

## PREFACE

### INTRODUCTION

The **Leelanau General Plan** was developed with the support and guidance of citizens and representatives of all local governments in Leelanau County to offer an overview with inner consistency on the issues of future peninsular land use. It is founded on the principle that all land use and infrastructure decisions that do not involve issues of greater than local concern should be made at the local level. These decisions should be carefully coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions and appropriate county agencies. The plan looks to a continuing partnership between the county and local units of government in the achievement of the shared vision described in this plan. The partnership can be built on mutual respect in areas of overlapping responsibilities and mutual support in areas where responsibilities are separate but compatible in pursuit of common goals and benefits. It is envisioned that future local comprehensive plans will be compatible with the **Leelanau General Plan**, but more specific with regard to land use and local implementing policies.

The Peninsula Chamber of Commerce provided the initial impetus for the public participation process which led to development of this plan. The public concern for improved growth management was first published in an economic development task force report sponsored jointly by the Chamber of Commerce and the County Board of Commissioners. The county board had expressed concern over fragmented planning on the peninsula and the apparent lack of value received on 1.5 million dollars spent in the prior decade on planning activities. In light of a significant number of severe development controversies, the county board desired to make county planning and planning county-wide more effective, or spend less money (perhaps none) if there were no meaningful role for the county in planning ac-

tivities.

In response, the County Planning Department, with the assistance of the County Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners, created a 60+ member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC, in a series of meetings beginning in December 1989 and ending in July 1990, made recommendations for a new plan with a broader focus and greater support than the type of plan traditionally prepared independently by a County Planning Commission.

Each local governmental unit in the county entered into a mutual agreement (in the form of a memorandum of understanding) to participate with the county in the development of a general plan which would look in a coordinated manner at the issues and alternatives for guiding growth on the peninsula. The agreement is reproduced in Appendix A.

This planning process represented an unprecedented commitment in the state of Michigan on the part of both county and local units of government. Each local government agreed to:

- participate, fully and freely, in the process by appointing one elected official, one planning commissioner, and one citizen-at-large to participate;
- communicate all suggestions via the participation process;
- participate fully in the various forums, seminars, workshops, and other meetings scheduled as a part of the process;
- accept, review, discuss, and respond to all reports, working papers, documents, etc. produced relative to the plan;

- provide without cost needed data, reports, and other information.

In turn, the county agreed to:

- coordinate and pay the costs of preparation of the county-wide growth management plan;
- conduct basic planning research and mapping.

It is hoped the **Leelanau General Plan** is not merely a "county plan" even though it has been adopted by the County Planning Commission. Instead, it is intended to be a plan that affects the lives of all peninsula residents and visitors on a daily basis. It is not intended to be as detailed as local comprehensive plans usually are, but rather to address the broader issues, and especially the multi-jurisdiction issues from a peninsula-wide perspective.

The ultimate success of the **Leelanau General Plan** largely depends on the commitment that is made to implementation. Commitment needs to come from every local government, the county, the various state and federal authorities as well as a broad spectrum of county citizens. It would be easy to ignore addressing the issue of implementation in the **General Plan**, but that would only delay discussion on this most important issue until much later, and forego several opportunities for meaningful public input. As a result, Part Three of this plan proposes an implementation strategy.

## PROCESS USED TO DEVELOP THE PLAN

Broad citizen involvement was encouraged by the Citizens Advisory Committee whose opinion is reflected in the following quote from an early working paper:

*"Involving people in the planning process means acknowledging that everyone has something of value to contribute. This system seeks to avoid setting up citizens, developers, environmentalists, or local governments as*

*"the enemy". Recognition of this fundamental can change the dynamics of growth management from "us against them" to "we're all in this together".*

Seventeen working papers (listed on *Page ix*) document key input and findings on the route to preparation and updates of this plan. Working Papers #6 and #12 are especially significant in documenting the shared common vision.

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### The process followed to create this plan attempted to create a shared common vision of the future.

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## RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL PLANNING AND OTHER COUNTY OPERATIONS

This **General Plan** is intended to guide the actions of the County Planning Commission and many of the priorities of the County Planning Department. It should also play a major role in guiding public facility and infrastructure decisions by the County Board of Commissioners and other county departments and commissions (such as the Road Commission) after capital improvement programs compatible with the Plan are prepared. Part Three focuses on these issues and the institutional changes that need to occur for this goal to be accomplished.

It is believed that common pursuit of the policy guidelines in this plan has led, and will continue to lead to, improved efforts to integrate and coordinate planning throughout the peninsula. *It is hoped a mutually supportive working relationship between the county and local units of government on the peninsula can build from the positive experience achieved by the many local government officials and citizens who significantly participated in the development of this plan.*

## CREDIT ON ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN AND INITIAL CREATIVE FOCUS

The authors of this plan wish to acknowledge that the structural organization of the **Leelanau General Plan** owes some of its existence to the award winning 1990 **Howard County** (Maryland) **General Plan**. That plan received a prestigious American Planning Association Award in 1991. The simple straightforward organization of that plan, the names of some of its chapters and the contents of its decision maps strongly influenced the structure and maps in this plan.

