

Table 3-8

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (1999)		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than \$15,000	225	5.8%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	251	6.5%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	209	5.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	577	14.9%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	909	23.5%
\$75,000 or more	1,695	43.8%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The 2000 Census revealed that 4.2 percent of the population (460 residents) were below the poverty level in 1999. A total of 11.4 percent of all residents 65 years and older and 12.7 percent of female-headed households with children were below the poverty level. By comparison, the current census indicated that 5.5 percent of Oakland County’s population was below the poverty level in 1999.

Future Population Growth

Population growth in Lyon Township will be determined chiefly by four sets of variables:

1. **Physical Parameters.** Several physical variables will affect population growth in Lyon Township, including the amount of vacant land available for residential development, the land use restrictions placed on such land, and the type of housing that is constructed in the future.
2. **Regional Growth.** Regional development patterns and the general economic health of the region will affect population growth in Lyon Township.
3. **Characteristics of the Existing Population.** Characteristics of the population, such as age structure, propensity to move, and household size will affect population growth.
4. **Preferences of Residents.** Existing and prospective residents' preferences in terms of a living environment will have an impact on population growth. The type and affordability of housing, characteristics of the environment, and availability of public facilities and services affect people's desire to live in a community.

Each of these sets of variables is discussed in detail in the following pages.

Physical Parameters. Vacant land on which new housing units can be constructed is a key variable that determines the absolute maximum population, or "holding capacity" of the Township.

In the **Existing Land Use Analysis** chapter of the master plan, the development potential on the vacant and buildable residentially-zoned land was computed based on the density standards set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. These computations revealed that the opportunity exists to develop another 7,381 housing units, 1.5 times more units than currently exist. Based on the current average household size of 2.63 persons, the construction of 7,381 housing units would add approximately 19,412 residents. Under this development scenario, which is permitted under current zoning, the total population of the Township could more than double to 32,403 persons.

These estimates do not take into account several variables that will affect population growth, including the following:

- **Changes in Planning and Zoning Policies.** Most vacant and agricultural lands in the Township are currently zoned to permit residential development on half-acre or one acre lots.

In developing semi-rural communities adjacent to more suburban communities, rezoning requests to permit higher density development are not uncommon, particularly as land values increase making agriculture less feasible. Rezoning of agricultural and vacant lands to accommodate higher density development would increase the maximum population potential of the Township. On the other hand, this master plan proposes to limit higher density development in the Township, except in a few select locations.

- **Other Land Use Regulations.** Other land use regulations, such as lot split, private road, and subdivision regulations will affect the development potential and subsequent population growth of the Township. Current land use regulations have resulted in haphazard development caused by lots splits on private roads randomly located throughout the Township. Such development has not always followed good planning practice, and it frequently is in conflict with public safety and transportation planning objectives. Initiatives to resolve these concerns will affect the development potential on certain lands.
- **Septic Systems, Availability of Sanitary Sewer and Water Utilities.** Although sanitary sewers and water utilities are being extended throughout the Township, there are many areas that still have no access to these utilities. According to the Soil Survey for Oakland County, soils in most of the Township have severe limitations with respect to septic system use. In establishing land use regulations, a key determinant must be the minimum site area that is required to be reasonably certain that there is sufficient land area for operation of a septic system in an environmentally safe manner. Similarly, land use regulations must recognize the need to drill a well for potable water on each building site. In summary, the maximum density standards deemed appropriate will be affected by the capacity of the wastewater treatment system, septic system limitations and potable water requirements in some locations.

- **Wetlands, Woodlands, Farmlands.** Wetlands, woodlands, and farmlands, to the extent that they are protected by local, state, or federal regulations, will affect development and population growth. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality maps reveal that large portions of the Township are covered by wetlands.

Regional Growth. Certain variables are largely beyond the control of the Township and its individual residents, yet these variables have a tremendous impact on population growth.

The general state of the economy and regional growth patterns are related external variables that work in conjunction to affect population growth.

Cycles in the economy have been cited as one of the key determinants of population change in Michigan, because of the effect of the economy on housing construction and migration patterns. A lackluster economy results in a reduction in the number of families that purchase new homes or relocate. Thus, a poor economy tends to preserve the status quo or, in certain communities, results in reduction in population.

The impact of the recovery of the regional economy in the late 1980's was evident in western Oakland County and Lyon Township. Resurgent growth pushed the leading edge of urbanization into the adjoining communities of Novi, Wixom and Commerce Township. The downturn in the economy in the late 2000's left over 2,500 developed lots vacant in Lyon Township, and caused many developers and builders to lose their businesses.

Characteristics of the Population. The earlier review of population data revealed that the number of mature households is increasing. The increase in more mature households portends smaller household size, which is an important consideration with regard to population growth. A fractional increase or decrease in household size can make a difference of hundreds in total population.

During the 1990's and 2000's, the decrease in household size was counterbalanced by immigration and general population growth. The patterns of the 1990's and 2000's reveal the importance of new housing construction and migration patterns with respect to maintaining or increasing the population.

Preferences of Residents. Variables related to people's preferences in terms of housing and the environment in which they live will affect population growth. The Citizen Planning Survey conducted in late 1990 revealed that residents have been drawn to Lyon Township primarily by its country or rural environment. Other attractive features that survey respondents cited include: general proximity to I-96; access to work, shopping and parks; large lots and open space; low population density; friendly people; and low crime.

The ability of the Township to maintain these qualities will affect population growth. As more people move into the Township, portions of the natural environment are developed upon and the remaining natural areas are subject to greater use. A point could eventually be reached where additional development will not only diminish the Township's natural features, but also alter the perceived desirability of the environment and community in general.

Public facility improvements will also affect the desirability of the community. Research in other semi-rural communities in Michigan revealed that newcomers often are accustomed to the amenities of urban living, such as paved roads, water and sewer services, parks and playgrounds, garbage pick-up, and other services. Typically, the demand for these services gradually increases as the proportion of new residents increases. The ability of the Township to meet these demands will have a substantial impact on people's perception of quality of life in the Township.

Population Projections

Current population statistics indicate that Lyon Township's population continues to grow, although at a slower rate than in previous decades. The information presented on the previous pages reveals events that are expected to generate future population growth. These events include continued economic expansion in western Oakland County, new housing development in the Township, and the general appeal of the community.

Even though population growth is expected to continue, it is unlikely that the population will approach the Township's holding capacity of 32,403 people within the twenty year framework covered by this plan. Population growth of such magnitude would depend on large-scale housing development and in-migration of thousands of new residents, since the size and age structure of the existing population would be able to generate very modest population growth. Regional economic forecasts do not support prospects for housing development and population growth of such magnitude.

One of the most precise population projections for Lyon Township and other communities in the region has been prepared by SEMCOG as a part of its 2030 Regional Development Forecast. The 2030 Regional Development Forecast is based on local land use plans and policies, modified to account for sewer service, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, planned transportation improvements, and similar considerations.

SEMCOG projections indicate that the number of households in Lyon Township will increase to 5,394 by the year 2015, 6,351 by the year 2025, and 7,801 by the year 2035. The SEMCOG projections indicate a total population of 14,430 by the year 2015. SEMCOG projections for year 2025 indicate a total population of 16,671 which represents a 51 percent increase from the 2000 population (see Table 3-9 and Figure 3-2). The net increase population must be attributed largely to the projected increase in the number of households due to in migration.