

New Designs for Growth

A Citizen's Guide to Planning & Zoning in Northwest Michigan

An Implementation Resource of the New Designs for Growth Guidebook



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A Citizen's Guide to Planning

A Citizen's Guide to Planning is a supplement to the *New Designs for Growth Guidebook* and is intended to provide basic information to citizens that haven't been closely involved in the planning process, but would like to shape future changes in their community.

This is introductory information only.

New Designs for Growth is a program designed to help guide the region's growth and development according to the ten tenets of smart growth. Implementation and outreach aspects of the New Designs for Growth program is administered by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments.



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A Citizens Guide to Planning

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Introduction

Northwest Michigan has long been defined by its extensive shorelines, small, quaint villages and cities, thick forests, clean water, and fertile farmland and orchards. Now, it is one of the fastest-growing regions in the Midwest, and is contending with development pressures that are changing both its landscape and its lifestyle. And as the population grows, so too does the need for new homes, sewer and water lines, widened roads, and more shopping centers—all of which are spreading out from our villages and cities and changing the face of the countryside. Meanwhile, local governments, schools, businesses, and farms all work to keep up with the rapid changes in population and demand for services.

To provide services for new and existing residents while maintaining our region's unique charm, preserving its clean lakes and rivers, enhancing our economies, and ensuring a high quality of life for all its citizens, our communities must plan comprehensively. Without plans to accommodate their changing populations and needs for services, communities may find they're contending with roads not designed for the traffic volume they're carrying; commercial development that spreads into former orchards and cornfields; strains on fire and police services; and harmful runoff into lakes and streams.

Planning allows our communities to be prepared for these changing populations and needs. Plans provide the foundation we need in order to make informed decisions about how best to manage limited resources, direct development to the most appropriate locations, and ensure that development is designed to protect those features of our communities that we value most.

For plans and land use policies to reflect the public's values and priorities, it's imperative that citizens become involved in land use decision-making. Through the local planning process, citizens have enormous power to influence the decisions that will affect the local use of land—and, consequently, the price of their homes, the views out their windows, the quality of the air, and the amount of time they spend in traffic.

This guide is intended to provide basic information to citizens that have not been closely engaged in the planning process, but would like to shape future changes in their community. **This is introductory information only.** There are many additional resources available for those that need more in-depth information or would like to be more closely involved in the planning process. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources listed in the appendices, or to contact your local planning department to learn more about specific issues.

The Master Plan

The master plan—sometimes called a comprehensive plan or land use plan - is a guide that is intended to shape local land use decisions. Plans make recommendations about the placement of public services like schools, roads, and sewer and water lines. They also serve as the foundation for zoning ordinance regulations, which then control the location, intensity, and design of a community's land uses. Master plans can also serve as a guide or basis for other ordinances or regulations.

It's important to note that, as a guide, the plan does not have the rule of law and cannot enforce where and how something is built. A community might adopt an excellent master plan, but it will only be effective if its goals are put into practice through techniques such as zoning, budget commitments, and partnerships with other community agencies and organizations.

Townships, cities, villages, counties, regions—and in some cases, groups of local governments—are all allowed to develop plans under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA). This act specifies what's included in the plan, how it's approved and changed if necessary, and who has authority over the plan. This chapter will discuss the basic elements of a plan as required by the MPEA, as well as the steps involved in creating and implementing a plan.

What's in a Plan?

Plans must address land use and **infrastructure** issues, with maps, charts, and text that make recommendations for the development of the community over the next 20 years or more. The plan's contents are generally organized into sections such as: community description; elements, issues, or background information; goals, objectives, and action statements; a future land use map; and a zoning plan.

Community Background/Description. Plans must include information that describes a community's history, economy, social characteristics, environment, transportation systems, and other features. Because all aspects of a community are closely interrelated, this information is needed as a foundation that will help the community make decisions about how it should grow. For instance, the characteristics of a community's population play an important part in determining whether a workforce base exists for new industry or business; the conditions and locations of major roads, airports, and railroads are important in decisions on where to direct new industrial growth; and the type and amount of natural resources in an area determine what types of industries the community should plan for.

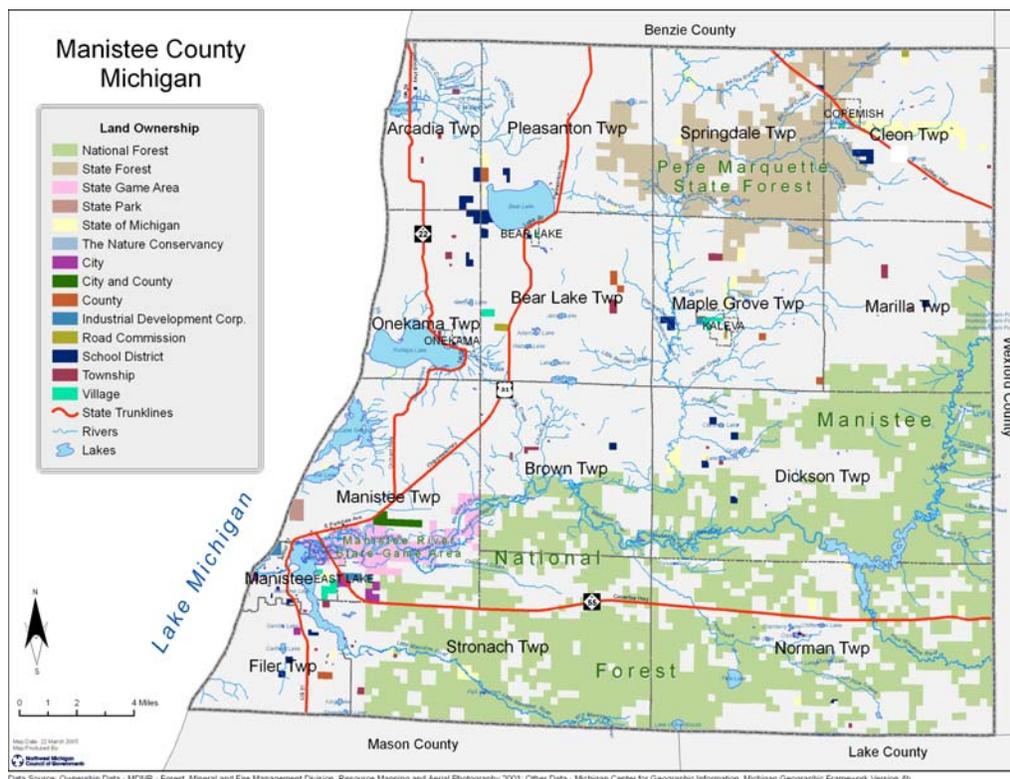
Population and economic information also helps identify needs that will have to

be addressed by the community in the future. Growing numbers of citizens over age 65 may show a need for additional hospitals or accessible housing, and more low-income families may point to a need for affordable housing and public transportation.

Background information may be obtained from a variety of sources, such as the US Census, aerial photos, or surveys conducted by the community. Sometimes this information is summarized in the plan, with details in a separate document called a “fact book” or “data book.” These documents may be cited in the master plan to support policy recommendations or other statements.

Goals and Objectives. The purpose of planning is to reach a consensus about how the community will grow. The goals and objectives, by defining this consensus, are the “heart” of the plan. Often developed after lengthy public discussion, they identify the community’s priorities for the future and how it will achieve its goals.

Goals are general statements about a certain topic. Objectives are more specific: they identify outcomes that will help the community achieve a particular goal. For instance, a goal to increase housing choices may be accompanied by an objective to modify zoning to allow for more multi-family housing options.



Analysis of existing local conditions, such as land use or ownership, helps communities understand current and future needs.

Recommendations for Implementation. All plans must include recommendations that will help the community accomplish the plan's goals and objectives. These recommendations—often called strategies or action statements—should discuss how the goals and objectives will be achieved, in what timeframe, and who is responsible. Action statements might recommend changes to zoning language, or they might include strategies such as forming partnerships with other organizations, making budget commitments for public improvement projects, cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions, changes in the jurisdiction's administrative procedures, or the purchase of property for conservation.

Future Land Use Map. The future land use map shows the land use or development types planned for the community over the duration of the plan. During the planning process, the community considers its goals and objectives and reviews information such as the types and location of roads, sewer and water availability, and the proximity of services like schools and shopping, in order to determine appropriate locations for different land uses. These land uses – like commercial and office space, industrial uses, agriculture, single family homes, and multi-family housing (apartments or townhomes) – are shown as **recommended** uses in certain areas.

