PREFACE

VISION BASED PLAN

This is a Comprehensive Plan to guide future land use and infrastructure decisions in DeWitt Charter Township for the next 20 years. It opens with an introductory chapter and follows with detailed background information in Chapter 2.

This is a vision based plan. The vision was created from citizen input at town meetings. Chapter 3 presents a common vision statement for the future of DeWitt Township in 2025. The goals and policies in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as the strategies in Chapter 6 are oriented to achieving the vision. This Plan will both guide and be guided by market forces, and it will never go more than five years before being thoroughly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant, and then it will be updated as necessary. Some components of the Plan, such as portions that are based on the 2001 *High Density Residential Study* rely heavily on projections. These in particular need to be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary.

DeWitt Charter Township is one of the most rapidly growing communities in mid-Michigan. This moment has long been anticipated and presents both special problems and special opportunities. For some it is seen as a moment of entitlement. To them, it is now DeWitt Township's turn to build a modern community with a high quality of life around the existing infrastructure framework and land use presently in place—without repeating mistakes of the past.

This opportunity includes building out contemporary suburban neighborhoods around and integrated with the City of DeWitt, while stabilizing and improving the quality of existing neighborhoods elsewhere in the Township. The Township wants to encourage the best in new development and redevelopment that respects the rural and suburban character of much of the Township. It also wants to accommodate the newest building quality and design that conforms to green development standards and smart growth principles, each in appropriate measures and locations.

Such a future means creating some new neighborhoods in the Township built more on old urban and small rural town characteristics (known as traditional neighborhood development or TND), than on suburban or rural ones. A large TND based on broad citizen input is proposed for possible development east of US-27BR, north of Webb Road and west of Wood Road. This future also means permanently preserving a large area in the northeast and southeastern portions of the Township for agriculture and rural living opportunities. In addition, it means stabilizing and rehabilitating older commercial strips and neighborhoods to prevent more blight and create a more desirable future for residents and businesses in the south central part of the Township. Last, it means planning for the conversion of a substantial amount of land for office, research and light industrial use to enhance not only the tax base in the Township (necessary to help pay for all the services the residential development will need), but also to provide more employment opportunities so that not all residents have to commute to good paying jobs elsewhere in the region. In the aggregate, this vision presents a wider range of desirable living and working choices for Township residents, while maximizing development

potential and infrastructure efficiency at cost levels far below those likely to be experienced if the 1991 Plan were implemented as adopted.

This vision is not for the faint hearted or those averse to taking well conceived risks. The Township already has sewer and water service spread across much of the Township and must provide police and fire services to all parts of the Township. The costs associated with these services, and variable market pressures in different parts of the Township, make it difficult to cost-effectively expand infrastructure and services, and hence to use infrastructure as a tool to guide growth in an incremental and efficient fashion. Similarly, it is well understood that the Township does not control all the land, all the infrastructure, or all the decisions necessary to successfully implement this Plan.

This Plan recognizes that the Township has certain obligations related to new development, as does the development community. This is especially apparent at the present time in the northwest part of the Township. These obligations will be spelled out in more detail in future zoning and subdivision regulations and in future capital improvement decisions. This Plan also recognizes that the Township has equal responsibilities to already developed parts of the Township, and especially in those areas where new investment has been infrequent and signs of blight are evident. Similarly the Township has an obligation to help landowners in the eastern part of the Township who wish to continue long-term agricultural pursuits and the retention of a very rural character in the face of annexation attempts and significant development pressure occurring in the southeast portion of the Township. In contrast, the southwest area presents a challenging mix of major new development and redevelopment potential, along with demands to improve the existing quality of neighborhoods in parts of this area near where the airport plans to expand operations. These are widely varied obligations and depending on the rate of change, may present the Township with special challenges in meeting them.

Similarly, Township leaders are acutely aware of both the huge benefit and potential detriment that market forces can have in achieving the vision of this Plan. The market can shift demand for public services from one area to another in a way that creates inefficiencies and higher public costs that can only be borne by requiring the private sector to bear those costs when development is proposed prematurely. But this Plan is also a pragmatic plan, and it is intended to provide general guidance and encouragement to the private sector to assist in helping to create the vision, while describing the situations where the Township will use regulations and infrastructure investments to assure quality development.

This Plan seeks to raise the bar for new development in the Township. It expects quality development everywhere in the Township. It expects developers to build only when the full development potential of property can be realized, as established by the uses and densities in the Zoning Ordinance. Similarly, where feasible, future development regulations will provide incentives for developers to build at appropriate densities and to shift more attention to quality design that is both compatible with the area and consistent with the vision of this Plan as expressed by zoning, subdivision and related regulations.

Building a quality community is a partnership with many partners: public, private, industrial, corporate, citizen-based and government-based. All must work together to successfully achieve the citizen vision in this Plan. With your help and that of all the other partners, this Plan will become a reality.