

# Master Plan 2024-2029

---

ANTRIM COUNTY

---

Board of Commissioners  
Approved 08/15/2024





**ANTRIM COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

P.O. Box 520  
Bellaire, Michigan 49615  
Phone (231) 533-6353  
Fax (231) 533-6935

Chairman: **Terry VanAlstine**

---

August 27, 2024

At the regular meeting of the Antrim County Board of Commissioners, on Thursday, August 15, 2024 the following resolution was offered and adopted.

**RESOLUTION #21-2024 By William Hefferan, and seconded by Jason Helwig**

**Resolution to Adopt the 2024-2029  
Antrim County Master Plan**

**WHEREAS**, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, authorizes the Planning Commission to revise a master plan every 5 years for the use, development, and preservation of all lands in the County, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Antrim County Master Plan was last updated in 2018, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Antrim County Planning Commission voted to begin the 5-year review process for the Antrim County Master Plan at their March 1, 2022 meeting, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Antrim County Planning Commission gave notice of intent on March 2, 2022 to revise the Master Plan, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Antrim County Master Plan was sent out for municipality comment on May 2, 2024 by the Antrim County Board of Commissioners, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Antrim County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on July 18, 2024,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Antrim County Board of Commissioners adopts the 2024-2029 Antrim County Master Plan.

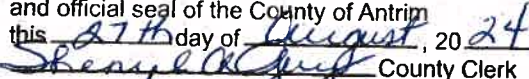
Yes – William Hefferan, Jarris Rubingh, Terry VanAlstine, Jason Helwig, Dawn LaVanway;

No – None;

Absent – None.

**RESOLUTION #21-2024 DECLARED ADOPTED.**

ANTRIM COUNTY CLERK, BELLAIRE, MI  
STATE OF MICHIGAN, COUNTY OF ANTRIM, ss  
I, Sheryl A. Guy, Clerk of the County of Antrim, do  
certify the above is a true and exact copy of the  
original record now remaining in this office.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have set my hand  
and official seal of the County of Antrim  
this 27th day of August, 2024  
 County Clerk

---

# Acknowledgements

## 2024 Board of Commissioners

Terry VanAlstine, Chair  
Dawn LaVanway, Vice-Chair  
Jason Helwig  
Jarris Rubingh  
Bill Hefferan

## Antrim County Planning Commission

Richard Friske, Jr., Chair  
James Gurr, Vice-Chair  
Leslie Elrod, Secretary  
Ron Tschudy  
Bill Hefferan

## Antrim County Staff

Jeremy Scott, County Administrator  
Janet Koch, Deputy Administrator  
Gayle Rider, Administrative Assistant  
Margie Boyd, Secretary  
Leslie Meyers, Drain Commissioner

---

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1	What is the Master Plan?	5
Chapter 2	Natural Resources and the Environment	8
Chapter 3	Existing Generalized Land Use	23
Chapter 4	Demographics	27
Chapter 5	Economic Development	33
Chapter 6	Agriculture	39
Chapter 7	Planes, Trains & Automobiles	49
Chapter 8	Guiding Principles	59
Chapter 9	Future Land Use	65
Chapter 10	Implementation	69

## Maps

Political Base Map	7
Elevations	9
Soils	10
Wetlands	12
Lakes, Rivers & Streams	13
Chain of Lakes	14
Watersheds	18
Managed Areas	20
Generalized Lake Use Patterns	24
Total Population	28
School Districts	32
Prime Farm Land	46
Existing Transportation	51
Airports	54
Future Land Use	68

---

## **Charts**

Antrim County Population	27
Population Comparison by County	29
Population by Townships	29
2020 Monthly, Permanent & Seasonal Transient Residents	30
Population by Age	31
Household Income	32
# of Farms in NW Lower MI	41
Market Value of AG Products Sold in NW Lower MI	42
Size of Farms in NW Lower MI 2022	43
Size of Farms in NW Lower MI 2007	44
Private Civic Organizations	57

---

# Chapter 1: What is a Master Plan?



## Summary

A Master Plan is a comprehensive long-range plan intended to guide growth and development of a community or region. It includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals for the community's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use. It is based on public input, surveys, planning initiatives, existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions.

A Master Plan is a policy document, it does not nor can it regulate land use. A Master Plan is not a zoning document; therefore the recommendations in this plan are only for guidance.

---

*“A Master Plan is an orderly, open approach to determining Antrim County’s needs and goals and developing strategies to address those needs and meet those goals.”*

---

A Master Plan is an orderly, open approach to determining Antrim County’s needs and goals and developing strategies to address those needs and meet those goals. The planning process involves working through four basic questions, which should be answered by the Master Plan:

1. Where is Antrim County now?
2. How did Antrim County get here?
3. Where does Antrim County want to go?
4. How does Antrim County get there?

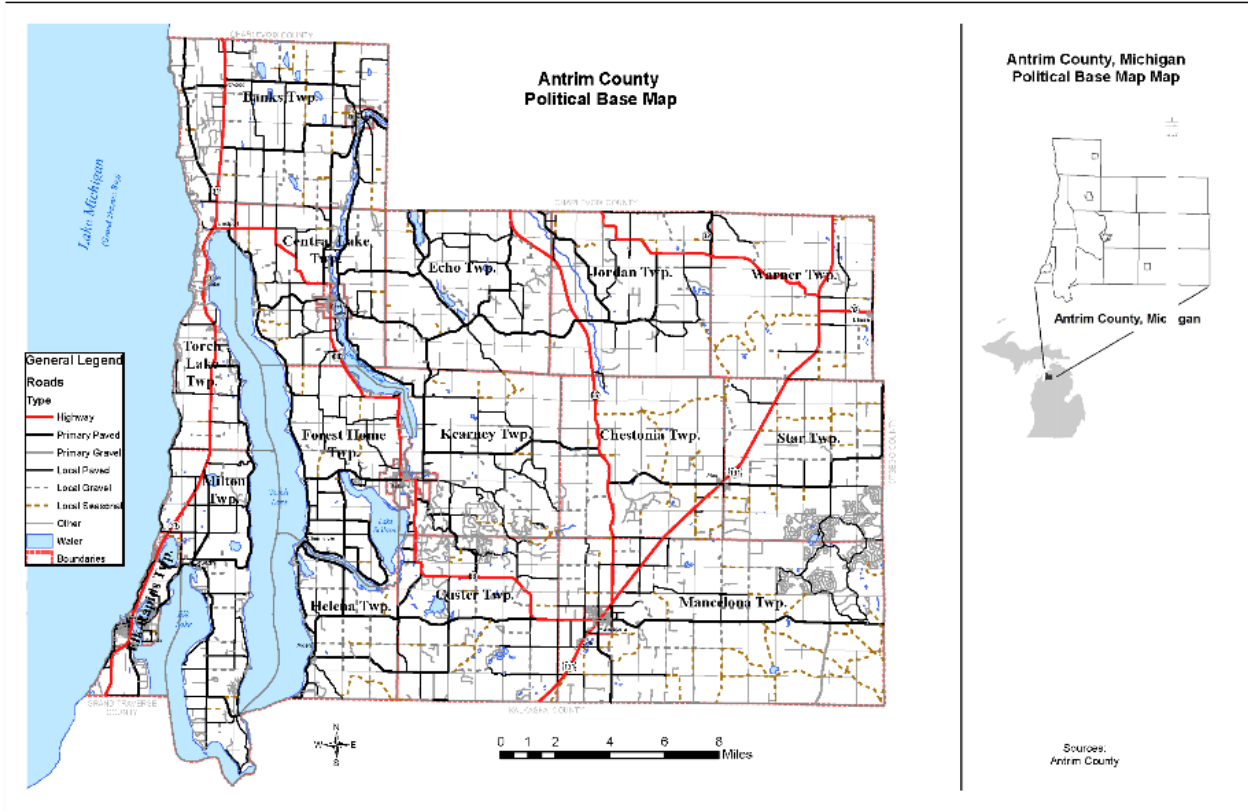


While the plan has little direct authority, it is an expression of Antrim County’s intention for the future and provides guidance to accomplish that vision. Local units of government, citizen groups, and individuals are encouraged to review this plan and make suggestions. The benefits of having an updated plan include:

- 
1. **Consistency in decision making.** The plan gives decision makers a steady point of reference for land-use related actions.
  2. **Ability to make informed decision.** The plan provides facts on existing conditions and trends, enabling decision makers to better understand the impact of their decisions.
  3. **Achieve predictability.** The Plan describes where and what type of development the community desires. This allows individuals to purchase and use property consistent with community goals.
  4. **Wise use of resources.** The Plan includes information from different departments and sources which can be used in prioritizing projects to undertake.
  5. **Preserving community character.** The plan describes the County's vision for the future and establishes its existing and intended growth. It permits the community to identify what is important and how it should be protected.
  6. **Produce positive economic development.** Planning for a community helps existing residences and businesses better predict the future development of an area. It also encourages new businesses and residential developments. In addition, the planning process allows a community to consider workforce, education, and local infrastructure capacity for appropriate economic development strategies to be developed.

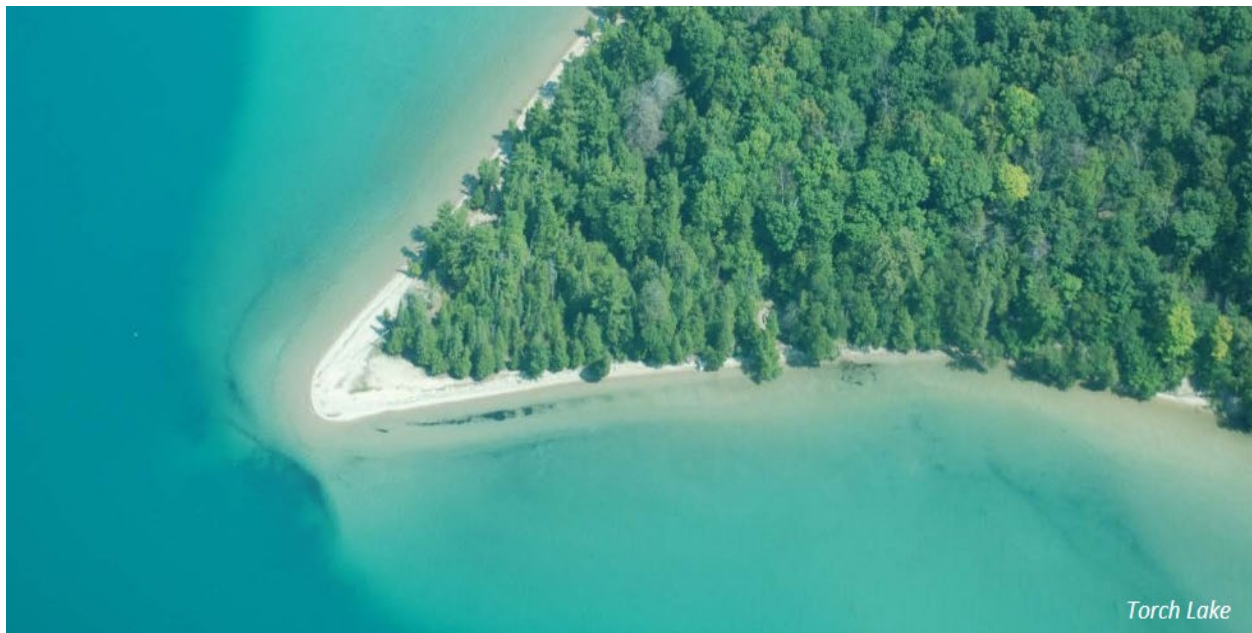
To remain viable, the Master Plan should be flexible and dynamic, not static. It must be able to respond to change and be able to guide. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that master plans be evaluated and amended every five years to keep the plans current.

The Antrim County Planning Commission is charged with interpreting, evaluating, amending, and keeping the Master Plan current. All County decisions relating to land use, transportation, acquisition of land, and major capital improvements within Antrim County should be reviewed in relation to the Master Plan to ensure compatibility.



---

## Chapter 2: Natural Resources & Environment



### ***Summary***

Natural features, such as wetlands, woodlands, lakes, and streams help shape community identity. This is especially true in Antrim County. New land developments can significantly impact natural features and consequently impact community character. The purpose of this section is to describe the significant natural features that exist in Antrim County.

This information will help the Antrim County Planning Commissioners recommend development into areas which are the least environmentally sensitive to minimize adverse impacts to these areas.

The natural features discussed in this chapter include: geology, topography, soils, climate, wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams, watersheds, fisheries and wildlife, vegetation, groundwater, extraction sites, the sky, and the environment.

## Physical Features (Surface Characteristics that give shape to a community)

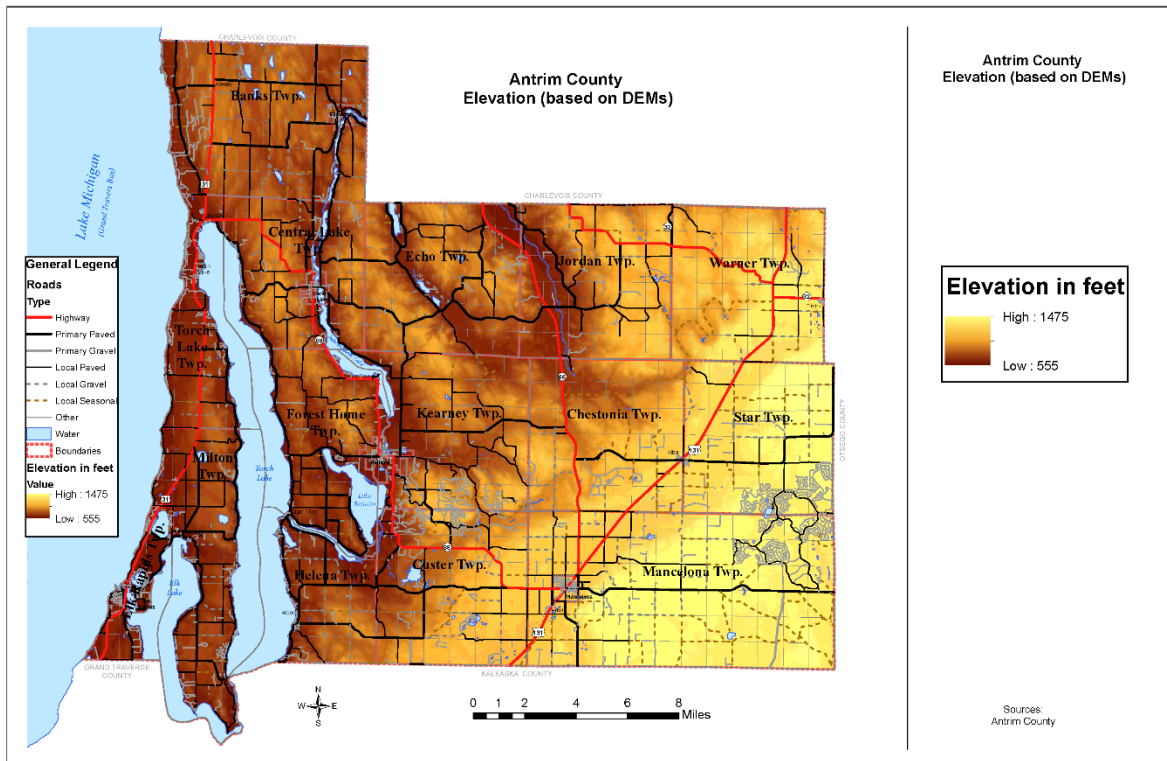
### Geology

The surface geology, like much of Northern Michigan, is characterized by upland areas or moraines, coastal areas and lakebeds, dunes along Lake Michigan, and outwash and glacial channels.

### Topography

The surface topography in Antrim County ranges from flat marshy areas to very steep and rolling hilly sections. The highest point in the county is approximately 1,460 feet above sea level, which is located in the Mancelona Plains region at the extreme southeast corner of Antrim County. The lowest surface elevation is the lake level in Grand Traverse Bay that averages 580 feet above sea level.

There are several areas that have slopes exceeding 15%. These areas are located primarily in Kearney, Forest Home, Echo and Banks Townships. Much of the shoreline along Torch Lake also has steep slopes.





---

During the winter months, the temperature generally ranges from 25-30° F for average highs and from 10-20° F for average low temperatures. During the May through September growing season, average highs range from the low 60s F in early May to the upper 70's° F to low 80's° F during the warmest average month of July. Average low temperatures range from the mid-upper 30s° F in early May to the 50s° F during July and early August. Air temperatures in the county are modified significantly by the nearby Great Lakes. This "lake effect" moderation results in relatively cooler air temperatures in the spring and summer seasons, and warmer air temperatures in the fall and winter, providing more favorable conditions for the production of specialty crops such as cherries and grapes. The average length of the frost-free growing season, defined as the average number of days between the last freezing temperatures of the spring season and the first freezing temperatures of the fall, is 138 days for the county as a whole, with slightly greater numbers in western sections near Lake Michigan, and slightly lower numbers across eastern sections of the county.

