



TCAPS –  
Grand Vision  
Student  
Assembly  
Summary

draft

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On March 11, 2008, sophomores from Traverse City Central High School and Traverse City West Senior High School participated in a Grand Vision public involvement workshop that was facilitated by fellow high school students. Students participated in four interactive stations that involved land use and transportation planning scenarios and applications of these to the Grand Traverse Region. The results of these workshop stations are summarized below.

### **Favorite Areas Map Station**

Students reviewed maps of four “favorite areas” in the Traverse City region, including the Open Space, Downtown Traverse City, the Civic Center, and Grand Traverse Commons. Using markers, the students recorded improvements to these areas in order to make them more user-friendly and enjoyable. Across the four favorite areas map stations, several common themes emerged, including the need for activities, restaurants, and stores that cater to local citizens and teenagers; the expansion of outdoor recreational facilities; the improvement of various modes of transportation; and provisions for a cleaner landscape along the beaches, parks, the Open Space, and the Boardman River. Specific improvement ideas are reported below and organized by favorite area and theme.

#### ***Open Space***

##### *Landscape*

Students overwhelmingly supported keeping the Open Space open, with a clear view of the West Grand Traverse Bay and improved cleanliness and maintenance throughout. Participants did not want buildings to encroach upon the Open Space. Students envisioned expanded beaches and fencing or short walls along the Open Space and pier to separate bike paths from the road. Landscaped park-like areas, with additional trees, grass, fountains, gardens, benches, and covered picnic tables with fire pits were also highly recommended by participants. Additionally, students indicated a need for additional and cleaner public restrooms.

##### *Recreation*

The second most pervasive theme that emerged during the Open Space map station was an overwhelming desire for more outdoor recreational facilities, including, but not limited to, tennis and basketball courts, a Frisbee field, a skate park, a putt-putt golf course, expanded running and bicycle trails that link to downtown, an outdoor ice rink in the winter, and a playground for children. Participants also suggested an expanded marina for boats, multiple swimming areas adjacent to the beaches with lifeguards, and a local jet-ski rental. Additionally, some students envisioned a water park or theme park, a Ferris wheel, and a hot air balloon station.

#### ***Most Frequently Cited Improvements to the Four “Favorite Areas”***

- Expand and diversify sports fields, courts, and recreational activities
- Expand trails
- Keep the Open Space open
- Preserve and/or rehabilitate historical buildings
- Improve public transportation
- Provide more activities for local teenagers

### *Restaurants, Shopping, and Other Activities*

Students would like to see restaurants or concessions along the beach and near the Open Space, such as ice cream and smoothie stands. Students were split evenly on reopening the zoo or removing and/or rehabilitating the zoo facilities. Those students in favor of removing the zoo suggested replacing it with expanded open space, sports fields, or parks. Students in favor of rehabilitating the facilities recommended developing it into a collection of small shops, restaurants, and amusement activities like Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco or Chicago's Navy Pier.

### *Transportation*

With regard to transportation, students suggested larger crosswalks or pedestrian bridges to enable crossing Grand View Parkway with greater ease. Additionally, students proposed a trolley along Grand View Parkway to connect the Open Space with downtown, expanded walkways, and bicycle routes. The expansion of vehicular parking using multi-level parking decks rather than single-level parking lots also ranked highly among student comments.

### *Programming and events*

Students were significantly concerned with programming and events that occur within the Open Space. They were divided over the presence of sculpture in the Open Space, with many wishing for a fully open space without sculptural obstacles. Students would like to see live entertainment and free movies in the Open Space, perhaps facilitated by the addition of an outdoor stage. Additionally, students envisioned an expanded space for the Cherry Festival and the farmer's market. Some students mentioned an expanded Visitor's Center could be useful, as could an art museum or gallery to showcase local high school artwork.

## ***Downtown Traverse City***

### *Landscape*

The most frequently cited improvements to downtown Traverse City overlapped, notably, with the comments about the Open Space and included improving, cleaning, and expanding the Open Space and beaches; cleaning the Boardman River; and cleaning the bay area.

