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**Amendment to the Master Plan for the**

**GRACE LAKE AREA**

**Charter Township of Van Buren**  
**Wayne County, Michigan**

**Prepared By:**

**Charter Township of Van Buren**  
**Planning Commission**

**With Assistance From:**

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**December 2001**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Adopted by the Van Buren Township Planning Commission on December 12, 2001.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgments .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
List of Maps .....	iii
<b>I. Need to Amend the Master Plan .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Existing Conditions .....</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Existing Land Use .....	3
B. Utilities .....	4
C. Roads .....	4
D. Natural Features .....	5
<b>III. Regional Land Use .....</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Regional Area Definition .....	6
B. Development Patterns .....	6
C. Market Trends .....	7
<b>IV. Opportunities and Constraints .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>V. Future Land Use Plan .....</b>	<b>11</b>
A. Office Technology .....	11
B. Mixed Use .....	11
C. General Commercial .....	12
D. Public/Semi-Public .....	12
<b>VI. Sequencing Standards .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## LIST OF MAPS

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	<u>Follows Page</u>
Map 1: Existing Land Use .....	3
Map 2: Utilities and Roads .....	4
Map 3: Generalized Regional Land Use Patterns .....	6
Map 4: Opportunities and Constraints .....	9
Map 5: Future Land Use Plan .....	11

## **I. Need to Amend Master Plan**

The Ecorse and Haggerty Road Corridor Plan was adopted in May 2000, to provide guidelines for future development along Ecorse and Haggerty Roads which are prime non-residential growth corridors in Van Buren Township. These corridors have seen the completion of large scale industrial complexes and buildings over the past few years, and several others are in the conceptual and planning stages. Adopted to address the need for quality at this major gateway to the Van Buren community, the Ecorse and Haggerty Road Corridor Plan recommends construction of a four lane boulevard with significant landscape enhancements and access management for the full length of Ecorse Road in the Township, from Hannan Road to Willow Run Airport.

Regionally, the midfield terminal for the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (Metro Airport) is nearing completion and is expected to open in the early part of 2002. The new midfield terminal is a significant component in Wayne County's on-going \$2 billion program to upgrade and expand Metro Airport's aging facilities. Currently the 6th busiest airport in the world based on operations, Metro Airport had a total economic impact of \$4.2 billion in 1996, and creates an estimated 60,000 jobs in the region. Willow Run Airport, in western Van Buren Township, is also planned for capital improvements to expand its freight capacity and enhance its position as the third largest airport in the State. Approximately 100 million pounds of cargo are transferred through Willow Run annually, and it is a major center for general and business aviation.

Wayne County, which owns and operates Willow Run, has identified a "Ring Road" concept to link Detroit Metropolitan Airport with Willow Run via Ecorse Road. This concept emphasizes road improvements to encourage development around and between the two airports. Another aspect of the Ring Road plan is the expansion of air freight operations at Willow Run, including the development of private freight distribution facilities on unused airport property. While increasing the trucking activity on Ecorse Road, all of the transportation and airport related improvements described above will combine in a strategic mix to significantly increase the demand for technology and industrial development along Ecorse Road.

The Grace Lake area, under consideration in this plan amendment, is located south of Ecorse Road and between I-275 on the west and Hannan Road on the east. In the early 1990's the Township's Future Land Use Plan for this area was modified from the previous plan's recommendation of light industrial to single family residential category. At that time, the Planning Commission was responding to a specific proposal to use much of this area for high value single family residential development.

Since then, the Township has experienced a dramatic increase in single family residential development, both as condominiums and subdivisions. The Township's Master Plan goal to encourage new, high quality residential development is being achieved through a combination of market demand and new planning and zoning tools, such as the Planned Residential

Development option. Also, the previously proposed residential development in the Plan area has been abandoned because of environmental and cost issues. In order to provide for rational and comprehensive future use, it is appropriate to reconsider the Master Plan for this area in light of current trends and conditions.

