

CHAPTER 7: HUMAN ELEMENT

SUMMARY

Typically, when a master plan is developed it focuses on the existing land uses, demographic trends, and economic development aspects. Social planning, that is understanding the needs and trends of human environment, is often overlooked. As described in the Demographic chapter of this master plan, Antrim County has a diverse population with different needs. This chapter focuses on the social aspects of physical planning. When applicable, it references specific reports or plans that focused on an issue. These reports or plans are more comprehensive and provide greater detail on an issue. These concerns are summarized in this chapter so that decision makers are aware of these issues when making land use policies.

This section focuses on human needs, such as affordable housing, elderly care, health care, recreation, solid waste disposal, and the historical perspective. All of these issues are related to actions of individuals and can directly impact the physical landscape. Although services for these various items are administered by different groups, their decisions can influence surrounding land uses in positive or negative ways (endorsing the construction of a senior housing complex near a park would be beneficial versus siting it in an area where there are no recreational opportunities). These different groups also have similar goals (such as not building a new landfill) and may need each others endorsement to fully implement their plans. It is important to know that these issues exist and support specific studies and implementation measures.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A simple definition for affordable housing is “housing unit where the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including taxes and utilities.” (A Planner’s Dictionary). The median income for an Antrim County household was \$38,107 according to the 2000 Census. Using the described methodology, the median household should not pay more than \$953 a month for their housing costs.

Quick Note:

15% of homeowners are paying more than what is deemed affordable for their housing costs.

Home ownership is an issue for people at all income levels.

The Census stated that the median mortgage payment was \$816 a month, which indicates that the majority of the residents in Antrim County are living in housing that is deemed affordable. The Census also reported that 15% of homeowners pay 35% or more for their housing costs.

A Housing Needs Assessment for Antrim County that was prepared by Community Research Group, LLC in December of 2003, studied the housing needs in Antrim County and had the following conclusions:

- The amount of household growth in the county (an important indicator of housing demand) is quite large, and widespread throughout the county. Much of the fastest growth is taking place in a small number of areas concentrated around Custer Township, the coastal strip of Torch Lake and Milton Townships, and the northwestern corner of the county.
- The number of houses in the “starter” category (in terms of affordability to first time, moderate-income homebuyers) is moderately large, and may meet the needs of persons who manage to save enough capital to afford a large down-payment.
- The starter stock that does exist is quite aged, and will require investments to continue its useful economic life.
- Affordable housing is difficult for many types of households to purchase, even though they have income levels that generally have been associated with homeownership. This is due partly to the “fixed” costs of maintaining a household in the area (food, transportation, health care, etc.), and partly to the costs of “starter” stock in the county relative to wages.
- The amount of rental housing is not meeting current demand (in terms of households with income less than that needed to purchase a home); this situation will likely continue to worsen as these households increase in number.
- There will be a large number of households that will earn less than what is defined as affordable by 2008. If the current distribution of household income continues, about 4,700 households will fall into that income category, which implies that affordable lodging will need to be found for 819 new lower-income households. Most of these will be located in Elk Rapids, Mancelona, and Banks Township.
- Local Section 8 rental voucher administrators say that while the program has a long waiting list (at least a year long), renters have a difficult time finding lodging that conforms to Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, and so do not benefit from the program.

ELDERLY CARE

Antrim County's population of senior citizens (people aged 65 and older) has increased significantly according to the U.S. Census. This population group has increased by 27.5%. The age group 70 years and above are the fastest growing population segment for our senior citizens.

Private groups are pursuing senior housing strategies to provide them attainable housing. The success or failure of these strategies will in part be determined by the availability of services in reasonable proximity to the senior housing complexes.

Quick Note:

The age group 70 and above is the fastest growing population segment for senior citizens.

Services such as adult day care and nursing homes will be needed as this population group increases.

It is important that a long range view of senior needs include planning for transportation services. Currently most of the shopping areas are outside Antrim County. This lack of service can create a hardship for senior citizens who may be losing their mobility. When this occurs, many of them are forced to rely on public transportation or more mobile friends or neighbors. Transportation is a primary issue when the nearest major shopping is in Traverse City, Charlevoix, Petoskey, or Gaylord. None of these communities are a short commute for most Antrim County senior citizens.