### *Recreation*

Like the suggestions for the Open Space, students overwhelmingly cited a need for facilitating recreational activities downtown, including but not limited to, sports fields or complexes; playgrounds; and laser tag, paint ball, or bowling facilities. Additionally, students advocated additional landscaping of parks and the Open Space with more grass and picnic tables. Students suggested bicycle rental operations, lifeguards along the beaches, and outside rinse showers near the beach.

### *Building Landscape*

With regard to the downtown building landscape, students prioritized the rehabilitation and preservation of historical buildings, especially the maintenance of the State Theatre. Although participants would like to limit the number of new buildings, particularly condominiums, and eliminate tall structures that block the waterfront, students do prefer that any proposed new structures build up rather than out for a more compact downtown. Several students suggested painting murals on the backs of buildings and

establishing a common theme with the architectural styles of downtown so that the old and new complement each other.

### *Shopping and Restaurants*

Students would like to see more small local businesses with local employees that cater to teenagers, as well as year-round citizens of Traverse City. Participants also envisioned unique waterfront restaurants adjacent to the beach.

### *Transportation and Infrastructure*

Several municipal infrastructure themes emerged from the participants' Downtown Traverse City maps. Students recorded the need for improved sewer systems, additional public restrooms, and more drinking fountains in the downtown area. Participants also had numerous ideas for improving and expanding transportation. First and foremost, the participants mentioned improving the quality of downtown streets and sidewalks and possibly widening heavily-trafficked streets. Other suggestions included the addition of speed bumps and reduced speed limits to improve the safety of pedestrians in the downtown area. Students overwhelmingly mentioned improving existing public and alternative transportation routes, including adding later times for BATA and expanding the TART trail. Many students envisioned a trolley or train system for the downtown area or a bus to connect the beach with downtown. Other transportation-related suggestions included offering free public transportation and making Front Street a pedestrian-only outdoor shopping street. Students proposed increasing the amount of available downtown parking by adding a parking deck.

### **Top Five Innovative Ideas for the Four "Favorite Areas"**

- Develop a trolley system connecting downtown with other Traverse City locations
- Develop zoo facilities and/or pier into a Fisherman's Wharf or Navy Pier-like environment with stores and restaurants
- Add a water or amusement park and a Ferris Wheel
- Provide historical tours of the Grand Traverse Commons and develop a museum-like display of the State Hospital's history
- Rehabilitate the Oak Park School buildings for commercial and/or recreational use

### *Programming and Events*

Frequently-cited programming suggestions included expanding the Cherry Festival, developing a fall festival, maintaining Friday Night Live, building a new concert hall and orchestra stage, and expanding open-air markets or farmer's markets in the downtown area. Some students proposed developing an art, music, and poetry center or museum, as well as providing more activities in the downtown area. Many students reiterated comments from Open Space station, suggesting that the zoo be reopened or its facilities rehabilitated for alternative uses.

### **Civic Center**

#### *Recreation*

The most pervasive sentiment among the students with regard to the Civic Center was the desire to improve recreational facilities and provide alternative sources of entertainment for teenagers. This might include expanding the skate park; enlarging or adding a swimming pool; adding another ice rink with a

hockey pro shop to an enlarged Howe Center; and redesigning the layout of the baseball fields in order to accommodate additional sports, such as soccer, football, basketball, tennis, and volleyball. Many students recommended an outdoor competitive-size swimming pool and an outdoor pond that could be used as a winter ice rink. Other recreation-related suggestions included developing a dirt-bike trail; a public batting cage; a roller hockey rink; a sledding hill; a rock wall; widening the running trails to accommodate cyclists, runners, and walkers; and adding mile markers to the trails. In addition to sporting facilities, some students envisioned a water or amusement park, a paint ball field, a miniature golf course, an extreme play area, and a center for playing musical instruments. To cater to families with young children, students recommended expanding and improving the Kids Kove playground.

### *Landscape*

In addition to expanding the Civic Center's recreational facilities, participants frequently cited enlarging the park area and providing more landscape features such as trees, grass, benches, sidewalks, a garden, a picnic area, and a fountain. In general, students proposed improving public restroom facilities and better park maintenance.

