

CHAPTER 11: FUTURE LAND USE

SUMMARY

Planning is defined as, “a method of doing something that is usually in some detail before it is begun and that may be written down in some form.....” (Encarta Dictionary). People plan every day, whether it is for vacations or dinner. The people in Antrim County live in a wonderful place. The vegetation, shoreline, small towns, water bodies, and rustic nature make this an area where people want to live.

The goal of this master plan is not to create regulations or zoning. The goal is to simply recognize what is special about Antrim County and provide recommendations that individual units of governments can choose to use to help sustain the quality of life. A thriving community involves many aspects; it goes beyond a person’s house and backyard. It involves a good school system, protection from crime and other disasters, a manageable journey to work, the availability of shops and services, the opportunity for growth, children and the elderly to continue living in the community. Livability depends on these things, as well as preserving what is unique: the natural settings, the farmlands, the country roads, the historic villages, and the views and access to the water.

To accomplish these objectives, many different groups, such as the school district, road commission, business owners, and the government agencies have to work together. The Planning Commission’s charge is to recognize what challenges exist, what opportunities exist, what can be changed and what can not be changed, and then work to accomplish what they see is achievable.

The following descriptions are to provide guidance to the Planning Commission to assist them in this charge and are displayed on the Graphic Representation of Future Land Uses. It should be noted that this graphic is very similar to the Generalized Land Use Plan in Chapter 4. The reason for this duplicity is that the existing land use patterns are what the populace would like to see in the future. It is a more of a “keep what we have” attitude; therefore the focus is 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 walkability, mass transit, and improved services such as water and sewer. It is hoped that these Villages will continue to thrive and remain social centers for people living in Antrim County.

These are ideal locations for senior housing, medical services, education centers, and employers. People can travel from their homes to these locations and have their needs met. If they desire to live in these environments, suitable housing can be provided.

It is important to help these villages to continue to thrive. This can be achieved 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; and communicating with the school boards to build new structures within these areas. 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. These areas should be thought of as second tier 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. These areas should focus on agricultural operations rather than residential development.

The primary uses of lands in the area should focus on agricultural activities including crops, horticulture, fruit growing, forestry, ranching, beekeeping, poultry and egg production, animal breeding, stabling, kenneling, milk production and similar uses, and the associated storage relating to these uses and activities permitted by the Michigan Right to Farm Act.

Agricultural related businesses such as value-added agriculture, grazing, wineries, corn mazes, bed and breakfasts, riding stables, and farm markets are attractions for tourists as well as being self-sustaining businesses. In order to encourage and maintain a balanced and diversified economy, these agricultural related enterprises should be encouraged.

These are the places where Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) could be implemented. The TDR program allows for the purchase of density in one location to be moved to another location. The PDR program

involves the purchasing of development rights. In 2003, Antrim County joined with Grand Traverse County in a Bi-County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. Currently the joint board is being created. This program allows townships to participate in purchasing development rights. Areas that are perceived for as potential purchases should have this classification.

Rural Country

People live in Antrim County to enjoy a more relaxed, rustic lifestyle. People living here take pleasure in having larger size properties and limited infrastructure services such as well and septic. Broadband connections are encouraged 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 recreation area. There are a couple of locations that primarily function as a resort for skiing, golfing, boating or a combination. The majority of the homes in these areas are for individuals who wish to live (either year round or seasonal) in these locations. 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 have a substantial increase in size, resulting in development that is more infill.

Public Recreation

These are the publicly owned lands that offer recreation, wildlife habitat, and visual beauty. These lands are owned by the state, county or township. It is projected that these areas will remain in public ownership. If there is a change, it is desired that the properties will 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

The land areas along the designated roadways in the County are among the most valuable open space visual areas in the region. The majority of these areas is undeveloped and provides spectacular views of the landscape. The views from the roadway reinforce northern Michigan's rural character. People who live here and visit here enjoy this amenity. The majority of these areas are also privately owned. It is recommended that incentives, such as increased density or reductions in development requirements be given to property owners who design their developments to maintain the visual corridor. Strip development should not be encouraged.

In addition, access management should be recommended to be implemented by the Michigan Department of Transportation or the Road Commission. Access management is a set of techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing capacity, and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design, and type of access to property.

Access management focuses on the number, location, and design of driveways as they relate to the following elements within the road right-of-way: travel lanes, medians, bypass lanes, dedicated turn lanes, and signal operations. It is more efficient to apply access management to properties along a roadway prior development, than retrofitting to developed properties (such as the properties along US 31 in Grand Traverse County). Access management can be achieved by one or more of the following:

- Minimize the number of lots fronting on US 31.
- Encourage shared access to parcels and consolidate driveways where possible.
- Encourage passing lanes over road widening.
- Encourage front or rear access driveways (frontage roads) where applicable.
- Promote internal connections and alternative accesses where applicable.

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.