



Antrim County Planning Commission

The Antrim County Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for

Tuesday, February 6, 2024 @ 4:30 p.m.

Board of Commissioners Room

203 East Cayuga Street, Bellaire, MI

MEMBERS

Richard Friske, Jr.
12/31/2024

Leslie Elrod
12/31/2025

James Gurr
12/31/2025

Ron Tschudy
12/31/2026

Bill Hefferan
Term elected

STAFF

Jeremy Scott
County Administrator

Janet Koch
Deputy Administrator

Gayle Rider
Administrative Asst.

Margie Boyd
Secretary

OFFICE ADDRESS

P.O. Box 187
Bellaire, MI 49615

PHONE: 231-533-6265

FAX: 231-533-8111

AGENDA ITEMS INCLUDE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Organizational Meeting
 - Election of Officers
 - Selection of Meeting Dates/Times
- 4) Approval of Agenda
- 5) Declaration of Conflict of Interest
- 6) Public Comment
- 7) Approval of [Minutes from November 7, 2023](#)
- 8) Old Business
 - Master Plan
- 9) New Business
 - Banks Township—Extraction Moratorium Ordinance
 - Helena Township—Master Plan Review
- 10) Various Matters
- 11) Public/Member Comment
- 12) Adjourn



Memorandum Administration Office

February 6, 2024

TO: Planning Commission
FR: Administration/Planning Office
RE: Organizational Meeting

Before getting down to regular business that has been put before the Planning Commission, you will be holding an organizational meeting. At this time, you will be selecting your officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary) and setting dates and times for your 2024 regular meetings. The Deputy Administrator will be chairing the meeting until your Chairperson has been elected.



Memorandum Administration Office

February 5, 2024

TO: Planning Commission

FR: Janet Koch, Deputy Administrator

RE: Approval of Agenda, Minutes

You should have received your agenda packets via electronic communication on February 1, 2024. If there are no changes or additions to the agenda, please consider the following action:

Motion by _____ and seconded by _____ to approve the February 5, 2024 agenda as presented.

You received the [minutes from the regular November 7, 2023](#) Planning Commission meeting via electronic communication on November 8, 2023 and again on February 1, 2024. If there are no corrections to those minutes, please consider the following action:

Motion by _____, seconded by _____ to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2023 meeting as presented.

**Antrim County
Drain Commissioner
Operator of Dams**

Memo

To: Antrim County Planning Commission
From: Leslie Meyers
cc: Janet Koch, Deputy County Administrator
Date: January 26, 2024
Re: Antrim County Master Plan 2024 - DRAFT

Review of the draft Antrim County Master Plan has been “mostly” completed. All of the Farm Census Data is scheduled for release on February 13, 2024. As AG is an important part of our identity, I say we can surely wait another month for the information. Chapter 6 – Agriculture can be updated for the final review phase.

Please note that I did not work in a vacuum. I worked with County departments and agencies to update the information as needed. Specifically, I would like to thank the Elk Rapids Harbor Master, GRNA, ACD, County Forester, Mancelona Village Clerk, TLA President Fred Sittel, Julie Weston – GIS, Rachel Krino, EDC, ACRC, ACT, ERCOL and anyone else that I might have missed.

You will find attached a copy of the text of the document. Once approved, photos, charts and maps will be included.

Notable Changes

Cover: Change date to 2024 – we can take advantage of an extra year before an update is required.

Acknowledgements: Updated to reflect the 2023-2024 group of involved folks.

Table of Contents: Will be updated at final draft.

Chapter 1: Spelling corrections. Add photos and Antrim County Jurisdictional Map at final draft.

Chapter 2: Spelling corrections, updated information, added the County dams, and added an implementation step. Add photos and the following maps and charts at final draft:

- AC Elevation Map
- AC Wetlands Map
- AC Lakes, Rivers and Streams Map
- AC Slope Map
- AC Drainage Classification Map
- AC Watershed Map
- AC Forest Managed Lands
- ERCOL Map

Chapter 3: Spelling corrections, updated information. Add photos and AC Land Use Trends Map at final draft.

Chapter 4: Spelling corrections, updated information. Add photos and the following charts, maps and graphs at final draft:

- AC Population versus Counties Chart
- AC Population 2000-2020 Graph
- AC Population Density Map
- AC political Subdivisions Populations
- AC Pop Age Chart
- AC Household income Chart
- AC Seasonal & Transient Resident Chart
- AC School District Map
- AC Workers Chart

Chapter 5: Spelling Corrections, update information, add photos and the following charts, graphs and maps at final draft:

- AC Employment for Industry Chart
- AC Business Patterns Chart
- Estimated per capita Income Chart
- Unemployment Chart

Chapter 6: Figures due out February 13, 2024. Photos and charts, maps and graphs will be added.

Chapter 7: Spelling corrections, update information. Photos and the following maps, charts and graphs to be added at final draft:

- AC Transportation Map
- AC Airport Map
- AC Public Utility Services Chart
- Private Civic Organizations

Chapter 8: Spelling corrections, update information and modify guiding principal 10: Climate Adaptation.

Chapter 9: Spelling corrections, and update map link. Insert pictures at final draft.

Chapter 10: Spelling and additions/revisions to plans.

I look forward to discussing the draft with you all on February 6.

DRAFT

Master Plan 2024-2029

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ANTRIM COUNTY

Board of Commissioners
Approved xx/xx/xxxx



Acknowledgements

2024 Board of Commissioners

Terry VanAlstine, Chair

Dawn LaVanway, Vice-chair

Jason Helwig

Jarris Rubingh

Joshua Watrous

Antrim County Planning Commission

Richard Friske, Jr., Chair

James Gurr, Vice-Chair

Leslie Elrod, Secretary

Ron Tschudy

Bill Hefferin

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

DRAFT

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. 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.

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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.

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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. As depicted on page 9 in the map "Antrim County Percent Slope," 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.

Soils

Generally, soils in the area tend to be sand, acidic, and low in fertility. Upland soils are characterized by Kalkaska-Montcalm soils, which are well-drained, nearly level to very steep, sandy soils on hills, ridges, and knolls. According to the 1978 United States Department of Agriculture Soil Survey, soils along rivers, streams, and riparian to lakes are often characterized as Tawas-Ensley-Roscommon soil types that are considered very poorly drained, nearly level mucky, loamy, and sandy soils in depressions on plains.

Climate

(Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Climatologic Division provided portions of this data)

In winter months, the temperature ranges in the high to mid-20s for an average high and the average low temperature is in the mid-teens. During the growing season, the average highs are about 70 degrees and the lows are near 50 degrees at night. The temperatures are moderate in the spring and fall by the lake effects. This "Great Lake effect" provides cooler temperatures in the spring and warmer temperatures in the fall. This temperature moderate makes for more ideal conditions for the production of specialty crops.

Growing degree-days are equivalent to the "heat units." During the month, growing degree-days accumulate by the amount that the average temperature each day exceeds a base temperature (50 degrees F). The normal accumulation is used to schedule single or successive plantings of a crop between the last freeze in spring and the first freeze in fall.

The total annual rainfall ranges from 30 to 33 inches. Of this rainfall, 18.7 inches usually fall in April through September. The growing season for most crops falls within this period.

Evaporation generally exceeds rainfall during the growing season. The average seasonal snowfall, as recorded by the Road Commission in Mancelona, is 150.4 inches and the winter storage of water in the root zone is important for the production of forest and agricultural crops for the upcoming year. Thunderstorms occur on approximately 31 days of each year.

The average relative humidity in mid-afternoon is about 63%. The sun shines 75% of the time possible in summer and 40% in winter. The prevailing wind is from the southwest. Lake Michigan on the western portion of the County impacts the weather for an average distance of 10 to 15 miles inland.

In the west half of the County, the presence of Lake Michigan tends to lessen extremes in temperature and creates a climate favorable to the growing of fruits. The inland lakes and soil conditions of this western area permit such types of agriculture not otherwise feasible at this high latitude. During the summer, the off-the-lake air currents tend to prevent high temperatures and maintain humidity. In the fall, they retain heat and in the spring retard premature growth with the 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 intermesidate 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 (formally 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 the home of the lake sturgeon, muskellunge, and walleye among others, providing fishing and ice fishing activities in Antrim County. 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.

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.

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 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. With 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, coyotes and weasel.

Vegetation

More than half of Antrim County is forested; 180,000 acres or 282 square miles. 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. Most of the forest in Antrim County is privately owned and it is the largest single natural resource.

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 in 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. Protection of our wellheads is addressed via well head protection overseen by the Northwest Michigan Health Department.

Surface Water

Surface water has the same concerns as groundwater. With our sandy soils, steep slope concerns, 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.

Environment

The Great Lakes contain one-fifth of the entire world supply of fresh water, considered by many to be the world's most precious resource.

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 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. The physical features such as the 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 commercial buildings 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 infrastructure services such as well and septic.

Manufacturing

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

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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, the villages of Central Lake and Ellsworth saw small increases.