Total annual precipitation ranges from 30 to 33 inches. 13-15" of which falls on average during the May-September growing season. Precipitation occurs in all months, but is relatively greater during the warm season into fall. The wettest months on average in Antrim County are September and October with average monthly totals from 3.4 – 4.4", while the driest months on average are February and March, with monthly totals from 1 to 2". Precipitation totals in the county and region are augmented by the lake-effect related precipitation during the cold season when relatively cold air upstream of the Great Lakes picks up moisture from the open waters of the lakes resulting in clouds and precipitation across areas downstream of the lakes which frequently include northwest lower Michigan.

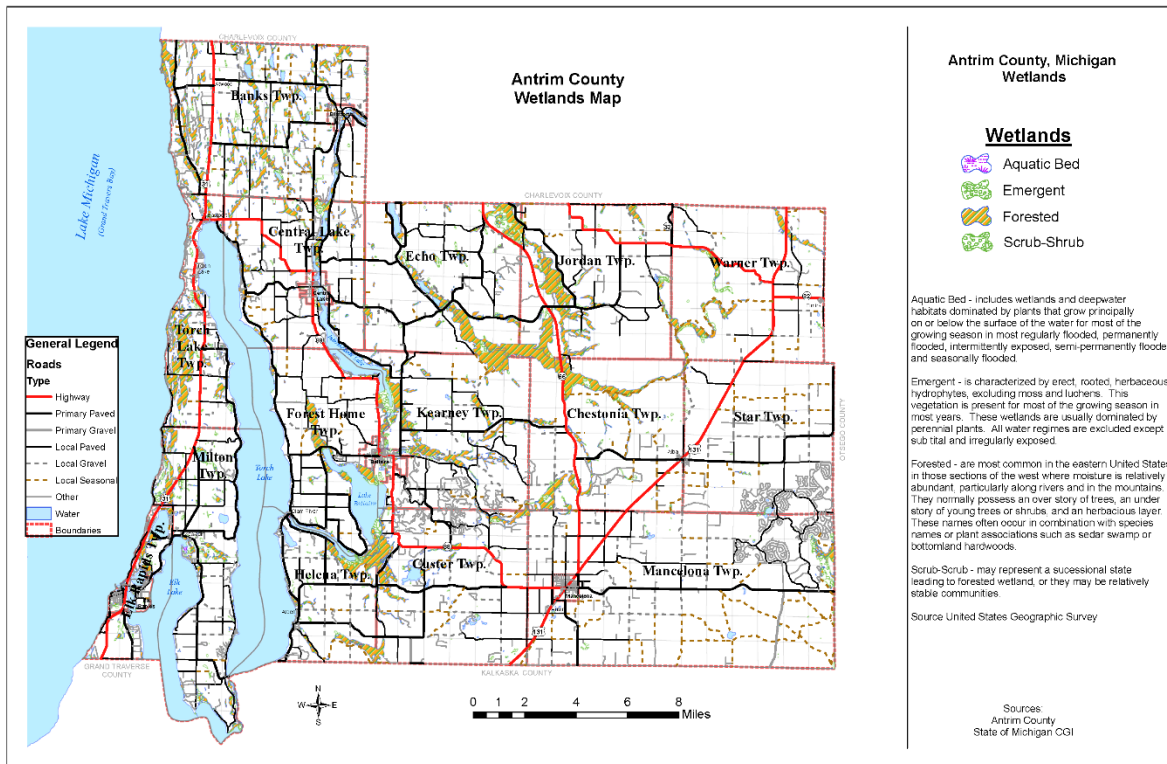
Average seasonal snowfall varies significantly across the county, ranging from just over 100" across southwestern sections of the county along Lake Michigan to more than 150" across higher elevation sites in southeastern sections. The snowiest month climatologically is January, followed by December. Winter recharge and storage of water in the root zone is important for the production of forest and agricultural crops for the upcoming year as evaporation generally exceeds rainfall during the growing season.

Thunderstorms occur approximately 30-32 times each year. Average relative humidity generally exhibits a strong diurnal cycle, with minimum values (typically from 50-60%) during mid-afternoon hours and maximum values (typically 80-100%) near sunrise.

The collective influences of Lake Michigan and lake effect modification on county weather tend to be greatest across western portions for an average distance of 10 to 15 miles inland. Combined with favorable soils and hilltops and other relatively high topographical features where cold air near the ground surface can more easily drain away, the proximity of Lake Michigan tends to reduce extremes in temperature and creates a climate favorable for the production of tree fruit and other specialty crops otherwise unfeasible at this high latitude. During the summer, onshore winds tend to reduce the frequency and magnitude of high temperatures and maintain humidity. In the fall, they retain heat and in the spring retard premature vegetative growth with cold retained in the lakes.

### Wetlands, Lakes, Rivers, and Streams

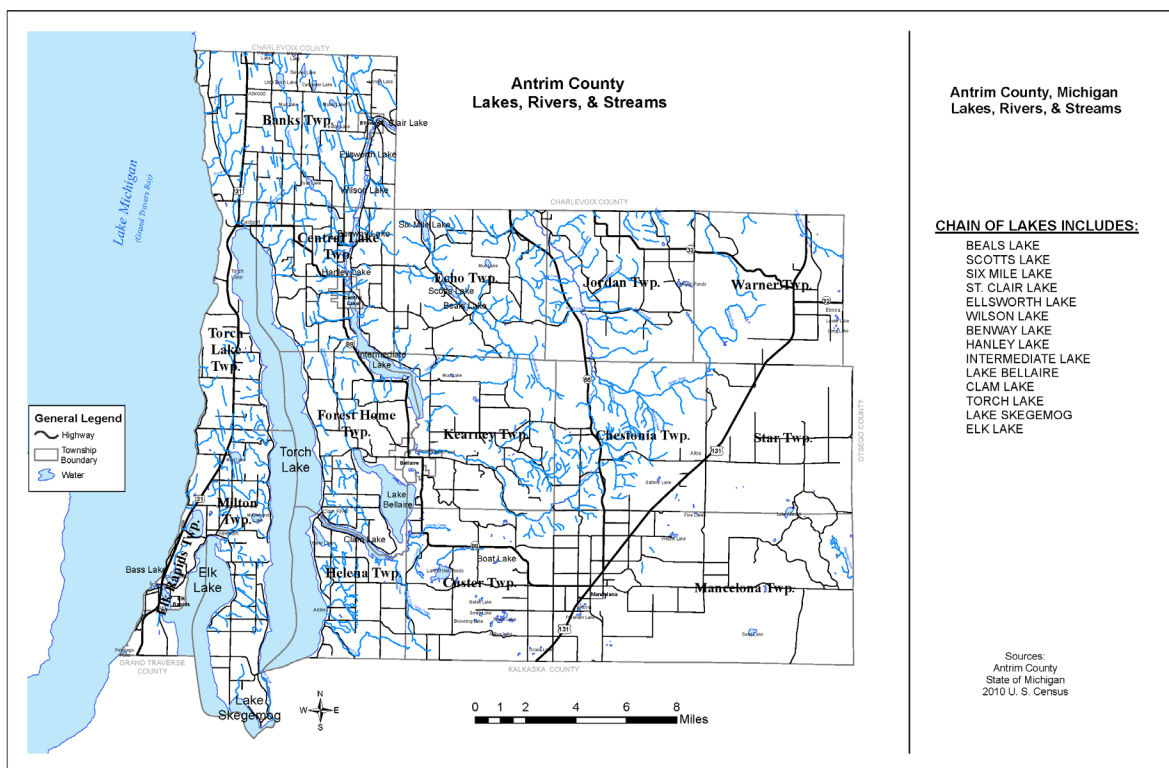
Antrim County has more than 31,000 acres of inland water area (lakes, rivers and streams), and more than 6,500 acres of wetlands.



It is estimated that wetlands make up 2% of Antrim County. Wetlands are a part of floodwater control, groundwater recharge and discharge, water quality, sediment entrapment, shoreline stabilization, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation. Although regulated by the 1994 Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), wetland environments can be impacted by draining and filling practices. Forest fractionalization, residential construction, golf course construction, and roads continue to affect the wetlands in the area.

Wetlands contain many species of plants and animals whose survival depends on this unique environment. However, because they are often associated with lake, river and stream shorelines, they have received considerable attention as the pressure to develop along these shorelines increases.

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act defines a wetland and describes what types of activities are permitted on or adjacent to a wetland. The United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) regulate water and wetlands that adjoin the Great Lakes. Permits from these agencies are required prior to development on a property that has a wetland, as defined by the EGLE and/or Army Corps of Engineers.



There are 76 inland lakes in Antrim County, with more than 25 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. The streams total 264 miles in length and most are high quality fishing streams

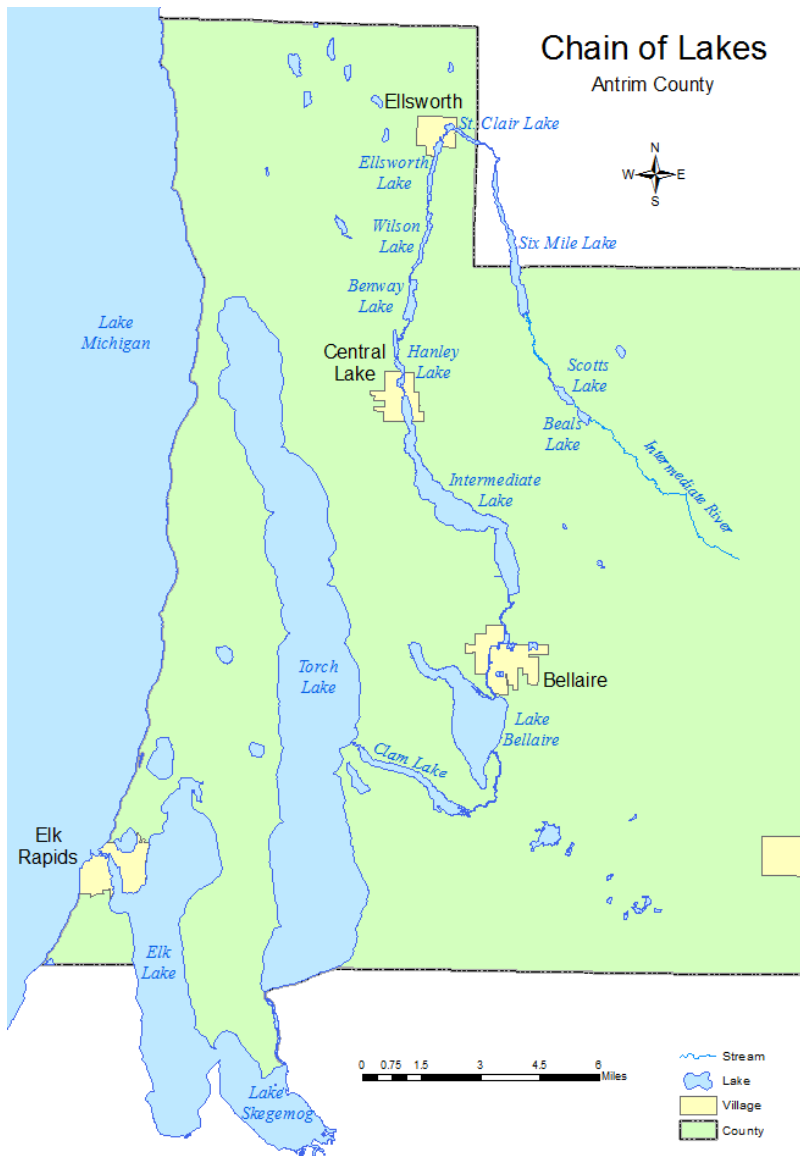
The headwater for the Jordan River is in Antrim County and it flows all but two miles in Antrim County. Over 30,000 acres of state forestlands border this river.

The Manistee River, part of the Upper Manistee River watershed, is located in the northwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It has a drainage area of 590 square miles. The watershed includes parts of five counties: Antrim, Otsego, Crawford, Kalkaska and Missaukee. The Big Manistee is approximately 78 miles long and originates in southeast Antrim County, at an elevation of 1,250 feet.

The Cedar River, a “Blue Ribbon Trout Stream,” flows mostly westward through Antrim County into the Intermediate River in Bellaire. The Cedar River rises in southwest Chestonia Township, near the boundary with Mancelona Township.

**Elk Rapids Chain of Lakes (ERCOL)**

A key natural resource in Antrim County is the Chain of Lakes, commonly referred to as the Chain ‘O’ Lakes by the locals. The Chain of Lakes has over 200 miles of shoreline and almost 60



square miles of water. This continual connection of water embraces 14 lakes and interconnecting rivers. In addition, there are more than 200 high quality groundwater fed tributaries (many of which are trout streams such as the Cedar and Rapid Rivers). The 14 lakes include: Beals, Scotts, Six Mile, St. Clair, Ellsworth, Wilson, Benway, Hanley, Intermediate, Bellaire, Clam, Torch, Skegemog, and Elk. Antrim County owns and oversees The Bellaire Dam on the intermediate River and the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Dam. Both dams maintain court ordered lake levels within ERCOL.

**Beals Lake**

Beals Lake is 41 acres, has a maximum depth of 16 feet, a mean depth of 10.2 feet, and is 0.50 miles long. It is the

uppermost lake of the chain and is also the smallest.

---

**Scotts Lake**

Scotts Lake is 63 acres, has a maximum depth of 30 feet, a mean depth of 13 feet, and is 0.70 miles long. At this time, this is the only lake that does not have a public boat launch.

**Six Mile Lake**

Six Mile Lake is 378 acres, has a maximum depth of 31 feet, a mean depth of 13 feet, and is 4 miles long. This lake has more tributaries than any other lake in the chain; however most of the tributaries are unnamed.

**St. Clair Lake**

St. Clair Lake is 91 acres, has a maximum depth of 32 feet, a mean depth of 10 feet, and is 1.25 miles long. This lake was once known as Campbell Lake.

**Ellsworth Lake**

Ellsworth Lake is 120 acres, has a maximum depth of 42 feet, a mean depth of 17 feet, and is 1.6 miles long.

**Wilson Lake**

Wilson Lake is 106 acres, has a maximum depth of 48 feet, a mean depth of 11.5 feet, and is 1.4 miles long. Much of the west shore is undeveloped because of a railroad right-of-way that existed until the 1980s.

**Benway Lake**

Benway Lake is 131 acres, has a maximum depth of 42 feet, a mean depth of 15 feet, and is 1.1 miles long. Similar to Wilson Lake, much of the west shore is undeveloped because of a former railroad grade.

**Hanley Lake**

Hanley Lake is 93 acres, has a maximum depth of 27 feet, a mean depth of 10.6 feet, and is 1.5 mile long.

**Intermediate Lake**

Intermediate Lake is 1,520 acres, has a maximum depth of 80 feet, a mean depth of 28 feet, and is 8 miles long. This lake was once known as Central Lake and is popular for fishing and boating.

**Lake Bellaire**

Lake Bellaire is 1,793 acres, has a maximum depth of 95 feet, a mean depth of 42 feet, and is 4.5 miles long. This lake was once known as Grass Lake and is popular for fishing and boating.

**Clam Lake**

Clam Lake is 439 acres, has a maximum depth of 27 feet, a mean depth of 13 feet, and is 3.25 miles long. This is another popular site in Antrim County. The majority of the shoreline is developed with homes, restaurants, and marinas.

---

### **Torch Lake**

Torch Lake is 18,473 acres, has a maximum depth of 302 feet, a mean depth of 140 feet, and is 18 miles long. It was called “Was-Wah-go-nink” or “lake of torches” by the Native Americans, reference being made by the use of torches in spearing of whitefish and trout. Torch Lake is known as one of the world’s most beautiful lakes.

### **Lake Skegemog**

Lake Skegemog (formerly known as Round Lake) is 2,560 acres, has a maximum depth of 29 feet, a mean depth of 12.4 feet, and is 3.7 miles long. Lake Skegemog, home of lake sturgeon, muskellunge, and walleye among others, provides fishing and ice fishing activities. Though not in Antrim County, Lake Skegemog is part of the Chain of Lakes watershed.

### **Elk Lake**

Elk Lake is 7,730 acres, has a maximum depth of 192 feet, a mean depth of 71 feet, and is 9 miles long. This lake divides the Village of Elk Rapids and is popular for boating.