Adult Day Care

One of the inevitable consequences of living longer for senior citizens is that their capabilities may be diminished to the level where they need assistance. Many times that assistance is provided by other family members. However, these family members often have obligations with their own younger families and employment locations. These responsibilities can limit the time available for senior care. A possible solution would be to encourage the establishment of an adult day care center in Antrim County.

Meadow Brook Medical Care facility is the only nursing facility in Antrim County. Sometimes referred to as the jewel of Antrim County, it receives wide support from the residents and enjoys strong support from the Antrim County Board of Commissioners. There is little likelihood that another nursing facility will locate in Antrim County. Again, the population density of the county argues against that reasonable possibility. However, since any new entry of a nursing home would be a private venture there is a possibility, although slim. A solution would be to have a nursing home that was connected to an adult day care facility.

Antrim County Commission on Aging

The mission on the Antrim County Commission on Aging (COA) is to improve the quality of life and maintain the highest level of independence for those persons age 60 and over who reside in Antrim County.

The Commission on Aging offers numerous services to Antrim County residents including information and assistance, activities, loan closet, congregate and home

delivered meals, personal care services, respite care, homemaker program, and the homechore program.

Information and Assistance

The Commission on Aging is an excellent source of information for seniors, answering questions about specific services and how to access programs and agencies throughout the state. Office hours are held 8:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday.

Activities

The Commission on Aging offers day trips during the spring, summer, and fall. The COA also offers activities at the senior centers including bingo, billiards, computer labs, crafts, cribbage, dances, euchre, exercise classes, picnics, potlucks, and speakers.

Loan Closet

The loan closet is available to all individuals over the age of 55, at no charge, who requires items such as wheel chairs, hospital beds, canes, bedside commodes, bench baths, depends, and hooyer lifts among others.

Congregate and Home Delivered Meals

There are four nutrition sites are located throughout Antrim County. The Bellaire and Mancelona Senior Centers sites serve meals Monday through Friday at noon. In addition to lunch, the Bellaire site serves breakfast on Friday at 9:00 am and the Mancelona site serves breakfast on Wednesday at 9:00 am. The Central Lake Government Building serves lunch at noon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and the Elk Rapids Senior Center serves lunch at noon on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The COA served 21,149 congregate meals in 2006

In addition to these sites, the COA provides home delivered meals to eligible homebound seniors, who are unable to prepare nutritious meals. The program provides at least five hot meals and two frozen meals every week. The program is designed to enable individuals to live independently. The COA delivered 34,701 meals in 2006.

Personal Care Services

Certified Nursing Assistants provide in-home assistance with activities of daily living for homebound, frail individuals including ambulation, bathing, dressing, grooming, transferring, toileting, and vital signs. The COA staff worked 5,158 hours on 106 people giving personal care in 2006.

Respite Care

A needed break in the caregiver role, a certified nursing assistant will provide for mentally or physically disabled and frail elderly with assistance with daily activities, companionship, and supervision. The COA worked 5,029 hours on 41 people in 2006 giving respite care.

Homemaker Program

Homemakers provide routine household tasks to maintain a clean and healthy living environment for homebound individuals with functional limitations. The COA worked 5,731 hours on 141 people through the homemaker program in 2006.

Homechore Program

Homechore services can be provided for the following: snow removal, removing and replacement of screens and storm window, installation of weather stripping, washing walls and windows, trimming low hanging branches, arranging for routine health and safety concerns. The COA worked 1455 hours on over 150 people through the homechore program in 2006.

Nifty Thrifty

Nifty Thrifty, Located on Broad Street in Bellaire offers the residents of Antrim County, a place to obtain quality reusable household items and clothing. People with special needs following a personal catastrophic incident such as fire, flood, or job loss, may obtain items that are needed to maintain daily living at below cost. Donations of quality reusable items are accepted at the store Monday through Friday between 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. For more information, please contact them at (231) 533-8478

The COA relies on millage funding for almost half of their funding, the next largest portion of their budget is from donations and the area agency on aging is the third largest contributor. The COA also receives funding from FEMA, Medicaid, sales tax, interest, in-kind, memorials, county appropriation, Nifty Thrifty, and transportation. The COA currently has 6 full time and 21 part time staff members. In addition to the staff the COA had 261 volunteers that worked 14,127 hours in 2006.