This amendment to the Charter Township of Van Buren Master Plan reviews the existing land uses in the area and regional land use patterns, then evaluates the development potential of the area including the significance of its location, and makes recommendations for future land use designations in order to:

1. Facilitate implementation of the Ecorse Haggerty Road Corridor Plan vision.
2. Recognize the development potential of the area as part of the I-275 Golden Corridor and its proximity to Willow Run and Metro Airports, and harness this potential to add to the Township tax base, provide employment, and promote a high quality image.
3. Improve the compatibility between existing and future uses, the I-275 freeway, and the potentially high traffic volume Ecorse Road.
4. Protect and provide for residential uses with adequate land use transitions, buffers, access and design controls.

## II. Existing Conditions

- A. **Existing Land Use.** Map 1 illustrates the land uses in and around the Grace Lake area in Van Buren Township. The map also shows the uses on the east side of Hannan Road in Romulus. Land uses in the area include public/semi-public, vacant land, commercial, single family residential, office/office technology and light industrial uses.
1. **Vacant Land.** This category includes all undeveloped land (not including developed sites with vacant buildings). Vacant land is concentrated in the central part of the area, east of I-275 and south of Ecorse Road to Tyler Road. Much of this vacant land was formerly a sand and gravel mining operation. Several parcels east of Hannan Road within Romulus are vacant.
  2. **Public/Semi-Public Uses.** Public and semi-public uses include the Township cemetery and fire station along on Tyler Road. There is also an existing church on Tyler Road. The Wayne County Community College Western Campus is located on the west side of I-275.
  3. **Recreation.** Woodland Meadows, a public golf course, is located on the north side of Ecorse Road, adjacent to I-275.
  4. **Single Family Residential.** Most of the single family residential uses within the area are located on large acreage parcels with frontage on Hannan Road. A few residential parcels front on Tyler and Ecorse Roads. On the east side of Hannan Road, single family residential dwellings exist, both as subdivisions and on acreage parcels.
  5. **Light Industrial.** This category includes industries involved in production or manufacturing using previously processed materials. Sites are typically less than 10 acres and contain one-story buildings which completely enclose the operations. Light industrial uses are concentrated west of the Grace Lake area on the east and west sides of Haggerty Road, north and south of Ecorse Road, and along an industrial park road north of Old Tyler Road.
  6. **Office/Office-Technology.** The planning area does not include any significant office or technology users. However, the Township has recently approved a building for Ricardo Inc., on the west side of I-275 between Old Tyler and relocated Tyler Roads for the development of an office, research and testing facility, which will be an office technology use.
  7. **Commercial.** This category includes local commercial, highway commercial and general commercial uses. The only significant commercial development within the subject area is the truck stop at the northeast corner of Haggerty and

Ecorse Road intersection. Romulus has approved commercial uses (gas station, convenience store and retail buildings) at the northeast and southeast corners of Ecorse and Hannan Roads intersection.

- B. Utilities.** Map 2 illustrates the existing water, sanitary and storm sewer lines within the area. Major water and sewer lines have been extended along Ecorse and Haggerty Roads. Water lines also extend along the length of Hannan Road. Sanitary sewer lines exist in Romulus along Hannan Road, extending from Ecorse Road south to Huron River Drive.

Electricity and natural gas are available along Ecorse, Haggerty and Hannan Roads. A Detroit Edison power transmission corridor parallels Ecorse Road, just to its south. This utility feature poses a challenge for future development, limiting the ability to integrate parcels on either side of the power transmission corridor.

Storm water management is a major concern and issue throughout the Township. Storm water drainage in the Township is divided into two (2) major basins separated along a ridge that runs roughly parallel with Tyler Road. Land south of Tyler Road, which includes the southern segment of the plan amendment area, drains into Belleville Lake and the Huron River. The northern portion of the Township, which includes all of Ecorse Road, drains into Rouge River. The Township often experiences flooding in various areas during heavy rains. Recently the Township has adopted stricter standards to control storm water discharge, which will help eliminate the flooding problem over time. The plan area includes the Post-Robson Drain, the French Post Drain, the Austin Drain, the Cooper & Fey Drain, and the McClaughry Drain, all under the jurisdiction of the Wayne County Drain Commissioner's office.