The ERCOL Chain of Lakes environment is supported by many advocacy groups including: Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association (ESLA), Intermediate Lake Association (ILA), Six Mile Lake Association (SMLA), Three Lakes Association (TLA), Torch Conservation Center (TCC), Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA), Tip of the Mitt Watershed Center (TOMWC), the Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay (GTBay) and the Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area serving Charlevoix, Antrim, Kalkaska and Emmet Counties (CAKE-CISMA).

### ***Chain of Lakes Hydrology Study***

In June 2022, the United States Army Corps of Engineers revealed the results of a years-long hydrologic modeling study conducted on the Chain of Lakes. The model was constructed of the watershed using publicly available information and data collected by the ERCOL Citizen Science community, incorporating information regarding the operation of the dams in Elks Rapids and Bellaire. In part, the study showed that groundwater plays a larger role in determining water levels on the Chain of Lakes than surface runoff. The study revealed the need for further data collection and the installation of additional gaging equipment to more accurately define the relationships between lake levels and dam operations.

In February 2023, the County Board of Commissioners and ERCOL Lake Associations engaged with the Spicer Group to expand the study to review the existing models to specifically address the Bellaire and Elk Rapids hydraulic capacities. The analysis was completed in Aug 2023. Elk Rapids Dam fared well with 6” of free-board available in the event of a 100 year storm. Bellaire Dam however, will top its banks. The Operator of Dams and an active Lake Level Committee are researching all options for funding, including grants.

---

### ***Grass River and Grass River Natural Area***

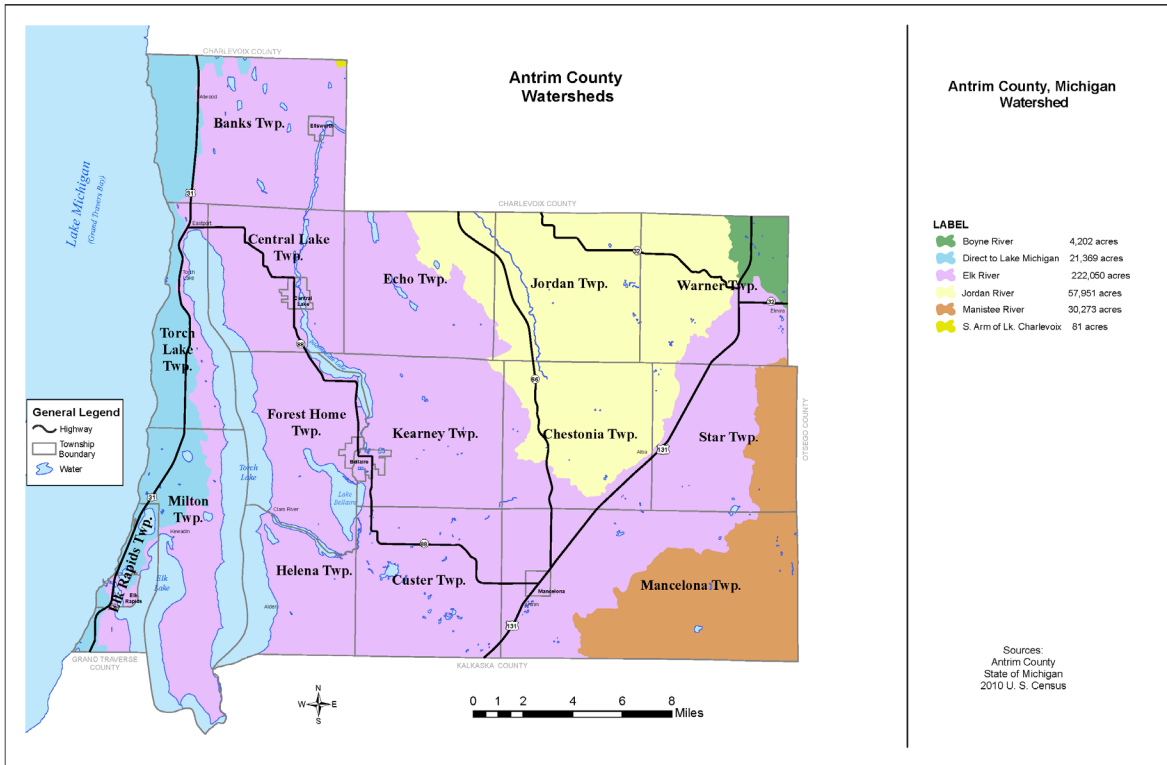
The Grass River is 2.5 miles long and connects Lake Bellaire to Clam Lake. Its overall watershed is approximately 175 square miles. It has been deemed one of the most scenic and ecologically significant areas along the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL). Most of the river is undeveloped and is protected by the Grass River Natural Area, a 1,492-acre Antrim County preserve, which, in addition to the river, includes nearly two miles of Clam Lake shoreline, four miles of shoreline along the Grass River and two miles on Lake Bellaire. The river itself is managed under the Grass River Adaptive Management Plan, a 2023 addendum to the ERCOL Watershed Plan. The Grass River Center is the starting point for over 40,000 annual visitors and paid staff and volunteers host a variety nature programs for all ages. The Natural Area is home to over 400 species of plants, 147 species of birds, 49 species of mammals, 35 species of fish, and 33 species of reptiles and amphibians.

The Grass River Natural Area, Inc. administers the area under contract with Antrim County. More information regarding recreational and educational activities is available at [www.grassriver.org](http://www.grassriver.org).

### ***Watersheds***

A watershed is a land area, also known as a drainage area, which collects precipitation and contributes runoff to a receiving body of water or point along a water course. In the southern corner of the County is the headwater area of the Manistee River Basin. The Manistee River drains southwesterly to Lake Michigan, and drains approximately 30-40 square miles of Antrim County.

The Jordan River originates in Antrim County, flows westerly then north into Lake Charlevoix at East Jordan. The Jordan River drains approximately 127 square miles in Antrim and Charlevoix counties.



The largest watershed in Antrim County is the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed, which supplies 60 % of the fresh water flowing into the Grand Traverse Bay each day. The Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed covers an area of about 316 square miles or 202,060 acres in Antrim, Charlevoix, and Kalkaska Counties. Over 72 % of the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed is in Antrim County. A small area in the northeast corner of Antrim County contains portions of the Boyne River Watershed. There are 81 acres of the South Arm of Lake Charlevoix Watershed in the northeast corner of Banks Township.

### **Fisheries and Wildlife**

Antrim County offers the sport fisherman an abundance of fishing opportunities with over 264 miles of quality fishing streams. This area is a focal point for trout and salmon fishing. The introduction of the salmon into Lake Michigan in the mid-1960s brought new interest that is unsurpassed in fresh water fishing. Fish and wildlife are important to Antrim County and rely on a high level of water quality.

Hunting for whitetail deer attracts many people to the county annually. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Report, *Michigan Deer Harvest Survey Report 2023*, records Antrim County with a deer harvest of 2,003 and an average of 74% being antlered bucks.

---

A variety of habitat also provides the hunter with good ruffed grouse, woodcock, squirrel, rabbit, and turkey hunting opportunities. Other game species of importance to trappers are beaver, otter, muskrat, raccoon, opossum, skunk, red fox, coyote and weasel.

### **Vegetation**

More than half of Antrim County is forested; 180,000 acres or 282 square miles, most of it privately owned. Over the past few decades, thousands of acres have become established forestland. This has been a result of a natural ecological succession from grass and shrub land and from the loss of farmland.

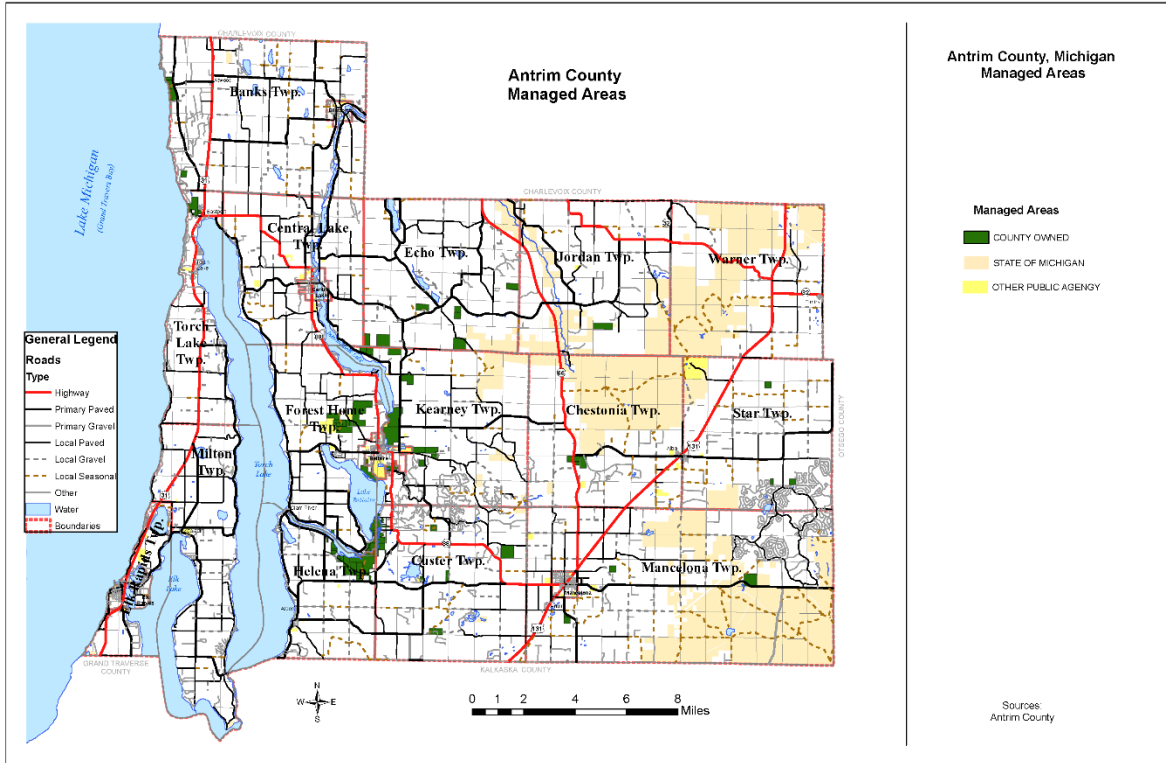
### **Commercial Forest Land**

Antrim County has 4,526.24 acres enrolled in the Michigan Commercial Forest Act as of 2024. The Commercial Forest Act was enacted in 1925 as a way to encourage management of private forestlands and production of forest products. Landowners interested in long-term forest management can enroll their land through a process administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Land enrolled is put on a special tax roll and annual property taxes are substantially reduced to a flat rate of \$ 1.25 per acre. Land must be 40 contiguous acres or more, have no buildings and not producing any income other than forest products. Land shall be open to public hunting and fishing. It is not otherwise public, users must obey and respect private property rights. There is a withdrawal fee and a substantial penalty to remove lands from listing. Information can be obtained at local DNR offices and on the DNR website.

### **Antrim County Owned Forest Lands**

Antrim County has approximately 3000 acres of land classified as Antrim County Forest Land. Antrim County received most of these parcels from the State of Michigan in the 1930s under what is now Public Act 451 of 1994, or the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. Most of the land was considered tax reverted land and deeded to the County to be utilized for “forestry purposes.” It is understood that the term “forestry purposes” relates to the



management of these parcels for the production of forest products as well as forestry education within the community.

Additionally, recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobile and other low impact uses are permitted on the parcels. Antrim County Forest Lands are administered by the Antrim Conservation District Forester under the supervision of the County Commissioners.

## **Subsurface Traits** *(Underground elements that impact community design)*

### **Groundwater/Wells**

Groundwater from glacial drift, and in the various kinds of bedrock geology is plentiful in Antrim County. Some nitrate testing has been completed to determine the movement and possible sources for contamination. Well head protection is overseen by the Northwest Michigan Health Department.

### **Surface Water**

Surface water has the same concerns as groundwater. With our sandy soils, steep slopes and close groundwater to surface water levels, good environmental stewardship is paramount.

---

### ***Extraction Sites***

Sand pits, gravel pits, mining, and oil and natural gas sites are regulated by the State and subject to local zoning (where applicable). Individual homeowners may sign individually with companies regarding the use of their own private property. Drilling on state owned property produces revenue for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund that provides funds for public recreation development and land acquisition throughout the state.

### **Above Ground Traits (*Night Sky Visibility*)**



The ability to view the stars at night is an essential rural characteristic of Antrim County and County residents have expressed their concerns in preserving this view. Many communities are now concerned with the growing amount of night illumination to the rural skies and have introduced ordinances to that effect.

### **Environmental Concerns**

With Antrim County providing 60% of Grand Traverse Bay and the Great Lakes containing one-fifth of the entire world supply of surface fresh water, considered by many to be the world's most precious resource, protection of our water resources is paramount.

There have been two major groundwater contaminations in Antrim County, Tar Lake and the Wickes Manufacturing Trichloroethylene (TCE) plume.

#### ***Tar Lake History***

The Environmental Protection Agency invested over fourteen million dollars in the clean-up and removal of more than 46,000 tons of contaminated material from a ground depression on the Tar Lake site and the EGLE has installed a system to remediate the groundwater moving off the site. Updates are provided every five years.

#### ***TCE Plume History***

Mount Clemens Industries, Inc., later known as Wickes Manufacturing, used TCE in vapor degreasers as part of the manufacturing of auto parts in Mancelona from 1947 to 1967. Waste containing TCE was discarded on the ground and in lagoons, where it seeped through the soil and became dissolved into the groundwater. Both companies went out of business many years ago. As a result, EGLE funds have been allocated to address the TCE in groundwater.

---

### ***Early Response***

In order to prevent exposure to TCE in residential wells in the Mancelona area, the EGLE worked with the community to found and fund the Mancelona Area Water and Sewer Authority (MAWSA). MAWSA operates the public water system that now provides safe drinking water to residences affected by TCE.

### ***Implementation (What should be done next?)***

1. Provide a countywide wetland educational program open to all property owners that would emphasize the legal definitions and uses of these properties.
2. Work with the County Forester to continue developing a tree planting plan. This plan should focus on the environmental, scenic, and financial benefits of hardwood trees to Antrim County. It should also have an outreach component.
3. Encourage the protection of water quality, water wells and the capping of abandoned water wells.
4. Work with local conservation and environmental groups such as the Antrim Conservation District and lake associations to promote environmental awareness, governance and protections.
5. Continue to plan for County owned dam protections and upgrades.

---

# Chapter 3: Existing Generalized Land Use

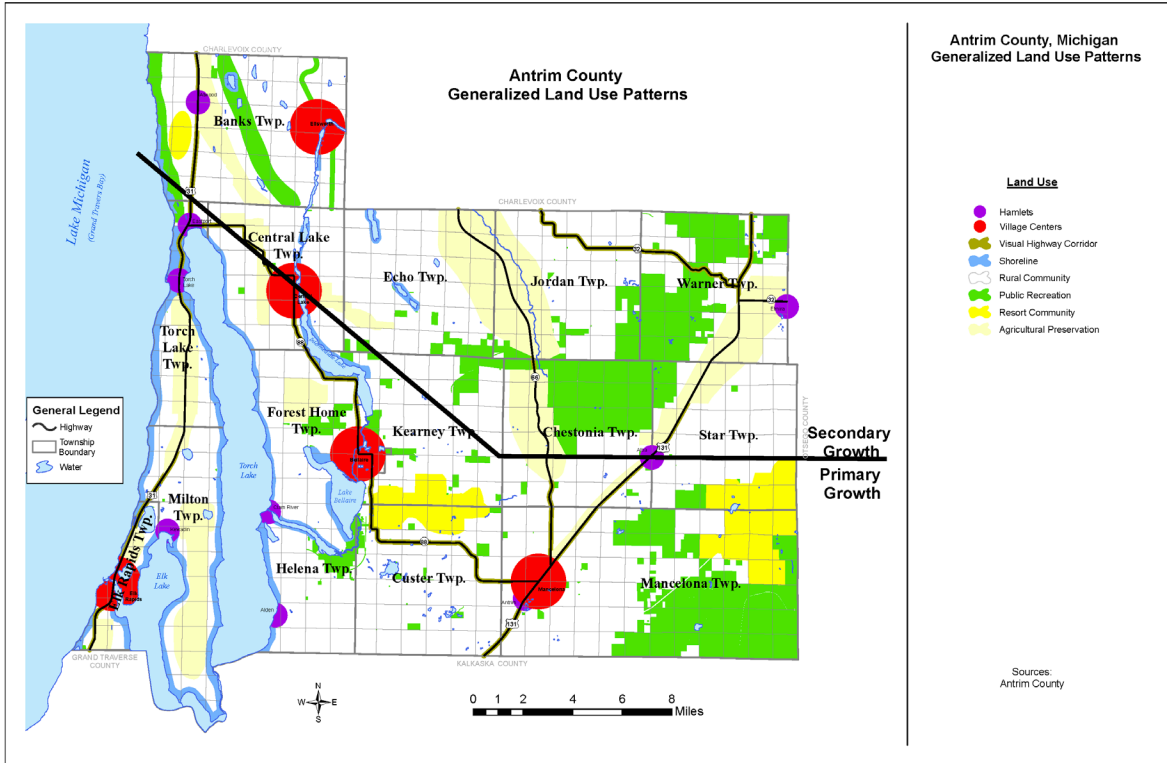


## **Summary**

It is important to know and understand the current land uses and development patterns of a community when planning for the future. Physical features such as rivers, lakes, roadways, and publicly owned land have an impact on the current land use patterns and will continue to do so. Economic and transportation changes will also impact growth.