Most of the population lives in the southern portion 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.

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.

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% Hispanic or Latino
- 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

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%.

Chapter 5: Economic Development

Summary

Economic trends and resources affect land use in population centers, forests, farms, orchards, lakes, and riverfront areas. 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%.

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, all of which have downtown development authorities and are zoned communities.

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 within the village limits.

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 Economics 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, 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.

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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 2017 Census of Agriculture, the average farm in Antrim County generated \$106,521 in total sales. In 2012 total sales were reported as \$50,592.

This data will be released February 13, 2024

In 2012, the average Michigan farm generated \$166,265 in total sales; in 2017 that amount was \$172,560. 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
- Cherries, tart
- 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 2017 Census, there were 333 farms in Antrim County, which was a decrease from the previous three Census' of Agriculture counts. This is a reversal of the upward trend in farm numbers that Antrim County has experienced. The last time Antrim County had a lower number of farms was in 1997 when the number of farms was 301. State-wide, the 2012 Census reported 52,194 farms in Michigan. In 2017, the number of farms decreased by 4,553 to 47,641.

During this time in Michigan, many farmlands were converted to other uses, such as residential developments or moved to idle lands. The decrease in the number of Antrim County farms may be due to similar changes in use.

Sales from Operations

The 2012 and 2017 Census data show that the average total sales increased for Antrim County farmers and throughout the State.

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 2012 Census of Agriculture recorded 64,167 acres in Antrim County that were considered farm land. The 2017 Census noted a decrease in farm land to 55,565 dedicated acres. There are 335,961 total acres in Antrim County, therefore in 2017, 16.5% of the County was considered active farmland, a significant decrease from the 2012 percentage of 19.1%, equating to a 13% decrease in active farmland since 2012.

Grand Traverse County and Leelanau County have similar farm acreage (50,886 and 50,053 respectively). Kalkaska and Benzie Counties have the smallest farm acreages at 27,137 and 18,516 acres respectively.

The majority of farms in Antrim County range from 50 to 179 acres, as shown on the following page.

The average farm size in Antrim County was 155 acres in 2012; in 2017 the average farm acreage was 167 acres.

The median size for a farm in Antrim County was 72 acres in 2012; in 2017 the median size of an Antrim County farm was 77 acres.

In the State of Michigan, the 2017 average size was 205 acres, and the median size was 59 acres.

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 on XX shows the location of the county's prime farmland areas. 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:

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- 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.

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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. 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 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. 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 adjacent 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.

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- 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 Custer Township have access to a public sewer. There are plans to expand the current limited sewer system.

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 Start 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. Most cable television, high speed internet, and natural gas is available in the villages, major resort developments, and along M-88 with a few exceptions. 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.

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.

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 then 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

The United States Constitution specifically states that a person cannot be deprived of their property without due process. A person’s ability and freedom to own property is essential in the United States. While balancing the rights of property owners and the public interest is always difficult, equal consideration should be given to the benefits a community receives when good public policy is implemented.

It is the intent of the County to carefully balance the 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.
- Ascertain and publicly reveal 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 eventually likely 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 reducing their carbon footprints 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.

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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. The Future Land Uses is guidance to assist the Planning Commission in this charge. The Future Land Use Map patterns are quite similar to the map in Chapter 3 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 methods that the Planning Commission has prioritized during the master plan process based on the request from the Board of Commissioners and 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.
- Continue to support the Northwest Michigan Health to support a Wellhead Protection Program.
- Review and update the 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.
- Study the Elk Rapids Hydro Dam to determine future updates, including automation.
- Review this task list to identify projects not accomplished.
- Review this master plan and update where needed.

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APPENDICES

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BANKS TOWNSHIP
Ordinance No. _____ of 2023

AN ORDINANCE TO IMPOSE A MORATORIUM ON SAND AND
GRAVEL EXTRACTION WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP

THE TOWNSHIP OF BANKS ORDAINS:

Section 1. Legislative Findings.

The Banks Township Board (hereinafter the Township Board) hereby makes the following findings:

1. The Banks Township Zoning Ordinance allows for sand and gravel extraction in all zoning districts subject to a Special Use Permit and site plan requirements under Article 8 of the Banks Township Zoning Ordinance.
2. The Township is aware of, but does not have a proper geological survey showing where the sand and gravel is located throughout the Township and needs to conduct such a survey in order to properly regulate sand and gravel and mineral extraction within the township.
3. The Township notes that there has been an increased interest to pursue sand and gravel extraction within the Township over the past two years. Given existing land uses, this raises concerns regarding the location operation of sand and gravel extraction activities and the potential for very serious consequences as a result of sand and gravel extraction on the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Township. Of particular concern is the relationship between existing land uses and the potential impact of sand and gravel extraction on the air and subsurface and surface water quality.
4. The Township is also aware of different regulations which may be appropriate in a township that has sand and gravel resources within it including regulations as discussed in the unpublished Michigan Court of Appeals case from 2021 of *Metamora Township v. American Aggregates of Michigan* being Michigan Court of Appeals case number 349069 decided on April 1, 2021.
5. The Township has a legitimate purpose in addressing the proper design, size, location, and operation of mineral extraction, particularly sand gravel and aggregate within the township.
6. The Township is reasonably concerned that the continued application of the existing zoning ordinance is insufficient and could result in mineral and sand and gravel aggregate mining extractive operations to be established without proper review in a manner that is either inappropriate or in some circumstances

inadvisable within certain locations within the Township based upon the Township's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

7. It is appropriate to forestall such issues for the Township and to impose a temporary moratorium on sand and gravel and aggregate extraction until necessary revised regulations can be enacted.
8. The Township Board has determined that the adoption of a moratorium ordinance is necessary to preserve the public health, safety and welfare by ensuring that appropriate regulations are in place to protect private and public property. This includes, but is not limited to, the physical and natural environment within the township during the time of this moratorium during the study and the need to potentially revise the township's zoning ordinance including drafting any appropriate police power ordinances necessary to protect public and private property in light of preserving the physical and natural environment both at the surface and subsurface level within the township. The reviews by the planning commission and township board which may result in the amendment of existing ordinance regulations and the possible need for additional zoning and police power regulations shall be done in light of the Township's Master Plan as well as its powers under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act particularly following the requirements of MCL 125.3205.

Section 2. Moratorium; Time Limit.

- (a). The Banks Township Board hereby adopts a moratorium on (1) the administrative review of any application for a special use or site plan review for sand and gravel mining and extraction; (2) an administrative deferral of review of any pending application for a zoning permit to allow for sufficient time to review and update existing ordinances appropriate needed for the regulation of sand and gravel and mineral extraction within the Township.
- (b). Therefore, the moratorium adopted under subsection (a) above shall be in effect for a period of six (6) months from the effective date of this ordinance, or the effective date of an amendment of the current Banks Township Zoning Ordinance regulating/addressing sand and gravel and aggregate extraction within the township and/or regulations imposed through a power police ordinance involved in the activities of sand and gravel and aggregate extraction, whichever is sooner, unless such moratorium is extended by further ordinance of the Township Board.

Section 3. Planning Commission Directive.

The Banks Township Planning Commission is hereby directed to study and consider appropriate amendments to the current Banks Township Zoning Ordinance

regulating/addressing sand and gravel and aggregate extraction involved in and activities allowed under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act inclusive of MCL 125.3205 as amended and also conduct a review of options of regulatory police power ordinances which would be passed by the Township Board.

The Planning Commission shall also engage a qualified entity to survey the surface and subsurface resources of all land within the township regarding the location, concentration and the nature of mining operations needed to extract sand and gravel on and under the surface of the township subject to approval of the township board.

Section 4. Severability.

If any section, provision or clause of this Ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not effect any remaining portions or application of this Ordinance, which can be given effect without the invalid portion or application.

Section 5. Effective Date.

This Ordinance shall become effective the day following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the Township.

Ordinance No. _____ was adopted on the _____ day of _____, 2023, by the Banks Township Board as follows:

Motion by: _____
Seconded by: _____
Yeas: _____
Nays: _____
Absent: _____

Donna Heeres, Clerk

Alex Busman, Supervisor

I certify that this is a true copy of Ordinance No. _____ that was adopted at a regular meeting of the Banks Township Board on _____, 2023 and published in the _____ on _____, 2023.

