

# Appendix B

# CULTURAL FEATURES

## GEOGRAPHY and EARLY HISTORY

Originally inhabited by native American Indian tribes including the Potawatomies, the first white settlers in what is now known as Hillsdale Township were Jeremiah Arnold and Caleb Bates. These individuals arrived in the Township in 1834 and settled along the Township's eastern border. It was not until fifteen years later, however, that Hillsdale Township actually came to be recognized as a governmental unit when Fayette Township was divided into two townships in 1859 just prior to the Civil War (1861-1865). Hillsdale Township thusly came into being with 18 sections and Fayette Township split with 18 + 6 sections from Scipio Township to avoid the future village of Jonesville from being split into two townships. The villages of Jonesville and Hillsdale gained chartership in 1869. Both would later change to city charterships. The splits and citifications left the area with four governmental units. Note that the growth of the rail system in the 1800's spurred growth. Eventually rails would go all four directions from Hillsdale. Land swapping or acquisition by the City of Hillsdale left Hillsdale Township divided in two with Hillsdale city near the middle. Population in the Township grew from just 413 in 1920 to 2033 in the year 2010.

## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

### Regional Access

Regional access to Hillsdale Township is provided by a number of state and federal highways (see Figure B-1). M-99 stretches from the Ohio state line to Homer through the Township and the City of Hillsdale. M-49 passes within two miles of the Township's western border and US-12 (linking the City of Detroit to the City of New Buffalo on Lake Michigan) passes within three miles of the northern edge of the Township. These major transportation thoroughfares provide high accessibility to and from the Township area. The closest public airport is the Hillsdale Municipal Airport, owned and operated by the City of Hillsdale and located on the eastern border of the Township, between State and Ba-

con Roads; there is also a rail line running through Hillsdale Township heading in a southwesterly direction from Hillsdale City. Rail service is of great importance to many local industries.

### Local Roadway Network Pattern

The Township's local roadway network reflects a loose grid-like pattern. Major east-west corridors include Mechanic, Bacon and State Roads. Bacon Road is the only east-west road which is continuous across the entire Township. Aside from M-99 which travels through the southeast corner of the Township for approximately one mile before entering the City of Hillsdale, the major roads are Bunn Road, S. Hillsdale Road, and Milnes Road. Lake Wilson Road, a local road situated in the western half of the Township one mile east of Bunn Road, is the only continuous north-south road in the Township.

In compliance with the requirements of Michigan Act 51 of 1951, the Hillsdale County Road Commission (HCRC) classifies all roads under its jurisdiction as either primary roads or local roads. Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing circulation throughout the County and to more regional areas.

Primary Roads within the Township are Bankers Road, Bacon Road, Mechanic Road, Spring Road, State Road, Bunn Road, and S. Hillsdale Road for a total primary mileage of 17.07 miles. All the remaining county roads are local roads with a total of 18.8 miles.

### Roadway Classifications

Aside from state and federal highways, the Michigan Department of Transportation classifies roads in rural areas as either principal arteries, minor arteries, major or minor collector roads, or local roads. These classifications, and their application to the roads of Hillsdale Township, can generally be described as follows:

- Principal arterial roads accommodate major traffic movements for trips typically over long local or

regional distances. No roads in the Township fall under this classification.

- Minor arterial roads interconnect with and provide access to principal arteries, accommodating more modest trip lengths, and place a higher emphasis upon access to adjacent land uses. M-99 is the only corridor in the Township classified as a minor arterial.
- Major collector roads emphasize access to abutting land areas and the collection of traffic for distribution to the larger arterial systems which may exist within the municipality or in neighboring municipalities. Within the Township, this classification applies to Bacon Road, Bankers Road, Bunn Road, S. Hillsdale Road, Mechanic Road, Milnes Road, Airport Road, and State Road (17.07 miles).
- Minor collector roads emphasize access to abutting land areas and the collection of traffic for distribution to the larger arterial systems but to a slightly lesser degree than major collector roads. There are no roads in the township which fall under this classification.
- Local roads emphasize access to abutting properties and the collection of traffic for distribution to collector and arterial corridors. This classification applies to the balance of the roads in the Township (18.81 miles).

Unpaved roads in the Township are very limited and, aside from some of the Township's local neighborhood roads, are restricted to the Township's borders including Mauck Road, Fitzpatrick Road, and portions of Sand Lake Road.

### Traffic

Average daily traffic counts recorded by the HCRC do not indicate any significant congestion or carrying capacity problems with the road network in the Township. A rural two-lane highway can typically accommodate between 6,000 to 8,000 car trips or more per day before congestion becomes a serious concern. Those roads in the Township which the HCRC recorded 24-hour traffic counts of 1,700 or more are identified below (date shown in parenthesis):

S. Hillsdale Road south of Hillsdale City  
5,677 (2011)

State Road  
4,352 (2013)  
W. Bacon Road  
3,700 (2010)  
Mechanic Road  
2,752 (2010)  
E. Bacon Road  
2,527 (2010)  
Lake Wilson Road  
2,404 (2010)  
Spring Road  
2,079 (2008)  
Bankers Road  
1,720 (2014)

The classification of roads in the Township by MDOT and HCRC has important financial implications regarding maintenance and improvements. Roads federally designated as local roads are not eligible for federal funding. Under Michigan law, townships have no responsibility for funding road improvements and maintenance. On the other hand, while County Road Commissions must maintain and improve primary roads at their own expense, state law limits the participation of County Road Commissions to no more than 50% for improvements to local roads. In reality, there are very few counties in Michigan where local townships are not actively involved in funding road improvements. Hillsdale Township typically provides funding for major road improvements and maintenance of roads classified by the HCRC as local roads, such as repaving and seal coating.

## LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Hillsdale Township's overall land use pattern reflects a comparatively low level of development and expansive areas of open spaces (see Figure B-3). The vast majority of the Township is characterized by woodlands, wetlands, fields, and farmland. Less than 7% of the Township area has been developed for residential, commercial, industrial, and/or related urban uses. A review of some of the more significant characteristics concerning land use and development within the Township follow.

### Agriculture

Of the approximately 3,600 acres of farmland in the Township, the vast majority are used for crop production. The most commonly harvested crops include corn and soybeans. Agricultural lands are located throughout nearly all areas of the Township although much of the acreage currently being farmed is being done so by

farmers paying rent to landowners for use of the acreage.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES**

### **Government Administration**

Hillsdale Township is governed by a five member Township Board. Township offices are located in the Hillsdale Township Hall at the southeast corner of Lake Wilson Road and Bacon Road. The Township Hall was built in the mid 1970's.

### **Sewage Disposal and Potable Water**

The vast majority of Township residents rely upon on site potable water and sewage disposal. Of the approximately 830 dwelling units in the Township in 1995, 39 households were connected to public water and 30 were connected to public sewer. These public services are provided by the Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities which principally serves the City of Hillsdale. There are no plans at this time for the extension of public sewer or water into the Township.

### **Emergency Services**

Police protection is provided by the Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police. There is no special funding by the Township for these services and they are provided "on demand." The Township does not directly fund either of these. The Sheriff's Department is located in the City of Hillsdale but close to the center of the Township. The Township provides Fire protection; the Township Fire Department is located just west of the City on Bacon Road. Ambulance service is provided by the Reading Emergency Unit which has Units in or near the Township 24/7. All of these agencies are dispatched by a Central Dispatch reached by calling 911. The County is also served by an Emergency Service Agency that reacts to severe weather and other major disasters with a mobile operation center and other emergency units.

### **Stormwater Management**

Stormwater management within Hillsdale Township is largely limited to several comparatively small drainage courses throughout the Township which are under the jurisdiction of the Hillsdale County Drain Commissioner. The Drain Commissioner is responsible for maintaining these drainage courses to facilitate the collection of runoff as well as responsible for issuing permits in connection with development projects where soil erosion

and sedimentation may be of concern. There are also several underground storm sewers originating in the City of Hillsdale which extend for short distances into Hillsdale Township.

### **Natural Gas and Electricity**

Natural gas is provided throughout the majority of the Township by Michigan Gas Utilities and electrical service is provided by both Consumers Power Company and the Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities.

### **Cemeteries**

The Township owns and operates two cemeteries. King Lake Cemetery is located on Bankers Road near the City; this cemetery is over a century old and all lots are considered sold. There are occasional burials in previously-purchased lots that are vacant. The second cemetery is Sand Lake Valley Cemetery, a new development located on Bunn Road near Hallett Road. This cemetery has over 3,000 lots; only a small percent have been sold, with less than ten burials occurring prior to 2015.

### **Education**

Most of the properties in the Township are a part of the Hillsdale School District. A few properties in the northwest corner are in Jonesville School District. Currently with "School of Choice" in Michigan, other School districts serve the Township with buses and availability of their schools. There is also one public charter school in the Township (Will Carleton Academy).

Hillsdale Township residents live in close proximity to Hillsdale College in the City of Hillsdale. The college has a national reputation as a strong liberal arts institution. Founded in 1844, the college covers approximately 200 acres and provides a four year curriculum for approximately 1,400 students. Hillsdale College was the first college in Michigan, and second in the United States, to admit women on a par with men. Jackson College's LaTarte Center in Hillsdale has over 500 students attending and currently offers technical training, skill sets, certificates, associate degrees, and two Bachelor degree programs.

### **Recreation**

The single public recreational facility in the Township is the 98 acre Lewis Emery Park in the southeastern portion of the Township, owned and operated by the Hillsdale County Parks Commission. The 98 acre park was formerly the site of rearing ponds operated by the Department of Natural Resources. In addition to the ponds which continue to be regularly stocked by the

County for fishing, the park includes a community building, picnic facilities, nature trail, and ballfield. Hillsdale Township is a partner in the “Headwaters Recreational Authority”, an authority that is comprised of the Cities of Hillsdale and Jonesville, as well as Fayette Township. This Authority develops plans and financing for recreational projects such as walking/hiking trails in more than one of these municipalities. The City of Hillsdale operates eight public parks covering a total of approximately 130 acres. Additional local recreation land in the City is associated with the elementary, middle, and high school facilities of the Hillsdale School District. There are four county parks and one state park facility (Lost Nation State Game Area) within one half hour of the Township. There is also a private campground within the Township which is on Hallett Road at South Sand Lake. The approximately 100 sites are primarily an RV type of campground that offers boating, fishing, swimming, along with other recreational facilities.