

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This element of the Master Plan presents long-term goals for the economic health of Kasson Township. The value of the natural resources and native terrain to the well-being of the community has already been amply stated, but must be reiterated here in relation to the economy: all land uses and activities should be measured by the effects they might have upon the beauty and integrity of the community environment, especially those resources treasured by the Township's residents -- the forests and farmsteads and the abundant wildlife associated with them.

With an eye to preservation of the quality of the existing environment and community character, the paramount land use issues therefore are:

- 1) Where should commercial or industrial development be allowed and encouraged?
- 2) What uses might be prohibited or restricted?
- 3) How should existing businesses be aided to continue and to expand, if desired?

The Township's many assets include:

- A fair quantity of productive farmland;
- An educated citizenry;
- A wide diversity of tradesmen and women;
- An ample supply of high quality gravel deposits;
- The regional landfill;
- A significant flow of transfer payments into the community from both public and private sources;
- A large influx of summer residents and tourists at least passing through the area.

The assessment of the economy of Kasson Township is bound up in an examination of the general Leelanau-Grand Traverse region, a region that is an attractive location for many people because it combines abundant natural attractions with a perceived desirable northern Michigan lifestyle.

Most established residents clearly understand that the entire region is growing at an accelerating pace because of the rush of outsiders to share the area attractions. This increasing population trend is not subject to debate: during the decade of the 1980's, Leelanau County grew by 18.0%, 24% in the nineties.

Although many retirees are moving to the area, added population means added commercial activity, and therefore, jobs, support systems, and infrastructure are all required in increased quantities to support population growth. These will be provided by all age groups. And this inexorable march of change has and will continue to affect Kasson Township.

Clearly, though most of the change is originating from sources not controlled by Kasson residents, not all such sources of change are new to the area. The Leelanau General Plan establishes Kasson Township as the solid waste collection point for the entire region for at least the next 50 years.

Areas such as Kasson Township are perhaps slower to see the direct changes to the area since they do not share the waterfront resources or the winter tourist recreational outlets which serve as population magnets for neighboring communities. In terms of recreation, Kasson Township is an area to pass through to get to somewhere else.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: With only Maple City as an indigenous commercial center, it is quite easy to assume that there is only limited potential in the Kasson Township area. The numbers speak differently.

Understanding the local market potential is basic to any discussion of local economic activity. Even if there is no local interest in developing the local market potential, the numbers are not secret. At some point, some motivated outside force may well act on untapped market potential. Therefore, we should look at how an outsider might examine the market potential of Kasson Township.

Kasson Township is a small community when measured by population. As such, not many official statistics are kept on a regular basis for the economic activity of the area. Much more information is available at the County level. By combining County level information from several sources with the Township information that is available, we begin to draw a picture of the market area for Kasson Township.

Except for Maple City and Cedar, the population centers tend to be on the water and circle the peninsula. Each of these communities appear to be self-sufficient with respect to commodity goods. That is, it is unlikely that any significant number of residents of one of these communities would routinely drive to another community to buy a quart of milk or any other product easily available closer to home. Because of geography and the resulting system of roads, there is no reason for persons in the outer ring communities to consider driving to Maple City to purchase a commodity product.

Our conclusion is that for non-specialty products, the Kasson Township market area is functionally joint with Solon Township and covers the entire center of the Leelanau peninsula, being bounded on the south by Traverse Highway (M-72), on the west by Glen Lake, on the east by Lake Leelanau, and on the north by the market area for the community of Lake Leelanau.

Because it is centrally located, the Kasson Township market area will receive some potential benefit from all the other areas in the County. We believe it is reasonable to assume that the Kasson Township market area can be mathematically defined as 100% of the market potential for the Maple City and Cedar areas, 15% of the Lake Leelanau market potential, 5% of the market potential from the other six segregated county population clusters, and 10% of the other market potential.

Population growth is the engine which will drive the changes in Leelanau County and by association in Kasson Township. To date, Kasson has been perhaps an under appreciated asset to the entire region since it is the site of both the primary landfill site in the entire multi-county region and is blessed with substantial deposits of accessible gravel, a key construction material for roads and structures. Growth places a premium on the assets of Kasson Township. The focus of the Township leadership must shift from maintaining the status quo (politically desirable, in most areas, but impossible given the growth explosion in the region) to how to monitor, orchestrate, and benefit from those identified and valued assets already in place and the changes that are forthcoming.

LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

- A. To afford entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for Township residents to increase the commonwealth.
- B. To encourage appropriate commercial and industrial activities that will increase the tax base of the community.
- C. To make the Township and the region more self-sustaining.
- D. To protect the vital and irreplaceable natural assets of the Township without which all else is nought.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

1. The Township Board and Planning Commission shall help to provide the conditions that will aid and encourage existing businesses within the Township.
2. Ordinances and regulations shall be promulgated to encourage desired enterprises, but also to protect the natural resources, rural character, and quiet enjoyment of the community and to ensure that all commercial and industrial operations bear their proportionate share of community burdens.
3. Encourage the organization of a local economic development group that will:
 - (a) Establish a network of economic information about the area and possible sites for new businesses and consider ways to jointly promote local affairs.
 - (b) Identify lacking services and businesses that could take advantage of the market base of the area and make certain the Township can and will accommodate them -- identify vacant property, ensure proper zoning, streamline approval procedures.
 - (c) Compile and publish a directory of community businesses, trades and craftsmen.
 - (d) Promote agriculture and all products that are grown locally and investigate ways to increase the value of these products for export.
 - (e) Consider developing an annual event, perhaps around a particular attribute of the Township, or a county fair at the County Park.
4. Continue to encourage home businesses that are not nuisances within their districts or neighborhoods.
5. Prepare a Capital Improvements Program for the Township and annually update it.

COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL LAND USE

Commercial and industrial land uses anticipated and desired by Township residents range from office to light industrial. As discussed throughout this Plan, Kasson Township is home to intensive mining and ancillary activities and to the regional landfill. Currently, small-scale business activity is scattered throughout the Township with a small congregation of cultural, business, and public facilities centered in the village of Maple City.

The Planning Commission intends the Village to remain a center of commercial activity and to grow with mixed commercial and residential uses while retaining its village character. From our investigation of area economic data, it appears there is ample opportunity to accomplish this. Two other modes of limited scale commercial activity are designated, one at the west Township border on West Empire Highway (M- 72) and the other at South Maple City Road (County Road 667) and Traverse Highway (M- 72). Tourist-related and highway service types of uses, along with other compatible enterprises, are indicated for these areas.

The largest commercial area designated in this Plan is the Gravel District. It has been so designated, as previously noted, as an indication to developers, entrepreneurs and possible home builders of the area, that the Township intends this area primarily for gravel mining and other allowed uses. This Plan sets out (with expansion and clarifications to be accomplished in the zoning ordinance) potential future allowed uses to be planned for and accomplished upon reclamation of exhausted gravel sites. Some future uses proposed for this district are:

A county industrial park
An entertainment complex
Planned residential developments

In order for any of these uses to be installed in the future, the site plan and reclamation plan should include retention and rejuvenation of the native terrain and reintroduction of agricultural operations in order to fulfill the primary goal of this Plan -- to maintain the rural character and the balance of natural attributes of the Township. Large buffer areas along the roadways and between intensive uses and residential complexes must be maintained during gravel extraction operations and established after gravel operations before intensive uses would be allowed. Therefore, required plans, before issuance of permits for operation, should require identification of post-reclamation uses and include the maintenance of buffers (or a scheme for creating them in a timely way) for the intended future uses.

Finally, the Township extends an invitation to Glen's Sanitary Landfill, Inc. & Waste Management, Inc., as one of the most prominent commercial enterprises in the area, to work with it to promote the betterment of the Township and the region. Both realize the profound impact a regional landfill can have upon the host community and that they should combine their resources to mitigate any potential negative effects of the facility and to create a healthier and more beautiful community.

LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

- A. To provide for diverse commercial and light industrial opportunities within the Township.
- B. To allow and encourage mixed commercial uses and higher-density housing at Maple City and to promote its growth as a cultural and commercial area for central Leelanau County.
- C. To provide other areas outside the Village for commercial enterprise at specific nodes for future development, as well as to ensure continued home occupation activities.
- D. To promote the planned extraction of gravel within the designated gravel district, along with planned future uses.
- E. To promote the construction of adequate roads and other infrastructure to support commercial activities.

POLICIES & ACTIONS

1. Appropriate light industry and commercial entities shall be encouraged to locate in designated areas in the Township. Any requests to install commercial or industrial activities outside designated areas shall be vigorously discouraged.
2. The possibility of a county industrial park to be sited in the reclaimed gravel district (or elsewhere) shall be investigated.
3. Methods should be instituted for cooperative construction of adequate infrastructure for commercial and industrial activities.
4. Site plan review shall be required of all non-residential uses to ensure adequate buffers for commercial uses, the protection of the native terrain, as well as proper site facilities.
5. Special standards might be promulgated for the Village to maintain its small town character.
6. Devise a plan to take advantage of the summer population and tourists of all seasons, who either stay in the area or pass through to other destinations.
7. Promote cottage industry, home businesses in rural residential areas.
8. Participate in county and regional planning to make certain Kasson Township's interests are being promoted and achieved.
9. Cooperate with entrepreneurs wishing to locate desirable businesses in the Township by making rules and regulations for site development clear and straightforward, and by being willing to work with them to bring projects to fruition.
10. Encourage enterprises that can add value to local resources or products.