Zoning Plan. The master plan is used as the foundation for the zoning ordinance. State law requires that local governments that have adopted a zoning ordinance **must** include a zoning plan as part of their master plan. The zoning plan can be a stand-alone document, a chapter in the master plan, or interpreted throughout various parts of the master plan. The zoning plan describes the community's zoning districts and discusses how the categories on the future land use map relate to the zoning districts. Zoning plans must include the criteria to be used when considering rezonings, and must also make recommendations on how zoning regulations should control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and properties (see Section 3 for more information on zoning).

Optional Elements. Many plans include additional studies or information on topics that are of special importance to the community—such as natural resources, environmental quality, community services, infrastructure, or housing. These issues are analyzed in depth, with goals, objectives, and recommendations, in specific chapters. This added detail can provide a solid framework that will help the community respond to changing needs.

Creating a Plan

The state requires local units of government to take certain steps in adopting a plan. The process is designed to give the public the chance to participate, and to encourage coordination across government boundaries. The law's requirements are only a minimum, however, and local governments may develop a process that provides for more input or coordination. More opportunities for public participation and coordination across boundaries will result in a stronger plan.

LOCAL EXAMPLES

2009 Emmet County Master Plan Goals, Objectives , and Strategies—Agriculture

Goals

1. Maintain the existing rural character and increase the vitality of our local agricultural community and forestry operations.
2. Preserve agricultural land within Emmet County for farming.
3. Preserve inactive agricultural land to maintain its rural character, wildlife habitat, water and air quality, potential for production, and historic value.

Objectives

1. Support value-added agriculture, such as farm stands, farmer's markets, community-based agricultural businesses, and the like.
2. Promote agriculture-based tourism and community events.
3. Work in cooperation with farmers and local, state, and federal agencies to encourage diversification of agriculture.
4. Acquire up-to-date information on the status of agriculture in Emmet County to best identify strategies for future agricultural land use.

Strategies

1. Update the County Zoning Ordinances to allow for roadside stands, consumer driven agriculture, valueadded agriculture opportunities, along with seasonal signs to promote these activities.
2. Coordinate with local farms and agricultural agencies in order to provide farm markets, farm stands, and harvest festivals.
3. Identify, support, and encourage the use of agricultural preservation tools, such as:
 - **Purchase Development Rights (PDR)** Local government adopts a PDR ordinance identifying the process of implementing PDR.
 - **Transfer Development Rights (TDR)** The Transfer of Development Rights Program helps preserve farmland and farming in the Agricultural Reserve.
 - **Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (PA 116)** Continue to use farm land and open space preservation programs.
 - **Zoning**
 - **Cluster Development, Conservation Design, and Open Space**
4. Develop a County preservation program and create an Agricultural Preservation Districts Map.
5. Complete a study to identify active and potential agricultural lands. Conduct an agricultural survey on the status of farming and the support for preservation tools in Emmet County. Upon completion, update Map 2-1 to accurately reflect potential lands for preservation.
6. Create a community consensus for protection of agricultural lands by educating and involving citizens and local organizations.
7. Support local, state, and federal tax incentive programs that encourage agriculture and related industries.

First, notice must be sent to all governments within or contiguous to the planning area. This includes neighboring villages, townships, cities, and counties, to inform them that the community is beginning the planning (or plan update) process. Ideally, the notice will also be sent to other interest groups and stakeholders, along with information on how to participate in the process.

The actual creation of the plan generally starts with work on background studies and mapping, along with surveys and other forms of public input to provide the foundation for the plan. Communities often hold public visioning sessions or form citizen's advisory committees to obtain public input and to help determine the community's goals and priorities. The work of creating a plan may be done "in-house" by the planning commission, elected body, and/or staff; or, it may be contracted out to a planning consultant. Whether or not a consultant is used depends on the capacity of the planning staff or officials, the local budget, and the scope of work – that is, whether the goal is to create an entirely new plan or to update an existing plan.

After a draft of the plan is complete, the planning commission must submit the draft to the legislative body. The legislative body then approves its distribution to certain parties, as required by the MPEA—including all neighboring jurisdictions, the county planning commission, public utilities, locally operated railroad companies, and other government bodies—for their review and comment. Comments from these parties are sent to the local planning commission, who then holds a formal public hearing on the plan. The plan may be revised based on the comments received either before or during the public hearing.

After considering the comments received on the plan, the planning commission votes on a resolution to adopt the plan and submit the plan to the legislative body.

If the notification and adoption requirements are not met, the plan may be considered invalid in a court of law.

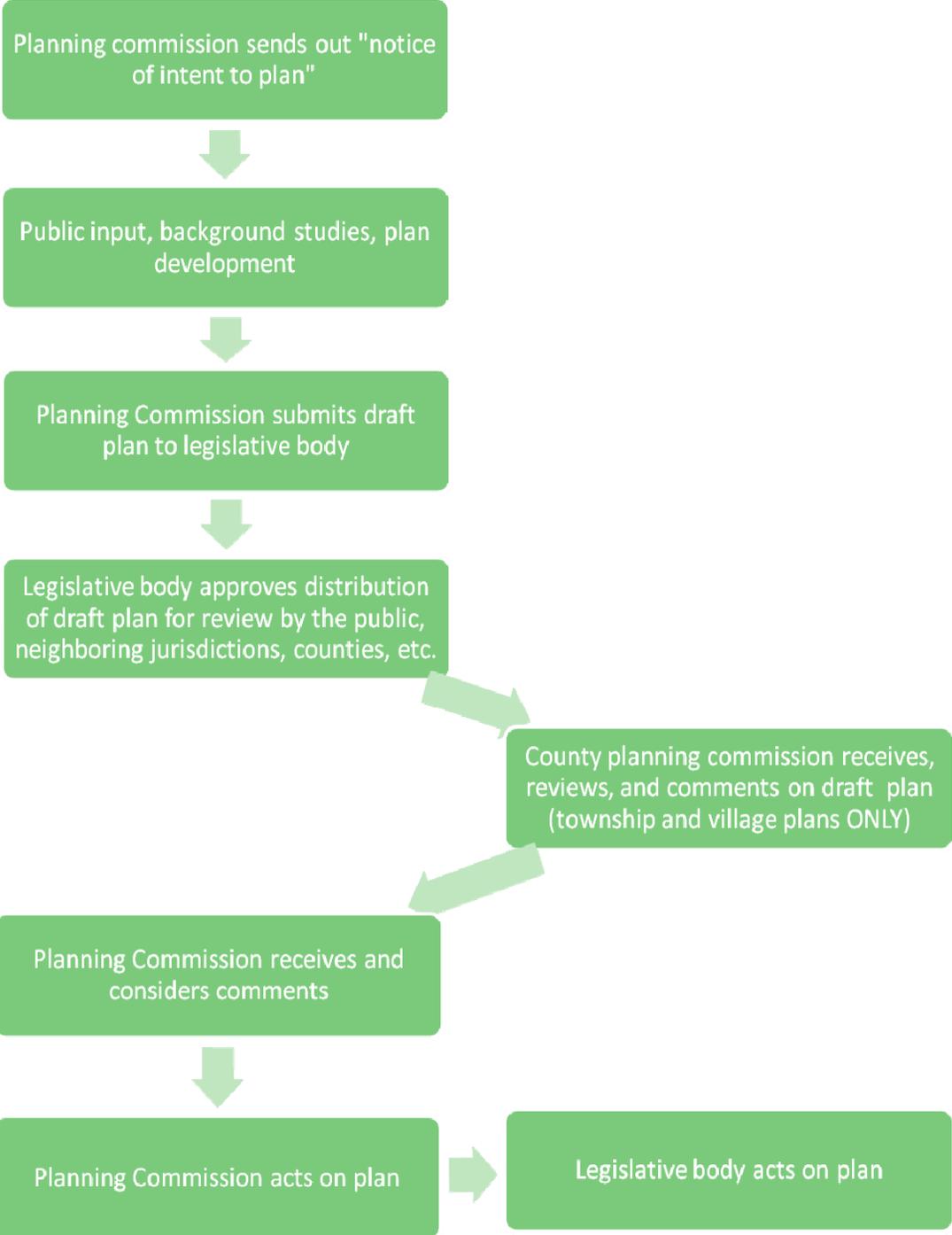
The planning process is intended to be ongoing, with reviews of the plan required every five years. Following the review, plans may be amended or updated as needed, allowing the community and its plan to respond to change. The plan update process is similar to the plan development process, with the same requirements for notification and adoption.