Dated: _____

Donna Heeres, Clerk

Banks Township Planning Commission
Regular Meeting and Public Hearing
January 9, 2024 DRAFT Minutes

1. Meeting was called to order by R. Diebold at 6:00 p.m.
 - a. Present were F. Hersha, P. Howes. Absent – J. Waterman (excused), A. Hoeksema (excused)
2. MMS P. Howes, F. Hersha to go into Public Hearing regarding proposed moratorium ordinance. Motion carried. Public Hearing began at 6:01 p.m. PC Chair R. Diebold provided an overview of the proposed ordinance. Brian Burns, a Petoskey resident, spoke regarding the importance of sand and gravel in everything built today and the importance of having resources close to save on transportation costs thereby making building of buildings, driveways, and homes less expensive. Marv Rubingh, a Banks Township resident, spoke. He expressed the delay caused by a moratorium is unnecessary because current ordinance is fine. There being no written correspondence regarding the proposed ordinance, MMS F. Hersha, P. Howes to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried. Public Hearing closed at 6:14 p.m.
3. Guests and Visitors attending were Kurtis Busman, zoning administrator, Cindy Busman, Recording Secretary, Brian Burns, a Petoskey resident, Marvin Rubingh, a Banks Township resident, Donna Heeres, a Banks Township resident, Alex Busman, a Banks Township resident.
4. MMS P. Howes, F. Hersha to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2023 meeting as written. Motion carried.
5. There were no announcements or correspondence received.
6. Public comment:
 - a. Donna Heeres spoke about the importance of gravel and thoughtful consideration. Expressed limiting the scope of mining might be a consideration.
 - b. Marv Rubingh spoke about desire to serve the community with this resource. He is willing to work with the Planning Commission to answer any outstanding questions.
7. Standing Reports:
 - a. Zoning Board of Appeals – has not met since the last PC meeting
 - b. Zoning Administrator: Kurtis Busman – light activity. Just received the first application for 2024. As a reference, 2022 saw 30 applications, in 2023 there were 44.
 - c. Township Board representative – Julie Waterman was absent. The Commission members have all had a chance to read the Board’s minutes
 - d. Planning Consultant – Ken Lane was absent. His monthly packet was provided to commission members.
8. Unfinished Business
 - a. Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment Number #6 of 2023 re. Section 4.08 Recreational Vehicles.
 - i. Planning Consultant K. Lane has edited to reflect discussion from the last PC meeting. Reviewed and discussed revisions. MMS F. Hersha, P. Howes to schedule a Public Hearing for comment on the proposed ordinance to be held March 12, 2024, Motion carried.
 - b. Special Use Permit application #1-2023 re. Section 8.03.12 Extraction
 - i. P.C. Chair reviewed need for professional involvement, and application deficiencies outlined in Planning Consultant’s and Geologist’s analysis from December meeting. M. Rubingh spoke to and provided written response to questions regarding missing information on the SUP application outlined in the Planning Consultant’s analysis; no response to geologist’s questions provided. PC

Chair indicated once all missing information was provided application review could continue.

- c. Proposed Ordinance #1-2024 re. proposed moratorium on processing all sand/gravel extraction applications for 6 months.
 - i. Discussion, questions, and deliberation regarding the proposed moratorium ordinance.
 - ii. MM F. Hersha to forward proposed ordinance #1-2024 to the Antrim County Planning Commission for review and comment, and concurrently to the Banks Township Board recommending approval. Motion to forward the proposed ordinance was seconded by P. Howes. Motion carried by roll call vote: F. Hersha – Yes, P. Howes – yes, R. Diebold – yes
- d. Master Plan 5-year Revision
 - i. It was proposed and agreed by consensus that February 2024 meeting date be designated as a work-session devoted to developing Master Plan Community Input Survey.

9. New Business

a. 2024 Meeting Resolution

- i. Resolution to establish 2nd Tuesday of each month during 2024, at 6:00 PM, at the Banks Township Hall as the Regular Meeting dates, time and location for the Banks Township Planning Commission was offered by P. Howes and supported by F. Hersha. Motion carried by roll call vote – R. Diebold - yes, P. Howes - yes, F. Hersha - yes.

b. 2023 Annual Report

- i. Will be compiled, returned to Planning Commission for review, before being presented to the Township Board

c. February 13 meeting/work session

10. Public Comment

- a. Marv Rubingh, Kurtis Busman (as a private citizen), Alex Busman (as a private citizen), Donna Heeres (as a private citizen) all spoke regarding Sand and Gravel Extraction.

11. Next Meeting – February 13 – Master Plan work-session

12. MMS P. Howes, F. Hersha to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

The Helena Township Master Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

Helena Township is located in the northwest lower peninsula of Michigan, in Antrim County, on the southeast side of Torch Lake. The township is bordered by Clam Lake and Grass River to the north, Custer Township to the east; Clearwater Township to the south; and Torch Lake to the west. The township is fortunate to have an abundance of over 74,809 linear feet of water resources including 35,321 feet on Torch Lake, 28,189 feet on Clam Lake, and 11,298 feet on Thayer Lake.

The challenge facing the planning commission and all citizens of Helena Township is to carefully plan and direct future growth in a thoughtful and orderly manner while retaining rural character, water quality, dark night skies, beautiful open space, small-scale village quaintness, and open roads.

- A. The Helena Township Planning Commission is responsible for developing the master plan for Helena Township. The first Helena Township Master Plan was adopted in 1978 with revisions made in 2002, 2009, 2016, and 2024.

ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION IN MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The Master Plan document is designed to present policy, provide supporting documentation and to organize in one document general information regarding Helena Township's history, funding, resources and infrastructure.

The material presented in the master plan is divided in two sections:

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. GOALS

II. Goals

A. VISION STATEMENT

HELENA TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN VISION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Act 184 of 1943, the Township Zoning Act and Act 1682 of 1959, the Township Planning Act, which govern township zoning in the State of Michigan, require the zoning districts, established by the townships, be based on a plan to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare; to encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability, to avoid overcrowding of land and buildings or people; to lessen congestion on public roads and streets; to facilitate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements; and to consider the character of each township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trend in land and population development. In our master plan for Helena Township, individual property rights guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Michigan must not be infringed upon.

BACKGROUND

Helena Township, once known for lumbering and agriculture, is today almost entirely residential in nature. Its character is defined principally by its natural features, including the enormously popular shorelines and vistas of Torch, Clam and Thayer Lakes, an abundance of forests, streams, rolling hills and scenic open spaces and the historic quaintness of the community of Alden.

Slowly at first and then rapidly in the 20th Century, Helena Township became a vacation-oriented area with increasing numbers of tourists. Today the trend continues with the addition of more and more retirees and year-round homeowners.

A small number of commercial establishments and the absence of heavy industry also define the character of Helena Township.

Therefore, growth in Helena Township must be as thoughtfully managed as possible in order to protect that very special residential and scenic character of the township and the quality of life associated with that character. To that end, zoning regulations should be developed that seek broad public input on development issues through public hearings before the planning commission, but reserves to the township board, the final decision-making authority on proposed developments, consistent with state law.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Protection of natural resources, including the forests, open spaces and especially water resources, is of prime importance in growth management. This includes protection of the underground aquifers and wetlands, as well as surface water on lakes and streams.

The use of individual wells and septic systems can continue to service township residences and businesses. However, in regard to septic systems, the township will encourage the appropriate county and/or state officials to enforce health codes, require a schedule of inspection and require replacement of faulty septic systems. The township should encourage the use of new technologies available for improved waste and sewage treatment.

The water-related geographical and natural resource attributes of the township have historically been, and will continue to be, the bedrock of its popularity. Protection of these should be the principal factor in any future development.

Growth will continue to focus on the lakes. As the density of lakefront development, the size of shoreline residences, the appeal of secondary properties with scenic views and year-around use all continue to grow, environmental pressures and other threats to the township's character will inevitably increase. Thus, it is crucial that the township impose and enforce protective regulations and communicate with residents and business owners about the need for these types of regulations.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative that the following specific policy initiatives be undertaken:

SHORELINE PROTECTION

A primary intent of the Helena Township Master Plan is to maintain an effective greenbelt buffer between human activities on land and the shoreline.

The Master Plan encourages guidelines to protect the shoreline, to protect water quality and to maintain the natural character of our rural lakes, rivers, and streams.

Road end and lake access sites must be protected and maintained.

Development practices that funnel or keyhole non-shoreline residences into shoreline property zoned R-1 or Village must be regulated to limit the development pressures on water quality and township character.

A greenbelt buffer is the best management practice recommended by both State and Federal natural resource agencies to accomplish the following goals:

- Control erosion
- Trap phosphorus and nutrient runoff
- Protect property values that depend upon high quality water resources

Future development, particularly in areas with high water-table soils or close to water will have special needs. Redevelopment with larger homes may change the character of the area. Additions to existing residences may result in crowding or lack of open spaces. Small lots have special problems of sewage disposal and separation of wells from sewage disposal systems.

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Since the lakeshores are becoming increasingly developed with single-family homes and cottages, the "off-lake" properties with easy access and views face heavy development pressure. Over 90 percent of the township is zoned Agriculture, while actual land use in the zone is primarily residential, with only approximately 12.5 percent of the zone dedicated to farming and forestry activities.

Zoning regulations require landowners requesting development of parcels 10 acres or larger to submit site plans based on both the current zoning minimum two-acre splits to determine maximum density and an open space conservation design plan.

Incentives are offered to landowners for selecting the open space conservation design alternative. Geographical Information Survey (GIS) maps, completed as part of the master plan process, will assist the land division committee, planning commission and property owners in implementing the open space preservation process.