- C. Roads.** The plan area contains three (3) major roads: Ecorse Road, Tyler Road and Hannan Road. All three are under Wayne County jurisdiction. The existing right-of-way width for Ecorse Road varies. The road has two lanes extending from the eastern Township line west to Belleville Road, from where it converts to a four (4) lane divided road which continues to Michigan Avenue. Hannan Road has a planned right-of-way width of 120 feet, but is currently a two lane road. Tyler Road has a right of way width of 100 feet at its intersection with Haggerty Road and then tapers off to a 66 foot right-of-way extending to the eastern boundary line of the Township. Tyler Road is unpaved from I-275 to Hannan Road. Although Tyler Road continues east into Romulus as a City street, its intersection with Hannan Road is off-set several hundred feet to the south. Tyler's planned future right-of-way width is 120 feet.

Hannan Road and Tyler Road are master planned major thoroughfares. Ecorse Road is a state trunkline.



**D. Natural Features.** Significant natural features in the area include large wooded tracts near the Wayne County Community College campus, and a large wooded area south of Ecorse Road, east of I-275. This area is heavily wooded with significant stands of mature and established trees. Most of the large tract residential parcels have isolated clumps of trees, and some appear to have been farmed in the past.

The Grace Lake site was once a sand and gravel extraction operation. As a result there is an approximately 40 acre man-made lake located in the middle of the southern portion of the parcel, and several other small depressions mark the land.

Wetlands exist in the plan area, both as a result of natural conditions and man-made circumstances. These environmental features will affect the location and character of development and should be incorporated into future development plans as amenities and assets.

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### III. Regional Land Use

A. **Regional Area Definition.** In order to gain perspective on the potential of the Grace Lake area, it is helpful to review land patterns and trends in the wider region. Map 3 illustrates the generalized regional land use patterns along the I-275 corridor extending from the I-696/I-275 interchange southwards to Metro Airport, a distance of approximately 25 miles. The I-275 corridor is often termed the “Golden Corridor” because of its concentration of high value office/office technology and industrial uses. As discussed earlier, other regional influences are the result of the proximity of both Willow Run and Metro Airport.

B. **Development Patterns.** For simplification and analysis, land uses have been categorized into residential and non-residential uses. This very basic classification will nevertheless, show regional patterns of land development.

1. **Residential Uses.** There are some areas of residential development along I-275, many of which pre-date the freeway. The area east of I-275 extending from south of Eight Mile Road to Nine Mile Road, is occupied by single family residential development. Other major single family residential areas are on the east side of Haggerty, and north of Seven Mile Road; west of Haggerty Road and south of Six Mile Road; east of I-275 from Joy Road to Ann Arbor Road; and at the northeast corner of the I-275 and I-94 interchange.

Multiple family uses (apartments and townhouses) are located on either side of I-275 in Canton Township.

2. **Non-Residential Uses.** This category generally includes light industrial, office, office technology, and commercial uses.

*Light Industrial.* Light industrial uses are located north of Grand River Avenue and west of I-275; on the east and west sides of I-275 between Nine and Ten Mile Roads; east of I-275 south of I-96 to Ann Arbor Road; north and south of I-96 extending east from the M-14 interchange; east and west of Haggerty south of Joy Road; north and south of Michigan Avenue along I-275; and east and west of Haggerty Road south of Michigan Avenue to Tyler Road.