It's important to note that the law's requirements for the planning process are only a minimum, and local governments may develop a process that provides for more input or coordination. More opportunities for public participation and coordination across boundaries will result in a stronger plan.

Putting the Plan into Action: Implementation

Once the plan has been adopted, there are a number of ways it can be implemented, or put into action:

Plan Adoption Process



Zoning. Zoning has traditionally been the primary means of implementation for a master plan. By defining appropriate uses of land, regulating density, creating standards for development, and offering incentives for different development types or patterns, the zoning ordinance offers clear direction on where and how development should occur.

Conservation. Recommendations to conserve environmentally sensitive land, farmland, or open space can be implemented in a number of ways. Some lands may be purchased outright by local governments as park land; in other cases, conservancies or other natural resource organizations may raise funds to buy the property for conservation purposes. Or, the community may use publicly-funded **purchase of development rights** (PDR) programs to allow certain properties (usually farmland) to remain in private ownership, while ensuring that it remains undeveloped.

Economic Incentives. Tax breaks or incentives available through brownfield authorities, land bank authorities, economic development corporations, and other governmental entities can encourage development in certain areas.

Partnerships with Community Organizations. Many plans include recommendations that are beyond the scope or authority of the local government that may require a partnership with a nonprofit or other agency. For instance, a local government may partner with a nonprofit to develop and maintain trails or to preserve and manage natural areas.

Capital Improvements Plans and Budgets. New or remodeled public buildings, parks, and major equipment are all considered capital improvements. These projects or improvements should be detailed in a capital improvements plan (CIP), which is a schedule of improvements to be built in the community over a number of years. A CIP can be a good way to implement some parts of a master plan, while making the most of limited financial resources and coordinating projects.

Other Ordinances. Other local ordinances can also be used to implement parts of an adopted plan—such as junk ordinances, housing inspections, erosion prevention, solid waste management, or land division and subdivision ordinances.

Implementing the plan: In order to encourage new development on a former industrial site within the city limits, zoning was adopted to allow residential development at a higher density than in other parts of the city. Brownfield tax credits were also available to the developer in exchange for cleaning up the property.



The Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is a law that regulates land and buildings in a community. By defining allowable uses of land, establishing standards for development, and offering incentives for different development types or patterns, zoning offers a number of opportunities to achieve a plan's objectives.

According to state law—Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006), the zoning ordinance **must** be based on a plan that is designed to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of all citizens. Because zoning affects the use and value of private property, the law is very specific about how zoning ordinances are structured, what's included, and where limitations can be imposed on zoning authority; and there are many court decisions that affect zoning authority.

This information is intended only to provide an introduction to the zoning ordinance and process. Because zoning is complex, for detailed zoning questions you may need to work with the local zoning administrator, attorney, or other planning resource.

Zoning Districts and Map

A zoning ordinance—which includes both a zoning map and zoning text—divides a township, village, city, or county into different districts (zones).

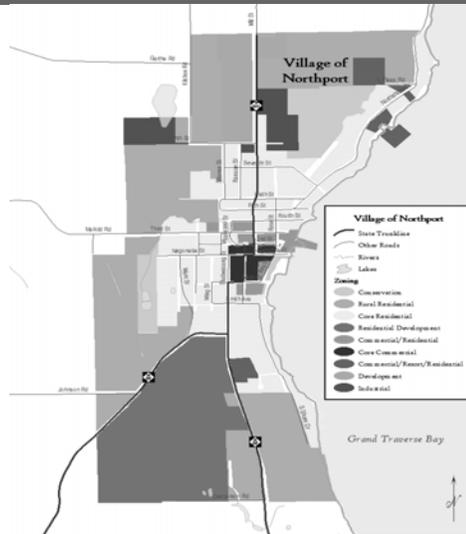
A zoning map divides the community into zoning districts, and shows the legal boundaries for each district. Zoning districts regulate the types of uses, building and property dimensions, and other features for all properties in the district.

In many communities, zoning districts are based on the types of uses that will be allowed. These uses usually include residential development, commercial uses, agriculture, recreation, and industrial uses. Communities may also set aside districts for unusual or intensive uses like gravel mining or waste management. This is known as “use-based” zoning, and is designed to separate uses that may be incompatible. For instance, an industrial district—which could allow activities that create noise, smoke, or heavy traffic—might be designated at some distance from the community's major residential areas.

Other communities may designate zoning districts based on building or architectural types, neighborhood patterns, or other physical and cultural features. This is known as “form-based” zoning because it takes into account the existing “form,” or character, of the community and encourages development that is consistent with that form.

Within each district, certain uses are allowed either by right, conditionally, or subject to special approval. “By right” or permitted uses are approved through a simple application

A zoning map divides the community into zoning districts, and shows the legal boundaries for each district.



process. Conditional or special uses go through additional review by the planning commission (and sometimes the legislative body) to determine whether or not the proposal is compatible with the intent of the district.

To ensure that development is safely designed, with proper access to roads and services, district regulations also include restrictions on different aspects of a development, such as:

- Building height regulations limit how tall buildings may be.
- Setbacks control the distance between the building and the street or property line. Setbacks are specified for the front, side, and rear of a lot.
- A building's footprint is the outline of the building on the ground.
- Floor area refers to the total amount of floor space in a building.
- Minimum lot sizes or density regulations limit the number of homes or other buildings that may be built on a piece of land. Usually this is done by requiring a minimum property size—ranging from 5,000 feet or fewer up to 10 or 20 acres per unit.

Overlay zones. Overlay zones are zoning districts that are placed over all or part of several existing zoning districts. Overlay zones add new regulations to those of the underlying districts. The new regulations may be more restrictive than the underlying zoning, or they may provide for extra flexibility so that specific land use needs can be addressed in a targeted way. For example, one overlay district may allow daycares as a special use in certain parts of an agricultural district; while another may impose larger setbacks on homes along the shoreline.

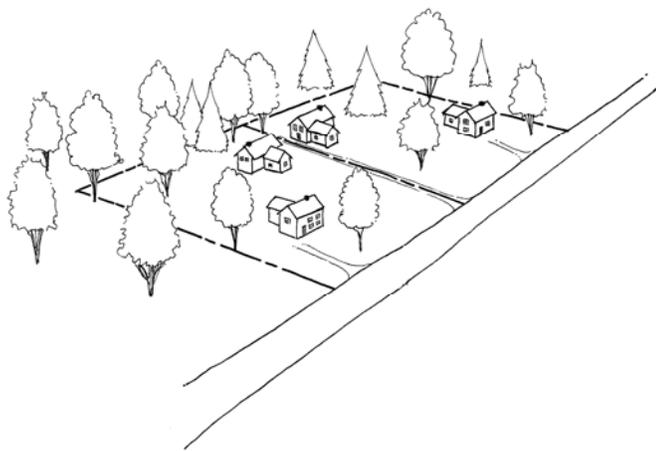
What's Allowed?

Uses in a district are divided into different categories, each with a different approval procedure.

Permitted Uses. Permitted uses, or uses permitted “by right,” are uses that can be allowed in a district through a simple application process. If appropriate applications are submitted, and the proposal meets the requirements of the zoning ordinance—such as setbacks, height, lot size, etc.—permitted uses are usually approved as proposed.

Special uses. Special or conditional uses are those that may be needed in the community, but could result in disturbances to other types of development that are allowed by right in the district. To be sure that they don’t negatively affect the neighborhood, special use regulations put certain conditions on these uses. For example, a small grocery or convenience store may be allowed as a special use in a residential district. A store may be valuable to the neighborhood, but will also result in additional traffic, parking issues, and lighting that can affect neighboring homes. Special use regulations might require the store to limit its hours of operation, install landscaping or fencing to screen the parking, or shield lighting from neighboring properties. The special use standards and approval process for this use would allow the local government to base their decisions how the use will impact neighboring properties and the community as a whole.

Non-conforming uses. Many zoning ordinances in northwest Michigan were not adopted until the 1960’s or 70’s. For cities and villages in particular, many buildings or uses were already in existence at the time the ordinance was adopted, and don’t always meet the requirements of the ordinance. These buildings or uses are called “non-conforming” structures or uses. Under the requirements of the MZEA, these uses must be allowed to continue without interference. However, they generally aren’t allowed to expand; and if the use changes at any time, the property can’t revert back to the former use without zoning changes that would allow the use under current regulations.