### *Transportation*

With regard to transportation around the Civic Center, students would like to see additional handicap-accessible parking, larger roads, and a pedestrian bridge across Front Street to improve accessibility.

### *Restaurants, Shopping, and Other Activities*

Students demonstrated concern with the currently vacant Oak Park School and suggested numerous alternatives to demolishing its buildings. These alternatives included rehabilitating the school to provide space for small businesses, public recreational facilities, a teen hangout, or a laser tag center. Participants also mentioned developing an amphitheatre or outdoor movie theatre that could accommodate outdoor summer film festivals. They also recommended increasing the number of restaurants and eateries around the Civic Center.

## **Grand Traverse Commons**

### *Landscape and Recreation*

The majority of students suggested keeping the National Register-listed Grand Traverse Commons generally the same, with minor improvements. Students overwhelmingly proposed expanding hiking trails around the Grand Traverse Commons and connecting the trails to the TART system. Additionally, students frequently cited developing some of the area's empty space into parks with gardens or space for recreational activities such as Frisbee, football, and baseball. Similarly, students would like the existing forested areas to be preserved and snowmobile trails added.

### *Building Landscape, Shopping, and Restaurants*

Students frequently mentioned the preservation of the old Traverse City State Hospital (Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital) buildings. Many participants thought the buildings should be rehabilitated. Some suggested tours of the historic buildings and the addition of a museum-like facility to document the history of the State Hospital. Although there was a demonstrated preference for using the historic buildings before building anything new, some students recommended building houses, stores, and

restaurants on the grounds; opening a second library on the west side of town; and developing a mall in the Commons region. Other recommendations included a farmer's market in the Commons, a concert hall or arena, festival grounds, a sport complex, a theatre, an indoor water park, and a new zoo. One unique suggestion was to move the government building to the Grand Traverse Commons. Overall, the Grand Traverse Commons was envisioned as a commercial and family-friendly recreational space, rather than a residential area.

#### *Transportation*

Students proposed improving road conditions in the area to reduce traffic problems and providing more public transportation to the Commons.

#### **Placemaking Station**

In this station, students considered which places in Grand Traverse County and Traverse City should be preserved over the next fifty years because they are pleasurable, interesting, and integral to the identity of the region. The results, which are summarized below, are largely consistent with those from the favorite areas map station and involve such themes as landscape management, public recreation, and historic preservation. Additionally, numerous students emphasized preserving Traverse City's small-town feeling.

#### *Landscape and Recreation*

The majority of places that students identified for preservation were related to significant and unique landscape features or public recreational areas. For example, students would like that all natural lakes be preserved and kept clean, including Ann, Boardman, Cedar, Elk, Fife, Green, Long, Spider, and Silver Lakes. Similarly, the preservation of West Grand Traverse Bay and East Grand Traverse Bay, including their adjacent beaches, marinas, and viewsheds, was a demonstrated priority. Participants emphasized the preservation of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Landscape, Hickory Hills and Sugar Loaf ski slopes, and regional parks and forests with trails. Students frequently cited as a priority the maintenance of undeveloped land on Old Mission Peninsula, between the county's communities and lakes and within the Traverse City Open Space.

#### *Buildings*

Students identified the historical buildings in downtown Traverse City and on Old Mission Peninsula as integral to the identity of the region and necessary for maintaining a sense of place. The buildings and associated neighborhoods include the State Theatre, Grand Traverse Commons, Mission Lighthouse, and Boardman Neighborhood District and Central Neighborhood Historic District. In general, students also expressed a desire to retain shopping centers, the zoo, the Front Street landscape, the Northwestern Michigan College campus, the Dennon Museum, and the airport.

#### *Transportation*

Students overwhelmingly cited preservation of the airport, TART trails, brick streets, and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.