HEALTH CARE

The present distribution of primary health care facilities in the villages of Antrim County provides locations whereby residents do not have any great distance to travel to receive health care. Northern and far eastern points of the county can respectively access primary health care through East Jordan or Gaylord. Essentially primary health care is accessible to all Antrim County residents within reasonable travel distances.

Quick Note:

As the population increases in Antrim County, there will be a need to expand health care services.

Emergency Services Facilities

True emergency services facilities are essentially non-existent in Antrim County. The initial response to someone going to a clinic and needing emergency treatment is to suggest that they go by ambulance to either Traverse City or Petoskey. This may be fine in many instances but can result in a life threatening situation being created where none needs to exist. Future planning accordingly indicates that all clinic facilities in Antrim County should have the capability of handling routine emergencies during the hours that they are normally open. Funding to support these additional services could be provided through a combination of property tax abatements, countywide millages, or other incentives.

Specialists

According to the 2005 estimated population, Antrim County has approximately 24,422 residents, and 4,512 of them are senior citizens. Doctors and dentists who are general practitioners are available in Antrim County. However, if medical specialists are needed choices usually have to be made from specialists in Gaylord, Petoskey, Charlevoix or Traverse City. This distance of services can create a hardship on senior citizens, especially ones with limited mobility. A possible solution that has been discussed would be to establish a clinic that would be staffed by specialists who would rotate through it on a once a week or once every two weeks basis.

Pharmaceuticals

The State of Michigan has implemented a preferred drug list which mandates the use of primarily generic formularies for drugs approved for use in the Medicaid program. While this is a big assist for Medicaid eligible seniors, it does not provide a solution for those senior citizens who do not qualify as Medicaid eligible for prescription coverage.

A major source of reimbursement to medical professionals in Antrim County is Medicare and Medicaid. 17% of Antrim County residents are over the age of 65. Antrim County has a large proportion of low income individuals in this age bracket who are Medicaid dependant for health care services. This population distribution is a limiting factor on the willingness of physicians to locate in Antrim County. The life style factors which draw people to Antrim County are not sufficient to always keep medical professionals who often can earn substantially higher incomes in southeastern Michigan's more populated counties.

RECREATION

An important component when planning for a community is understanding the need for recreation facilities and how they improve the mental, physical, and social involvement of individuals. The Antrim County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and staff updated the Antrim County Community Recreation Plan in 2005. This Plan was developed with an in-depth public input process that included a county-wide opinion survey, visioning sessions, and Parks and Recreation forums. The goal setting session ranked trail development; additional parks and recreation resource development; publicity of resources; and public access to water. The results of the planning process was an inventory of every recreational facility in the county and a prioritization of recreation projects for the next five years.

The recreation inventory is detailed in the 2005 Community Recreation Plan and on the Antrim County website, www.antrimcounty.org. The action program describes maintaining the existing facilities as a main priority. It also describes lake-accessibility as an important objective. Based on these considerations, the Park and Recreation Advisory Board will focus on the following projects until 2009. Afterwards, the Plan will be reviewed and revised for future projects.

Grass River Natural Area: construction of the Grass River Center building; acquisition of surrounding parcels; and construction of the rail trail.

Barnes Park: the only large waterfront camping facility in the county will need improvements, including upgrading rustic sites with electricity; providing a paved non-motorized trail; repaving the interior park road; and replacing the existing park office.

Elk Rapids Day Park: improve and encourage increased utilization by installing a new sign and landscaping; provide education materials to teachers; linking it to the downtown area of Elk Rapids Village; replacing or repairing the pavilion; and improvements to the bathhouse and bathroom facilities. It may also include paving the entry and parking areas.

Wetzel Lake Park: installation of a 1.25 mile walking trail around the lake; providing more picnic tables; upgrading the restrooms; providing electricity; adding more rustic campsites and RV sites with electricity; and stationing a camp host.

County Forest Reserve Lands: monitor trail use; deal with erosion control; improve trails and signage; and acquiring adjacent parcels.

Cedar River Natural Area: building more bridges; improving fishing habitat; bank stabilization; and improve recreation.