Setbacks control the distance between the building and the front, sides, and rear property lines.

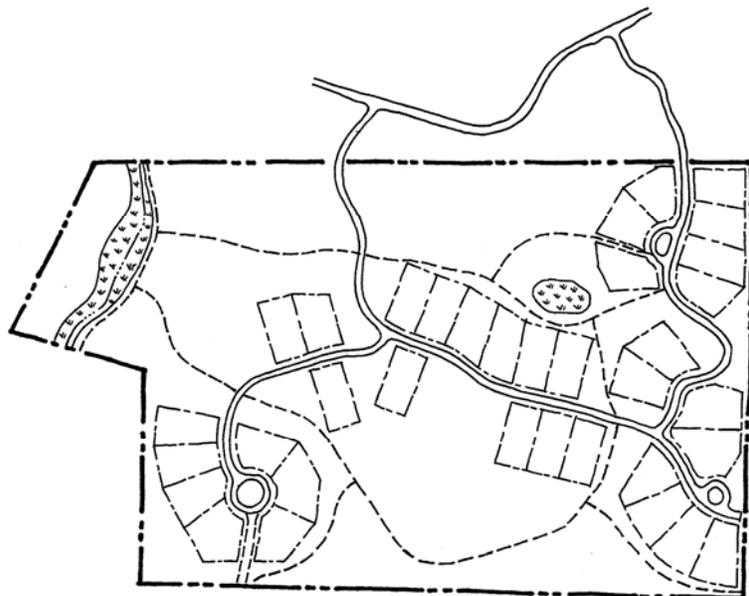
Accessory Uses. An accessory use is a use or structure that is secondary to the main use on a property—such as garages or storage sheds. These are usually regulated by standards that limit the size and location of the building and approximate location to ensure that it remains secondary to the main building.

Planned Unit Developments. A planned unit development (PUD) is a zoning approach that allows for flexibility in development. PUDs may consist of one type of use—such as new homes—or they may include a mix of uses, such as residential, commercial, and office space, which may or may not be allowed by underlying zoning. PUDs may allow changes in density, setbacks, height, or other requirements.

In return for the flexibility offered through a PUD, the developer is required to meet certain standards in order to achieve specific community goals. These standards are written into the PUD ordinance and based on the local plan. Standards usually include a high quality of design, the preservation of important natural features, the inclusion of affordable housing, or new recreational features. In many cases, these standards are fairly subjective and open to interpretation; planning commissions and elected bodies must use their discretion in deciding whether or not the proposal meets the standards included in the ordinance. This is known as a “discretionary” decision.

The PUD approval process can be complicated and time consuming. Because the technique offers so much flexibility, and because of the discretionary decision-making process, there’s often a great deal of negotiation and

In this PUD, the owners were allowed to design for a higher density than is normally allowed in the zoning district, in exchange for preserving large areas of open space.



deliberation between the local government, developer, and the public in order to be sure that everyone's needs and concerns are addressed. Final authority over a PUD may lie with either the planning commission **or** the elected body (depending on the ordinance language) after the necessary site plan review and public hearings have been held.

Site Plan Review

A site plan is a set of documents and drawings that show the proposed physical layout of a project, including any proposed buildings, property lines, roads, utilities, parking, and landscaping. Site plan review is a process that allows the planning commission to review these plans to be sure they comply with local regulations. The review process and accompanying standards can ensure that a development is well-designed, adequately served by community infrastructure, consistent with the local plan, and in compliance with the zoning ordinance.

The zoning ordinance should include clear guidelines for site plan submittal, review, and approval procedures. Standards address how features like existing historic structures, lighting fixtures, signs, natural features, pedestrian access, sewer and water lines, parking, traffic flow, and open space should be designed in order to meet the requirements of the ordinance and the intent of the local plan. Sometimes additional studies may be required to show the impact of the proposal—such as traffic impact studies, environmental impact analysis, and soil erosion studies. If other permits are required from state or federal agencies, those permits must be submitted with the site plan.

The authority over site plan review is specified in the zoning ordinance. The planning commission—and in some cases, the zoning administrator—may be authorized to grant final approval for a site plan, but in some communities the legislative body takes final action on a proposal.

When reviewing a site plan, the planning commission or legislative body may approve, deny, or approve the plan with conditions. For example, the planning commission may approve a subdivision plan, but only on the condition that the developer agrees to protect wetlands on the property or preserve historic features.

Site plan review is required for subdivision plans, planned unit developments (PUDs), cluster housing, special uses, and other types of development as required by the local zoning ordinance. Some communities require site plan review for all commercial or industrial uses or for all developments over a certain size. Individual single family homes and accessory uses are usually exempt from site plan review; these uses are generally approved by the zoning administrator.

Administration

Application and administration procedures are developed by the planning commission, and are often included in the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is administered by the zoning administrator, who interprets the ordinance to determine if new developments or uses meet its requirements.

Creating a Zoning Ordinance

The creation of zoning regulations is often an intensive process, requiring a great deal of deliberation, public input, and legal review. Zoning ordinances are usually written by the planning commission and planning staff, often with the help of a consultant and municipal attorney. Zoning regulations must be carefully written in order to meet the intent of the community's plan while balancing the interests of property owners with community goals and legal obligations.

Once the ordinance or amendments are drafted, the planning commission holds at least one public hearing to obtain input from citizens. After the public hearing, the planning commission makes a recommendation on the ordinance. **If** the planning commission jurisdiction is a township, the draft ordinance is then sent to the county planning commission for their review and comment.

Following planning commission review, the ordinance is submitted to the legislative body, who may or may not hold another public hearing. The legislative body considers any comments made at the public hearings or by the county planning commission, then votes on adoption of the ordinance.

Changing the Zoning: Variances, Rezoning and Amendments

In some cases, individual property owners can request a change from a specific zoning regulation if that restriction is creating a hardship in terms of how the property can be developed. These changes are known as variances. A variance offers legal relief to property owners by providing an exception from the requirements of the zoning ordinance. On request from a property owner, variances from dimensional, use, parking regulations, and other requirements may be granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), if the ZBA finds that the change won't result in a negative impact to the community's health, safety, and welfare.

In other cases, it might be necessary to change the zoning classification or overall regulations for one or all properties in a district. For these broader changes, the zoning ordinance must be amended by the local government. Zoning amendments can change the text of the ordinance, in which case the change applies to all properties covered by that particular text; or they can change the zoning for one or more particular properties through a rezoning, or amendment to the zoning map. Both map and ordinance amendments must be consistent with the adopted master plan.

Text Amendments. Amendments may be proposed for all or a portion of the zoning ordinance when the existing regulations are no longer appropriate. An example of a text amendment may be a change to allow commercial wind towers in an agricultural district.

Rezoning. Landowners can apply for rezonings in order to change the minimum lot size, allow for a new use that isn't allowed under current zoning, or change the status of a **nonconforming** use. For example, a landowner who wants to develop their property at a higher density may apply for a rezoning from agricultural to residential; or a business owner that wants to expand a nonconforming store in a residential neighborhood may apply for a rezoning from residential to commercial.

The local government may also apply for rezonings. This is usually done to address problems with nonconforming uses, or to make the zoning of a property more consistent with surrounding properties or with the intent of the master plan.

Rezoning Procedure. To rezone a property, the land owner or local government must submit a rezoning application to the planning commission. Rezoning applications usually ask the applicant to describe the property and the reason for the request. Applications are heard by the local planning commission, which recommends approval or denial of the application. After the planning commission has made a recommendation, the legislative body makes the final decision on the rezoning.

It's important to note that rezoning decisions must be based on whether the proposed district meets the recommendations of the community's adopted plan. Applicants will sometimes provide information on how they intend to use the property after rezoning, but they are not obligated to follow through with those plans as part of the rezoning, **unless** those proposals are offered through a conditional rezoning request.

Conditional rezoning. If the property owner or applicant offers conditions, in writing, as part of the rezoning, the governing body may authorize the rezoning based on those conditions. These are known as conditional rezonings, and are allowed only when the conditions are offered voluntarily **by the owner**. Rezoning conditions **cannot** be imposed by the jurisdiction. For instance, a landowner may wish to rezone a residential property to commercial in order to develop an office – a use that generally results in less traffic and noise than other commercial establishments. The owner may request a rezoning based on the condition that upon rezoning, the property will only be developed as an office. No other commercial uses may be developed after the rezoning.