The information for this generalized map of land use trends in Antrim County was developed through field observation and verification from County officials. It is not meant to be a comprehensive study.

The graphic is divided between primary growth and secondary growth. Primary growth has been areas of the county that have a faster growth rate, while the secondary growth areas have had a smaller growth. This division shows that townships that have a body of water or are in the southern location have had a greater population increase. Townships that do not have these characteristics and/or have a large amount of publicly owned lands have had a smaller increase in population.



## Generalized Land Use Categories

### Villages

There are five villages in Antrim County. Each of these villages has residential and commercial components.

The **Village of Bellaire** is the county seat and contains most of its government buildings. It is comprised of older buildings built along the street-side and has a defined downtown.

The **Village of Central Lake** is at the north end of Intermediate Lake and has a small but defined downtown.

The **Village of Elk Rapids** acts as an entranceway into Antrim County from the southern area. This is a popular tourist destination and is the most populated village. It has a defined west side downtown and a commercial district on the east side with the Elk River traversing the center.

---

The **Village of Ellsworth** is a small community, forested and very rural in character. The Village has promoted itself as part of the “Breezeway,” connecting the Village with Atwood to the west and East Jordan and Boyne Falls to the east.

The **Village of Mancelona** is the second most populated village and has a defined downtown. Mancelona, on the US 131 corridor, identifies itself as the “Explore 131 North” gateway to Antrim County.

### **Hamlets**

Antrim County is home to a number of hamlets, among them Alba, Alden, Atwood, Eastport, Torch Lake, and Torch River. Some of the hamlets, such as Alden, Eastport, and Alba, appear to look and act as villages though they are unincorporated. They are locations that have their own distinct look. Each has its own small commercial center made up of mixed uses in a town setting.

### **Transportation Infrastructure**

The major roadways in Antrim County are US-31 on the west side, US-131 on the east, state highways M-88 and M-66 near the middle, and M-32 in the northeast. They have a symbiotic relationship to the adjacent properties. Land uses are impacted by traffic on the roads, while the view from the roads is impacted by development on the adjacent land. One rail line traverses Antrim County, running parallel to US-131. In addition, there are a number of small airports. These are detailed in Chapter 8: Transportation, Infrastructure, and Community Services.

### **Waterfront Residential**

These are the home sites built along the lakes and rivers. These homes along the Chain of Lakes are a mix of smaller existing homes and new development, with a majority considered seasonal.

### **Recreational Area**

These are public lands that are used for recreation and wildlife management. Many are heavily forested with mature woodlands and rivers. Other areas include open parks and beaches.

### **Resort Recreation**

These are home sites built around a recreational amenities that are both publicly and privately owned such as a ski hill, golf course, or a body of water.

---

### **Active Farming**

These are agricultural areas that are actively being farmed. Farm products include but are not limited to field crops, tree fruits, and livestock. Some farms have farm markets that sell directly to the public. Agri-tourism is increasing throughout the area and includes wineries, distilleries, u-pick and instructive opportunities.

### **Rural Residential**

These locations are rural in nature and the properties are larger in acreage. They have limited on-site infrastructure services such as well and septic.

### **Manufacturing**

There are light manufacturing businesses throughout Antrim County providing local employment opportunities.

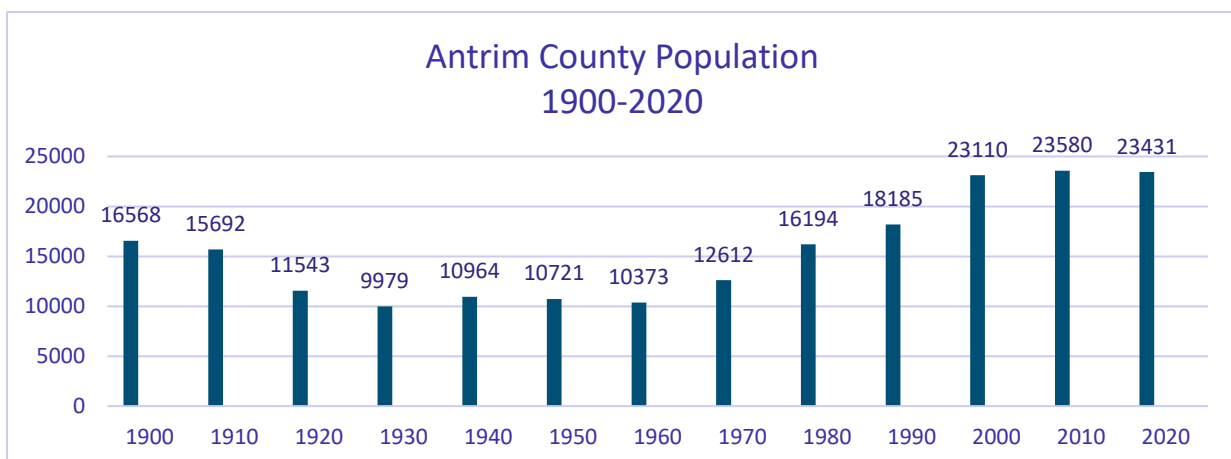
# Chapter 4: Demographics



## Summary

The demographic portion of this master plan provides background data to support the planning of future land uses. When planning for a community, it is important to know who will be affected by the plan and their characteristics. This portion of the master plan is essentially data presentation.

Antrim County's population increased significantly between 1960 and 2000, but has had little overall change since 2000. While the population has seen small decreases over the last decade, census numbers do not reflect the population changes influenced by the COVID19 pandemic.

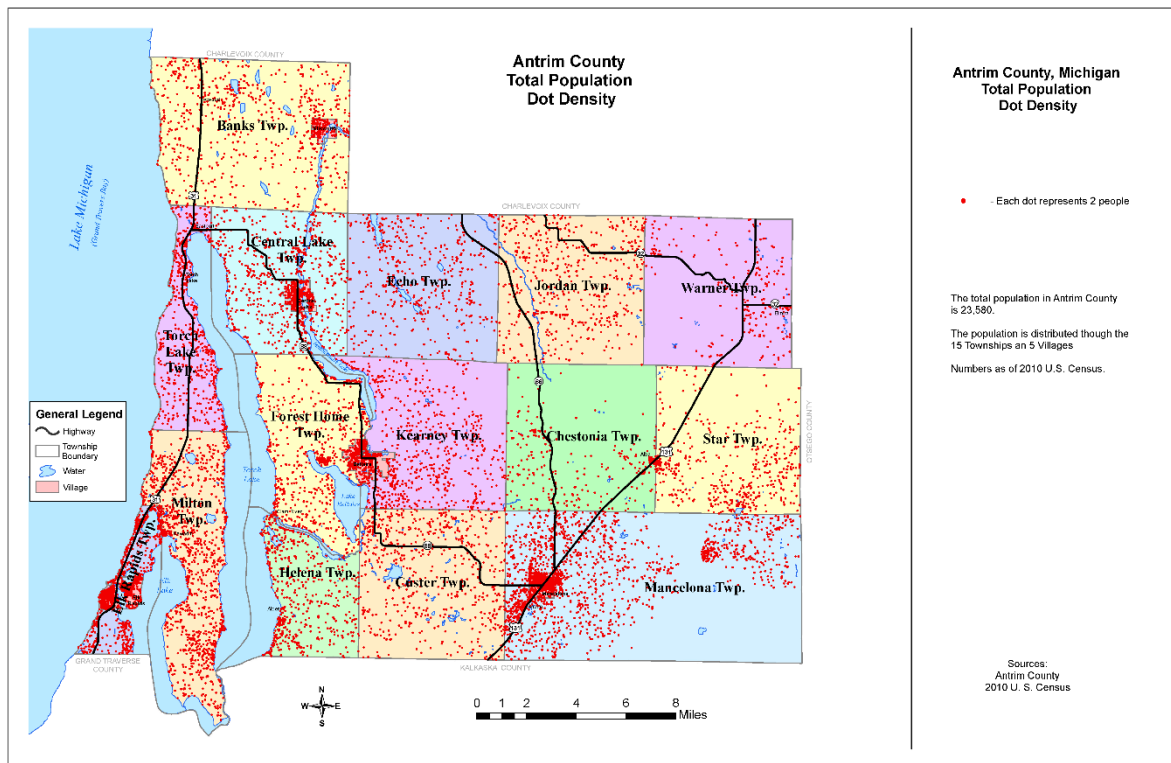


An estimated 818 new residents have relocated to the County since June 2020 (per 2022 US Census QuickFacts).

### ***Community Population (Where the people live)***

Approximately one-quarter of the population lives in an incorporated village. While Bellaire, Elk Rapids, and Mancelona saw small decreases in population over the past 10 years, the villages of Central Lake and Ellsworth saw small increases.

Most of the population lives in the southern portions of the County. The publicly owned land in Warner, Chestonia, and Jordan Townships limits the amount of developable land, which minimizes population growth. Although much of Mancelona Township includes the Mackinaw State Forest, it is equivalent in size to two townships and contains the highest population.

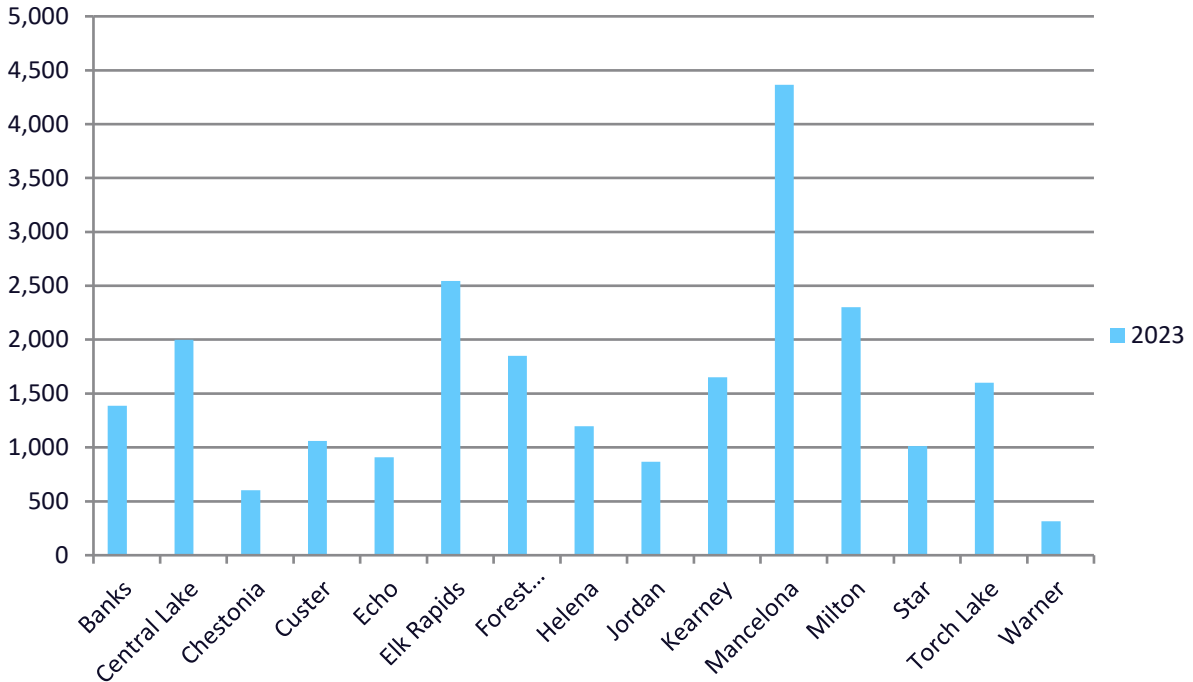


### **Regional Population**

The population of Northwest Lower Michigan grew by 22,941 residents from 2000-2020. The majority of that growth occurred in Grand Traverse County.

### Population Comparison by County

<b>County</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2023 est.</b>
<i>Antrim</i>	<b>18,185</b>	<b>23,110</b>	<b>23,580</b>	<b>24,409</b>
<i>Benzie</i>	<b>12,200</b>	<b>15,998</b>	<b>17,525</b>	<b>18,441</b>
<i>Charlevoix</i>	<b>21,468</b>	<b>26,090</b>	<b>25,949</b>	<b>26,159</b>
<i>Emmet</i>	<b>25,040</b>	<b>31,437</b>	<b>32,694</b>	<b>34,123</b>
<i>Grand Traverse</i>	<b>64,273</b>	<b>77,654</b>	<b>86,986</b>	<b>96,421</b>
<i>Kalkaska</i>	<b>13,497</b>	<b>16,571</b>	<b>17,153</b>	<b>18,490</b>
<i>Leelanau</i>	<b>16,527</b>	<b>21,119</b>	<b>21,708</b>	<b>23,019</b>
<i>Manistee</i>	<b>21,265</b>	<b>24,525</b>	<b>24,733</b>	<b>25,562</b>
<i>Missaukee</i>	<b>12,147</b>	<b>14,478</b>	<b>14,849</b>	<b>15,311</b>
<i>Wexford</i>	<b>26,360</b>	<b>30,484</b>	<b>32,735</b>	<b>34,122</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>230,962</b>	<b>281,466</b>	<b>297,912</b>	<b>316,057</b>



Antrim County Population by Township – Estimated 2023 by Networks Northwest

## ***Household Population***

The U.S. Census definition of a household is all the people who occupy a housing unit, including family and non-family members. According to the U.S. Census, the average household size was 2.59 in 2010 while in 2020, the average household size decreased to 2.53.

Across Michigan the average household size was 2.45 in 2020 whereas Antrim County was even lower with an average of 2.27 people per household.

## ***Seasonal Populations (How much we change throughout the year)***

Antrim County is a popular tourist destination: as such, it is important to consider seasonal residents when planning. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a seasonal home as “a housing unit held for occupancy only during limited portions of the year, such as, a beach cottage, ski cabin, or time-share condominium.”



In the off-season, Antrim County’s permanent (year-round) population of 23,431 (2020 Census) account for over 70% of the total population. However, in the summer months, Antrim County’s population nears 60,000 people, driven by second homeowners and overnight visitors.

### **2020 Monthly, Permanent, Seasonal Transient Residents**

	Permanent population	Second home population	Overnight	TOTAL
January	23,431	1,861	5,698	30,990
February	23,431	1,861	5,811	31,103
March	23,431	2,792	4,637	30,860
April	23,431	2,792	5,478	31,701
May	23,431	2,792	16,457	42,680
June	23,431	14,892	19,123	57,446
July	23,431	14,892	21,029	59,352
August	23,431	14,892	20,914	59,237
September	23,431	4,118	15,843	43,392
October	23,431	4,188	10,995	38,614
November	23,431	4,188	5,777	33,396
December	23,431	4,188	5,900	33,519

## Demographic Data

Antrim County's total population in 2020 was 23,431. In that year, 50.2% of the population was female and 49.8% was male. The median age was 51.3.

