

CHAPTER 10: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SUMMARY

Guiding Principles are statements that focus and direct decision making for future land use, transportation, and public improvements. These are the statements that represent the essence of what a community values most and wishes either to encourage or, not to have changed as growth occurs.

Each Guiding Principle has been tailored to aid Antrim County in guiding growth. They should be reviewed when considering projects, regulations, or improvements that can impact the county's future land uses. These policies should be reviewed in conjunction with Township Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances for implementation. 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 that are needed to be implemented to achieve each principle. There is no priority assigned to the guiding principles, the corresponding numbers are for reference only.

ANTRIM COUNTY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

#1 Keep Antrim County Rural

There are many different ways to define “rural character.” In some communities it means low density housing; in others it means dirt roads. In Antrim County, it has many components. It is defined as the ability to:

See stars at night; live near wildlife; view open space from the road; recreate in forested areas; and purchase food from nearby farms.

The people of Antrim County wish to preserve this 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.
- Assist commerce in having 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 resources 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 shoreline along Grand Traverse Bay (Lake Michigan). These water areas provide scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, and recreation. They should be protected, or they will not be able to continue these functions. To help implement protection measures, the following polices are recommended:

- Encourage intensive land uses that could impact water quality be placed at a distance from streams, rivers, wetlands, and creeks.
- Encourage alternative wastewater disposal systems in areas with sensitive characteristics.

- 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.
- Be an active partner with soil erosion control.

#3 Promote Healthy Living.

Residents responding in the Opinion Survey and Visioning Sessions 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 polices are recommended to address individual health needs:

- Encourage the creation of a healthy living site plan guidebook that promotes development designs for a healthier living. Encourage walkable neighborhood designs when possible.
- Encourage cluster-housing techniques to establish neighborhoods that are organized around open space areas.
- Encourage road designs that enhance safety for children 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.
- Plan for a medical compound in the county and designate a location for this service.
- Support transit service.
- Encourage recreational planning.

#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. It is the intent of the County to 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 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. Likewise, businesses will need employees of varying income levels and these employees will need housing that is affordable in reasonably close 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.

#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 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 development 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 the proper use of traffic control devices.

9. Balance Property Rights with the Public Interest

The United States Constitution specifically states that a person can not 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 determine if alternative approaches can be used to minimize affects on property rights.
- To the extent possible, ascertain and publicly reveal the facts of any land use issue before making a decision.
- 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.
- The county should encourage grass roots activism to actively support and engage directly in the process. Bottom up collaboration between the counties, villages, townships, environmental advocacy groups, and ultimately the state and federal government could be facilitated and directly supported by the county.