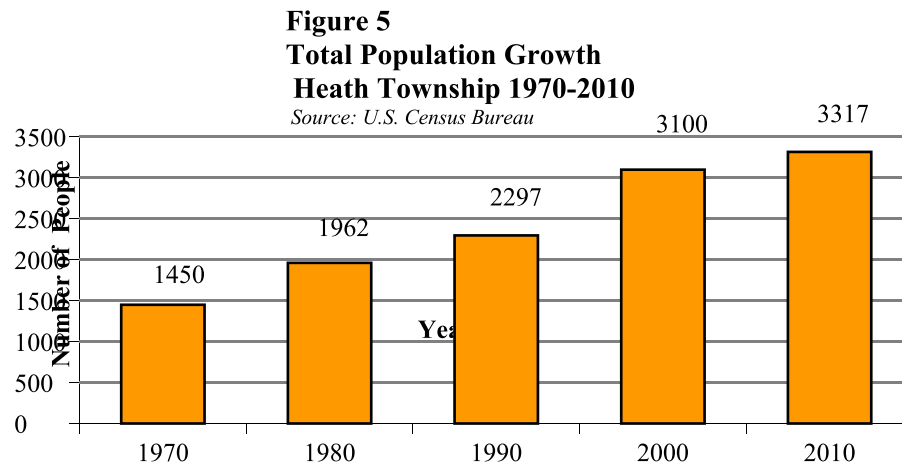


Chapter 5

PLANNING ANALYSIS

Population Trends and Projections

Population trends refer to the historical direction a community has followed in respect to its population counts while population projections refer to the direction a community is anticipated to follow in future years.

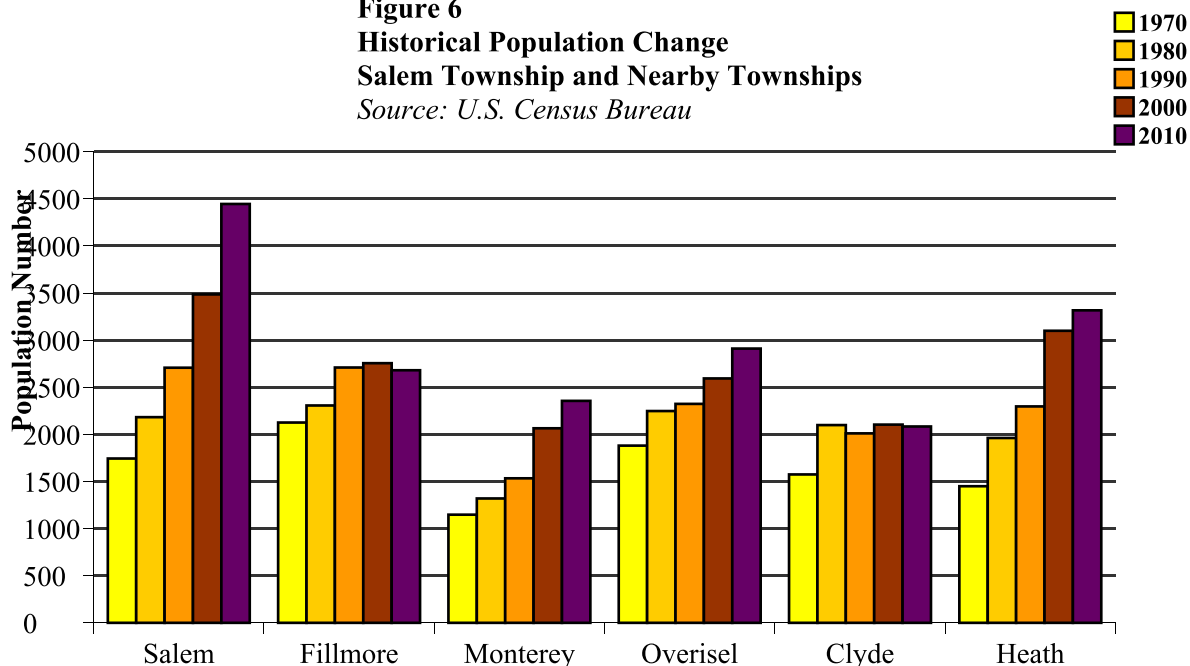


In reaching its current population, the Township has seen a steady upward population trend over the past 40 years. That trend is illustrated in Figure 5. The Township existed as a classic rural farming community for a good portion of that time but from 1970 to 2000 the population actually more than doubled and had experienced fairly rapid growth recent years. During the same period, Allegan County and the State of Michigan grew at average annual rates of only 1.75% and 0.39% respectively. Had the growth rate of the late 1990's and early 2000's continued into the present, the current population would be nearly 4000 and the 2020 population at nearly 5000. Since 2005 and consistent with the economic downturn of the state and nation, the population growth has slowed dramatically and in 2010 the population stood at 3317.