*Office/Office-Technology.* The Golden Corridor supports several single and multi-tenant large scale office complexes and office technology parks. The land between Twelve Mile Road and I-696 is almost exclusively occupied by office buildings. Some of the significant office corridors include the west side of I-275 south of Nine Mile Road; east of I-275 north of Seven Mile Road; east of I-275 between Warren and Joy Roads; and west of I-275 near Warren Road. The northwest corner of M-14 and I-275 interchange is under development as a

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large scale office-technology park. Another new office technology park is currently under construction on the south side of Warren Road, east of I-275. Two other major mixed use projects that will have long term implications for development in the region are the Metro World Center project at Vining Road, north of Metro Airport, and the Pinnacle Aeropark project by Wayne County on the south side of Metro Airport.

*Commercial.* The Golden Corridor supports numerous commercial uses such as car dealerships, restaurants, retail stores, department stores, etc. These businesses are mostly concentrated on Haggerty Road, many with frontage on the I-275 freeway. Significant commercial nodes include north of Grand River Avenue west of Haggerty Road; west of I-275 near Six Mile Road, Seven Mile, Eight Mile and Ann Arbor Roads; and east and west of I-275 at the Ford Road exit. The Six Mile Road exit is particularly significant as it contains the Laurel Park Place Mall on the east side of I-275 and several hotels providing accommodation to business travelers.

- C. **Market Trends.** The I-275 corridor has been known as the “Golden Corridor” for good reason. According to the Colliers International Market Report for Metro Detroit, even during the softening market of the past year, the I-275 corridor was surprisingly strong. New speculative office buildings that had high vacancy rates for several years were substantially leased at midyear 2001. In the high technology sectors, more than one million square feet of product was developed in the I-96 and I-275 corridors last year.

Formerly concentrated north of M-14, industrial, office technology and office uses are expanding to the south, drawn by the availability of vacant land with good access, growth at Metro Airport and Willow Run, and increasing availability of quality housing in the area for company executives and professionals. Studies suggest that the Metro Airport Midfield expansion could lead to thousands of new jobs, and perhaps the establishment of headquarters for foreign companies in the U.S. The catalyst would be the increasing number and greater convenience of direct flights to overseas destinations. Industrial and technology companies are moving to freeway frontage for the exposure.

As discussed earlier, this area is part of an emerging concentration of airport-driven urban development, the Wayne County “aerotropolis”. In 21<sup>st</sup> Century commerce, it is imperative that orders generated by e-commerce are fulfilled rapidly. Nationwide, this has resulted in the clustering of time-sensitive goods facilities around airports (i.e., expanded air cargo, air express, less-than-load trucking, freight forwarders, and third-party logistics providers). According to Dr. John Kasarda, who coined the term “aerotropolis”, over 40 percent of the value of world trade now travels by air, and express air shipments comprise almost two-thirds of all U.S. air cargo.

Airports are becoming locations for other uses that rely upon air travel and which are time-sensitive, such as corporate headquarters, regional offices, consulting services data-processing and other service sector and information technology industries, high tech companies are attracted to airport areas because of their reliance on speed, flexibility and reliability in the movement of people and goods.

All of the above market factors have significant implications for the future land uses in the Grace Lakes area.

## IV. Opportunities and Constraints

Map 4 illustrates existing conditions, regional considerations, opportunities and limitations for development in the Grace Lake area. These conditions will influence the future development of the planning area. Plan recommendations and implementation strategies will follow in subsequent sections.

