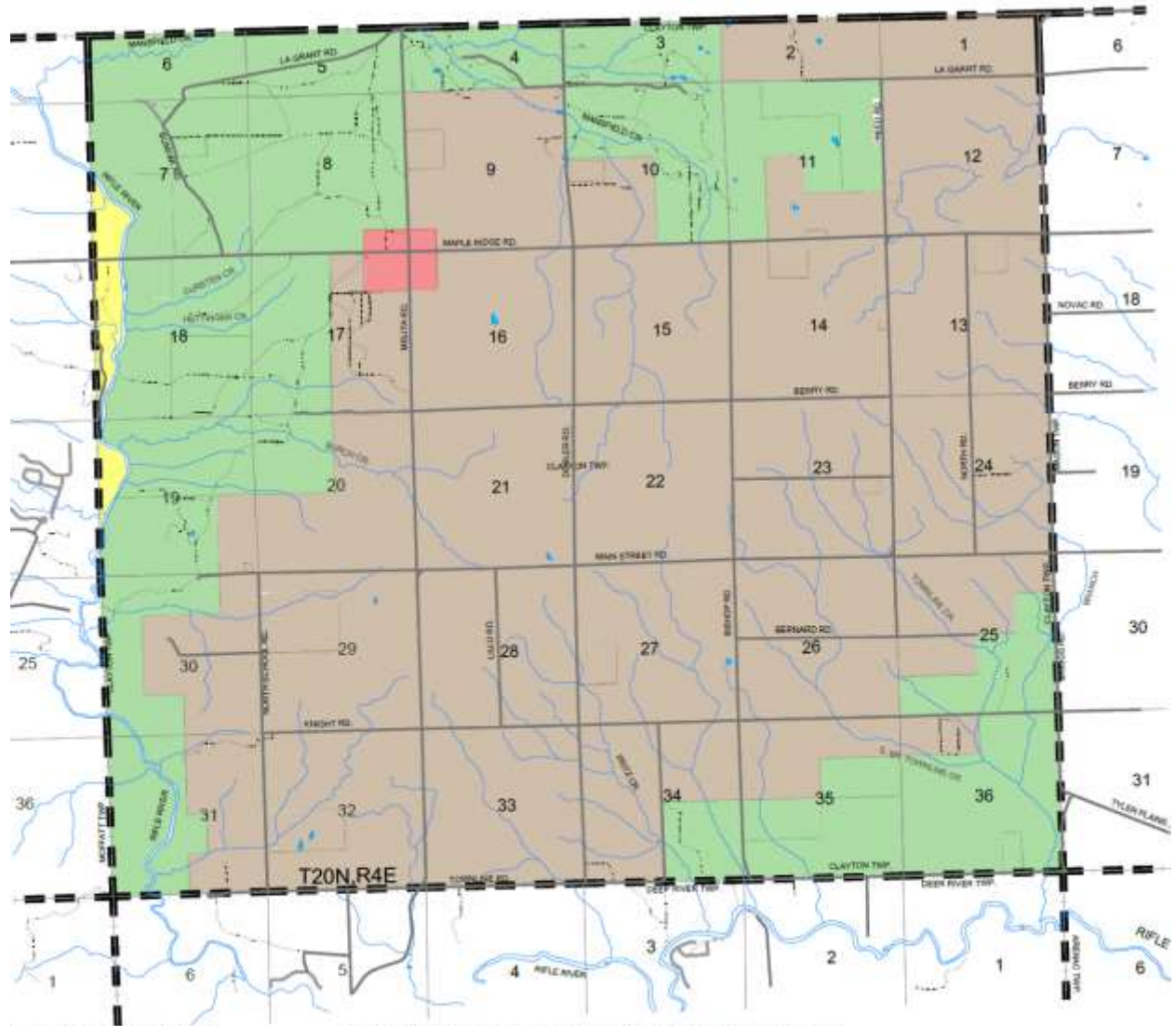
Forest/Recreation, Agriculture/ Rural Residential, Residential, Commercial.

The **Forest/ Recreation District** contains state and private forest areas, riparian wetlands, and other lowlands. The primary land cover and uses of this district are intended to be forests, recreation, homesteads and tourist development.

The **Agriculture/Rural Residential District** has most of the agricultural lands within the Township. The intent of the district is to protect and foster farming where it is feasible and to allow other uses compatible with this purpose. These other uses include agricultural and rural businesses and residential dwellings on one acre or larger parcels.

The **Residential District** is established primarily for single-family residential purposes as historically practiced. Residential lots in this district should be a minimum of one acre.

Future commercial uses are provided for in the **Commercial District** at the Melita Road and Maple Ridge Road intersection. Other commercial activities may be allowed as special uses in other districts as regulated by the zoning ordinance. Lot sizes will be determined by health sanitary requirements, parking, and other specific requirements of an intended use.



Source: Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
Michigan Resource Inventory System

CLAYTON TOWNSHIP, ARENAC COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Future Land Use Legend

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Commercial |  Highways |
|  Residential |  County Roads |
|  Forest/Recreation |  Streets |
|  Agriculture / Rural Residential |  Two-Track |