For its initial creative stimulus, the **General Plan** also recognizes the Intergovernmental Growth Management Consortium. This consortium of Michigan communities seeks new ways to use existing laws, as well as supports the passage of new laws to enable local governments to better manage growth. Leelanau County is a member of the Consortium.

## GENERAL PLAN UPDATES

The **General Plan** is founded on mutually supportive relationships in pursuit of mutual goals. To ensure that these relationships and goals remain mutual, it is important to periodically reexamine the plan and update it. Chapter 16 advocates the preparation of annual reports to document actions taken to implement the plan as well as the preparation of annual work programs and budgets. The **Leelanau General Plan** is thoroughly reviewed and updated at least every five years to ensure it continues to reflect a common vision for the future of the Leelanau Peninsula.

In the summer of 1999, the Leelanau County Planning Commission appointed a steering committee to prepare a draft update to the **Leelanau General Plan**. The steering committee was divided into three sub-committees to address the issues of land use, economic development, and public facilities. These issues drove the review process, but each chapter was reviewed in detail and the most important issues were addressed. New information on the survey results, facilities strategies, and seasonal population was also compiled, and Working Papers 13, 14, and 15, respectively,

were created with the data. In August of 2000, the Planning Commission approved the plan update with the understanding that four major issues—farmland preservation, open space preservation, development rights, and greenways/trails—would be addressed following a review of the 2000 census data.

After receiving and reviewing 2000 Census data, the Planning Commission embarked on another update, which included a county-wide survey on a number of issues affecting the Peninsula, and updates to Working Papers #5 (Current Trend Future) and #11 (Demographics). The update primarily focused on Part 2 of the Plan, which discusses county issues in depth, and proposes policy initiatives to address those issues. Many changes consisted of updated information on trends, conditions, and initiatives, as well as added “accountability” to action statements. The “major issues” identified in the 1998-2000 update were addressed in this context. Two working papers were added to provide additional background information: Working Paper #16, which tabulates results from the county-wide survey, and Working Paper #17, which will include all comments on the proposed update. The Planning Commission approved a draft update for distribution in March 2005. After reviewing comments from local governments and other County agencies, the update was approved by the Planning Commission in October 2005.

## PERSPECTIVE

The **Leelanau General Plan** assumes future growth will occur at about the same rate in the next 20 years as in the recent past. At the present time, the most significant economic development activity in the county is neither agriculture nor tourism (the mainstays of the economy for decades); rather, it is the construction of new single family homes. Over 4200 new dwellings were constructed in the county between 1980 and 2000. Much of this development activity has been on large lots scattered along existing roads throughout the county. If the low density residential sprawl pattern of most of the growth on the peninsula in the last

three decades continues, however, it will destroy the present character and traditional economic vitality of the peninsula. Each new dwelling on prime orchard or forest land not only permanently converts that land out of renewable resource use, but also creates a new public service burden and contributes to rising taxes on the farmer -making it more difficult for the farmer to stay in business.

Citizens and local government officials basically have two choices: maintain the status quo and accept a diminished quality of life or change destructive development patterns. This **General Plan** advocates the latter.

## PRINCIPAL STRATEGIES

The **Leelanau General Plan** proposes a compact land development pattern that protects renewable resource lands (such as orchard land and forests) as well as sensitive natural resources (like wetlands and dunes). It proposes policies to encourage location of future land development in and near existing villages, as well as near Traverse City. It proposes infrastructure management policies to achieve and reinforce this land use pattern. It encourages the development and implementation of a transfer of development rights program (TDR) to accomplish open space protection, while simultaneously permitting large landowners an opportunity to capture the development value of their land. Open space zoning and rural clustering techniques are also proposed to encourage new development in rural areas to be sited so as to minimize visual impacts on the landscape and to minimize public service costs.

The plan proposes measures to protect the small-town, rural character of peninsula villages and the scenic qualities of the major road corridors. Using naturally occurring vegetation for landscaping, minimizing signs, burying utilities, placing parking at the side or behind commercial buildings are all measures proposed to retain the existing character of the peninsula.

More specifically, the plan proposes an environmental protection strategy that also:

- identifies and avoids development near sensitive environments
- protects water quality of surface water and ground water
- minimizes land fragmentation of large parcels
- links open spaces
- restricts keyhole development
- protects renewable resources.

The plan proposes widespread acceptance by citizens of a stewardship ethic that views land not as an asset to be exploited, but rather as a resource held in trust for future generations for use by the present generation.