- The area is adjacent to the I-275 and Ecorse Road interchange, which in turn provides access to I-94, Metro Airport, and I-96. Due to its strategic location, the area is prime for the development of uses that require access to major thoroughfares and transportation facilities.
- The area has exposure to I-275 on two sides, offering excellent visibility.
- There is established light industrial development west along Haggerty Road.
- Ecorse Road is planned for roadway improvements to address future increased traffic volumes and streetscape enhancements to improve its appearance and emphasize its significance in the regional transportation network. It has been christened the northern link of Wayne County's "Ring Road."
- Residential quality of life in this area is impacted by heavy truck volumes on Ecorse Road generated by the trucking and distribution uses to the west and east.
- Due to the impacts of I-275 traffic noise and fumes, the I-275 frontage area is not conducive to a high quality residential environment.
- The area is characterized by large parcels of land, attractive for large scale development that can meet the high quality design standards of office-technology development.
- The existing woodlands and natural features provide an opportunity to develop the area in a campus like setting. The golf course north of Ecorse Road is an additional amenity for such a development form.
- The uses in the area should be designed to provide a buffer between residential development on Hannan Road, the I-275 freeway and light industrial and distribution center uses on Haggerty Road.
- Many of the existing single family residential dwellings on Hannan Road are located on very deep acreage parcels, with only approximately one third of the parcel actually occupied with dwellings and accessory structures. Opportunity exists to combine and split off the rear portions of these properties for office technology uses, however, the

long term utility of the remaining land (fronting on Hannan Road) should be a foremost concern.

- The past use of the lake and vicinity for sand and gravel mining and associated storage of materials may pose environmental limitations for residential development suitability. Non-residential options are likely to be more feasible and appropriate.

## V. Future Land Use Plan

This section includes a description and justification for the future land uses shown on Map 5.

- A. **Office Technology.** Most of the area included in this amendment is proposed to be master planned for office technology uses. These uses typically require large tracts of land with good access to major roads, high visibility and aesthetically pleasing sites, often with natural amenities in an office research park environment. The intent of this Master Plan amendment is to encourage developments that would utilize the natural features of the land and work around its limitations to develop campus type settings. The primary office technology uses often require support businesses such as restaurants, child care, and other service oriented operations. The planned office technology classification is designed to attract developments with high quality architecture, generous landscaping, open space areas, sidewalks and pathways, entry features, site interconnections, and other site design characteristics of a campus setting.

The office technology master planned area extends south of the DTE transmission corridor and extends to Hannan Road. Land south of Tyler Road, from Hannan Road on the east to I-275 on the west and south is also master planned office technology.

- B. **Mixed Use.** The Ecorse and Haggerty Road Corridor Plan designates most of the land on the north and south sides of Ecorse Road, east of I-275 for mixed use development. The area identified in this Master Plan amendment, is consistent with that shown in the Ecorse and Haggerty Road Corridor Plan. The uses anticipated also remain the same.

The intent of the mixed use district is to prevent strip commercial development, and at the same time, provide incentives for shallow frontage parcels on Ecorse Road to be developed for uses compatible with an office technology environment. As stated in the Ecorse and Haggerty Road Corridor Plan, mixed use would allow residential, office and commercial uses. Residential uses could be in the form of moderate density town homes at a density of 6 to 12 units per acre. Commercial uses would include: offices and office parks; limited retail uses (specialty markets, retail shops, personal services, etc.); sit-down restaurants and taverns, sidewalk cafes; some types of limited commercial recreational uses; day care centers, etc. Commercial uses would be limited to a maximum percentage of a project to prevent a intensive strip commercial development. Retail uses that are not neighborhood oriented and pedestrian friendly, such as uses with drive-through facilities, gas stations and other auto service uses, or that have a regional orientation, such as “big box” retail, are not consistent with the intent of the mixed-use land use category.

Moderate density town home developments are appropriate for shallow parcels with large When mixed appropriately with limited office, restaurant, and retail use, such

developments become vital and attractive communities. frontage exposure and higher volumes of traffic. Town homes also add a moderately price housing option that is not currently available in the Township.

- C. **General Commercial.** The southeast quadrant of the Ecorse Road/I-275 interchange is master planned for general commercial uses. This use designation corresponds to the C-1 General Commercial district, and is located to provide for necessary commercial services, including gas stations and hotels. The area planned general commercial is more than sufficient to meet future commercial needs at this interchange, especially given the areas of commercial at the other quadrants of the interchange.
  
- D. **Public/Semi-Public.** The existing Township cemetery parcel with frontage on Tyler Road will continue to remain as public/semi-public land. The fire station is also shown remaining, with the rear of that parcel going for office technology uses. If a replacement fire station is constructed, the entirety of that parcel may convert to office technology.