Using the Zoning Ordinance to Achieve Master Plan Goals

Zoning is the method most commonly used by local governments to achieve master plan goals. Goals as diverse as farmland preservation, the creation of more housing choices, and water quality protection can be achieved in part through zoning requirements.

Preserving Agriculture. Zoning can help to preserve or encourage agriculture through a number of techniques. To protect productive agricultural lands from development, zoning restrictions might limit the number of nonfarm residences in an area, or allow only uses that are compatible with farming. Some communities may require a buffer between farm and nonfarm properties, or may require large minimum lot sizes to reduce the amount of residential development in an area.

Agricultural zoning may limit nonfarm buildings in an agricultural district, while allowing for agricultural uses and development such as roadside stands or storage buildings.



Zoning can also help preserve agriculture by improving its economic viability. “Mixed use agriculture” or “value added agriculture”—such as roadside stands, wine tasting and production, food processing plants, and farm markets—can be a source of additional income for the region’s farms. Zoning that allows these activities in agricultural districts can help farmers improve their bottom line and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the region’s agriculture.

Preserving open space. Cluster zoning, or conservation design, regulations, is a zoning technique that clusters buildings in smaller areas of a site, in order to preserve large tracts of usable open space on the remainder of the site.

Preserving neighborhood character. There are many ways zoning can help enhance or improve a neighborhood’s character. Basic zoning techniques like sign ordinances, landscaping requirements, parking regulations, and lighting ordinances can help to ensure that new development fits in with the surrounding neighborhood. Some communities also adopt form-based ordinances, which require new development to be designed in a way that’s compatible with the existing or planned character of a neighborhood.

Housing choices. Many communities recognize a need for more types of housing—in particular, housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families. Zoning can encourage this type of housing in a number of ways. Some ordinances require that planned unit developments, or all developments over a certain size, must include a fixed percentage of affordable housing. Others include flexibility that can help lower the cost of development and housing. For instance, higher densities and smaller lot sizes in some areas can result in more affordable lots, and allowing flexibility in parking, setbacks, and other requirements can lower the costs for developers and homebuyers alike.

Environmental protection. Overlay districts can provide an additional layer of protection in areas that are environmentally sensitive—such as shorelines, ridges, steep slopes, or wetlands. An example is a shoreline overlay district that requires larger setbacks from the shoreline, along with requirements for a vegetative buffer between a residence and the shoreline.

Who's Who in Planning and Zoning

For anyone that would like to become involved in the land use planning process, it's important to become familiar with the key players—including the local legislative or elected body, planning commission, zoning board of appeals, and local government and/or county staff.

The Local Legislative Body: Boards, Councils, and Commissions

The local legislative body consists of members elected by the public to represent their interests. For a county, the legislative body is the county board of commissioners; in townships, it's the township board; for a city, the legislative body is the city council or city commission; for villages, it's the village council. These boards or commissions makes the final decisions on zoning, and in some cases (but not all) they are the final authority on plan adoption. They also control, through appointments to the planning commission and oversight of staff, how local ordinances are administered.

Township board and village council members are elected at large, while county and city commissioners are elected by district. The length of service varies by jurisdiction, but generally ranges from 2-4 years.

Responsibilities of elected bodies include:

- Adopting plans and ordinances

Elected Officials and Legislative Bodies: County, Township, City, Village

County Board of Commissioners. County commissioners are elected by district. The county register of deeds, clerk, and treasurer are also elected positions, but do not sit on the county board of commissioners.

Township Board. On a township board, the treasurer and clerk are a part of the board, along with two or more representatives elected at large. The board is headed by an elected supervisor.

City. City council members or commissioners may be elected either at large or by district. City councils or commissions is headed by an elected mayor. The clerk and treasurer, also elected officials, do not sit on the council or commission.

Village. Village council members are elected at large; the village council is headed by an elected village president. Village clerks and treasurers may be either elected or appointed.

- Developing and adopting a budget
- Setting the tax rates
- Authorizing expenditures and borrowing
- Hiring administrative staff
- Providing oversight of public facilities and infrastructure
- Appointing members to the planning commission and zoning board of appeals
- Other duties as necessary

The Planning Commission

The planning commission is an important advisory group that is appointed by the legislative body to develop plans. For communities with zoning authority, it also prepares and makes recommendations on zoning ordinances, zoning changes, special use or planned developments, and site plans. The planning commission can serve as the final authority on some of these matters, when authorized by the zoning ordinance.

Planning Commission makeup. Planning commissions are composed of citizen volunteers. Some members may have a land use background like engineering, architecture, or development, but such experience is not required, and many planning commissioners do not have this background.

The number of members on a planning commission depends on the type and size of the community. Planning commissions usually vary in size from 5-11 members. State law requires that members serve three-year terms.

To ensure that the commission is fair and objective, it's important for planning commissioners to represent diverse interests and backgrounds. Planning commissioners may be appointed based on their ability to represent different segments or interests of the community—such as schools, farming, or business.

As volunteers, commissioners are usually only reimbursed for the cost of trainings they attend; some also receive a “per diem,” or flat fee, reimbursement for the time they spend at regular meetings.

Responsibilities. The planning commission's responsibilities depend on the capacities and activities of the jurisdiction, but generally, a planning commission is expected to:

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive plan
- Make recommendations on approval of the plan, and in some cases adopt the plan
- Develop, upon direction from the governing body, capital improvement plans, recreation plans, and other community plans
- Develop a zoning ordinance and map
- Make recommendations on approval of and amendments to the ordinance
- Hear rezoning applications, conduct site plan review, consider zoning ordinance amendments, review planned unit developments
- Review the jurisdiction's property purchases and development projects

The Zoning Board of Appeals

All jurisdictions with zoning authority must have a zoning board of appeals, or ZBA.

The elected body appoints members of the ZBA, which hears appeals on requirements or on zoning decisions made by the zoning administrator or planning commission. ZBA appointments and procedures are outlined in the zoning ordinance. The ZBA can grant variances to zoning regulations that change one or more requirements of the zoning ordinance. In order to receive a variance, the property owner must show that the zoning regulation constitutes a hardship or prevents the development of the property.

On request, the ZBA also provides interpretation of language in the zoning ordinance.

Staff

Zoning Administrator. Zoning ordinances are interpreted and enforced by the zoning administrator, who is hired by the legislative body or by the jurisdiction's administrator. The zoning administrator receives and processes applications for land use permits, site plan review, and other zoning issues.

Planning Staff. Planning staff is hired by the legislative body or the jurisdiction's administrator to provide advice, analysis, and assistance to the Planning Commission, the legislative body, and the ZBA. In communities with zoning authority, planning staff might also review development applications, subdivision plans, and zoning change requests to ensure that they comply with local regulations.

Planning staff has no authority over changes to the plan, zoning ordinance, or other local policies – authority rests with elected and appointed officials. However, planning staff and zoning administrators often draft planning or zoning language and make recommendations to the planning commission, which can influence local decisions.

Manager/Administrator. The township, village, city, or county manager or administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the municipality. They serve as the legislative body's chief advisor and are also responsible for daily delivery of public services, preparing and submitting a proposed annual budget, and hiring and firing personnel.

Municipal Attorney. While there's no requirement for a jurisdiction to have an attorney, most communities recognize that legal advice is essential in drafting – and defending – plans and ordinances, and most local governments do contract with a municipal attorney or firm. The advice of the local attorney is influential in the planning and zoning process, and can help the community avoid legal challenges.

Getting Involved: Public Participation and Planning

Input from the public in the planning and zoning process is critical in shaping our communities' futures. Unfortunately, public involvement often doesn't occur until a controversial development proposal comes forward and residents get involved in efforts to influence the decision. However, the stage is usually set for these decisions long before this point, and it may be difficult to change the outcome by the time a proposal is presented. Local governments must follow adopted ordinances and policies—which means that some development proposals with very little public support may ultimately be approved. In other cases, seemingly beneficial or well-received proposals may not meet all the requirements of the ordinance, and must be denied. For this reason, the public sometimes feels disenfranchised from the local decision-making process.

There are, however, many opportunities for citizens to engage in local decision-making before proposals come forward: by participating in the creation of plans and ordinances, citizens can help guide development before it occurs. And, when the local government receives proposals for certain types of development, the public has other opportunities to take part in the decision-making process, which can influence the proposals themselves or the final outcome.