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The **Leelanau General Plan** is neither a slow growth nor an anti-growth plan. It calls for *balanced growth* that is carefully guided to protect and enhance the quality of life on the peninsula. It accepts the principle that environmental protection and economic development are not incompatible objectives. It recognizes that a healthy economy depends on a healthy environment. To these ends the following general strategy is proposed:

- curtail sprawl and encourage compact development
- protect and enhance the existing economic base

- create new year-round jobs
- guide new development where public services are adequate or efficiently added
- phase future growth
- seek to achieve a better balance between the location of jobs/housing/ transportation
- protect agricultural operations
- protect sand and gravel resources
- address equity concerns of large landowners in the implementation of development regulations
- improve educational opportunities
- improve health and human services.

Additional tools to be used to better manage growth include:

- increased promotion of carefully considered PA 116 enrollments
- the use of a peninsula-wide transfer of development rights program to address landowner equity interests while still protecting renewable resources
- concurrency requirements so new development occurs after necessary public facilities are in place (not before)
- village and rural service districts to define what services will be available where and when
- capital improvement programs to better guide development of new public facilities.
- development of a county-wide map to identify the location of all new future public facilities
- development of impact assessment procedures and checklists
- development of model local ordinances

- further enhancements to the County Planning and Community Development office's data center function and Geographic Information System.

The plan recognizes special needs for affordable housing and jobs among a growing segment of the year-round residents. It also recognizes the growing economic disparity between persons of different age and income classifications.

The **General Plan** recognizes important roles for the county in the provision of:

- data
- maps
- coordination and communication
- technical assistance
- model plans and ordinances
- capital improvement programming
- conflict resolution
- training
- limited financial support and encouragement of local planning
- assistance in passage of new legislation to improve the range of available tools to manage growth.

A list of the principal issues in which guidance from this plan is likely to be sought are presented below.

- as the basis for more detailed township and village plans and development ordinances.
- as a framework for private investment in the county.
- as an aid to village, township, and county public facility and infrastructure decisions.
- as a guide to the County Planning Commission in fulfilling its responsibility to review proposed public facility expenditures, and township plans and zoning amendments.
- as a guide in improving protection of air and water quality.

- as a guide to improved long term resource management decisions, especially with regard to renewable resources, critical plant and animal habitats, and sensitive environments.
- as the basis for joint village / township / county grant utilization activities.
- as an organization plan for county program expenditures
- as a means of facilitating intergovernmental cooperation (e.g., with not only the county and local units of government, but also with area schools, the National Park Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, MDOT, Benzie and Grand Traverse Counties, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, etc.).
- to define issues of greater than local concern and establish appropriate mechanisms to deal with those issues.

### **CITIZEN BENEFITS OF THE PLAN**

If implemented as presented, this plan will benefit the average citizen in the following ways:

- taxes will be lower than they would be if the plan were not implemented because future infrastructure and public services supported by property taxes will be incrementally provided in compact areas as needed, rather than spread widely across much of the peninsula.
- owners of agricultural and forest land will have improved opportunities for success due to reduced pressures from non-farm residences and will have new opportunities to capture the development value of their land without dividing and selling it for residential development.
- children of current residents will have opportunities to continue to live and work within the county in affordable homes and at jobs that

provide an income sufficient to support a family.

- there will be many different types of housing opportunities to meet the needs of young and older families, "empty nesters," retirees, and persons with special needs.
- there will continue to be large expanses of orchards, woods and other open spaces across the peninsula for many years to come.
- the unique beauty of the peninsula will continue to be largely maintained.
- sensitive natural features like wetlands, floodplains, dunes, and unique plant and animal habitat will receive greater protection over time, increasingly through acquisition of key properties by land conservancies.
- new jobs will be encouraged in areas where public services are available and adequate to meet the needs.
- local and county governmental agencies will more closely coordinate planning and the provision of other public services to eliminate unnecessary overlap, gaps and inefficiency.
- public services will be adequate to meet the needs of a diverse population.
- developers will find, over time, greater uniformity in local land use regulations across the county.
- development of coordinated planning objectives and ordinances between and among all the local jurisdictions will greatly benefit all because conflicts and variations will be reduced. Such a concept should in no way affect the autonomy of local governments with respect to implementing their ordinances. Compatibility throughout the county, however, will enhance the character, future growth, development, and economic well being of constituencies of the county. Such consistency will add legal strength by minimizing challenges and interpretations.

For a more detailed description of life on the peninsula when this plan is implemented (See Chapter 3 of Working Paper 12).

## ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The **Leelanau General Plan** is organized into three major parts. Part One examines issues from a peninsular view. It presents a comprehensive description of the character of the Leelanau Peninsula and the key policy guidelines proposed to protect and enhance the quality of life on the peninsula. Part Two takes a traditional "functional" view of issues and proposed policy initiatives to address them. Specific policies and action statements generated from extensive citizen input in seven functional areas (such as land use, transportation, natural resources, etc.) are presented to supplement and support the general growth management strategy presented in Part One. Part Three presents the structure for and major efforts to be initiated to implement the **Leelanau General Plan**. It includes a proposed institutional structure for planning decisions and identifies the actions that should be taken to implement the **General Plan**.

## PRINCIPAL GOAL

The major purpose of the **Leelanau General Plan** is to record a consensus based growth strategy developed over several years. It is intended for joint use by Leelanau County and local governments within the county in making coordinated and mutually supportive future land use, infrastructure and public service decisions. It includes policy guidelines and a brief description of key planning tools to achieve the following goal:

*It is the principal goal of the **Leelanau General Plan** to establish a strategy for guiding growth that protects, and where possible, enhances the unique character of and quality of life on the peninsula. To that end, the **General Plan** focuses on balancing environmental protection, resource management and economic development so as to provide a foundation for a sustainable economy that permits long term prosperity for all present and future Leelanau County residents. The balance so achieved should not sacrifice environmental quality when reasonable and prudent development alternatives exist. This plan recognizes that a healthy economy depends on a healthy environment. Achievement of this goal means protecting the integrity of the land base for use by present generations without unnecessarily compromising the options of future generations.*



## FIVE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR GUIDING GROWTH ON THE LEELANAU PENINSULA

### **Policy Guideline: Intergovernmental Cooperation**

*A partnership founded on mutual respect and mutual support in achievement of the common goals of this **General Plan** should guide the development and implementation of new relationships between the county and local units of government in the county and between the county and adjoining counties in the region.*

### **Policy Guideline: Preservation of Peninsula Character**

*The existing natural and people-made features on the peninsula that make up its rural character are interdependent with the activities that comprise its economic base. It is important therefore, that future land use change on the peninsula enhance, not undermine the character of the area around it, and in so doing contribute to protection of the unique rural character of the entire Leelanau Peninsula.*

### **Policy Guideline: Working with Nature**

*Extensive and diverse sensitive natural features found throughout provide the foundation for the present and the future quality of life on the peninsula. They should be protected where pristine, restored where damaged, and have access and use managed for long term sustainability.*

### **Policy Guideline: Balanced Growth**

*New residential, commercial, and industrial development on the peninsula is encouraged provided it is: 1) in locations with public services adequate to meet its needs, 2) environmentally friendly, 3) consistent with the character of development in the area, 4) consistent with local plans and regulations, and 5) compatible with the guidelines of this*

*General Plan. In the implementation of this policy guideline, both the county and local governments would seek to ensure over time, that all the health, safety, and general welfare needs of its citizens that can be reasonably met are accommodated with a variety of land uses in the pattern proposed and in a manner which does not unnecessarily compromise options for future generations.*

### **Policy Guideline: Managed Growth**

*Local comprehensive plans and local development regulations (including for example, zoning and subdivision regulations) should be updated and thereafter maintained, to include goals, objectives, policies and strategies for managing future growth compatible with the **Leelanau General Plan**. Local plans should include more specific land use and density proposals at the parcel-specific level. Local regulations should focus on design and other issues of local significance. Public facilities should all be constructed according to local capital improvement programs that are coordinated at all governmental levels on the peninsula.*

## LEELANAU GENERAL PLAN WORKING PAPERS

#1	Results of the Leelanau County Growth Management Forums	March, 1990
#2	A Survey of Citizens Concerning Issues Related to Long-Range Planning in Leelanau County	June, 1990
#3	A Survey of Local Officials Concerning Issues Related to Long-Range Planning in Leelanau County	June, 1990
#4	Final Recommendations of the Citizens Advisory Committee	April, 1991
#5	Leelanau Peninsula Current Trend Future: Implications of "Business as Usual"	Sept. 1991 Updated 2004
#6	Goals and Objectives for Managing Growth on the Leelanau Peninsula	Sept. 1991
#7	Economic Development	May, 1992
#8	Transportation, Public Facilities and Physical Services	May, 1992
#9	Natural Resources and the Environment	August, 1992
#10	Land Use	Nov. 1992
#11	Demographics	Nov. 1992 Updated 2003
#12	Alternative Futures	March, 1993
#13	Public Comments on the Draft Leelanau General Plan	March, 1994
#14	Leelanau County Facilities Strategy / Long Range Plan	March, 1994
#15	Seasonal Population	Jan. 2000
#16	2003 Leelanau County Citizen Survey	June 2003
#17	Comments on the Draft Update to the Leelanau General Plan	Sept. 2005

A summary of each working paper is included in Appendix C.