Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

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This chapter describes the location of DeWitt Charter Township in the Lansing metropolitan area. It also explains the purposes of this Plan and its relationship to zoning, subdivision regulations, capital improvements planning and related implementation tools. This Comprehensive Development Plan is intended to guide the growth and development of DeWitt Charter Township over the next twenty years.

REGIONAL SETTING

Location

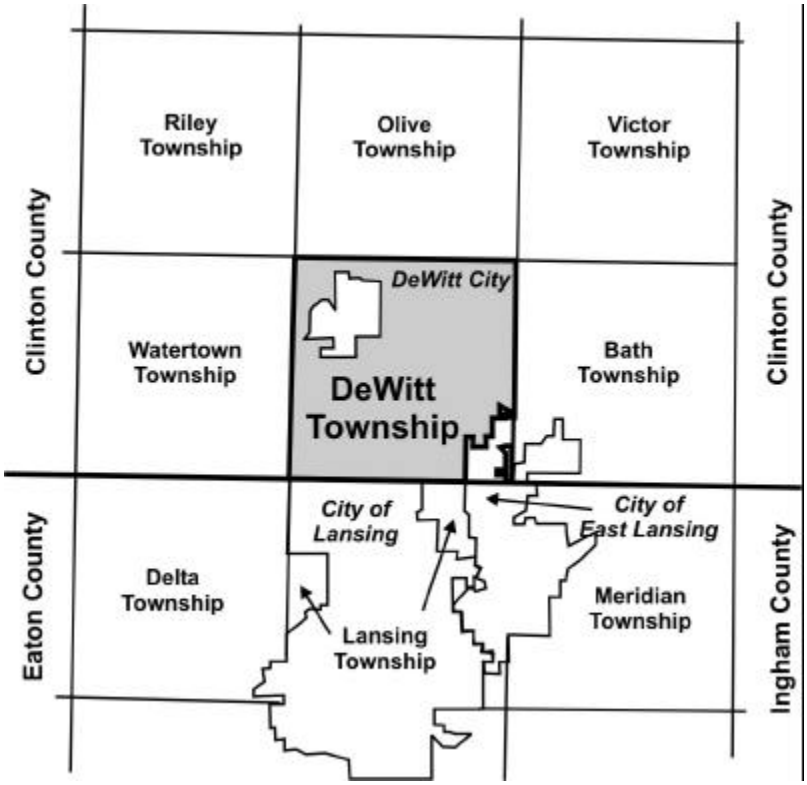
DeWitt Charter Township is located in mid-Michigan in south central Clinton County with its southern border less than three miles from the State Capitol Building. It is the largest suburb on the north side of the Lansing metropolitan area. It is bisected by I-69 and US-127. In addition, old US-27 (now Business Route 27, US-27BR) runs the length of the Township connecting Lansing to St. Johns. The Township has a legal description of T5N, R2W and globally sits at 42.813^{o} latitude and -84.543^{o} longitude. It is traversed from east to west by the Looking Glass River, a tributary of the Grand River. See Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1 Location Map

DeWitt Charter Township shares its southern boundary with Clinton County the northern boundary of the City of Lansing, Lansing Charter Township and Ingham County. Portions of the City of East Lansing extend into the southeast corner of the Township.

DeWitt Township completely surrounds the City of DeWitt in the northwest quadrant. The Township shares a border on the west with Watertown Township, an eastern border with Bath Township and a northern border with Olive Township. All are in Clinton County.

Figure 1-2 Adjoining Jurisdictions Map



With a 2004 estimated population of 13,769 persons, DeWitt Charter Township has a mix of small lot, older urban neighborhoods adjacent to Lansing, new suburban housing around the City of DeWitt and large lot rural development in other parts of the Township. BR-27 is the spine of the Township and changes from small lot older commercial development on the south end, to freeway interchange commercial services at I-69 and then scattered commercial establishments north of Herbison Road. Much of the Township has a rural character with many trees and open farm fields along the key arterial roads. There is a strong desire to retain this rural character and the proximity of most residents to open space as the Township continues to grow and redevelop.