The only way to ensure that development reflects the public's priorities and goals is for citizens to actively engage in planning at all stages of the process. Following are some ways the public can stay engaged, informed, and influential during decision-making processes.

Meetings, Records, and Access to Information

To effectively influence the decision-making process, citizens must be well-informed of activities in their community. By attending public meetings and reading the minutes, or written records, of those meetings, citizens can stay up-to-date on the types of issues that are facing their community, and can determine whether or not their interests are being served. The public's access to these meetings and information is protected by the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Open Meetings Act. The Open Meetings Act (OMA) requires all meetings of public bodies - including planning commissions, elected bodies, and committees—to be open to the public. Any time a **quorum**, or majority, of the members of a public body gather to discuss public business, they are considered to be officially participating in a "meeting," and must comply with the requirements of the OMA. To comply with the OMA, a public body must:

- Provide public notice of all public meetings
- Keep minutes of each public meeting and make them available to the public within eight days of the meeting
- Provide an opportunity for public comment
- Do all business in open session



One of the most influential ways to engage in the planning process is to work proactively in creating the plans and ordinances that will guide development in the future.

- Go into closed session only for reasons permitted by the OMA
- Vote only in open session
- Hold all meetings in a place available to the general public

In some cases, violations of the Open Meetings Act may result in fines or other penalties; but because it's intended to ensure that government decisions are open and transparent, the primary remedy for a violation of the Act is to reenact the actions taken in compliance with the Act.

In some communities, public meetings may be broadcast on public television. In the Traverse City area, cable channel 99 (Government Access Channel) broadcasts a variety of public meetings. Video of the meetings is also available online at the Northwest Michigan Community Media Center at www.upnorthmedia.org.

Freedom of Information Act. Most land use information is easily obtained from local government staff, by request. But in some circumstances—such as when a great deal of information is needed, or the information includes personal correspondence or historical records—you may need to file a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain information. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) sets requirements for the release of public records—which is defined as a writing prepared, owned, used, or retained by a public body—by all public bodies in the state.

Some public records are exempt from FOIA requests. The public body can deny these requests but must provide a full explanation of the reasons for the denial, and must also state the requester's right to submit an appeal to the head of the public body or to seek judicial review.

Public Hearings

A public hearing is required by law for planning and zoning decisions, and is a formal opportunity for a board or commission to receive public opinion on various subjects that may eventually require board action.

Public hearings can be an effective way to influence decision-making. Local governments will often vote in reaction to the public comment received in a public hearing. However, in many cases, citizens may not become involved in an issue until or unless they are outraged; and public comment may as a result become emotional and confrontational. A confrontational approach to public comment is ineffective in terms of negotiating—with either the local government or a developer—for the best possible outcome. A factual, focused, unemotional approach to public comment will provide constructive direction and, in some cases, positive resolution of an issue. For these reasons, when providing public comment, remember:

- Protect your credibility. Avoid personal attacks or statements that cannot be verified.
- Present your comments clearly and concisely, with specific suggestions relative to the proposal.
- Focus on the issues. If the topic is a development proposal, focus on whether or not the proposal meets the standards of the ordinance. For rezonings or changes to the zoning ordinance, address whether or not the changes meet the goals and intent of the comprehensive plan.
- Use good research and rely on facts, rather than assumptions or emotion.
- Do not make statements regarding the exclusion of certain types of people. Zoning, by law, cannot exclude different types or classes of people.
- Make sure you thoroughly read and understand the regulations or language that you are commenting on. If you're not sure how to interpret some of the language, work with staff or other planning professionals, or consult one of the resources in this guide.
- Show support for your position by encouraging participation from other citizens that share the same position. A large audience that supports a particular position can be very influential in the decision-making process.

While making comment at a public hearing can get desired results, it's more effective in the long-term to participate proactively in these decisions by taking part in the creation of plans or ordinances.

Creating a Plan

Because the public's goals and priorities are the foundation of the plan, communities make an effort to obtain citizen involvement and input throughout the process of drafting a plan. Visioning sessions are held or surveys are conducted to determine what the community's priorities are. Or, the planning commission or legislative body may form citizen's advisory committees or work groups to engage the public in the actual creation of the plan.

Once the plan is drafted, neighboring governments, public bodies, and other stakeholders are asked for their review and comment; and public hearings must be held prior to adoption.

After the plan is adopted, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the jurisdiction to review the plan every five years. The jurisdiction may decide to amend or update the plan. The amendment or update process is very similar to the plan development process, with many opportunities for public participation.

Public Input in the Zoning Process

One of the most influential ways to engage in the planning process is to work proactively in creating the plans and ordinances that will guide development in the future—either by commenting on draft plans and ordinances through visioning sessions or public hearings; or by serving on committees that are working to develop these plans and ordinances. However, once the plans and ordinances are in place, citizens may still have opportunities to impact the outcome of a proposal:

Working with local government officials and staff. It is the imperative of local elected and appointed officials to represent the interests of the community. Local officials should therefore be willing and available to answer questions and discuss concerns with their constituents. Citizens should communicate with local officials throughout planning and zoning procedures that affect them.

Planning and zoning staff are important resources for citizens engaged in land use issues. Staff can provide a great deal of information on planning in general and on specific proposals.

Administrative Decisions. When a project proposal is on the table, citizens can take part in the decision-making process in a number of ways. Special use permits, rezonings, and planned unit development procedures provide opportu-

The Grand Vision, a six-county land use and transportation planning process, asked residents to identify what types of growth and development they wanted to see in their communities over the next 50 years, through a “scorecard” questionnaire process.

We want to Hear from you

The Grand Vision Decision Scorecard



Now it's your turn! Tell us about your preferred future growth scenario here. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Please fill out and return the scorecard below no later than **Tuesday, October 28, 2008**. Or you may also complete this same scorecard online at: thegrandvision.org.

Give us your opinion! Check one box per question.

The graphs on the facing page provide more details about the trade-offs in the following questions.

Scenario

Part 1 - Choose the scenario you prefer for each question.	A	B	C	D
1. I think the scenario that does the best job of preserving the region's farmland and open space is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I think the scenario that does the best job at balancing our needs for mobility with our desires for thriving cities and towns and a cleaner environment is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think the scenario that best provides jobs and affordable housing for working families is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I think the scenario that does the best job of enhancing our region's cities and villages is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I think the scenario that does the best job depicting a future I support is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 2 - Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the next statements using the scale to the right.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I think transportation investments should prioritize new and widened roads.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. I think new transportation investments should include biking and walking facilities, even if it means some roads aren't widened.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I think new transportation investments should include enhanced transit, including in-town buses and regional bus service, even if it means some roads aren't widened.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. I think increased traffic congestion in our cities and villages would be okay if I could park once and walk to shops, jobs, schools and parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. I would consider living in a neighborhood with smaller yards and some multi-family buildings if it meant that I could walk or ride my bike to shops, jobs, schools and parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. I oppose taller buildings in our cities and villages even if it means that we need to build on farm and forest lands.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. I think people should be able to have a home on rural acreage even if it increases new public investment in roads, sewers and schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please, help us ensure that we're receiving input from residents throughout the region. (No identifying information will be released or will this data be used in anything other than this survey.)

Comments: _____

My home county:

 Antrim
 Benzie
 Grand Traverse
 Ionia
 Leelanau
 Leelanau
 Mack
 Muskegon
 Oshtemo
 Ottawa
 Saginaw
 Shiawassee
 Washtenaw

I am a:

 Full-time resident
 Part-time resident
 Visitor
 Other

My age is:

 Under 18
 18-24
 25-44
 45-64
 65+

Here's What To Do With Your Scorecard

Drop it off: For the location of the drop-box nearest you, go to thegrandvision.org or call toll-free (866) 441-5214

Mail to:
 The Grand Vision
 400 Boardman Ave
 Traverse City, MI 49684

Fill out online:
thegrandvision.org

nities for citizens to participate in and influence the process through public hearings. When a local government receives a proposal on a PUD or special use, they have some flexibility in determining whether or not the proposal meets the standards outlined in the zoning ordinance; and also have the ability to impose conditions on approval, in order to lessen the impacts of a use on neighboring properties. Public comments from neighbors and other interested parties can affect what form those conditions may take.