The planning commission should also establish a process, using the natural resource inventory, to identify open space within the township that should be given a high priority for preservation and identify land that is more suitable for development. After completing this process, the planning commission should explore implementing programs that would allow the transfer of development rights or the purchase of development rights to encourage the preservation of high priority open space. In addition, the planning commission should explore implementing programs with the appropriate organizations to encourage property owners to voluntarily place permanent conservation easements on their land.

Housing developments planned on parcels larger than 10 acres are encouraged to use open space planning with possible incentives for cluster development. These incentives allow for smaller lots in exchange for large open space preservation, allowance for pedestrian and non-motorized trail access, and preservation of established wildlife corridors or habitats.

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Commercial areas will be proposed as population and demand increase. In the village zoned area of Alden and Clam River, all contiguous residential areas without commercial use may be rezoned R-1 to protect the historic residential character of the neighborhoods. Areas where current commercial and residential uses are contiguous will continue to be zoned village. New commercial areas must be rezoned.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Commercial and manufacturing activities, and any other activities, including short-term rentals which have the potential for air, water, light, noise, scenic pollution or which might otherwise intrude on Helena Township's residential character must be reviewed. Retirement and assisted living centers, high-tech and light industry, compatible with the township's character, can be accommodated through an overlay zone.

The township, working with DABA (Downtown Area Business Association), should develop a long-term economic development plan consistent with the goals of this master plan. Grants for roads, streetscape improvements and infrastructure development for high-speed data and voice communication to foster township based economic activity, including telecommuting should be a high priority.

ROAD REPAIRS

A ten-year 2.0 mil property tax was approved in November of 2023. The township must follow the guidelines approved in the Helena Township Master Plan in establishing priorities for maintenance and improvement of roads consistent with road designation and their impact on current and future use.

ROADS

The township has established a permanent roads committee to address citizens' concerns regarding increased use of the primary county roads and residential secondary roads by commercial traffic. Increased commercial traffic threatens pedestrian safety in Alden and has the potential to alter the township's quiet, residential character. The township will explore alternatives to address these issues.

GAS & OIL DRILLING, EXPLORATION, AND PRODUCTION

The township will continue to evaluate ways to limit potential health, safety and water quality threats resulting from further gas and oil drilling, exploration, and production in Helena Township.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS

The Helena Township Master Plan recognizes the need to accommodate renewable energy systems, including commercial solar and wind systems, while protecting the public health, safety and welfare of the community.

PRESERVING ALDEN'S QUIANT VILLAGE CHARM

The township will continue to work to preserve the historic quaint village charm of Alden.

PARKS & RECREATION

The Helena Township Parks & Recreation Committee shall establish a regular meeting schedule that is published annually and posted at the community center to encourage public input into decision-making. The planning commission shall appoint one of its members to the parks and recreation committee. The committee shall develop and refresh a 5-year plan for recreational use of township parks and accesses to gain access to grant opportunities offered by the Department of Natural Resources.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The planning commission and township board will give the highest priority to amending the current zoning ordinance to reflect the master plan. The zoning ordinance serves as the township's major regulatory tool. It will continue to be a flexible document, amended as needed to direct growth in an orderly and thoughtful manner, to protect Helena Township's unique quality of life.

To understand the issues and develop policies, goals and objectives, the planning commission organized the information in this section into nine categories as listed below:

1. Commercial/Village Areas
 - a. Alden
 - b. Clam River
 - c. South End
2. School Sites
3. Conservation Areas
4. Farmland
5. Residential Development
6. Shoreline Residential
7. Economic Development
8. Parks and Recreation
9. Roads, Access Management and Road Designations

DRAFT

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Three areas within the township permit commercial activity: the Village zoned areas of Alden and Clam River, and the Commercial zone on the county highway at the south end of the township. These districts are the historic backbone of Helena Township's commercial activity.

It is also recognized there are successful income producing activities that are occurring in the township that have been and can be accommodated through the Special Use Permit process.

Density of Development

Higher density uses and specific uses such as food service and car washes will need plans for:

- A. sewage disposal systems,
- B. water supply.

ALDEN VILLAGE

Description

The (unincorporated) village of Alden is the heart and activity center of the community and the township. Its environmental setting along the shores of Torch Lake and Spencer Creek makes it exceptionally unique.

Alden is seen as important for the following activities according to the responses from the opinion survey questionnaire. (not in priority order)

- Recreation center
- Shopping
- Alden District Library
- Alden Harbor docks
- Alden Harbor boat launch site
- Youth activities
- Tennis courts
- Alden Depot
- Coy Mountain Trails

Traffic and Parking

Traffic Goals and Objectives

- Keep right-of-ways the same width – do not widen
- Keep parking on both sides of the street
- Keep sidewalks where they currently exist
- Future – Add sidewalks where appropriate
- Future – Consider a plan for alternate truck traffic around Alden.

Parking

Encourage a plan for off-street public parking for commercial use.

Pedestrian Circulation

Establish walkways for people and bicycles beyond commercial buildings and road traffic. These walkways add value to adjacent properties, enhance village character and increase access to businesses.

- It is in the best interest of residents and businesses that safe and convenient pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access be provided to residential recreational and business destinations in Alden.
- If possible, identify and show current pedestrian routes on both public and private land on a map.
- Create a map showing desirable future pedestrian and bicycle connections between residences and destinations such as retail businesses, harbor, beaches and parks.
 - A. Obtain trail or sidewalk easements across private property.
 - B. Consider private property issues of trespass and privacy

- C. Require pedestrian/bicycle connections as development of new business, parking, subdivisions, etc. takes place.

Maintain Commercial Viability

- The central area of Alden shall be devoted to retail stores, restaurants and similar uses that cater to high pedestrian traffic. “Big Box” stores and drive-through restaurants, available in nearby communities, are incompatible with the small-scale commercial activities, rural character, and quaint village charm of Helena Township.
- Create a plan that identifies:
 - A. An area where only retail stores, restaurants and similar uses that cater to high pedestrian traffic are allowed on the first floor, and office and residential uses are allowed on upper floors.
 - B. An area where office and lower pedestrian traffic uses are allowed such as real estate, attorney, physicians, and banks.
 - C. These zones should consider existing uses and also consider long range plans.
- Work with the Downtown Area Business Association (DABA) to plan for and implement a program of improving the infrastructure.

Maintain Village Character

- The village should have identifiable borders so that the current small town pedestrian scale character can be maintained as growth in the surrounding area continues.
- Show on the Future Land Use Map the current developed village boundaries and projected future growth areas, taking into account existing development, natural features, and natural maximum walking distances of about one quarter mile.
- Show features such as forested hills, wetlands, property ownership patterns, etc. that indicate natural village borders.
- Approach adjacent townships and Antrim County to encourage neighborhood-sized commercial services.
- Future – Develop a plan, such as acquiring conservation easements on natural boundary areas, to ensure that the boundaries are maintained.

Coy Mountain, due to its proximity to the (unincorporated) village of Alden, its beautiful forest cover, and scenic views of the lake that are available from the top of the hill, is a major community asset. Properties adjacent to Coy Mountain are privately owned and therefore prime parcels for a future public acquisition to preserve and protect this self-sustaining climax forest and community trail.

Future Zoning

Consider creating Village Zoning Districts with location-appropriate combinations of some of the following uses allowed in a number of separate zones so that specific land use objectives can be achieved through the rezoning process.

- I. mixed uses with Special Use Permit review approval procedures,
- II. commercial retail center,
- III. office and tower-volume pedestrian traffic uses,
- IV. residential with auxiliary apartments,
- V. allow home occupations,
- VI. shoreline residential standards,
- VII. residential rental,
- VIII. waterfront district.

CLAM RIVER

It is recommended the zoned village of Clam River is as follows:
North – by Clam River and Clam Lake

East – by Dewitt Marina and the Rock Shop
South – by the Rock Shop and the “island” formed by River Street and East Torch Lake Drive
West – by the center of River Street east

The remaining “Village” zoned property at Clam River be rezoned “R-1”

Commercial businesses

Plans and zoning regulations for the commercial businesses in the Clam River area should address the following:

- A. expansion of businesses,
- B. redevelopment of businesses,
- C. business-residential needs.

SOUTH END COMMERCIAL AREA

The planning commission has identified the following issues in the South End Commercial Area.

The South End Commercial Area currently extends from Crystal Beach Road to the north 800 feet on the east side and 700 feet on the west side of South East Torch Lake Drive. There are five properties on the east side about 400 feet deep and four properties on the west side about 300 feet deep.

SCHOOLS & SCHOOL SITES

- A. School Location -- School location has a major impact on future development patterns. Families base location decisions on school accessibility.
- B. Relationship to Recreation -- Schools can contribute to the recreational needs of the township by joint use of recreational facilities and also for summer recreation.
- C. The township and the school district need to plan future school locations consistent with the township plan.
- D. Locate future schools in existing developed areas where easy access by students is available. Keep schools away from low density and non-development areas.
- E. Schools should be located and planned for pedestrian and bicycle access for both school use and summer recreation activities.