### **Smart Growth Station**

Students reviewed the “Ten Tenets of Smart Growth” from the *New Designs for Growth* guidebook. The tenets are as follows:

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

After discussing these tenets, participants looked at twenty-four photographs of land use and transportation scenarios in order to discuss whether the images demonstrated or violated Smart Growth principles. In addition, students considered whether they approved or disapproved of these photographic examples being used as models for urban and regional planning in the Grand Traverse Region. The photographs are included for reference, and a summary of the results follows.

# Smart Growth

*"Development needs to go somewhere or it just goes everywhere and looks like anywhere."*

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2.



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Photos used courtesy of R. Clark Associates, New Designs for Growth, and the Michigan Land Use Institute.

# Smart Growth

*"Development needs to go somewhere or it just goes everywhere and looks like anywhere."*

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23.



24.



Photos used courtesy of R. Clark Associates, New Designs for Growth, and the Michigan Land Use Institute.

Like the favorite areas map station and the placemaking station, students favored photographic examples that preserved open space and farmland; provided gardens, family-friendly recreational space, and farmer's markets; illustrated neighborhoods with sidewalks, tree-lined streets, and privacy; and offered public transportation and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and downtown areas. Therefore, photographs 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 19 were most frequently identified as "good" planning examples that are appropriate for the Grand Traverse Region. Students frequently commented that neighborhoods and downtown photographs with trees, gardens, landscaped sidewalks, and recreational facilities were friendly, neighborly, open, peaceful, and easily accessible by foot. Additionally, students mentioned that rehabilitating old buildings is preferable to all-new construction.

Alternatively, students disliked photographs illustrating sprawling suburban neighborhoods, large malls with extensive parking lots, wide thoroughfares flanked by strip malls, and expansive highway interchanges. Thus, photographs 1, 2, 7, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 21 were most frequently identified as "bad" planning examples that are not appropriate for the Region. Many commented that these photographs were too congested, polluted, associated with large cities, and ugly. In particular, students recorded that sprawling suburban neighborhoods lacked privacy, were too crowded, and were repetitive. Multi-level highway interchanges were viewed as "too much" for the Region, but students preferred naturally-landscaped viewsheds with trees and grass to a more urban and industrial highway landscape.

### Online Survey Station

Students took an online values and opinions survey regarding land use and transportation planning in the Grand Traverse Region. The tabulated results are available online and reprinted below.

## Zoomerang Survey Results

Grand Vision - TCAPS Student Survey

Response Status: Completes

Filter: No filter applied

Mar 14, 2008 7:46 AM PST

### 1. What do you like the most about living in the Grand Traverse Region?

The water/environment	205	47%
Smaller population	38	9%
Downtown area	124	29%
Diverse climate	19	4%
Other, please specify	46	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2. What do you like the least?

Diverse climate	62	15%
Growth of the area	114	27%
Smaller / limited shopping area	107	25%
Smaller population	30	7%
Other, please specify	114	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 3. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in the Grand Traverse Region?

Global climate change	65	15%
Regional population increase	115	27%
Economic competitiveness	95	22%
Traffic congestion	92	22%
Other, please specify	56	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 4. What methods do you think would be most effective in getting the word out about planning activities?

Newspaper	139	33%
Radio	121	29%
TV	245	58%
Word of mouth	93	22%
Internet	138	33%

## 5. Thinking about the future of the region, tell us whether each of the following is a high, medium, or low priority of the region to focus on:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	High	Medium	Low
Traffic	132 32%	226 55%	56 14%
Preserving neighborhoods	162 39%	212 51%	40 10%
Safety	201	149	63

	49%	36%	15%
Education opportunities	226	141	45
	55%	34%	11%
Housing you can afford	225	140	44
	55%	34%	11%
Environment – clean air and water	283	88	42
	69%	21%	10%
Jobs	270	97	44
	66%	24%	11%
Different housing choices	96	235	79
	23%	57%	19%
Racial harmony	137	179	92
	34%	44%	23%
Crime	126	194	88
	31%	48%	22%
New development using up open space	115	147	141
	29%	36%	35%
Protecting agricultural land	187	169	48
	46%	42%	12%
Protecting forested land	230	132	40
	57%	33%	10%