Of the 23,431 residents of Antrim County in 2020, the U.S. Census noted the following reporting of race:

- 2.4% Latinex (((What does the census do?))
- 1.3% American Indian and Alaska native alone
- 0.4% Asian alone
- 0.5% Black or African American alone
- 0.1% were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific native alone
- 1.6% were 2 or more races
- 96.2% were White alone

Of the residents of Antrim County who were 25 years and older in 2020:

- 94.3% were high school graduates or higher
- 32.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher

### Antrim County – Population by Age

	2000	2010	2020	% Change
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>23,110</b>	<b>23,580</b>	<b>23,431</b>	<b>1.0 %</b>
<b>Under 5 years</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>-29.9 %</b>
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>1,387</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>-25.5 %</b>
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	<b>1,746</b>	<b>1,444</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>-36.8 %</b>
<b>15 to 19 years</b>	<b>1,497</b>	<b>1,417</b>	<b>1,351</b>	<b>-9.8 %</b>
<b>20 to 24 years</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>14.3%</b>
<b>25 to 34 years</b>	<b>2,379</b>	<b>2,033</b>	<b>2,161</b>	<b>-9.8 %</b>
<b>35 to 44 years</b>	<b>3,464</b>	<b>2,629</b>	<b>2,324</b>	<b>-33.0 %</b>
<b>45 to 54 years</b>	<b>3,177</b>	<b>3,628</b>	<b>2,720</b>	<b>-14.4 %</b>
<b>55 to 59 years</b>	<b>1,536</b>	<b>1,934</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>11.7 %</b>
<b>60 to 64 years</b>	<b>1,426</b>	<b>1,823</b>	<b>2,456</b>	<b>42.0 %</b>
<b>65 to 74 years</b>	<b>2,353</b>	<b>3,054</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>65.7%</b>
<b>75 to 84 years</b>	<b>1,321</b>	<b>1,625</b>	<b>2,134</b>	<b>61.9 %</b>
<b>85 years and over</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>59.3 %</b>
<b>Median age</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>51.5</b>	

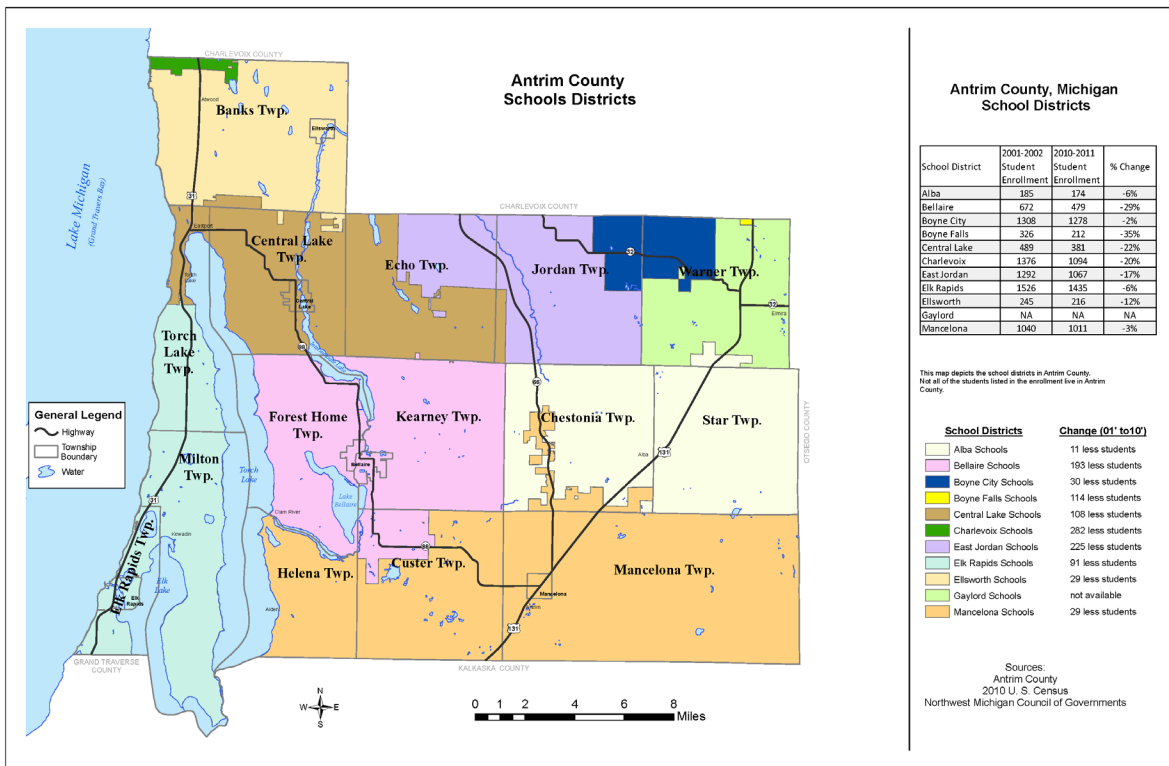
The county is experiencing a major demographic shift; the 55+ population is increasing at a rate approaching 49.5%, as predicted in previous planning forecasts, while the 20 - 45 year old population is declining at a rate near 26%.

In 2020, the median household income in Antrim County was \$57,256. Per capita income for Antrim County was \$32,096. The percentage of Antrim County residents in poverty was 11.3%.

The average poverty and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) numbers are fairly consistent throughout the County.

### Antrim County Household Income - 2022 Estimated

	Estimate	Margin of Error
Less than \$10,000	2.7%	+/- 0.9
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.9%	+/- 0.9
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6.7%	+/- 1.1
\$25,000 to \$34,000	9.7%	+/- 1.3
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.4%	+/- 1.7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.8%	+/- 1.9
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17.1%	+/- 1.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	16.3%	+/- 1.6
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.7%	+/- 1.1
\$200,000 or more	5.8%	+/- 1.0



---

# Chapter 5: Economic Development

## **Summary**

Economic trends and resources affect land use throughout the county. Demographic influence land use, not only for housing and recreation considerations, but in planning for economic development as well.

The county is experiencing a major demographic shift; the 55+ population is increasing at a rate approaching 49.5%, as predicted in previous planning forecasts, while the 20 - 45 year old population is declining at a rate near 26%, since the 2010 Census.

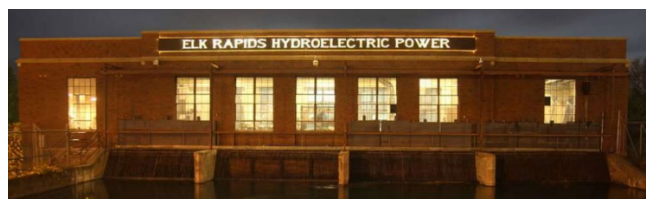
While these factors present challenges, leaders must be diligent in the pursuit of a strong, meaningful economic sector including service, technical, manufacturing, and agriculture and related strands while striving to support our educational systems, public services, and community infrastructure needs. During this transitional period, planning decisions should balance growth and current need, recognize changing service needs of an aging population, while attracting younger families.

This portion of the master plan analyzes economic trends to determine the best way to stimulate the economic growth, create opportunities for employment and preserve the rural charm and character of Antrim County.

## **Goals**

### **1. Preserve & Utilize Natural and Existing Resources**

- Balance growth with preservation of rural climate and natural resources.
- Preserve the scenic beauty of the region.
- Regularly review integrity of County owned dams.
- Support and promote area parks, trails, rivers and lakes, encouraging responsible use and growth.
- Leverage existing infrastructure and resources to promote sustainable growth.
- Promote relationships between local organizations, agencies and businesses to work toward common goals.



## 2. Drive Economic Developments

- Establish business-friendly and entrepreneurial environment.
- Promote usage of brownfield sites and vacant unused facilities.
- Promote growth/expansion of value-added agricultural opportunities and use of local products.
- Support ongoing efforts to expand broadband development.
- Enhance cultural and entertainment assets as attractors for additional economic investment.
- Encourage development and construction of affordable housing.



## 3. Foster Education and Planning

- Advocate for business, self-employment, and entrepreneurship educational programs.
- Promote collaboration and training of competitive skills related to regionally identified workforce needs for students and adults.
- Utilize technology for training, education, and planning collaboration.

## ***Existing Infrastructure***

There is an abundance of both natural resources and assets throughout Antrim County, including Downtown Development Authorities in each village. Each area offers a unique blend of those resources that could readily be utilized for economic development. Many of our communities utilize the resources of surrounding cities, including Traverse City, Gaylord, Charlevoix and East Jordan. The following outlines the existing infrastructure in zoned and incorporated villages.

### **Mancelona**

Mancelona is well-positioned with immediate access to both M66/US131, M88 and railroad. The village has established downtown buildings and a sewer and water system that can be further utilized.

---

## **Elk Rapids**

Elk Rapids is bisected by US31 and incorporates two large bodies of water, Lake Michigan and Elk Lake. In addition to their natural resources, this village has a well-developed downtown and residential areas in addition to an industrial park.

## **Bellaire**

Bellaire has both M88 and the Intermediate River running directly through it. The village has two distinct business areas, an established downtown, and an area to the south with room for more development. Additionally, the county maintains an airport, capable of handling small jets and charter flights.

## **Central Lake**

Situated at the intersection of two lakes, Intermediate and Hanley, Central Lake has room to grow in each direction from its downtown intersection along M88 plus water and sewer capacity.

## **Ellsworth**

Also situated at the connection of two Lakes, Saint Clair and Ellsworth, the village offers a central location for the farming community with significant room for future development.

## **Zoned Townships**

Elk Rapids, Milton, Banks, Forest Home, Kearney, Torch Lake, and Helena Townships are all zoned communities.

## **Un-zoned Townships**

Central Lake, Echo, Jordan, Warner, Chestonia, Star, Custer and Mancelona Townships are all without zoning.

## ***Future Potential***

The County has a number of villages and communities with potential for future development along with several additional areas that could be primed for potential growth. Eastport, Alba, Lakes of the North and Elmira in particular are ripe for future development given their proximity to both natural resources and existing infrastructure. Alba, located along US131 additionally has proximity to railroad and has a school and post office. Lakes of the North has over 8,000 lots, an airport, and multiple recreation opportunities. Elmira, located along M32 has potential to expand west to US131 and closer to a large manufacturing employer, EJ. Finally, Eastport, with its proximity to US31, M88, Lake Michigan, and Torch Lake, has an abundance of room to grow as local zoning allows.

---

## ***Future Economic Planning***

The future of work is evolving due to technology advances and the COVID Pandemic accelerating the remote work environment. A rise in e-commerce and shifts to online shopping has also resulted. It is also important to note that our aging population and an increased focus on preventative care will bring a greater demand for healthcare professionals.

The Antrim County Planning Commission has a well-established working relationship with the Antrim County Economic Development Corporation. This partnership advocates a cooperative approach toward supporting and creating economic opportunities throughout the County. Using the data in this Master Plan, the Planning Commission will be able to assist the Economic Development Corporation to proactively plan for economic development.

Both groups agree that the long-term viability of Antrim County will be strengthened by utilizing collective strategies and collaborative partnerships specific to economic and community development efforts consistent with sound planning principles.

In pursuit of economic and community development opportunities, Antrim County will work towards these economic guiding principles:

- Support technology expansion throughout the County.
- Diversify the County's economy beyond tourism.
- Preserve and protect our natural resources, our rural identity, and our scenic beauty.
- Follow appropriate land use and planning principles.
- Recognize the importance of continued input from all sectors of the community at large.

Based on the economic picture of Antrim County, the outlined economic guiding principles, and demographic data, the Economic Development Corporation outlined Goals and Objectives for the County. The Antrim County Planning Commission endorses these goals and will work to support the Economic Development Corporation to implement them.

---

## ***Implementation Steps (What should be done next?)***

In order to leverage community and economic development resources and opportunities, the County should:

1) **Preserve & Utilize Natural and Existing Resources**

- Continue working with Northern Lake Economic Alliance on maintaining a list of currently unused facilities, brownfield sites, and properties for sale as one strategy to leverage brownfield sites and vacant unused facilities to support reuse and redevelopment.
- Take advantage of and optimize regional, state and federal support resources when applicable including Economic Development Planning and Infrastructure Grants, Transportation Economic Development Fund Grants, Brownfield Tax Credits, Historic Preservation Credits, Industrial Facility Property Tax Abatements, Federal Small Business Administration Loan Program, Rail Loan Assistance, Freight Economic Development Assistance, Revolving Loan Funds, Michigan Economic Development Corporation resources, EGLE Dam Risk Reduction Grants, FEMA High Hazard Potential Grant Program, Community Development Block Grants, HUB Zones, Downtown Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing Authorities, Opportunity Zones, Brownfield Authorities, Economic Development Job Training Programs, Federal and State Alternative Energy Incentives and other programs and resources.
- Maintain and strengthen ties with neighboring counties through associations such as the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center, Networks Northwest, all local townships and municipalities, and other agencies and entities to assist in facilitating community and economic development.
- Maintaining and strengthening ties with existing chambers of commerce, Antrim County Economic Development Corporation, K-12 schools and intermediate school districts, charter schools and regional community college partners to assist in expanding educational efforts.
- Target investments in rural communities that support expansion of their natural asset-based economies and provide quality living opportunities to those talented workers who prefer a rural environment and its amenities.
- Target community investments on place-based improvements to attract knowledge workers and their families with a special focus on green infrastructure investments,

- 
- parks, trails, recreation areas, and bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the community and with adjoining rural areas.
- Encourage the development of principles of planning among all municipal jurisdictions that protect the long-term viability of agricultural land in the development of future wind and solar energy projects.
  - Target community investments on infrastructure maintenance and improvements to attract business establishments including adequate commercial centers, communication infrastructure, broadband data and internet services, public roads, airport, transit, port, sewer, storm sewer, and water facility.

2) **Drive Economic Developments**

- Endeavor to establish a business-friendly and entrepreneurial environment.
- Promote housing that is affordable as an economic development tool and assist local units of government in their efforts to increase the number of affordable housing units in their communities.
- Enhancement of culture and entertainment assets as attractors for additional economic investment.

3) **Foster Education and Planning**

- Promote utilization of technology to create greater access to new markets, training, education, and access to planning information and other resources.
- Promote the network of Business Resource Centers designed to provide support and assistance for business counseling, start-up, expansion, growth, demographic analysis, and planning.

---

## Chapter 6: Agriculture



### **Summary**

A farm consists of land and buildings used in the production of crops and livestock. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a farm as generating at least \$1,000 a year in the sales of crops or livestock. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the average farm in Antrim County generated \$138,931 in total sales. In 2017 total sales were reported as \$106,521.

In 2017, the average Michigan farm generated \$172,560 in total sales; in 2022 that amount was \$267,935. These figures represent the market value of agricultural products sold, which represents the gross market value before taxes and production expenses of all agricultural products sold or removed from the place. It does not include payment received for participation in federal farm programs or income for farm related sources such as woodworking.

Farms typically consist of a farmstead, which includes a farmhouse and buildings used to shelter livestock, migrant workers and store crops, livestock feed, and farming equipment, and land used to grow crops or pasture grazing livestock.

---

Agriculture plays a significant role in Antrim County through crops, livestock, and agricultural processing facilities. The top crop items, as reported by the 2022 Census, were the following:

- Forage (hay and haylage) – all
- Orchard Crops - all
- Vegetables harvested, all
- Soybeans
- Corn for silage or greenchop

The top livestock inventory items were:

- Cattle and calves
- Chickens - layers
- Sheep and lambs
- Chickens - broilers and other meat-type
- Horses and ponies

The website of the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) notes the following:

*The Michigan Right to Farm Act, P.A. 93, was enacted in 1981 to provide farmers with nuisance protection. This state law authorizes the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop and adopt Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for farms and farm operations in Michigan. These farm management practices are scientifically based and updated annually to utilize current technology promoting sound environmental stewardship on Michigan farms.*

*By utilizing GAAMPs, farmers and Michigan residents benefit: through environmental protection of natural resources; sound management of agricultural inputs; and sustaining a strong and stable agricultural industry.*

There are eight sets of GAAMPs:

- Manure Management/Utilization
- Pesticide Utilization-Pest Control
- Nutrient Utilization
- Care of Farm Animals
- Cranberry Production
- Site Selection
- Irrigation Water Use
- Farm Markets

## Number of Farms

According to the 2022 Census, there were 350 farms in Antrim County, which is an increase from 2017. This is a reversal of the downward trend that in farm numbers that Antrim County has experienced in 2017 after years of farm gains the previous 20 years. State-wide, the 2017 Census reported 47,641 farms in Michigan. In 2022 the number of farms decreased by 2,060 to 45,581. During this time in Michigan, many farmlands were converted to other uses, such as residential developments or moved to idle lands.

**Number of Farms in Northwest Lower Michigan**

	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
State of Michigan	53,519	53,315	56,014	52,194	47,641	45,581
Northern Michigan	3,016	3,351	3,555	3,516	3,301	3,269
Antrim County	301	382	411	415	333	350
Benzie County	165	181	205	181	197	194
Charlevoix County	230	299	336	297	271	209
Emmet County	248	274	291	287	324	376
Grand Traverse County	485	489	522	504	497	553
Kalkaska County	162	175	221	224	225	181
Leelanau County	420	429	449	494	470	500
Manistee County	330	315	358	324	274	278
Missaukee County	377	412	391	433	406	344
Wexford County	298	395	371	357	304	284

Data source: 2022 Census of Agriculture, Michigan State and County Data, United States Dept. of Agriculture



## Sales from Operations

The 2017 and 2022 Census data show that the average total sales rose sharply for Antrim County farmers and throughout the State.

### Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold in Northwest Lower Michigan

	Avg. farm value in 1997	Avg. farm value in 2002	Avg. farm value in 2007	Avg. farm value in 2012	Avg. farm value in 2017	Avg. farm value in 2022
State of Michigan	\$69,035	\$70,035	\$101,710	\$166,265	\$172,560	\$267,935
Northern Michigan	\$44,001	\$33,788	\$51,188	\$66,318	\$874,938	\$851,311
Antrim County	\$58,131	\$41,501	\$56,766	\$50,592	\$106,521	\$138,931
Benzie County	\$40,873	\$23,324	\$38,933	\$65,179	\$50,900	\$74,673
Charlevoix County	\$18,818	\$13,349	\$22,762	\$33,390	\$31,050	\$53,900
Emmet County	\$22,848	\$21,412	\$25,600	\$55,383	\$26,895	\$30,271
Grand Traverse County	\$38,744	\$23,243	\$36,865	\$36,202	\$68,610	\$93,786
Kalkaska County	\$33,906	\$32,203	\$27,397	\$39,300	\$37,000	\$91,636
Leelanau County	\$72,863	\$37,268	\$78,628	\$41,485	\$90,302	\$116,223
Manistee County	\$29,072	\$25,494	\$25,732	\$23,544	\$37,683	\$62,495
Missaukee County	\$94,589	\$95,983	\$180,652	\$290,999	\$366,276	\$84,767
Wexford County	\$30,167	\$24,101	\$18,542	\$27,103	\$59,701	\$104,629

Data source: 2022 Census of Agriculture, Michigan State and County Data, United States Dept. of Agriculture

Market value is the gross market value before taxes and production expenses of all agricultural products sold or removed from the farm, regardless of who received the payment. It includes sales by the operator(s) as well as the value of any shares received by partners, landlords, contractors, or others associated with the operation. It does not include payment received for participation in other federal farm programs, nor does it include income from farm-related sources such as custom work.

## Farm Size

The 2017 Census of Agriculture recorded 55,565 acres in Antrim County. The 2022 Census noted an increase in farm land to 59,432 dedicated acres. There are 335,961 total acres in Antrim County, therefore in 2022, 17.7% of the County was considered active farmland, a significant increase from 2017.

Leelanau County has a similar farm acreage of 57,189. Benzie and Charlevoix Counties have the smallest Northern Michigan farm acreages at 18,800 and 23,947 acres respectively.

The majority of farms in Antrim County range from 50 to 179 acres, as shown on the following table. The average farm size in Antrim County was 167 acres in 2017; in 2022 the average farm acreage was 170 acres. The median size for a farm in Antrim County was 77 acres in 2017; in 2022 the median size of an Antrim County farm was 73 acres.

In the State of Michigan, the 2022 average size was 208 acres, and the median size was 50 acres.

<b>Size of Farms in Northwest Lower Michigan - 2022</b>						
	1-9 acres	10-49 acres	50-179 acres	180-499 acres	500-999 acres	1,000+ acres
State of Michigan	5,802	16,878	12,783	5,455	2,511	21,52
<b>Northern Michigan</b>						
Antrim County	44	94	138	47	17	10
Benzie County	35	103	39	10	5	2
Charlevoix County	27	85	64	20	11	2
Emmet County	69	131	129	38	6	3
Grand Traverse County	135	226	136	36	15	5
Kalkaska County	28	57	59	32	1	4
Leelanau County	45	221	151	63	17	3
Manistee County	15	108	109	35	5	6
Missaukee County	39	114	87	45	28	31
Wexford County	17	111	93	8	3	0

Data source: 20222 Census of Agriculture

<b>Size of Farms in Northwest Lower Michigan - 2007</b>						
	1-9 acres	10-49 acres	50-179 acres	180-499 acres	500-999 acres	1,000+ acres
State of Michigan	4,219	20,726	19,206	7,275	2,619	1,969
Northern Michigan	273	1,185	1,431	497	118	51
Antrim County	21	134	171	61	15	9
Benzie County	28	68	81	22	4	2
Charlevoix County	26	115	131	50	11	3
Emmet County	18	91	115	51	14	2
Grand Traverse County	62	215	164	55	20	6
Kalkaska County	15	92	81	28	1	4
Leelanau County	36	134	199	66	10	4
Manistee County	12	101	176	58	11	0
Missaukee County	37	99	148	65	22	20
Wexford County	18	136	165	41	10	1

Data source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

### ***Farmland Protection***

Farming can be considered part of the region’s rural character. A dilemma for many communities is how to promote the preservation of farmland while addressing the demand for development. If a community wishes to protect their agricultural lands, their focus should be threefold: limiting development in predominantly agricultural areas, providing for development away from prime agricultural lands, and providing an environment that encourages and supports local agriculture’s sustainability. A successful program is dependent on having the appropriate planning option that will result in a balanced development pattern.

Sustainable agriculture has been defined as by the National Association of County Agriculture Agents as an integrated, site-specific system of plant and animal production. Over the long term, it will:

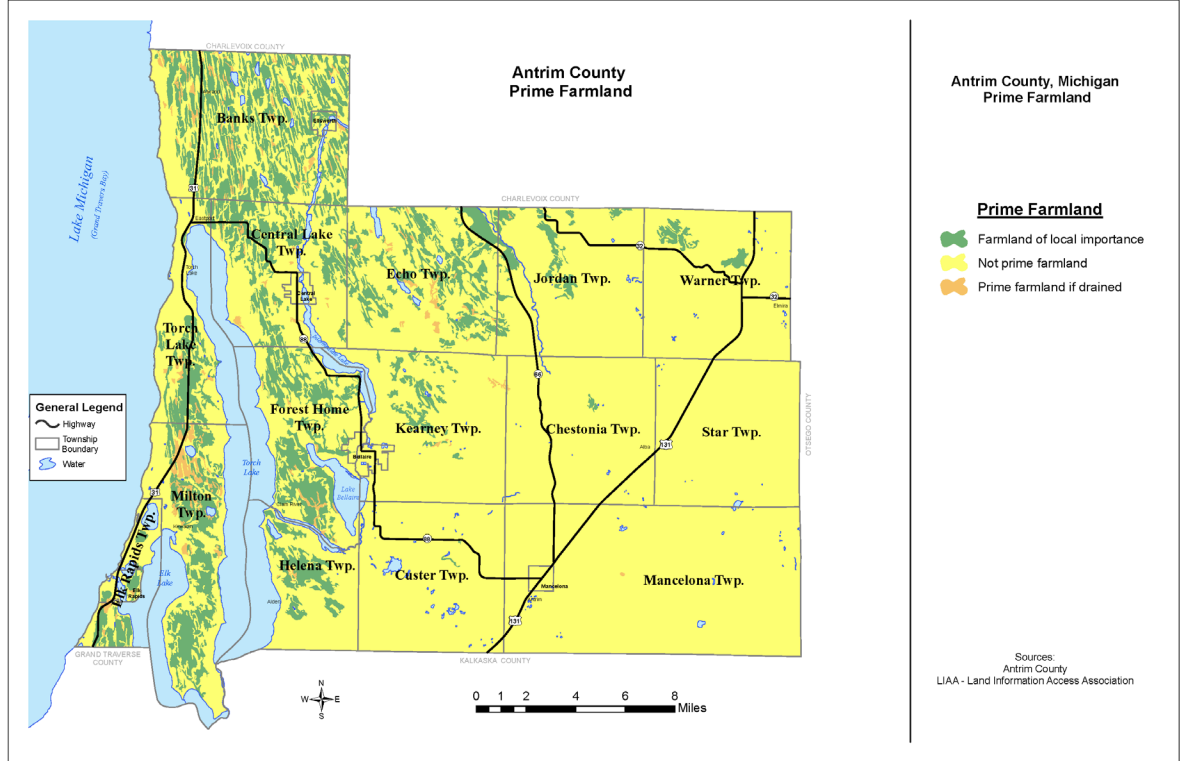
- Maintain the economic viability of farm operations.
- Satisfy human foods and fiber needs.

- 
- Preserve environmental quality and the natural resource base farming depends on.
  - Make efficient use of non-renewable and on-farm resources.
  - Integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls.
  - Enhance the quality of life for farmer and society as a whole.

Studies have shown that providing for farmland preservation in an orderly matter may provide economic benefit to the community. In a study by the American Farmland Trust an example showed that for every \$1 in tax revenue generated by farms and open land in Marshall Township, Calhoun County, only 27 cents was required for associated services. For every \$1 in tax revenue generated from residential development in that township, \$1.47 was required in public services.

The map showing the location of the county's prime farmland areas is below. This map was based on designating the most productive areas for farming. In addition, the farming areas are shown close together and not fragmented over a large area. To assist in Farmland Preservation, the State of Michigan has two programs:

- 1) A Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. In this program farmers enter into a restrictive covenant to not develop land for an enrolled period of time. Enrolled farmers receive property tax relief through a tax credit applied to their income tax (when property taxes on land in the agreement exceed 7% of the owner's household income).



- 2) An active Purchase of Development Rights Program that will pay a farmer for the development rights on a site and allow them to continue farming.

Antrim County joined with Grand Traverse County to have a Bi-County Farmland and Open Space Development Rights Ordinance in 2003 to promote a similar program. The Antrim County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board consists of six (6) members, appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board administers the County's farmland preservation program and is responsible for:

- Establishing selection criteria for ranking and prioritizing of applications to the program.
- Establishing a points-based appraisal formula for determining the value of the agricultural conservation easements.
- Reviewing and providing oversight in scoring all applications according to the adopted selection criteria.
- Ranking and prioritizing the top scoring applications for acquisition and determining whether the development rights should be purchased.
- Approving the restrictions and permitted uses under the agricultural conservation easement.

- 
- Establishing the price to be offered to the property owner and authorize negotiations for the purchase of development rights and agricultural conservation easement.
  - Establishing monitoring procedures and overseeing subsequent monitoring to insure compliance with the agricultural conservation easement. Enforcement of the agricultural conservation easement in the case of non-compliance shall be the responsibility of the respective County Board of Commissioners.

It is a goal of Antrim County to increase activity and growth in the agricultural economic sector and provide an environment that encourages and supports local agriculture's sustainability.

### ***Implementation Steps (What should be done next?)***

1. Work with farm groups and the Michigan State University Extension, Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, and MDARD offices to promote agriculture-related businesses.
2. Establish and maintain a healthy “work with farmers” attitude in county and township departments that farmers rely on.

**STRATEGY:** Departments that recognize agriculture as one of the few true “wealth creating” industries in the county and therefore departments will help producers work through regulations in a way that is helpful, understanding, and seeks to minimize the negative impacts on farm sustainability.

3. Minimize regulations that negatively impact farm sustainability.

**STRATEGY:** Support local ordinances and master plans that encourage maximum flexibility for farmers including marketing, direct sales, value-added processing, and new product development.

4. Grow local, value-added farm enterprises by actively supporting them.

**STRATEGY:** Provide infrastructure support of farm markets through joint community applications to economic development grants.

**STRATEGY:** Continue funding of education for value-added farm enterprises and consumers.

**STRATEGY:** Support local programs (e.g. Project Fresh) that are tied to and support

---

local agricultural production.

5. Support the development of industries that support agricultural producers as well as those that process the commodities that Antrim County farms produce for both local consumption and export. These industries are essential for a vibrant agricultural community, just as our farmers are, because they create wealth for the area.

**STRATEGY:** Work with NLEA and the agricultural community to target needed agriculture support and processing industries for recruitment and assistance in start-ups.

6. Make infrastructure investments that benefit agriculture, agribusiness, and the business community as a whole.

**STRATEGY:** Support the Antrim County Road Commission's investment in roads that allow year-round transport of goods.

**STRATEGY:** Work with agencies and private utilities to increase investment in technology infrastructure.

**STRATEGY:** Encourage portions of municipal Master Plans and township zoning ordinances which allow by permit or special use new reliable energy sources.

**STRATEGY:** Encourage continued funding for agricultural production education.

---

## Chapter 7: Planes, Trains, & Automobiles



### **Summary**

Effective transportation and infrastructure systems are critical to maintain the productivity, health, and safety of a region. People travel to work, for pleasure and drive to stores and services. Medical and emergency vehicles are required to reach all areas of the region to provide their services. While the villages in Antrim County are walkable communities, they do not provide all the necessary services families may rely upon. Therefore, people travel to other communities and locations to meet their needs. Since this travel is usually by vehicle, it is important to understand the current road conditions and future plans.

Antrim County is growing in population, but the overall density of that population is not sufficient for improved services such as water and sewer throughout the County. However, many of the denser locations, such as the villages, do provide improved services. The remainder of the County is serviced by well and septic.

In addition to transportation and infrastructure, community services are equally important to meet the local needs and demands of a community. They are vital in providing a diverse range of recreation, leisure, social, and community services.

---

Prior to land areas being designated for certain density and uses, the infrastructure capacity should be studied. It would not be advisable for a high intensity use, such as a manufacturing operation to be located on a limited access road with a well and septic field. Nor would it be advisable for a subdivision to have five acre lots when it is serviced by water and sewer. The availability of services will impact future growth in terms of use and rate.

## ***Roadways***

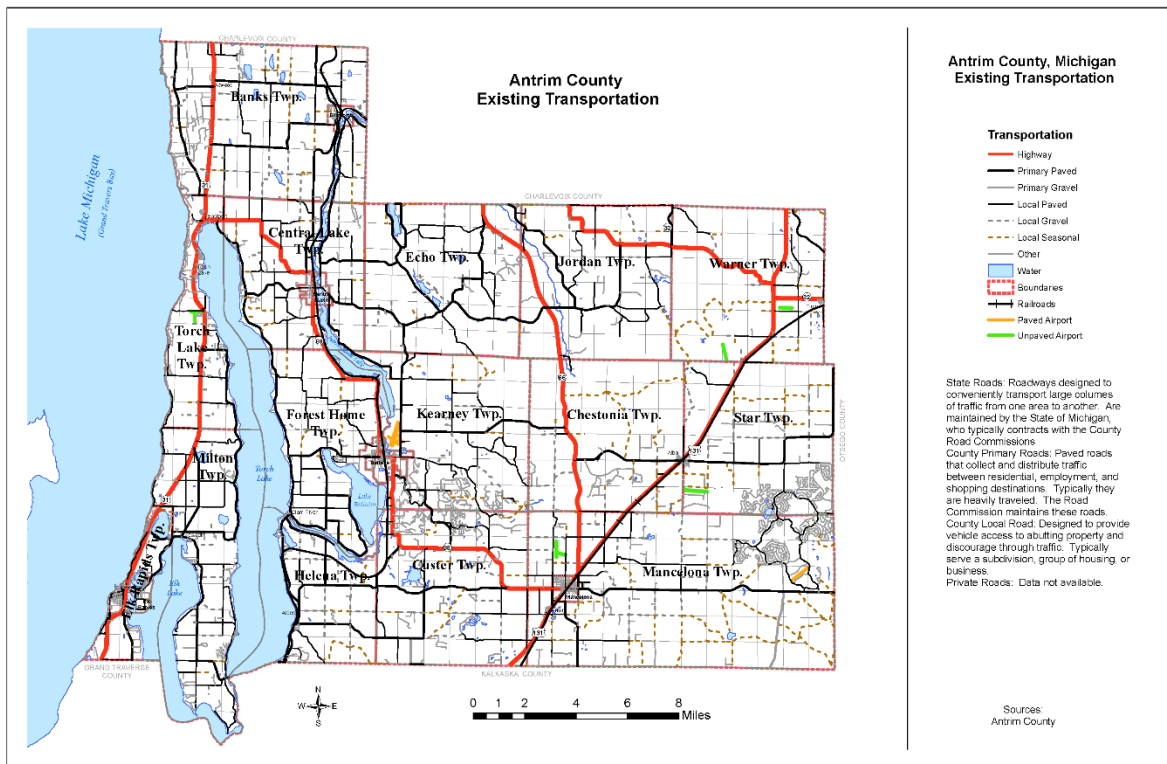
The majority of the roads in Antrim County are paved; however there are unpaved, less-traveled roads. There are numerous well-developed and direct routes in the County such as Highway 597 (which runs from Elk Rapids through Kewadin, to Torch River to Rapid City Road). From there Highway 593 runs through Alden, Clam River, Central Lake, Ellsworth, and north to Charlevoix. Highway 618 is an east-west connection from Alden to Mancelona. Highway 620 extends from East Torch Lake Drive through Bellaire through Green River, ending in Alba. Highway 624 branches from Michigan Highway 66 through Central Lake to East Torch Lake Drive. There are a number of other paved County roads that generally provide adequate circulation for development. It should be noted that Torch Lake makes it difficult to have an east-west roadway because it almost completely traverses the County from north to south.