## VI. Sequencing Standards

There is no way to know today how fast the land use changes envisioned by this plan will occur. A single large user is currently considering developing much of the vacant land. The remaining parcels, particularly the single family residential parcels along Hannan, Ecorse and Tyler Roads are not generally large enough to individually accommodate the Township's desired office technology uses in the master-planned campus environment. The potential to create isolated single family residences, surrounded by non-residential uses is evident, particularly as some residents will choose to sell their property while others elect to stay or hold out for more money.

Avoiding land use conflicts during the extended time period which may be required to achieve the Master Plan for the Grace Lake area will require careful consideration and application of standards. Patience will be required for the assembly of parcels. Development may need to be delayed to avoid introducing incompatible uses, or until and unless the effects of the potential incompatibilities of "leap-frog" relationships, vehicular traffic and circulation effects, developmental impacts, visual impacts, and other effects can be eliminated or effectively mitigated. Standards must be applied strictly to achieve these ends.

However, because of the variety of potential spatial relationships and unpredictability of the sequence of development, potential for new conflicts will likely arise. Therefore some flexibility and real time adjustment will be required and the following standards may need to be refined and manipulated through the use of site design, screening, and other mitigating measures to protect the integrity and quality of individual residential lots. Further, because the standards herein are not exhaustive and may not cover all eventualities or combinations of proposals, the Township should periodically review, refine and reflect the changing circumstances in ordinances, policies and procedures.

In review of rezoning and development proposals, the Township should consider the following standards:

1. Residential lots shall not be isolated by office technology uses or zoning. Office technology use shall not "wrap around" a single residential lot or isolate a single residential lot from other residential uses.
2. Because the area is in transition, an office technology use or zone may "back" to a residential use during the interim, provided screening is installed to reduce negative impacts on the residential use or zone. Screening shall comply with the requirements of the OT district.
3. Rezoning for office technology uses shall be linked as closely as possible to the timing of development and land use change. Premature rezoning without a specific

development proposal and site plan shall be avoided to minimize land use conflicts, property value decline, maintenance and safety problems.

4. Office technology sites shall have sufficient width and area to facilitate development that satisfies the ordinance intent as well as specific standards for parking, circulation, delivery needs and landscaping, and without producing isolated islands of existing conditions which would not be economically viable for development. A minimum parcel width of 340 feet, and minimum area of 8 acres is generally required to meet present day development and ordinance standards.
5. Driveway access to office technology uses shall be encouraged to be only from an internal road system, not from Hannan Road or Tyler Road. The purpose of this shall be to limit points of vehicular access (multiple driveways) from office technology development and minimize the impacts of the resultant traffic on single family residential uses which may be adjacent or across Hannan Road.
6. Any rezonings and development approved shall be compatible with the Plan as a whole, and able to stand and function on its own, without harm to the quality of the office technology sector, or the continuation of residential land uses where the single family owners wish it to continue.
7. Development proposals and rezoning requests which involve a change from residential to office technology or mixed use must encompass total parcels and not divide residential lots. This is necessary to ensure that sufficient land area remains on the thoroughfare frontage to permit the eventual rezoning and conversion to uses consistent with the Plan.
8. Landscaping shall be used with office technology, mixed use and commercial development to enhance the image of the Plan area, to minimize noise, air and visual pollution, improve building appearance and screen and improve the appearance of parking and service areas. In particular, landscape screening, buffering and setbacks shall be provided along the Hannan Road frontage to buffer office technology uses on the west side from existing and master planned single family residential uses on the east side of Hannan Road. Along Ecorse Road, landscape improvements shall be consistent with and enhance the Ecorse Road/Haggerty Road Corridor Plan.
9. Sites shall be developed and designed to accommodate future connections, linkages and common elements with adjacent sites so as to create a campus style environment, consistent with the intent of the OT district.

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