HELENA TOWNSHIP LANDS

There is a total of 10,391 acres in the township. Vacant land (4,984 acres – 48.00 percent), and forests (2,322 acres – 22.00 percent) make up 70 percent of the land area of the township. Agricultural zoning makes up over 90 percent of the total land area of the township.

These lands include farmlands, vacant lands, wetlands, steep slopes, scenic view lands, lakes and streams, wildlife habitat, etc. These lands contain significant natural resources and contribute greatly to the character of the township. Each of these areas has unique characteristics and special planning issues. Development can occur in these areas if care is taken to include consideration of the natural resource base.

Land use planning is one of the best tools available to protect resources while allowing development to occur. Resources are inventoried and protected on a site-by-site basis. This includes wetlands, steep slopes, scenic views, and wildlife habitats, etc. Development of the land is directed away from these resources.

Land use areas also include such areas as shoreline buffer zones, public access sites and township, county, tribal, and school district public owned lands.

Potential Conservation Areas

The Potential Conservation Areas Map found in section IV illustrates features that comprise elements that may be considered as potential conservation areas. The map also identifies the resource areas that could be protected, the areas that are most appropriate for development, as well as the areas that have already been developed. These maps show the interconnected pattern of resources that need protection and where development should be carefully managed, or in some cases, discouraged.

Active Farmlands

Active farms contribute to the economy and to the rural character of the township and preserve scenic views. Farmlands also provide wildlife habitat and act as wildlife corridors between other wildlife habitats.

- I. The long-term economic viability of farmland in Helena Township is being challenged by rising land values.
- II. Farmland may be split into small development units unless other economically viable development or preservation options are available.
- III. Conservation easements, rural clustering or transfer of development rights are possible means to preserve the rural character and open space values of these farmlands.

Wetlands

Extra care should be taken in development of wetland areas for many reasons.

Wetlands are home to many plant and animal species. They help prevent flooding and recharge our aquifers.

- I. Loss of wetlands due to development activities such as access roads and filling.
- II. Splitting into small parcels that may disrupt their function as wildlife corridors.
- III. Wetland areas should be protected.
- IV. Bodies of water and their adjacent wetlands need buffer areas.

Protection of certain resources (such as wetlands) by ordinance is desirable. Development of wetlands is undesirable. Planned Unit Developments that allow reasonable residential development with appropriate setbacks from wetlands are reasonable where it is possible to maintain wildlife corridors. Maps of these wetland wildlife corridors should be created and an Overlay Zone of the wetlands and their adjacent steep slopes with allowable uses should be addressed.

Steep Slopes

- I. Steep slopes are associated with some areas near each creek.
- II. Erosion takes place if development occurs, and siltation of adjacent streams or wetlands is likely.
- III. Grading changes the character of steep slopes.
- IV. Construction along steep slopes could cause soils to erode.
- V. Areas of forested slopes provide a border along wetlands.
- VI. Conservation Easements, public purchase or Cluster Development are options to consider.

Scenic Views

Scenic views are an important part of Helena Township. A substantial part of the attractiveness of the township is due to the views of forested hills, farmland, and panoramic views of water from public roads.

Current development patterns indicate that these public scenic views will gradually change. Development can occur in these areas if care is taken to include consideration of the natural resource base.

Environmental zones

Environmental zones and their adjacent areas provide valuable ecological functions.

A better understanding of the issues relating to these areas is necessary to make zoning ordinance requirements more meaningful and to help the public become more informed of development options to protect these areas.

Public Access Sites

Helena Township owns 19 public access sites on Torch Lake and Clam Lake and Thayer Lake.

- I. Possible improvement or expansion of one or more of the most popular road end parks may be considered and perhaps relieve use pressures from the Harbor.
- II. There may be a desire to establish a larger park on Torch Lake.
- III. Depot Park provides swimming but no boat access.

IV. Baseball Diamond Park

Public-Owned Lands

The Public Owned Lands Map illustrates Helena Township, Antrim County, and Helena Township public lands, and township owned public access sites on Torch Lake, Clam Lake, and Thayer Lake.

Farmland

The conversion of farmland into non-agricultural uses is a noteworthy problem that is experienced statewide and will be faced in Helena Township as well. The general public recognized the importance of retaining farmland for food and tree production, as well as for its contribution to open space that comprises what people think of as rural character. Tools available to protect farmland include purchase of development rights and deed restrictions.

- I. A large portion of Helena Township is zoned Agricultural.
- II. A number of uses are allowed in the Agricultural zone.
- III. There may be a need to allow clustering, purchase or transfer of development or other methods to retain the rural character of the township.
- IV. To maintain both the economic value of agricultural land and the rural and residential character of agricultural areas, the Township should consider allowing by special use permit certain specified agribusiness and agritourism uses with appropriate regulations and conditions to limit their impact on surrounding uses, rural character, the environment, and local roads and other infrastructure.

Residential Development

Residential development and rural character are important issues. As rural areas are developed for residential uses concern for their effect on township character and quality of life should be considered.

The Environmental zone may be expanded to cover these streams and adjacent lands where rural clustering is required for all development and houses are located in clusters respecting streambanks, steep slopes, and wildlife corridors.

Encourage conservation planning language for use in all residential zoning districts in the zoning ordinance. Conservation planning is one of the best tools available to protect resources while allowing development to occur. Resources are inventoried and protected on a site-by-site basis. This includes wetlands, steep slopes, scenic views, and wildlife habitats, etc.

Development of the land is directed outside these resources. Example of ordinance language that can be written to implement conservation planning may include:

- A. mandatory protection of certain resources (such as wetlands) by ordinance,
- B. voluntary conservation planning, written with built-in incentives such as bonus density points,
- C. open space planning, cluster housing, and/or planned unit development,
- D. requirements for special use permits in environmental resource areas,
- E. overlay zoning districts to provide buffer areas along lakes, streams, or other resources,
- F. conservation easements and preserves in cooperation with a land conservancy,
- G. require a pre-application conference between the zoning administrator (or other designated township representative) and developers so the township's resource protection goals can be articulated,
- H. require a resource inventory map, existing conditions (both natural and human made), and/or a site analysis map for every development.
- I. Purchase of development rights, rural clustering, and transfer of development rights should be considered as methods of retaining the rural character of the township._

MOBILE HOMES IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

- A. Mobile homes should be permitted in residential districts subject to current standards.

- B. Mobile Home Park Developments

Statement of Intent

Mobile home park developments have special characteristics which require full consideration of their

location, including their site layout and design, their demand upon community services and the relationship to, and effect upon, surrounding uses of land. The Township should review its zoning regulations and update as needed to ensure compliance with state and federal laws governing manufactured housing and mobile home parks. This statement of objectives is not intended to promote the establishment of new recreational vehicle parks.

Location and Siting Standards

- I. Area with good road access to schools, shopping, and other services.
- II. Area with soil suitable for community sewage disposal area or connection to a central sewage disposal system – not including a sewage lagoon.
- III. Appropriate screening and buffering from adjacent uses.
- IV. Minimum overall parcel size to accomplish all of the objectives set forth in this Master Plan and in updated zoning regulations.

Access to the park development site should be from a public thoroughfare only. Access should be designed with a capacity to safely and effectively handle any increased traffic which may be generated by the mobile home park development.

- I. Individual site access standards such as:
 - A. minimum average size per mobile home site;
 - B. minimum individual site size;
 - C. provision for minimum dedicated open space;
 - D. yard requirements such as setbacks from any private street or roadway, side site lines and rear site lines,
- II. park road standards.
- III. unit lot improvement standards such as:
 - A. each mobile home unit shall occupy at least a single lot;
 - B. all parking areas should be hard surfaced;
 - C. skirting or equivalent treatment which shall be fire resistant, vented, and have access panels.
- IV. building height limits
- V. lighting standards that keep light on the parcel and do not allow glare off site.
- VI. regulation or limitations on mobile home unit sales so that the mobile home park is not a retail sales area
- VII. Appropriate special use permit standards and conditions specific to these land uses.

Shoreline Residential

The highest value, most densely developed land is located along the township's 12.95 miles of shoreline on Torch, Clam and Thayer Lakes.

Home sizes

Impervious structure to lot size ratios and setbacks may need to be considered in the future for new development or additions to existing structures.

Short-term Rental in R-1 Zone

The intent of the R-1 zone is to provide an area for single-family homes and a quiet residential neighborhood setting. Seasonal rental of homes can change the single-family residential character of a neighborhood. While historically short-term rentals have occurred in Helena Township on a neighbor friendly basis, given the increase in the commercial nature, scale and frequency of short-term rentals, including but not limited to the historically-unknown but now widespread internet marketing of and transaction in such rentals, regulation may become necessary to retain the single-family residential character of neighborhoods and to prevent nuisance impacts.

The zoning administrator must carefully review development plans in the R-1 zone to assure plans are consistent with the intent and character of single-family residential use.

Economics/Development

The commercial areas of the township are located in Calm River, Alden and a small area at the south end of the township.