There are five State trunk lines traversing Antrim County. The length of US-31 is approximately 24 miles and provides a north-south route through the County. It is located along the western edge. It passes through Banks, Torch Lake, Milton, and Elk Rapids Townships. US-131 enters the County at the southern edge and travels through Custer, Mancelona, Chestonia, Star, and Warner Townships. It is approximately 18 miles long.

There are three State highways. Michigan Highway M-66 branches north from US-131 in Mancelona Township and provides a fairly direct route to Charlevoix. It is approximately 14 miles long within the County. Highway M-88 also branches from US-131 in Mancelona and travels to US-31 in Eastport. This roadway provides an integral connection in the County and is approximately 26 miles long. State Highway M-32 extends a short distance through the northeast section of Antrim County; it runs through Warner and Jordan Township, north to Highway 66 in Charlevoix County. It is approximately 9 miles long within Antrim County.

According to the Antrim County Road Commission, there are 664 miles of local County roads, 210 miles of primary County roads, and 99 miles of State trunk lines. The Antrim County Road Commission is responsible for the maintenance and snow plowing of these roadways. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) contracts with Antrim County for the maintenance and snow plowing of the State trunk lines.

The Road Commission receives its funds through taxation, via the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The Road Commission is only responsible for publicly owned roads. The Road Commission and MDOT are not responsible for private roads; snow removal and maintenance of these roads are funded privately.



## Asset Management

The Antrim County Road Commission (ACRC) maintains 210 miles of primary county roads and 663 miles of local county roads. Also, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) contracts with the ACRC to perform routine maintenance on 98 miles of state trunk line (M 32, M 66, M 88, US 31 and US 131). In the county system, approximately 700 miles are maintained year round. Five hundred fifty-six of those miles are paved, 144 miles are gravel, and 173 miles are seasonal roads. Seasonal roads are not open to public travel November through April. The ACRC's primary responsibility is to provide safe roads for the motoring public.

Since 2003, the County's Federal Aid eligible paved roads have been rated annually for surface condition. There are 178 centerline miles of paved roads in Antrim County that are eligible for federal aid. See the chart below for changes in surface road conditions from 2008-2016.

---

All local and non-Federal aid eligible paved county roads were rated in 2010 and again in 2016 by members of the Antrim County Road Commission, Traverse City Transportation Service, Michigan Department of Transportation, and Networks Northwest. They studied the road surfaces in Antrim County as part of an Asset Management study of the counties in the region. Asset Management involves visually inventorying the county roads and prioritizing any needed improvements. This inventory includes collecting and assessing data about the following characteristics: roughness (ride), surface distress (condition), surface skid characteristics, and structure (pavement strength and deflection). The outcome of the 2016 study showed that 56% of Antrim County's local and non-Federal aid eligible paved county roads were in "fair" condition. 25% were considered "good" and 19% received a rating of "poor." A new assessment was scheduled for 2020, but was delayed until 2025 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Future Road Plans**

The Antrim County Road Commission creates an annual list of paved road needs for the County. This list includes estimated costs but does not provide a prioritization of paving projects or specific dates for projects. The total estimated cost for all paved road needs, as listed in the ACRC 2022 Annual Report is \$53 million.

### **Forest Roads**

Public Act 288 of 2016 changed the State of Michigan rules for the following:

- Off road vehicle (ORV) use on state forest roads
- Use of ORVs by hunters for the retrieval of big game animals on all state-owned lands open to hunting including game areas, wildlife areas, state parks and state recreation areas
- Use of pack and saddle animals for the retrieval of big game animals

Public Act 288 also requires the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to inventory and map all state forest roads. This process was completed in 2017. The list has then been reviewed and updated yearly. PA 288 allows ORV use of many miles of forest roads. The The State of Michigan Forest Road Map is available online.

### **Private Roads**

The majority of newer development is served by private roads. State law encourages the development of private roads during land division. Private roads are privately maintained. At this time, there are no county-wide standards or inventory for private roads.

---

## ***Alternative Modes of Transportation***

### **Mass Transit**

A bus system called Antrim County Transportation (ACT) was established in 1977 and provides public transit services to all citizens in Antrim County. It operates Monday through Friday, 6 am to 6 pm. The operation has 17 vehicles, 16 of which are capable of lifting wheelchairs.

In the 2022 fiscal year, 23,641 riders utilized this service (this number includes the total amount of people on a bus every day; therefore a person riding a bus every day would have been counted every day).

Mass transit systems everywhere have been adversely affected by the COVID19 pandemic. In general, operations around the country run the risk of being disrupted by supply chain issues, increased costs, and staffing shortages. For ACT specifically, long-range planning has been altered by the COVID19 pandemic, but the expectation is that the planning process will begin again once the situation has stabilized. ACT would like to increase their ridership by focusing on areas that have higher densities. They are also working with surrounding counties to create a more comprehensive transit system. Many of the riders travel to Traverse City, Gaylord, or Petoskey for their services and shops. Eventually, ACT would like to provide consistent travel to these areas.

### **Commercial Bus Routes**

Though there is no commercial bus stop in Antrim County, residents can access Indian Trails lines from Charlevoix, Gaylord, Grayling, Petoskey, or Traverse City. Residents can also access Greyhound lines from Charlevoix, Grayling, Petoskey, or Traverse City.

### **Harbors**

There is one public harbor in Antrim County on Lake Michigan. The Elk Rapids Grace Memorial Harbor, located in downtown Elk Rapids, offers multiple amenities including water, electric, WIFI, cable, restrooms, showers, gasoline/diesel, pumping station, courtesy vehicle, dog run, and laundry. There are 161 seasonal slips, 50 transient slips, and 2 commercial slips on the Grand Traverse Bay side of the Harbor and 47 on the Upper Harbor on the Elk River. The seasonal dockage currently has a waiting list of over 700!

The Harbor recently completed their 5 year Master Plan and will be following up with an engineering study to review the break wall. Yearly dredging may be eliminated with an engineered realignment.

---

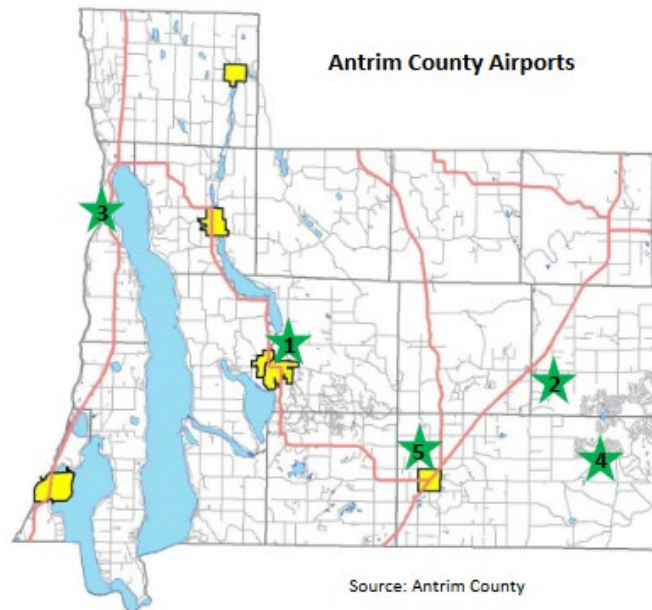
## Trails

Although Antrim County has a rustic character, it does not have a comprehensive trail system that allows people to travel between villages and hamlets. There are some organizations that are focusing on providing trails in Antrim County. These projects are preliminary, however if they are built, they will improve the quality of life for residents by offering a different form of transportation and providing additional recreation.

Work has begun on the Nakwema Trail in Grand Traverse County. Once complete, the 45 mile trail would connect the TART Trail that runs throughout Grand Traverse County to the Little Traverse Wheelway in Charlevoix County. Antrim County is expected to have a number of trailheads along the US-31 corridor, including trailheads in Elk Rapids and Eastport.

## Airports

The Antrim County Airport (airport 1 on the map) is a vital component to the transportation and infrastructure in Antrim County and Northwest Michigan. The airport is owned and operated by Antrim County and is located just outside the Village of Bellaire in Kearney Township.



### Basic Information:

- Airport Reference Point: Latitude 44°59'.32" N, Longitude 085°11'.90" W
- Location ID: ACB
- National Plan of Intergraded Airport System Classification: General Aviation
- Runways: Runway 02/20 is 5,000 feet in length and 100 feet wide

- 
- Pavement: Constructed of bituminous pavement with a gross weight bearing capacity of 55,000 pounds dual wheel main landing gear configuration. Repaved in 2017.
  - Landing Aids and Lighting: Rotating beacon, medium intensity runway lights 10% intensity, Precision Approach Path Indicator, Runway End Identifier Lights - Standard Pilot-Controlled Lighting, Common Traffic Advisory Frequency
  - Navigational Aids: Instrument Approach Procedure

The airport is capable of handling corporate jets with hanger space for rent. North Country Aviation provides charter service to and from the airport. With Traverse City Airport and the Pellston Regional Airport within 60 miles of Antrim County, a scheduled commuter service is unlikely.

There are four other airports in Antrim County. These airports serve mainly private individuals and do not have the capacity to serve the public with regularly scheduled flights. The airports include:

- 2) Alba: Air Park North
- 3) Eastport: Torchport Airpark
- 4) Mancelona: Lakes of the North Airport
- 5) Mancelona: Mancelona Municipal Airport

## ***Infrastructure and Services***

### **Water and Sewer**

The majority of County residents are served by well and septic systems. The following locations provide water and sewer to their residents: Village of Elk Rapids, Village of Central Lake, Village of Bellaire, Schuss Mountain, and Shanty Creek Resort. The following locations only provide water to their residents: Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Township, and Village of Ellsworth. The business districts of the Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Township, and portions of Custer Township have access to a public sewer. There are plans to expand some of these systems.

### **Ambulance Services**

Central Lake, Chestonia, Custer, Forest Home, Helena, Kearney, Mancelona, Star, and Warner Townships work together to provide ambulance services to their residents through the Township Ambulance Authority.

Banks, Echo, and Jordan Townships have partnered with the Jordan Valley EMS Authority to provide ambulance services to their residents.

---

Torch Lake Township provides their own ambulance service. The ambulance needs of Elk Rapids and Milton Townships are serviced by Mobile Medical Response.

### **Police and Fire**

The five villages in Antrim County provide some form of police protection. The villages of Elk Rapids, Mancelona, Bellaire, Ellsworth, and Central Lake all have their own police force but do not provide a 24 hour 7 day a week police force. The Antrim County Sheriff's Office, which patrols the unincorporated areas of the County, also covers these areas when their police forces are not working.

All townships levy a millage or contract for fire protection services in their township. Chestonia levies a millage and pays Star Township for fire protection services.

### **Antrim County Emergency Services**

Antrim County Emergency Services plans, coordinates, and manages federal, state, local, voluntary, and private resources prior to, during, and after emergencies and disasters. They provide support, training, and exercises for first responders, public officials, and private citizens. The office is supported by a 30 member volunteer Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Trained in basic disaster response skills, CERT members are prepared to assist others following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help, as well as providing support to first responders.

### **Other Essential Services**

Land-line phone services, cell phone coverage, gas, electricity, cable services, and high speed internet are available in most locations in the County. At this time, most of the utility lines are above ground.

### ***Community Services***

Although private civic organizations in Antrim County are not affiliated with any governmental unit, they are listed in this chapter because of the important services they provide to the County's residents. As shown in the chart on the next page, Antrim County communities have multiple organizations within them. If there is not one in the nearest town, then there is usually one close enough to utilize their services.

Many communities and nonprofits provide services that benefit a particular portion of the community or a community at large. Various other groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H) are located throughout the county. Please contact your local school district or the county MSU extension office for further information.

### Private Civic Organizations in Antrim County

	Alba	Alden	Bellaire	Central Lake	Elk Rapids	Ellsworth	Mancelona	Torch Lake
Alden Volunteers		Yes						
American Legion			Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	
AmVets					Yes			
Area Seniors			Yes					
Art Rapids					Yes			
Business Association		Yes	Yes					
Chamber of Commerce			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Educational Foundation				Yes			Yes	
Free Masons			Yes	Yes	Yes			
Garden Club		Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Historical Museum	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes
Historical Society	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Lionesses			Yes	Yes	Yes			
Lions			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Men's Club		Yes						
Moose Lodge							Yes	
Order of the Eastern Star			Yes		Yes			
Parkside Arts Council			Yes					
Rainbow Girls			Yes					
Rotary			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Veterans of Foreign Wars			Yes	Yes				

---

## ***Implementation Steps (What should be done next?)***

1. To compete in a global economy, communities should include in their infrastructure development plans, wireless and broadband technology. Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) has undertaken an initiative to bring wireless and broadband technology to this area. The County is an active participant in this process and should be encouraged to include their village and township counterparts as key stakeholders as well. A broad coalition of government, private sector, and providers of these services should be convened, updated, and included in the ongoing efforts of NLEA to bring these technological resources into the local communities countywide.
2. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan's "Septage Waste Disposal Committee" was created to work toward a sanitary code implementation strategy intended to address increasing problems related to septage disposal, including water quality and wetlands protection. New and emerging technologies and advanced treatment systems for waste disposal offer tremendous potential for protecting our groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources.

The Health Department approved a revised District Sanitary Code, effective January 30, 2017. It is recommended that the County work closely with the Health Department, environmental advocacy groups, villages, townships, the EGLE, and the EPA in order to research, develop, and implement decentralized clustered septage disposal systems that take full advantage of cutting-edge technologies that provide for protection and preservation of our freshwater and wetland resources.

3. Assist in the development of private road standards. These standards should address design speed, right-of-way width, pavement width, the proper use of traffic control devices and meet the minimum AASHTO standards.

---

# Chapter 8: Guiding Principles



## **Summary**

The Guiding Principles in this chapter focus and direct decision-making for future land use, transportation, and public improvements. They express what a community values most and wishes to encourage and/or to preserve as growth occurs.

Each Guiding Principle has been tailored to aid Antrim County in guiding growth. They should be

kept in mind when considering projects, regulations, or improvements which could impact the county's future land uses. They should be considered when township master plans and zoning ordinances are reviewed and revised. The Guiding Principles are based on the results from the 2001 Antrim County Community Opinion Survey, 2003 Visioning Sessions, and input from the Planning Commission members and interested public. The following pages describe each Guiding Principle in detail and list a set of policies to be implemented to achieve each Principle. There is no priority assigned to the Guiding Principles. The corresponding numbers are for reference only.

### **Antrim Counties Guiding Principles**

- 1. Keep Antrim County Rural**
- 2. Protect the Water**
- 3. Promote Healthy Living**
- 4. Direct Development towards Existing Communities**
- 5. Provide Housing Opportunities for Everyone**
- 6. Retain Farming and Farmlands**
- 7. Promote Diverse Working Opportunities**
- 8. Maintain the Rural Appearance of the Highway and Road Corridors**
- 9. Balance Property Rights with the Public Interest**
- 10. Mitigate Natural Hazards and Meet the Challenges of Climate Adaptation**

---

## 1. Keep Antrim County Rural

There are many different ways to define “rural character.” The people of Antrim County wish to preserve a rural lifestyle, therefore the following policies are recommended:

- Facilitate development and land use consistent with the rural environment.
- Encourage cooperation with townships, villages, businesses, and community leaders to minimize outdoor lighting. Endorse and promote local lighting ordinances that lessen night time glare.
- Provide education to elected and appointed officials about wildlife protection.
- Promote and educate community leaders about different road designs that fit the rural character of the area.
- Encourage the use of native vegetation; especially in County building projects and in local landscape ordinances.
- When appropriate, work to establish incentives that can be used to encourage the incorporation of desirable views and vistas, woodlands, farmlands, and the protection of ridgelines into development plans. This could include a Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR).
- Coordinate county park projects with open space and protection initiatives by other groups (such as Townships, conservancies, and State government) to create a comprehensive countywide open space and trail network.
- Encourage trees and landscaping along the corridors
- Encourage appropriate signage and signage size along roadways that is consistent with the rural character.