**6. On a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being very unsatisfied, 3 being neutral and 5 being very satisfied, please rate the service provided by the current transportation system:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Major Roads /State Hwy	33	62	155	110	22
	9%	16%	41%	29%	6%
County Roads	69	105	129	64	14
	18%	28%	34%	17%	4%
Neighborhood streets	58	76	132	87	26
	15%	20%	35%	23%	7%
Bike paths and trails	36	44	129	111	59
	9%	12%	34%	29%	16%
Sidewalks	47	73	116	113	29
	12%	19%	31%	30%	8%
Buses/public transit	82	68	150	62	15
	22%	18%	40%	16%	4%

**7. Thinking about the transportation system's ability to meet the need of the the region and its residents in 20 years, what do you see most lacking or needing change?**

More roads to meet needs of growing population	60	16%
Keeping bike trails / sidewalks a priority	95	26%
More accessible transportation	89	24%
More bus routes/public transit	71	19%
Other, please specify	52	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

**8. What do you think brings in the most money to the Grand Traverse Region?**

Tourism	320	88%
Manufacturing	16	4%
Retail sales	10	3%
Other, please specify	16	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9. Do you think the region should grow a lot, a little, or stay the same?**

A lot	60	17%
A little	204	57%
Stay the same	96	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100%</b>

**10. Do you feel that new development should mainly be located in "vacant" areas or in areas where development already exists (like existing towns and villages) or a mixture of both?**

Mostly undeveloped areas	37	11%
Mostly already developed areas	122	35%
Both	123	35%
Neither	30	9%
Don't know	38	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

**11. Do you think the region will need more, less or the same amount of affordable housing in the future?**

More	221	65%
Less	28	8%
Same	49	14%
Don't know	43	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100%</b>

The next questions gauge your values and beliefs about land use and property rights. For example, some people feel that cities and counties should have rules to help guide development while others believe that property owners should be able to develop their property as they wish. For questions 12 through 15 indicate the set of words that you personally value most when it comes to land use.

**12.**

Private rights	62	19%
Public good	70	21%
Balance of private rights and public good	162	49%
Not sure	36	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>100%</b>

**13.**

Protecting individual rights	177	55%
Responsibility to the community	88	27%
Not sure	58	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>100%</b>

**14.**

Protect land for future needs	219	68%
Use land now for homes and business	48	15%
Not sure	55	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>100%</b>

15.

Base land use decisions on planning	153	48%
Allow development where there is a demand or market	87	27%
Not sure	78	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100%</b>

16. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means least important to you and 5 means most important, please rate each of the following potential areas of regional planning focus.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Least Important	2	3	4	Most Important
Land Use Planning	28 9%	26 9%	90 30%	83 28%	74 25%
Transportation Planning	20 7%	40 13%	91 30%	100 33%	49 16%
Issues of Social Equity	29 10%	41 14%	114 38%	68 23%	49 16%
Preservation of Open Space	21 7%	20 7%	50 17%	76 25%	134 45%
Jobs	13 4%	12 4%	45 15%	84 28%	145 48%

17. What is the very best thing you can imagine occurring in the region - what would you do if you were guaranteed success?

260 Responses

18. What would keep you in the Grand Traverse region if you are planning to leave? (or, if you are staying in town what would make it better to live here?)

256 Responses

**19. What do you feel will be the most significant or important issue facing the region in 20 years?**

243 Responses

**20. What do you imagine would prevent the Grand Traverse Region from making money in the future?**

228 Responses

**21. The region is changing in many different ways. Are there any examples of development (either old or new) that you want to see more of in the Region? (be specific)**

205 Responses

**22. Are there specific areas where you think new development should not occur?**

209 Responses

**23. Are you concerned about any environmental issues? If so, what are they?**

204 Responses

**24. Is there a racial division in the region? Explain. What could the plan do to make it less divided?**

189 Responses

**25. Where do you go for:**

205 Responses

**26. Are there specific goods or services that you cannot get in the area that you would like to be able to get?**

181 Responses

**27. Is there anything else you want the planning team to know?**

168 Responses