Sand Lake: improve access.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

Part 115, Solid Waste Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act of 1994, PA 451, as amended requires every county in Michigan to have a solid waste management plan. This plan is to assure that all non-hazardous solid waste generated in the county is collected and recovered, processed, or disposed of for a ten-year period at facilities' which comply with state laws and rules.

The Board of Commissioners adopted a Solid Waste Management Plan in August of 1999. This plan listed specific goals and objectives that focused on reducing waste sent to landfills and maximizing resource recovery efforts. These goals and objectives were developed to comply with Michigan's solid waste goal to reduce the amount of material sent to landfills to only "unusable residuals" by 2005.

Currently the Department of Environmental Quality is updating their solid waste management plan requirements. Once the requirements have been updated, Antrim County will begin the process of amending their solid waste plan. The Board of Commissioners appointed a Solid Waste Management Planning Committee who will be responsible for updating and implementing the solid waste plan. Their efforts will be supplemented by the Antrim County Solid Waste and Recycling Council.

The 1999 Solid Waste Plan stresses the importance of recycling and mentioned the limited number of recycling locations as being a major deficiency. It also discussed the lack of coordination for recycling and composting facilities in the county.

In 1998, the total tons generated for solid waste was 16,850. The 1999 Solid Waste Plan projected that the total number of tons would be 19,197 in 2003 without recycling and composting efforts. 10,543 tons would come from residential, 5,653 would come from commercial, and 3,001 would come from industrial uses. It is projected that the tonnage would be reduced by 4,900 resulting in 14,297 tons to the landfills if more aggressive recycling efforts were implemented. Of these 4,900 tons, 1,850 would go to drop-off recycling locations, 675 would go to curbside recycling, 1,875 would go to commercial recycling, and 500 would be composted yard waste. The current data will have to be reviewed during the Solid Waste Plan update.

If the recycling efforts have not resulted in less tonnage to the landfills, it may show a need for a new landfill, which would be a major land use issue. At this time, there are no active landfills in Antrim County and the plan did not show need for one.

Quick Note:

At this time, there is no need for a new landfill in Antrim County. However, if recycling and composting efforts are not increased, there could be a need in the future.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The area currently known as Antrim County was originally called Meguzee (meaning Eagle). In 1843, the name was officially changed to Antrim County, after a county in Ireland. In 1863, the Michigan legislature organized Antrim County, attaching the unincorporated counties of Kalkaska, Crawford and Otsego. During this time, the county seat was renamed from Meguzee to Elk Rapids. In 1879 the county seat was moved to a tract of land in the geographical center of the county. Originally the post office at this point was called Keno but was later renamed Bellaire. The present courthouse was built in 1905.

The original inhabitants of this area were Native Americans. Native American artifacts can be found throughout Antrim County, indicating widespread occupation of the area by hunters and gatherers. European hunters and trappers first settled Antrim County in the latter part of the 1700's. The flow of homesteaders increased after the end of the Civil War.

Lumbering and the processing of Upper Peninsula iron ore were the primary economic forces in the 1800's. These industries altered the landscape drastically, changing large swaths of forests to become open fields. Once the timber industry slowed, agricultural uses were established in the cleared areas. The agricultural industry slowed during the twentieth century as the population declined. In the second half of the twentieth century, the economy became more tourism and recreation based.

Any effort to preserve sites, structures, and/or artifacts from the historic past of Antrim County should take into account the circumstances of those earliest ancestors of Antrim County residents – native and immigrant alike. A single visit to the Antrim City town site in Banks Township will demonstrate that a long- established tradition of re-using building materials seems a part of the Antrim County ethos. Very little evidence of a once well-established industrial past exists currently in western Antrim County.

More lasting private, public, and civic buildings can be found in vital Antrim County villages. Efforts should be made to preserve them. Dedication of structures as historic buildings can be a method of preserving individual buildings. The designation of Historic Districts is another method that can be used. Various State of Michigan, Federal and Tribal programs exist which might benefit the preservation of identified and qualified sites.

It is important to note, that some of these programs can bring with them a higher threshold of compliance and expense when structural requirements are needed to be addressed. In no case, should efforts be made to include buildings and sites into programs without the agreement of affected parties.