It is also interesting to place the Township's population change into a regional context. Figure 6 charts the population growth history in Heath Township and that of several neighboring Townships. Between 2000 and 2010 Heath's growth rate exceeded that of all of its neighbors except Heath. Over the 40 year period, Heath's percentage increase in growth exceeded all other surrounding Townships except Salem and exceeded the 67.3% growth experienced in Allegan

County as a whole.

Figure 6
Historical Population Change
Salem Township and Nearby Townships
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



In the planning process, projections of future population growth provide a bridge between the present and the future. They help to define future land use requirements as well as the demand for various public services and capital improvements. Population projections are, however, only refined estimates of what the future might hold, for it is clearly impossible to precisely forecast the results of economic trends coupled with untold individual and public decisions. Projections are useful as "yardsticks" though and there are several methods used to project population growth, four of which are described below and summarized in Table 10.

Constant Proportion Method

The constant proportion method assumes that Heath Township will maintain the same percentage of Allegan County's population in the years ahead as it had in 2010. Adjustment and extrapolation of the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission's 2020 projection to 2035 suggests that there will be 154,730 people in Allegan County in 2035. The constant proportion method projects that Heath Township will have 6168 residents in 2035.

Table 6
Constant Proportion Projections

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>
Heath Twp.	3317	3578	3842	4097	4608
Allegan County	111,408	120,214	129,021	137,591	154,730*

* The original Allegan County 2020 projection is a percentage and arithmetic projection published by WMRPC. The projection has been adjusted to account for actual 2010 Census counts. The 2035 County projection results from an extrapolation of the 2000 to 2020 growth projection for an additional 15 years.

Annual Percent Growth Rate Method

This projection method projects future population growth (or decline) based on the rate of growth in the past. Between 1970-2010, the population of Heath Township grew at an average rate of 3.21 percent every year. Extending this rate into the future, the growth rate method projects 6029 people by the year 2035.

Table 7
Percent Growth Projections

<u>Ave. Annual Percent Growth 1970 to 2010</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>
3.21	3317	3849	4478	5196	6029

Arithmetic Method

The arithmetic method is similar to the annual percentage growth method in that population projections are based on growth that occurred in past decades. This method, however, bases population growth on the average increase in numbers of persons per year, rather than the percentage rate. Between 1970 and 2010, Heath Township gained an average of 487 persons each year. The arithmetic method projects 4257 people in Heath Township by 2035.

Table 8
Arithmetic Projections

<u>Ave. Annual numeric increase 1970 to 2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>
47	3317	3552	3787	4022	4257

New Dwelling Unit Method

The new dwelling unit method may be the most accurate projection technique because it accounts for recent, construction activity while tempering the recent short term trends with the trends that occurred within a longer 40 year period. The census data show that a total of 835 new dwelling units were constructed between 1970 and 2010 for an average of 20.9 per year. This number, multiplied by an average household size of 2.84 persons per year (2010 census figure) yields an average annual population increase based on new projected dwelling unit construction. The resulting 59.3 persons per year average annual increase is extended arithmetically from the 2010 population to arrive at the future projections.

Table 9
New Dwelling Unit Projection Method

<u>Ave. No. Dwelling units/year 1970 to 2010</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>
20.9	3317	3614	3910	4207	4503

Table 10 indicates a 2035 population increase of as many as 2712 individuals over the

2010 census and as few as 940 individuals. The average of the various population projections results in an additional 1532 persons.

Table 10
Population Projections Summary
(Alternative Projections Based On Various Statistical Methods)

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>
Constant Proportion	3317	3578	3842	4097	4608
Percent Growth	3317	3849	4478	5196	6029
Arithmetic	3317	3552	3787	4022	4257
New Dwelling Unit	3317	3614	3910	4207	4503
Average	3317	3648	4004	4381	4849

While recent growth in the Township and elsewhere has been slowed, the influx of people in the not too distant past still suggests that Heath Township will experience a steady influx of people over the long term. The area's quality schools and natural resources are magnets that will continue to draw people and its relatively close proximity to expressways and to Holland will allow people them to reach employment centers and regional shopping destinations all within reasonable travel times. High energy prices and a continued loss of high wage jobs could however, dampen the effect on growth.

The number of anticipated future housing units within a community can be determined by utilizing a simple statistical formula. By dividing the projected population count by the 2010 average number of persons per occupied dwelling unit, the projected number of housing units for various years is obtained. Table 11 presents projected total dwelling units based on the "average" population projections found in Table 10. By subtracting the number of homes in existence in 2010 from the projected number in 2035 a total of 700 new housing units are projected. This represents a nearly 38 percent increase over the 25 year period.