PURPOSE OF PLAN

This Comprehensive Development Plan defines the existing and proposed future character of DeWitt Charter Township. Its fundamental purpose is to allow the Township to comprehensively describe the goals and policies for its physical development. This Plan is intended to guide Township officials and citizens in making decisions about public facilities and the use of public and privately owned land.

The DeWitt Charter Township Comprehensive Development Plan was prepared under the provisions of the Township Planning Act 168 of 1959, which specifically gives

Township Planning Commissions the authority to prepare and officially adopt a future land use plan (called a “basic plan” in the statute). The Comprehensive Development Plan is comprised of text and supporting maps. The most significant map is the Future Land Use Map (Chapter 4) which shows the location and relationship of land in the Township for the next twenty years.

The Comprehensive Development Plan provides:

1. A comprehensive means of integrating planning principles and policies that look 20 years ahead to meet future needs regarding general and major aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the Township;

2. An official, advisory policy statement for encouraging orderly and efficient use of the land for residences, businesses, industry, and agriculture, and for coordinating these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and with other necessary public facilities and services;

3. A rational basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Township Planning Commission and the Township Board as well as other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical development of the Township;

4. A means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects and policies to official Township planning policies.

PLAN RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING

The Township Zoning Act, Public Act 184 of 1943 provides that *"the provisions of the zoning ordinance should be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability and to limit the improper use of lands."* This Comprehensive Development Plan is adopted to help provide a strong legal basis for the Township Zoning Ordinance and it contains a Zoning Plan element in Chapter 6 which sets forth the principal district and use regulations of the Ordinance.

However, adoption of this Plan does not directly control land use. Such control is left to the Zoning Ordinance (including the zoning map), to land division and subdivision regulations, and to other local ordinances. Plan implementation is made with final decisions on rezonings, special use permits, site plan and plat approvals as well as by the expenditure of Township funds on various capital improvements.

UPDATING THE PLAN

Because of the constant change in our social and economic structure and activities, the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long range goals. By law, this Plan will be reviewed by the Township Planning Commission every five years, and if necessary, updated. If circumstances warranting a change to the Plan come up before the five-year review, then this Plan would be changed. Changes may be necessary because the Plan

is based upon present goals, knowledge and technology and these change through time.

The Plan will be effective to the degree that it continues to:

- reflect the needs and desires of the people;
- realistically interpret the existing conditions, trends and the dynamic economic and social pressures for change; and
- inspire cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the Township toward achieving common goals.

PUBLIC INPUT

This Plan was prepared as the result of a public process which examined existing conditions, public input on a vision of what the community should be like in twenty years, analysis of key issues identified by the public, consultation with adjoining units of local government and other governmental agencies and consensus among the Planning Commission and Township Board on specific elements in the Plan. A leadership survey was conducted in the late spring of 2004 and public input was solicited at two Visioning Town Meetings on June 17, and June 29, 2004, and at a Town Meeting on May 19, 2005. A public hearing was also held prior to Plan adoption.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This Comprehensive Development Plan has seven chapters. The second chapter presents a wide range of background information on existing conditions and trends. It summarizes recent demographic and economic characteristics; presents data and maps describing current conditions related to the land and buildings in the Township; and summarizes basic characteristics of the infrastructure and public services available in the Township. The third chapter presents a vision statement, goals and policies for guiding future land use and infrastructure change in the Township. The fourth chapter presents a future land use map and text describing the existing character of various parts of the Township and proposed land use in each area. The fifth chapter presents a zoning plan to guide future revisions to the Township Zoning Ordinance. The sixth chapter describes the essential parts of the growth management strategy. The last chapter lists a set of actions that should be taken to implement this Plan.