The economic base of Helena Township rests with resort and tourist business, high quality residential, service businesses, and agriculture. The following goals apply.

- I. Maintain the economic viability of the existing businesses.
- II. Retain or improve the character of the commercial areas as redevelopment or new development takes place.
- III. The Community Wide Opinion Survey indicates the following:
 - A. resort and tourist business is typical,
 - B. some industry is allowable,
 - C. High-tech business is acceptable if it is environmentally compatible with natural resource protections,
 - D. Limited clustered commercial with special use permit review process is acceptable,
 - E. Encourage development plans to conserve open space.

Parks and Recreation

1. The Five-Year Plan puts together suggestions from public input with information obtained by the Parks and Recreation Committee to construct a plan to protect, maintain, and develop, if appropriate, Helena Township owned land and water resources.
2. Biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing are recreational pursuits northern Michigan residents of all ages enjoy. The recreation plan should provide the ability of residents to enjoy these resource-based activities. The township enjoys hiking trails at Coy Mountain and may consider non-motorized pathways for hiking and cross-country skiing in the acreage owned by the township just off McPherson Road.

ROADS, ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND ROAD DESIGNATIONS

Roads

There are both public and private roads in Helena Township that provide a variety of functions ranging from providing access to individual parcels to carrying an increasing amount of vehicular traffic. They also provide recreation opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian use as well as use by vehicles. Zoning Regulations should include the following:

- A. Erosion Control Standards
- B. Driveway numbers, separation, and location
- C. Road Capacities should be maintained according to classification.
- D. Safety
 1. Sight distances for driveways
 2. Number of private accesses to public roads.
- E. Road Maintenance requirements for all new developments.
- F. Premature Development – splitting narrow lots off public roads, also splitting parcels with limited or no provisions for future interior roads should not be allowed.
- G. Plans for future public roads should be shown on the Township Plan.
- H. Unpaved roads that have potential for future traffic should be planned for paving.
- I. Provide adequate entry and egress of fire and emergency vehicles.

Access Management

Defining and preserving the function of roads is an essential part of the Master plan. The concept of Access Management is to ensure that the road system provides access to properties or moves traffic quickly and efficiently depending on the classification of the road. For example, Alden Highway provides a means for vehicles to travel at speeds up to 55 miles per hour with few conflicts with multiple driveways or vehicles entering and leaving the roadway, in contrast other roads serve primarily adjacent properties, with a number of driveways and at speeds of 35 & 45 miles per hour or less.

- A. Standards of road design and maintenance should be based on the planned function of the roads.
- B. Preserving the function of roads will result in lower overall costs and safer roads.
- C. Coordination with Antrim County Road Commission is needed to insure proper design and maintenance of public roads.
- D. Roads in the Township need to be shown on maps according to the desired function.
- E. Coordinating land use regulations with the desired function of the adjacent roads.

Helena Township should consider the principles of access management included in the Access Management Guidebook published by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in October 2001 when considering access to public or private roads.

Planned orderly land development that is coordinated with road improvements result in less traffic congestion, safer operation, and a more efficient use of limited infrastructure resources.

Points to be considered for appropriate additions to existing land use regulations for the corridor are:

- A. adjustments to land use density and permitted land uses,
- B. frontage requirements,
- C. setback requirements,
- D. shared and joint access requirements,
- E. driveway spacing standards,
- F. corner clearance standards,
- G. improved internal site circulation, and
- H. condominium and subdivision regulations that support the development of local roads and service drives.

FUNCTIONAL ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

The following functional classification of roads is consistent with the various development zones of the future land use map.

- A. Primary
 - 1. Purpose is to handle traffic needs into the future
 - 2. Driveways are limited in number
 - 3. Provides safe intersections with Collector Roads and a limited number of Local Roads.
 - 4. Designed for speed of 55 miles per hour.
- B. Connector
 - 1. Purpose is to provide vehicular access to Primary Roads from local road.
 - 2. Provides safe intersections with Local Roads.
- C. Local Roads
 - 1. Purpose is to provide direct access to individual properties.
 - 2. Provide safe driveway intersections.

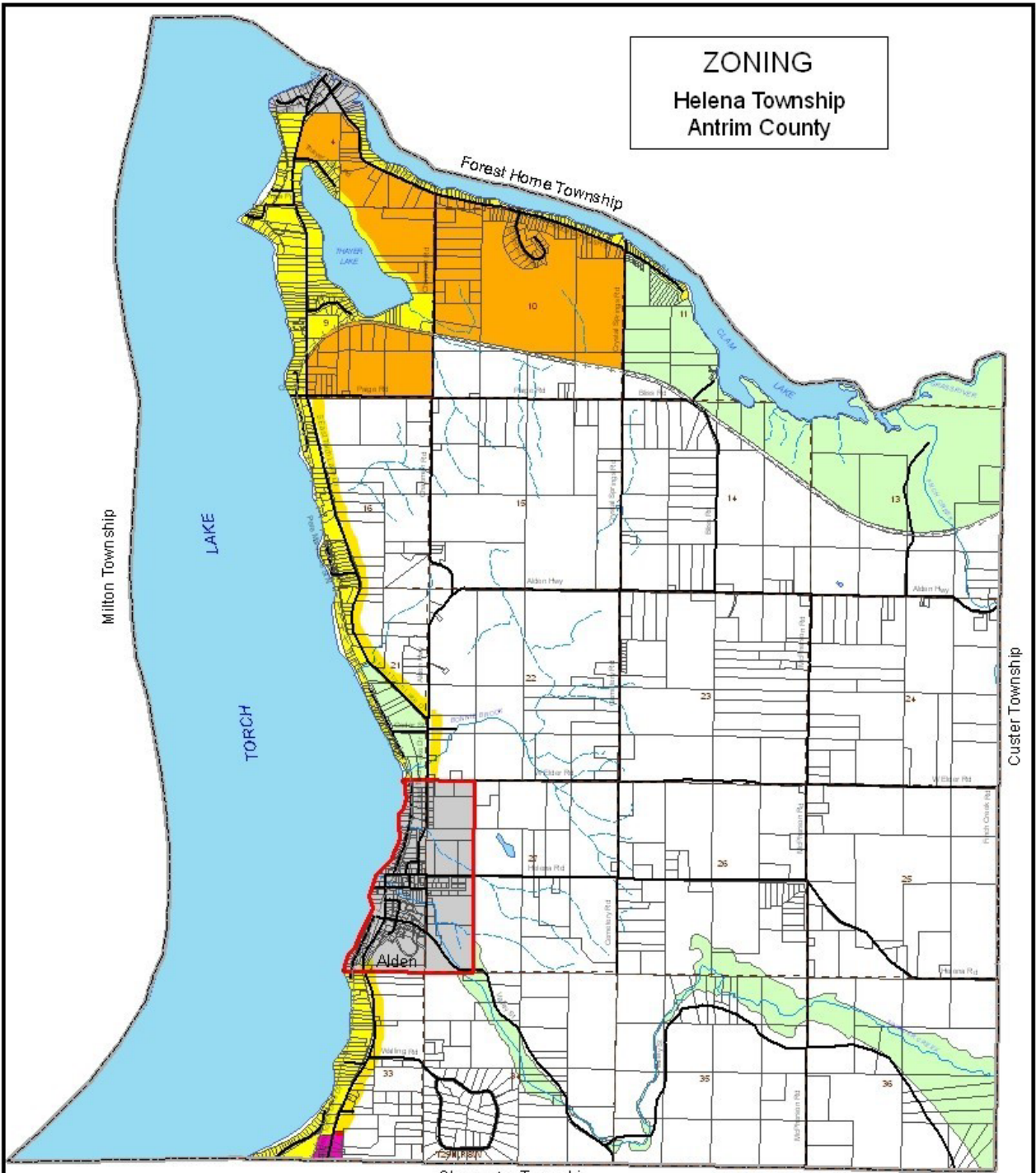
TOWNSHIP ROAD DESIGNATIONS

The following roads have been classified according to their long-term function.

- I. PRIMARY ROAD
 - A. Alden Hwy (reduce speed through Alden)
 - B. S. E. Torch Lake Drive
 - C. S. E. Torch Lake Drive (reduce speed in Alden commercial area)
- II. CONNECTOR ROADS
 - A. Helena
 - B. McPherson – Consider as possible an alternative route around Alden and improve to Alden Hwy.
 - C. Crystal Springs Road (reduce Commercial Truck traffic and speed)
 - D. East of Torch Lake Drive
 - E. Chapman Road
- III. LOCAL
 - All Other Township Roads

ZONING

Helena Township Antrim County



Legend

Section Lines	Lakes	Zoning District: Agricultural	Zoning District: Residential-Multi Family
Roads	Township Boundary	Zoning District: Residential-Single Family	Zoning District: Commercial
Inactive Railroads	Village Boundary (Unincorporated)	Zoning District: Environmental	Zoning District: Village
Intermittent Streams	Parcel Lines		
Rivers			

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data Source: Zoning data provided by Helena TWP. Parcel Lines provided by Antrim County Geographic Information Systems. All other data downloaded from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information website.