Public hearings aren't required for projects that are permitted by right: if the proposal meets the requirements of the ordinance, **it must be approved**. By the same token, if a proposal does not meet the requirements of the ordinance, it can't be approved. While this limits the influence the public may have over some decisions, citizens can still play an important role in the decision-making process, by staying well-informed of local issues and becoming involved in the planning process. For some proposals, the public may be able to work directly with the developer or applicant to communicate their concerns or negotiate their case. Because developers recognize that public endorsement is critical to the success of a project, working with a developer early in the process may successfully impact the design or other details of a developer's proposal.

Seeking Elected or Appointed Office

Perhaps the most effective way for citizens to shape local plans and land use decisions is to commit to serving as elected or appointed officials. Almost any citizen over the age of 18 can run for local office or apply for a commission or committee. In some cases, even those under 18 may be appointed to a planning commission. Citizens may want to consider running for elected office or seeking and appointment to the planning commission, zoning board of appeals, or other committees, which are often created to address specific issues like the creation of a plan or ordinance. Or, those not interested in serving on a public body themselves may instead campaign for candidates that they believe will represent their opinions and interests.

Media

The media plays an important role in land use decisions. Citizen involvement can have a huge impact on decisions about an issue; but for citizens to become involved in an issue, they need to know if and how it affects them.

Many citizens rely on newspaper, television or radio coverage for information about local news. If land use and planning stories are not covered by the local media, many citizens may not be aware of plans or proposals that could affect them. In-depth media coverage can encourage public interest and participation, which can subsequently impact the outcome.

In many cases, media coverage of an issue is a result of citizen activism. Citizens often raise awareness through letters to the editor, and may work directly with the local media to encourage stories on an issue and make sure that their perspective is covered. Individuals and local governments alike should communicate regularly with the media, through letters, phone calls, press releases, and meetings with editorial staff, to be sure that issues are being covered regularly and fairly.

Appendices

- A. Glossary**
- B. Frequently Asked Questions**
- C. Local Jurisdictions—Planning/Zoning Control**
- D. Local Jurisdictions—Contact Information**
- E. Other Resources**

Appendix A:

Glossary

Density: the number of people or housing units contained on a parcel of land. Density is often expressed as the number of housing units per acre.

Footprint: outline of the built area of a structure at ground level.

Infrastructure: public services and facilities provided by a government to support the population, including roads, schools, sewer and water systems, and services such as police and fire protection and waste management.

Lot: an individual parcel of land.

Nonconforming use: a use that violates zoning regulations but is allowed to continue because it began before the applicable zoning regulations were enacted.

Planned Unit Development: a type of residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development that provides more flexibility than traditional zoning and lot layout. Buildings may be clustered on smaller lots to preserve natural features as common property or provide other benefits.

Purchase of development rights (PDR): a voluntary program where landowners receive financial compensation for selling a parcel's development rights to a land trust or similar agency. In return for the development value, a deed restriction is placed on a portion or entire piece of property, protecting the land from future development.

Quorum: the minimum number of members of a deliberative body, such as the planning commission, necessary to conduct the business of that group.

Rezoning: a change to the official zoning map and/or zoning ordinance that changes the zoning district and accompanying density, use, or other regulations for a parcel or land area.

Site plan: a set of documents and drawings that show the proposed physical layout of a development.

Site plan review: the process through which a jurisdiction determines if a site plan meets the standards of the zoning ordinance and other regulations.

Special use: use allowed in a zoning district only by obtaining a special use permit and the permission of the local zoning authority.

Appendix B:

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is a project approved if so many people object?

If the proposed project meets the requirements of the zoning ordinance, it **must** be approved, even if there is no public support for the project. By the same token, if a proposal doesn't meet the requirements of the ordinance, it can't be approved—even if the public supports it.

While this limits the effect that public input may have over some decisions, citizens can still play an important role in the decision-making process, by staying well informed of local issues. For some proposals, the public may be able to work directly with the developer or applicant at the beginning of the process, in order to communicate concerns or negotiate their case. Because developers recognize that public support is critical to their projects' success, working with a developer early in the process may change the details of a proposal.

How can a project be approved if it's not consistent with the master plan?

Master plans are guides used by communities to shape land use decisions, while properties are regulated by the zoning ordinance. While the zoning ordinance must be based on an adopted master plan, the master plan is not a law. In some cases (such as planned unit development reviews), the zoning ordinance may require compliance with the master plan as a condition for approval—but even in these cases it may be difficult to determine whether or not a proposal component meets the intent of the master plan.

What is the difference between a zoning or land use permit and a building permit? Why do I need both?

A zoning or land use permit allows for the development of a site according to the terms of the zoning ordinance, and is concerned with the placement on the site, height, and other basic design issues. Building permits are issued by the construction or inspection department **after** the land use permit is received, in order to ensure that the building is structurally sound, safe, and sanitary. Building permits are issued according to requirements found in the state construction code.

Can zoning restrictions be changed for my property?

Individual property owners can request a change from a zoning restriction in cases of hardship through the variance process. Variances offer legal relief for property owners by changing height, setback, or other requirements. Variance requests are reviewed and acted on by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

How can I change the height restriction for my property or other requirements of the ordinance?

Work with your local government staff and planning commission to introduce a zoning amendment to the planning commission, who will make a

recommendation to the legislative body. The legislative body will have final authority over whether or not the change is adopted.

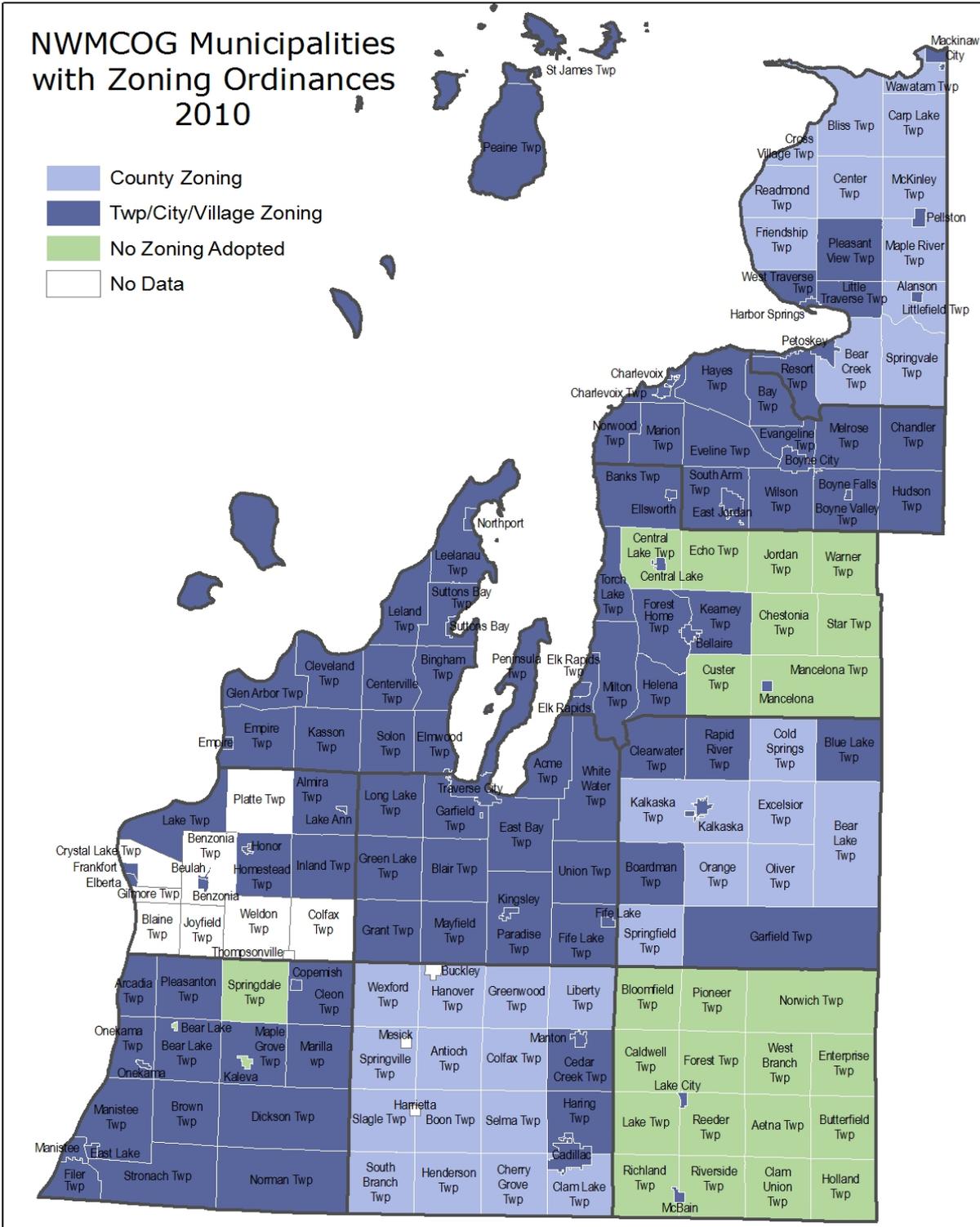
What does a planner do?