Table 11
Dwelling Unit Projections
Heath Township

<u>2010</u>	Ave. 2010 Persons/Occ. Household	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2035</u>	Projected Increase By_ 2035
1241	2.84	1286	1410	1543	1707	466

Source: Data extrapolated from 2010 Census and Population Projections

Converting the projected increase in dwelling units into raw lands needs results in the following estimates

- 466 acres of land used at 1 dwelling per unit per developable acre (R1a zoning)
- 932 acres of land used at 1 unit per 2 acre (R-1 zoning)
- 2330 acres of land used at 1 unit per 5 acre (AG zoning)
- 133 acres of land used at 3.5 units per acre (R-2 zoning).

Table 12 takes the projected population of the Township and applies basic planning standards or “rules of thumb” to determine rough projected additional acreage requirements for retail, industrial, and recreational land for 2035. The amount of land that is ultimately allocated in each category is one of the primary functions of the land use planning process.

Table 12
Non-Residential Land Needs

	<u>Current Need ¹</u>	<u>2035 Projected Total Need</u>
Retail and service uses (41 sf. per capita x 3/43560)	9.4 acres	13.7 acres
Industrial (.55 workers per person x 1 ac. per 10 to 20 workers)	91 to 182 acres	133 to 266 acres
Recreation and Open Space (11 ac./1000 persons)	36.4 acres	53.3 acres

Sources: Development Impact Assessment Handbook, ULI, 1994

Population Projections, Landmark Strategies, 2010

¹ Current need reflects the estimated land need based the application of ULI ratios to the 2010 population. It does not reflect a current land inventory.

Projection Summary

The forecasts presented above assume that the Township will continue to direct growth in the same essential patterns exhibited in the past. In a community such as Heath, which is located in commuting proximity to urban areas, the growth of housing and population will be strongly impacted by trends experienced within the larger geographic region. For Heath, this involves consideration of the growth characteristics of Northwest Allegan County, the Grand Rapids –Holland Metropolitan area, and West Michigan in general. Major determinants of future population and housing growth will include the following:

- The economic health of the Holland and Grand Rapids metropolitan areas.
- The availability of jobs locally and within commuting distance.
- Wages and future gasoline/energy prices will affect people’s ability to afford a long commute to work. The quality of roads, congestion and the travel time to and from

the area will also affect people's willingness to commute.

- Whether public utilities become available to support larger scales of development.
- The growth management efforts of Heath Township and adjacent Townships and the quantity of housing development that is accommodated.
- The quality of life in terms of the availability and quality of local support services required for development. These include police and fire protection, streets and sidewalks, parks and the quality schools and shopping opportunities.

Development Implications

The preceding chapters and sections of the Master Plan have described the existing land use, socioeconomic, and demographic conditions in Heath Township. This section draws from that data and empirical observations and outlines some of the key planning issues or concerns that the Future Land Use plan must address:

1. Growth trends indicate that significant growth pressure will continue in Heath Township. That pressure will be supported by the relative ease that people have in accessing the Township from the northwest as well as the southeast via M-40.
2. Hamilton is strong local economic driver and a community focal point. Policies to protect and enhance its identity and significance as a community center and economic focal point are important.
3. The Township's farmland, its rural character and the State Game Area are its most identifiable features. "Open space" may be its own worst enemy, however and as a result of society's desire for elbow room and clean air, the area's privately held rural areas can be devastated. As the countryside is slowly converted to homes and other uses, the features that first attracted families to the community are eliminated. Without proper land use management, the rural areas north of the state game area could one day be unrecognizable residential areas.
4. By requiring higher density residential development to locate in and near Hamilton (where residential and commercial development concentrations already exist and where utilities are most likely to be feasibly extended in the future), policies can be formulated and supported to conserve farmland and preserve open space elsewhere in the Township. This strategy will help to meet the housing needs of the area, place priority on preserving privately held open space and farmland and create an ability to better plan for

economically feasible public utilities.

5. Pressure will again arise for the Township to allow more dense residential developments. Dense development scattered haphazardly throughout the Township will fail to enhance rural character and will inevitably degrade environmental quality. Cluster development and open space preservation regulations are mechanisms that should be utilized to preserve open space. These are constructive growth management tools that should be utilized in Heath Township. Combined with the state manage Allegan State Game Area, and with overlay regulations designed to protect stream corridors, Heath Township will be in a good position to manage and sustain its rural resources.
6. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in Heath Township and the Township will be pressured to use land use policies that foster small-scale "incubator" service uses and light industries. The Township lacks public sanitary sewer and water utilities. Good locations for future industrial development have been identified but without utilities, major employment opportunities should not be encouraged to locate here.
7. As in all communities, a full range of housing styles and opportunities should exist in the Township. This requires the proactive allocation of sufficient land areas for manufactured housing communities and various other housing styles and densities.