Map Date: 15 October 2007
Map Produced By:
Michigan State University
Geospatial Information Systems

Minutes of Helena Township Planning Commission

January 04, 2024

Meeting called to order by Robinson at 5.03 P.M.

Opened with Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Sue Moglovkin Joe Bassil
 Gary Lockwood Gordy Schafer
 Bonnie Robbins Jim Gurr
 Mike Robinson
Township officials present: Bob Logee, Butch Peeples
Absent: None

Motion to have Jim Gurr chair tonight’s meeting. Motion by Robbins, 2nd by Lockwood to appoint Gurr as chair for this public hearing. Motion carried (7,0)

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Lockwood, 2nd by Moglovkin as presented. Motion carried (7,0)

Statement of Conflict of Interest: None

Approval of Minutes: December 7, 2023 . As presented. Motion by Moglovkin, 2nd by Schafer

Public Comment: In attendance: 11 in meeting room, 26 thru Zoom link
Gurr clarified this is for topics other than the public hearing on the master plan. The public will be given another opportunity to speak at the end of the meeting.
Lockwood asked if the hand-written letter and other letters received earlier on short-term rentals would be included in this meeting as public comment. Robbins pointed out they had been included in record for the previous meetings when they were received. Suggestion they also be added to this record. Robbins will add the emails and letters about short-term rentals to this meeting record.

Discussion of a letter from resident concerning short-term rental next door to them in R1. Attendee identified herself as co-author of the letter. Schafer asked if they had contacted the owner or if they knew who the owner is. Resident said they have talked with someone who said they were the property manager and they have the owners’ names but they have not had a response, and issues haven’t been addressed. Rentals are shorter than the required 7 days. The renters park boat trailers in the middle of the alley. Robbins stated it is not up to the residents to enforce township code. Discussion among commissioners about letters and emails received and if they were on the same property. Robbins clarified there is more than one rental with complaints being made to the township.

Gurr read an email from Richard Rolfe asking for a link to the survey results discussed in recent meetings and where he can find master plan updates that reflect the survey findings or ordinances that have been updated to reflect the changes in the master plan. Gurr stated he thought this was in reference to previous plans and ordinances. Robbins will locate the electronic records and place them in the archives on the website and contact my Rolfe with a link to those records.

Paul Sak (Zoom) thanked the township for making the meeting accessible to those who were not able to attend in person. He asked what additional updates were being discussed as handouts and requested they be put on the website so they would be available for all to review. Robbins stated the material was suggested changes from legal counsel that had not been presented to the commission for discussion and placing them on the website would be inappropriate prior to the commission having a chance to discuss them at a meeting. They will be read as the commissioners review the document and the public will be able to comment on them before the final document will be adopted as the updated Master Plan. The goal will be to make any

adjustments to this final draft tonight so it can be sent to the county for review. The public will be able to comment as the meeting progresses to that point.

Peggy Dolane (Zoom) also thanked the township for making the meeting accessible. She saw a question asked in the chat about how we determine if a conflict of interest exists. Will the commission separate the master plan down by sections and declare any conflict of interest on those pieces if a member is a land owner who could profit from the section being discussed. Her second question was he also asked when the comment on the master plan would take place. Gurr explained we were currently in our regular meeting and after this public comment period was done we would close the meeting for the public hearing on the master plan review. She offered an example of sitting on the commission and owning property with RV use in R1. Gurr explained RV use in R1 pertained to the landowner being able to keep their personal RV on their property and was misinterpreted as allowing RV parks in R1. Dolane apologized for using that example but asked how the commission determines if a member has a conflict of interest. Gurr said he could give the simple definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest: If member stands to benefit from immediate financial gain for the member themselves or for their family it is a conflict of interest. The question is asked at every meeting and there has seldom been an incident of a member having a conflict of interest. We are all members of the township and in the long run someone could perceive a member had a conflict of interest. He assured the public there is no conflict of interest in the matters being discussed tonight.

Laura Wilcox (present) asked what ordinances Robbins was referring to on the short-term rental concerns. Robbins said there is a noise ordinance but it is very hard to enforce, we have the 7-day minimum language in the current zoning ordinance. The home next door to her is rented for weekends only after Labor Day which is in violation so there is abuse of the ordinance.

Communications: No additional communications.

Meeting closed for Public Hearing on the five-year revisions on the master plan. 5:27 P.M.

Chris Bzdok, Township legal counsel from Troposphere Legal in Traverse City, offered an overview of comments and suggestions the public had not seen. His suggestions were based on three things Robbins asked him to review that may need addressed in the zoning ordinance in the future. The public and commission are aware the master plan is the foundation for opening up the discussion of ordinance language or revision. One was on short-term rental which has already been discussed. One was on agritourism and one was on mobile home parks. The question on mobile home parks was simply making sure the master plan and zoning ordinance are in compliance with any legal developments since the last review of the master plan and zoning ordinance. The question on the short-term rental was that while this has traditionally been a neighbor to neighbor enterprise for a long time obviously the market and conditions have changed so the question for the planning commission is whether there is a need to look into further regulation on this. Nothing he commented on in the master plan is to suggest what the outcome of that decision should be but simply to say if we are going to look into that is there a basis of health, safety, and welfare in the zoning to do that. On the agritourism/agribusiness the question is if that is something we want to promote and to what extent. If so what would we want it to be and what regulation would we want to look at. He added one other suggestion that he will get to in a second.

On agritourism/agribusiness for the public who have not had access to this information prior to the meeting on page 10 he suggested we add a bullet under the Farm Land section that reads:

IV. To maintain both the economic value of agricultural land and the rural and residential character of agricultural areas, the Township should consider allowing by special use permit certain specified agribusiness and agritourism uses with appropriate regulations and conditions to limit their impact on the surrounding uses, rural character, the environment, and local roads and other infrastructure.

Again, not telling the commission what the outcome should be but just give this suggestion to add to the master plan so it can be looked at moving forward. As an editorial comment he suggested we keep an eye on what is happening in Peninsula Township. That is the bleeding edge on the

knife on some of those issues right now. It is an enormous controversy and there's a ton of resources being spent on those issues by both sides involved.

Under the mobile home parks section it is more of a compliance concern. There are state, federal, and local regulations and the question was are we in compliance. He didn't see anything in the zoning ordinance that indicates you are not but he suggests we continue to consider that if we want to make changes to this language. The language he suggested is on page 11 and reads:
The Township should review its zoning regulations and update as needed to ensure compliance with state and federal laws governing manufactured housing and mobile home parks. This statement of objectives is not intended to promote the establishment of new recreational vehicle parks.
There is reference to siting standards and parcel size. The law states you can require a special use permit for a mobile home park but you cannot require a special use permit for a mobile home. This law applies to a park that would have multiple units.

Under short-term rental on page 11 he suggested adding the following to the third sentence: (suggestions in italic)
While historically short-term rentals have occurred in Helena Township on a neighbor friendly basis, given the increase in commercial nature, scale and frequency of short-term rentals, *including but not limited to the historically-unknown but now widespread internet marketing of and transactions in such rentals*, regulation may become necessary to retain the single-family residential character of neighborhoods *and to prevent nuisance impacts.*

Schafer asked if he means less than seven days. Bzdok said that's an issue the planning commission can define in the ordinance. The conventional definition is less than 30 days. Less than 30 days you are into short-term rentals. That's a decision you can make and recommend to the board if you choose to address short-term rentals.

The last item he added was recommendation to change Alternative Energy Systems to Renewable Energy since that's how the current state statute defines it. Schafer commented that the state has taken the regulation over. Bzdok explained that that is the message that has been put out but local units can still regulate those facilities as long as the regulation is compatible with the state standards. For example, on setbacks, you can regulate less setback but you cannot require a larger setback. If you want to regulate these uses there is a method for doing that or you can decide you don't want to regulate them and leave it to the state. If we want to regulate that he would be happy to help write that language. Gurr stated we can write it but there is a deadline. We have wind energy language that can be adapted for solar. Schafer stated it was a priority and counsel could write the language. Gurr said we could suggest that to the board. Robinson commented on an interview with the Governor and her statements that the new law was giving the power of land use back to the farmers and municipalities would not be able to regulate them out of that use and the law would go into effect sometime in February. Schafer said there were townships that were trying to regulate them out. The township he grew up in has them and they are noisy and blinking lights all night and people don't like it. Bzdok said there has been a lot of noise out there surrounding this issue and while he couldn't comment directly on what was said in the interview Public Act 233-2023 regulates utility scale wind, utility scale solar, and utility scale battery storage. The deadline is only important if there has been an interest in bringing those facilities into the township. Gurr stated area farmers have been approached so we should probably work on any language soon.

Schafer suggested we have Bzdok write the language. Gurr stated we can make that recommendation to the board for their approval.

Gurr and Lockwood thanked Bzdok for doing this work. Gurr stated he had not seen any major changes to the master plan that had not been discussed previously and is comfortable moving forward with the process of adoption.