## 2. Protect the Water

One of Antrim County’s most notable and precious resource is its water resources. Antrim County has approximately 264 total miles of rivers and streams, covering about 28,480 acres. The county also has 27 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline along Grand Traverse Bay. These water resources all provide scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, and recreation. To help them, the following principles are recommended:

- Encourage land uses that could negatively impact water quality to be placed at an appropriate distance from streams, rivers, wetlands, and creeks.
- Encourage land uses to be placed at an appropriate distance from streams, rivers, wetlands and creeks to avoid negative impacts on water quality.
- Help townships and municipalities develop an ordinance to minimize intensive uses on a single lot when the lot is adjacent to a body of water (“key-holing” or “funneling” ordinance).
- Support community wellhead protection plans. Incorporate wellhead delineation maps into County plans.

- 
- Support education programs about septic system maintenance. Encourage this education in the schools.
  - Support education on Low Impact Design (LID) storm water techniques.
  - Be an active partner for soil erosion control.

### **3. Promote Healthy Living**

Residents' past survey responses frequently expressed how much they enjoy living in Antrim County. People want to live here. This is a community where people of all ages can live and thrive. To ensure that this desire continues, the following policies are recommended to address individual health needs:

- Encourage the creation of a healthy living site plan guidebook that promotes development designs for healthier living. Encourage neighborhood designs that are walkable and bicycle-friendly when possible.
- Encourage cluster-housing techniques to establish neighborhoods that are organized around open space areas.
- Encourage road designs that enhance safety for children, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Show community leaders how these designs will improve the community.
- Recommend to community leaders performance standards that minimize noise, visual access, odor, vibration, dust and particulate matter, and the other potential impacts of industrial, commercial, and resource based land uses when they abut residentially zoned areas.
- Work with local school districts to coordinate growth plans.
- Support transit services.
- Encourage recreational planning.
- Encourage access to recreational activities.

### **4. Direct Development Towards Existing Communities**

Encourage development and investment in communities that possess infrastructure. Directing this development to existing communities increases the efficiency of developed land and infrastructure, and reduces development pressures in rural areas. Promote this growth by:

- Encourage higher density development in the "infrastructured" communities.
- Encourage businesses to locate within "infrastructured" communities.
- Discuss growth strategies with the "infrastructured" communities and assist them when possible.
- Assist each "infrastructured" community in their "placemaking" and promoting their uniqueness.

- 
- Discourage intense development from occurring outside communities with infrastructure.

## **5. Provide Housing Opportunities for Everyone**

Not everyone will wish to live in the same house for as long as they live in Antrim County and have to move away from familiar surroundings when their housing needs change. People need housing that is affordable in reasonable proximity to their jobs. It is the intent of the County to provide opportunities for a variety of housing as follows:

- Encourage a wide range of housing opportunities to satisfy the lifecycle housing needs of residents of all income and age levels.
- Support a range of quality affordable housing types to satisfy the needs of residents.
- Encourage affordable housing throughout the county rather than concentrate it in monotype developments.
- Promote homes on small lots where there is infrastructure.
- Encourage work/live environments in rural areas to allow for home owners to operate small scale businesses from their homes when the impact will be minimal.

## **6. Retain Farming and Farmlands**

Agriculture plays an important role in Antrim County's history and current character. It is important to think of these areas as perpetually being farmed and not as future residential areas. Once these lands are developed into residential or commercial developments, it is nearly impossible for them to be farmed in the future; therefore, it is important to employ the following:

- Encourage new agricultural activity within the community.
- Think of agriculture as employment locations; work with farmers and interested agencies to develop agricultural related businesses such as U-pick operations, nurseries, and wineries.
- Encourage the sale of agricultural products at farm locations.
- When appropriate, work with farmland preservation groups and land conservancies to retain larger areas of contiguous agricultural lands in the agricultural designated areas.
- Support Purchase of Development Rights program to purchase large farmlands.
- Proactively help farmers continue agricultural operations through the Michigan State University Extension and other USDA offices.
- Encourage the most flexible regulation of farms and farm markets.

---

## **7. Promote Diverse Working Opportunities**

One of the important components a community needs to be sustainable is a solid job force. This can be accomplished by a mixture of job opportunities, including professional, manufacturing and service oriented. Although it is not the county's responsibility to create these job opportunities, the county should encourage viable locations for them.

- When appropriate, work with responsible parties to ensure that high-speed internet and wireless communication is available throughout the County.
- Designate areas where small businesses can afford to operate.
- Encourage homegrown businesses and incubator businesses.

## **8. Maintain the Rural Appearance of the Highway and Road Corridors**

Antrim County has many beautiful, highly visible vantage points. People enjoy these views while traveling. The forest vegetation, open space, and views of Lake Michigan along with all other lakes are magnificent to look at. They are important resources and preserving them is a high priority. These are not just attractive sites, they add to the quality of life and tourism experience. A main objective is to protect these areas from highly visible, inappropriate or ill-suited development such as signage, billboards, multiple access points, and obtrusive building placement.

- Encourage clean highway corridors and encourage businesses along the highway to landscape.
- Work to become a partner with the County Road Commission, Villages, Townships, and MDOT in roadway planning and access management.
- When appropriate, work with community leaders, townships, villages, and businesses to control signage and limit billboards.
- Encourage access management provisions in local ordinances.
- Reduce driveway access points wherever possible.
- Encourage internal connections between business properties.
- Promote alternative access, such as frontage roads.
- Work to keep the long vistas of open space and wooded areas along the roads.
- Encourage compact development, rather than allowing development to "strip" down the roadway.
- Work to become a partner with the County Road Commission, villages, townships, utility companies, and the private sector to improve utility location.
- Assist in the development of private road standards. These standards should address design speed, right-of-way width, pavement width, and proper use of traffic control devices.

---

## 9. Balance Property Rights With the Public Interest

It is the intent of the County to carefully balance the constitutional rights of property owners with the public interest by:

- Evaluating each public interest and determining if alternative approaches can be used to minimize effects on property rights.
- Ascertaining and publicly revealing the facts of any land use issue before making a decision, to the extent possible.
- Making recommendations on the basis of sound land use practice
- Keeping the public informed and involved in key land use issues. The more difficult the issue, the more input should be elicited from the public, including going beyond the normal required public hearing requirements when there is a major issue of concern.
- Encouraging direct citizen engagement in the process.

## 10. Mitigate Natural Hazards and Meet the Challenges of Climate Adaptation

Antrim County's "Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan" (NHMP – 2023) specifies the collaborative efforts and actions to be taken to deal effectively with natural disasters and emergencies such as tornadoes, pandemics, extreme winter weather, flooding, etc. The NHMP is available online, and several pages, it should be noted, offer evidence of current global and local warming and regard it as an amplifying factor in some of these disasters, as well as having a negative impact on tourism and agriculture. Thus, for both disaster mitigation and climate adaptation, the following policies are recommended:

- Continue to strengthen collaboration with government and other entities involved in mitigating natural hazards.
- Encourage the installation of residential, community and utility grade solar and wind energy.
- Encourage the efforts of homeowners, businesses and units of government to plan and set goals aimed at transitioning to renewable sources as much as feasible.
- Support tree-planting projects and develop new ones.
- Support efforts to increase public transportation and car-pooling.
- Advocate for more renewable (proportionately less coal-and gas sourced) energy from electric utilities.
- Help facilitate the installation of charging stations for electric vehicles.

---

# Chapter 9: Future Land Use



## ***Summary***

The goal of this master plan is to simply recognize what is special about Antrim County and provide recommendations that local units of governments can reference to help sustain quality of life. A thriving community includes a good school system, public safety, manageable commutes, availability of shops and services and opportunity for growth. All of these are necessary considerations towards livability as is preserving what is unique to Antrim County: the natural settings, farmlands, country roads, historic villages, and views and access to water.

The Planning Commission's charge is to recognize what challenges and opportunities exist, what can and cannot be changed, and work to accomplish what they see is achievable. This Future Land Use section is guidance to assist the Planning Commission in this charge. The Future Land Use Map patterns are quite similar to the map in Chapter 4 because the populace has generally focused on maintaining the existing characteristics in Antrim County rather than creating new land uses or intensities.

## **Village Centers**

There are five Villages in Antrim County. Each one has a unique character. Some are more developed than others; however, each one has a combination of residential and commercial uses in a small vicinity. This compactness makes them suited for walk-ability, mass transit, and improved services such as water and sewer.

These are ideal locations for senior housing, medical services, affordable housing, education centers, and employers. People can travel from their homes to these locations and have their

---

needs met. It is important to help these villages to continue to thrive by working with the Economic Development Corporation and the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance to provide jobs within these locations; promoting higher density; working with the Antrim County Transportation operations to ensure that each Village has regular public transportation. It is projected that these Villages will grow in residential and commercial population.

### **Hamlets**

Although these areas resemble villages, they are not incorporated. They serve the nearby populations and traveling public. Like the villages, these locations are mixed use and social centers. It is expected that they will continue to grow, but will not experience any substantial growth due to minimal infrastructure or space. These areas should be thought of as similar to villages and encouraged to continue their current functions.

### **Agricultural Preservation**

The intent of this classification is to identify the areas that are actively farmed or have characteristics that make them suitable for farming. This identification is to maintain, promote, and encourage existing operations and protect them from incompatible uses. The primary uses of lands in this area should focus on agricultural activities and associated storage relating to these uses permitted by the Michigan Right to Farm Act.

Agricultural related businesses are attractions for tourists as well as being self-sustaining businesses. In order to encourage and maintain a balanced and diversified economy, agri-tourism should be encouraged.

Since 2003, Antrim has participated in a Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. This program was designed to allow townships to participate in purchasing development rights. Areas that are perceived for potential purchases should have this classification.

### **Rural Country**

People living in Antrim County tend to enjoy a relaxed, rustic lifestyle. Many residents enjoy having larger size properties and limited infrastructure services such as well and septic. Broadband is a growing and encouraged infrastructure to allow for more people to work from home. The plan for this area is to retain rural characteristics and allow individuals to continue their standard of living.

### **Resort Community**

Antrim County is known as a destination recreation area. There are a few locations that primarily function as a resort for skiing, golfing, boating or a combination. Homes are sited

---

around the resort amenities, creating a live/play environment. These homes are usually on smaller lots and developments are more concentrated than in the rural country. It is projected that these areas may increase in population, but will not, due to infill development, have a substantial increase in size.

### **Public Recreation**

These are lands are owned by the state, county or township that offer recreation, wildlife habitat, and visual beauty. It is projected that these areas will remain in public ownership. If there is a change, the properties will preferably transfer from one government entity to another. If a property is privately obtained, the road and infrastructure services should be studied to ensure any future use of the property will be appropriate.

### **Visual Highway Corridor**

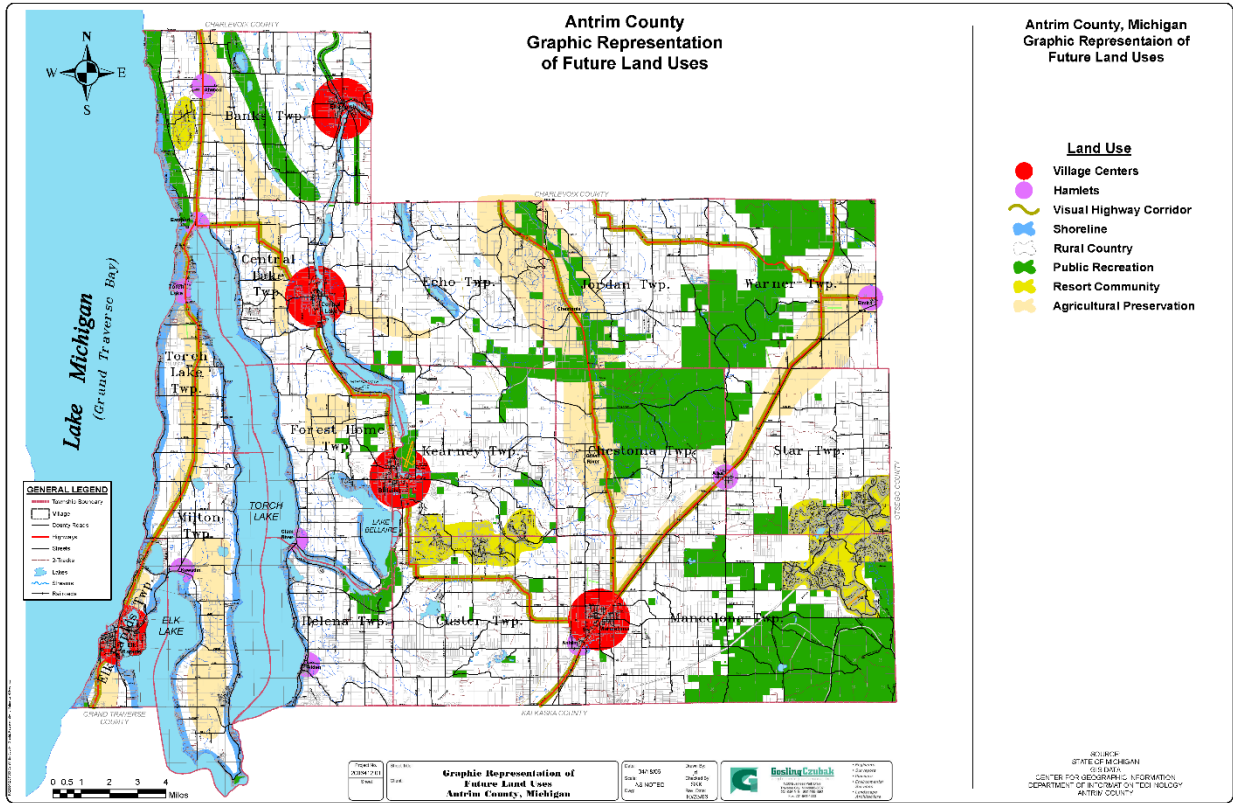
Much of the land along the designated roadways in the County are undeveloped and reinforce Antrim County's rural character while providing spectacular views of the landscape. It is recommended that incentives, such as increased density or reductions in development requirements, be given to developers to maintain the visual corridor. Strip development should not be encouraged.

Additionally, access management should be recommended to the MDOT or the Road Commission. In order to help reduce traffic congestion and accidents, access management focuses on the number, location, and design of driveways. This can be achieved by encouraging consolidation and shared access to parcels, passing lanes, frontage roads, and alternative accesses where applicable. It is more efficient to apply these measures prior to development, than retrofitting developed properties.

### **Shoreline**

Much of the buildable land areas along Lake Michigan and surrounding the interior lakes have been developed. Most of the development is single family homes on smaller lots. These are desired locations and it is projected that most of the future growth will actually be rebuilding of homes versus building new homes due to the limited amount of developable land.

Communities with these developments should be aware of the environmental constraints these properties may have and work with the owners to minimize negative environmental impacts.



---

# Chapter 10: Implementation



Zoning is the typical means for a community to implement priorities of a master plan. Antrim County, however, is without county-wide zoning and, as such, utilizes other methods for implementation. The Antrim County Planning Commission has, over the years, focused on advising, communicating, and partnering with local units and other organizations as a method for implementing priorities of the Master Plan. Below is a timeline list of implementation tasks that the Planning Commission has prioritized during the master plan process based on the request from the Board of Commissioners and the needs of Antrim County.

## Immediate Priorities

- Distribute copies of the Revised Master Plan to the following townships: Banks, Torch Lake, Milton, Elk Rapids, Central Lake, Forest Home, Echo, Helena, Kearney, Custer, Jordan, Chestonia, Mancelona, Warner, and Star. Distribute copies to the following villages: Ellsworth, Elk Rapids, Central Lake, Mancelona, and Bellaire.
- Distribute copies of the Revised Master Plan to the surrounding counties and townships.
- Work with the Economic Development Corporation to assist in their goal implementation.
- When reviewing a township or village master plan, look at the Guiding Principles listed in the Antrim County Master Plan and note areas where the community's master plan could be amended to further implement the Guiding Principles.
- When reviewing a township or village zoning ordinance, look at the Guiding Principles listed in the Antrim County Master Plan and note where the ordinance applies the Guiding Principles.

---

## One to Four Years

- Work with the County Forester to develop a Countywide tree planting plan. This plan should discuss the environmental, scenic, and financial benefits of hardwood trees to Antrim County. It should also have an outreach component.
- Contact the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, as well as environmental consultants to pursue a Wellhead Protection Program.
- Commission a new aerial land use study and compare the findings to the 1978 and 1998 results. Provide education on low impact design (LID) storm water techniques.
- Work with farm groups and Michigan State University Extension and Northern Lakes Economic Alliance offices to promote agricultural related businesses.
- Continue to submit applications for grant funding from Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

## Five Years

- Compare development densities with improvements, such as road connections and sewer availability. Use this information when updating the master plan.
- Review this task list to identify projects not accomplished.
- Review this master plan and update where needed.