Public Comment on Master Plan:

Paul Sak, 6461 Crystal Springs Road, President of the Friends of Clam Lake, asked commission to request additional comment from legal counsel on funneling and enforcement of the ordinance. Without enforcement the zoning ordinance is not effective. He didn't expect comment tonight but urged the commission to ask counsel to weigh in on these concerns.

Bzdok clarified with Robinson on whether he had answered his question on the renewable energy section. Robinson stated he just wanted to make sure we would not place the township in court and any ordinance would be compatible with the new standards.

Carol Fricke 9566 Fowler Lane, (Zoom) asked legal counsel about his statement on the renewable energy deadline. A lot of different dates are discussed so when is the deadline. Bzdok clarified that the law was passed in January and takes effect February 1 st. The deadline for municipalities is to have language in place before an application is presented. Fricke stated there was too much going on that the public hadn't had time to review. She didn't feel the person with the short-term rental concern was dealt with fairly. There's a lot of ambiguity here and what is the big rush? Robbins asked what has been left out that the public hasn't had for review. The document has been on the web for over a month, a hard copy has been available in the library and township office. What legal counsel presented is not so outrageous that we can't discuss it tonight and make a decision. The review was due in 2021 and is long overdue. No code is being written tonight and the master plan has been discussed by the commission for several months. If a final draft is completed tonight it still has to be reviewed by the county planning commission and will come back to this commission for future discussion before it is submitted to the board for final approval. That will be another two months so the public will still have time to comment before it is adopted. The planning commission needs to move ahead on zoning language review.

Peggy Dolane, Seattle and Lone Tree Point Lane in Helena Township, asked for a summary of what changes are being made to the master plan. She likes what is written about septic systems but are there other significant changes. Gurr stated there have been no significant changes made to the plan and he does not anticipate any major changes being presented to the board. The master plan has been revised many times and the only significant change in this revision is in the agricultural district and what commercial uses may be considered. Some survey respondents are in favor of extended commercial use and others are not. The commission will seek advise from counsel on that and his comments on the legal fight in Peninsula Township is something we strive to avoid and do not want to write any ordinance that could become a costly legal battle for the taxpayers.

Discussion of placing any old master plan files on the website archives so the public can review them and see what updates have been made.

Paul Sak The public has been more involved in the meetings since the proposed changes to the greenbelt and RVs language brought it to their attention. He stressed the plural of the RV statement. He believes words do matter and a major concern is the difference between saying something should be regulated and saying something should be prohibited. Saying it should be regulated means it can be allowed. He strongly believes funneling should be prohibited to protect the impact on the lakes. Short-term rental should be regulated in R1 and commercial short-term rental should be prohibited in R1. He agrees very little has been changed and we can move ahead knowing the work has just begun.

Laura Wilcox, 7197 Crystal Springs Road, stated she has attended several meetings and thanked the commission for their work. She has reviewed what legal counsel presented tonight and feels it is in line with the master plan. It is important to get the renewable energy language in place. She suggest the commission move forward and have legal counsel write the language for that ordinance.

Ken Masck, 8658 S East Torch Lake Drive, (present) said he felt the commission and township had done a good job on the master plan. He had two questions. First, when the commission begins work on the zoning ordinance how do we decide which item to work on first? Secondly, what is the procedure when an ordinance is considered outdated, how is it removed? Example: There used to be an ordinance restricting the number of docks on a 100' lot. That was removed and now we have developments that are funneling use with multiple docks and shore stations.. The expansion at Cedar Shores is one example and the lot next to where he lives has seven shore stations on that one lot. The public should be notified when ordinances like this are dropped. Gurr explained that removing an ordinance goes through the same public hearing

process. Robbins stated the ordinance about the docks was removed when Guy Molby was the zoning administrator so it has been out of the ordinance for a long time. The reasoning was that it referred to the number of boats or watercraft and it became difficult to regulate what was considered watercraft. Discussion to research a definition and discuss whether to add language back to the ordinance. Robbins said we need to find a way to enforce the ordinances because it doesn't do any good to write ordinance if we can't enforce it.

Peggy Dolane, the preamble talks about all the things we love about Antrim County. She knows the shoreline and fishing has changed because of the rental boat business on the lake. There is impact from all of our uses and we should have a larger conversation with some of the many organizations that work to preserve the water quality and minimize the impact on the lake. Thank you and the township for making the zoom available and commented the resource used is doing an excellent job. Gurr mentioned we are on the reading list for the organization you mentioned and often have presentations from them.

Stephanie Lick, 10571 Smalley Street (present) commented about being asked why doesn't she contact the property owner. She said her or her husband would be over there several times a week or writing letters. Schafer discussed he understands the owner is an absentee owner who doesn't take care of his properties; He has had discussions with owners before and found it effective to handle the problem without the township being involved. Lick asked if that is her responsibility. Continued discussion between Schafer and Lick on contacting the owner. Gurr stated the commission should not engage in back and forth between public making public comment.

Paul Sak, a couple quick questions. One by Laura Wilcox on having legal counsel write renewable energy language. The other on his question on having legal counsel review funneling and enforcement. How will those questions be handled or has the commission already decided what they will do? Gurr explained that the commission would discuss that after the public comment period was closed. No final decisions have been made at this point.

Public comment on master plan review closed at 6:28 PM.

Robbins suggest the commission go through the suggestions offered by Bzdok and make a decision on whether or not they would be incorporated into the master plan. They will be handled individually.

Beginning with changes suggested for Page 4 of the draft. Alternative Energy will be changed to read as follows:

RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS

The Helena Township Master Plan recognizes the need to accommodate renewable energy systems, including commercial solar and wind systems, while protecting the public health, safety and welfare of the community.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin. No further discussion. Motion passed (7,0)

Page 7 under Future Zoning will read as follows:

Future Zoning

Consider creating Village Zoning Districts with location-appropriate combinations of some of the following uses allowed in a number of separate zones so that specific land use objectives can be achieved thru the rezoning process.

- I. mixed uses with Special Use Permit review approval procedures.
- II. commercial retail center
- III. office and tower-volume pedestrian traffic uses.
- IV. residential with auxiliary apartments.
- V, allow home occupations
- VI. shoreline residential standards
- VII. residential rental
- VIII, waterfront district

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin. No further discussion. Motion passed (7,0)

Page 10 under Farmland—

The word Agriculture in Bullet I and Bullet II will be changed to Agricultural.

Bullet IV will be added and read as follows:

IV, To maintain both the economic value of agricultural land and the rural and residential character of agricultural areas., the Township should consider allowing by special use permit certain specified agribusiness and agritourism uses with appropriate regulations and conditions to limit their impact on surrounding uses, rural character, the environment, and local roads and other infrastructure.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin. No further discussion. Motion passed (7,0)

Page 11 – Under Mobile Homes in Residential Districts

Bullet B will read as follows:

Mobile home park developments have special characteristics which require full consideration of their location, including their site layout and design, their demand upon community services and the relationship to, and effect upon, surrounding uses of land. The township should review its zoning regulations and update as needed to ensure compliance with state and federal laws governing manufactured housing and mobile home parks. This statement of objectives is not intended to promote the establishment of new recreational vehicle parks.

Under Location and Siting Standards:

Change Bullet III to read as follows:

III. Appropriate screening and buffering from adjacent uses.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin. No further discussion. Motion passed (7,0)

Add Bullet IV to read as follows:

IV. Minimum overall parcel size to accomplish all of the objectives set forth in this Master Plan and in updated zoning regulations.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin. No further discussion. Motion passed (7,0)

Add Bullet VII to last section on standards. It will read as follows:

VII. Appropriate special use permit standards and conditions specific to these land uses.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Schafer.

Further discussion: Schafer asked for clarification on whether the language was to make new mobile home parks. Robbins explained the language has always been there but she asked to have it reviewed because she wasn't sure it had been looked at with the 2010 review, which was the last legal review on the zoning ordinance. Several changes were made to the ordinance due to court rulings and she asked that the master plan language be reviewed for compliance.

Motion passed (7,0)

Under Short-term Rental in R-1 Zone

Change sentence three. Paragraph will read as follows:

The intent of the R-1 zone is to provide an area for single-family homes and a quiet residential neighborhood setting. Seasonal rental of homes can change the single-family residential character of a neighborhood. While historically short-term rentals have occurred in Helena Township on a neighbor friendly basis, given the increase in the commercial nature, scale and frequency of short-term rentals, including but not limited to the historically-unknown but now widespread internet marketing of and transactions in such rentals, regulation may become necessary to retain the single-family residential character of neighborhoods and to prevent nuisance impacts.

Motion to adopt by Lockwood, supported by Moglovkin.

Further discussion: Robbins asked about the question concerning the term may as opposed to is in the short-term rental language. Public input that they have a rental and have had no problems. Schafer talked to businesses and they don't want regulations as they make money from the short-term rentals. He asked Bob Logee, zoning administrator, how many complaints he had last year. Logee