Planning staff—including zoning administrators, planners, and planning directors—are hired to interpret and enforce the zoning ordinance. Staff reviews and processes applications for land use permits, site plan review, and other zoning issues. They also provide advice and assistance to the planning commission, elected (legislative) body, and the zoning board of appeals. Staff has no authority over changes to the plan, zoning ordinance, or other local policies—authority rests with elected or appointed officials. But by providing assistance to these officials, staff plays an important role in local decision-making.

How do I find a copy of my community’s plan or zoning ordinance?

Many communities post master plans and zoning ordinances on their website; and some master plans and ordinances are also available at the local library and/or the local government offices. They can also be obtained by request. Websites and contact information are included in Appendix D.

Appendix C: Local Jurisdictions— Planning/Zoning Control



Appendix D: Local Jurisdictions— Contact Information

Area code for all phone numbers is 231

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/Zoning
Antrim County	533-6265	POB 187 Bellaire, MI 49615	www.antrimcounty.org	No
Banks Township	588-6126	6520 Center St/POB 68 Ellsworth, MI 49729	www.bankstownship.net	Township Zoning
Central Lake Twp	544-6687	1622 M-88 Hwy/POB 748 Central Lake, MI 49622	antrimcounty.org/centrallake.asp	No
Chestonia Twp	584-3222			No
Custer Township				No
Echo Township				No
Elk Rapids Township	264-9333	315 Bridge St/POB 365 Elk Rapids, MI 49629	www.elkrapids.com	Township Zoning
Forest Home Twp	533-8003	321 N Bridge St/POB 317 Bellaire, MI 49615	www.foresthometwp.com	Township Zoning
Helena Township	331-4643	8751 Helena Rd/POB 177 Alden, MI 49612	www.helenatwp.net	Township Zoning
Jordan Township				No
Kearney Township	533-5719	POB 51 Bellaire, MI 49615		Township Zoning
Mancelona Twp	587-9451	9610 S M-88 Hwy/POB 332 Mancelona, MI 49659	www.mancelonatownship.com	No
Milton Township	264-6612	7023 Cherry Ave/POB 309 Kewadin, MI 49648	www.miltontownship.org	Township Zoning
Star Township		6775 Alba Hwy Alba, MI 49611		No
Torch Lake Twp	599-2036	2355 N US31/POB 713 Eastport, MI 49627	www.torchlaketownship.org	Township Zoning
Warner Township	546-3568			No
Bellaire Village	533-8213	202 N Bridge St/POB 557 Bellaire, MI 49615	www.bellairemichigan.com	Village Zoning
Central Lake Village	544-6483	1622 N M-88 Hwy/POB 368 Central Lake, MI 49622	www.centrallakemi.org	Village Zoning
Ellsworth Village	588-7411	6520 Center St/POB 265 Ellsworth, MI 49729	www.villageofellsworth.com	Village Zoning
Elk Rapids Village	264-9274	315 Bridge St/POB 365 Elk Rapids, MI 49629	www.elkrapids.org	Village Zoning
Mancelona Village	587-8331	120 W State St Mancelona, MI 49659		Village Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/Zoning Control?
Benzie County	882-9671	448 Court Place Beulah, MI 49617	www.benzieco.net	
Almira Township	275-5862	7276 Ole White Dr Lake Ann, MI 49650		Township Zoning
Benzonia Twp	882-4411	1020 Michigan Ave Benzonia, MI 49616	www.benzoniatownship.org	
Blaine Township	352-9880	2760 Herring Grove Rd Arcadia, MI 49613		
Colfax Township	378-2144	7607 Michigan Ave/POB 68	Www.colfaxtpw.org	
Crystal Lake Twp	352-991	1651 Frankfort Hwy/POB 2129 Frankfort, MI 49635		
Gilmore Township	352-			
Homestead Twp	325-6772	11508 Honor Hwy/POB 315 Honor, MI 49640	www.homesteadtpw.org	Township Zoning
Inland Township	275-6568	19971 Kent St Interlochen, MI 49643		Township Zoning
Joyfield Township	882-0133	6393 Joyfield Rd Frankfort, MI 49635		
Lake Township	325-5202	5153 Scenic Hwy Honor, MI 49640	www.laketwp.org	
Platte Township	325-2459	11935 Fowler Rd Honor, MI 49640		
Weldon Township	378-2477	14731 Thompson Ave/POB 570 Thompsonville, MI 49683		
Benzonia Village	882-9981	1276 Michigan Ave Benzonia, MI 49616		
Beulah Village	882-4451	7228 Commercial St POB 326 Beulah, MI 49617	www.villageofbeulah.org	Village Zoning
Elberta Village	352-7201	151 Pearson St Elberta, MI 49628	www.villageofelberta.org	Village Zoning
Honor Village	325-8432	10922 Platte St/POB 95 Honor, MI 49640		Village Zoning
Thompsonville Village	378-2560	14714 Lincoln Ave Thompsonville, MI 49683		
City of Frankfort	352-7117	412 Main St/POB 351 Frankfort, MI 49635	www.frankfortmich.com	Village Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Charlevoix County	256-9711		www.charlevoixcounty.org	No
Bay Township	582-3594	05045 Boyne City Rd Boyne City, MI 49712	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Boyne Valley Twp	549-3130	2489 Railroad St/PO Box 191 Boyne Falls, MI 49713	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Chandler Twp			www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Charlevoix Twp	547-4611	12491 Waller Rd Charlevoix, MI 49720	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Evangeline Twp	582-2931	PO Box 396 Boyne City, MI 49712	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Eveline Twp			www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Hayes Twp	547-6961	09195 Old US 31 North	www.charlevoixcounty.org www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Hudson Twp	549-2646	07865 Reynolds Rd/ 08755 Huffman Lake Rd Elmira, MI 49730	www.hudson township.org	Township Zoning
Marion Twp	547-2154	03735 Marion Center Rd Charlevoix, MI	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Melrose Twp		04289 M75 North/PO Box 189 Walloon Lake, MI 49796	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Norwood Twp		19759 Lake St/PO Box 113 Charlevoix, MI 49720	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Peaine Twp	448-2389	36825 Kings Highway Beaver Island, MI 49782	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
South Arm Twp	459-1055	02811 M-66/PO Box 304 East Jordan, MI 49727	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
St James Twp		37735 Michigan Ave Beaver Island, MI	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Wilson Twp	582-1033	PO Box 447 Boyne City, MI 49712	www.charlevoixcounty.org	Township Zoning
Boyne City	582-6597	319 N Lake St Boyne City, MI 49712	gov.boynecity.com	Township Zoning
Boyne Falls				Township Zoning
Charlevoix	547-3270	210 State St Charlevoix, MI 49720	www.cityofcharlevoix.org	Township Zoning
East Jordan	536-3381	201 Main St/PO Box 499 East Jordan, MI 49727	www.eastjordancity.org	Township Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Emmet County	348-1702	200 Division St Petoskey, MI 49770	www.emmetcounty.com	
Bear Creek Twp	347-0736	373 N Division Rd Petoskey, MI	www.emmetcounty.com	County Zoning
Bliss Twp	537-4680	2265 N Sturgeon Bay Tr Levering, MI 49755		County Zoning
Carp Lake Twp		6339 Gill Rd Carp Lake, MI 49718	www.emmetcounty.com	County Zoning
Center Twp	539-8592	981 Van Rd Pellston, MI 49769		County Zoning
Cross Village Twp	242-0182	POB 182 Cross Village, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	County Zoning
Friendship Twp	526-8955	3018 Beacon Hill Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	County Zoning
Little Traverse Twp	526-5060	PO Box 112 Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	County Zoning
Littlefield Twp	548-2220	7631 Burr Ave Alanson, MI 49706		County Zoning
Maple River Twp	529-3000	3989 S US 31 Brutus, MI 49716		County Zoning
McKinley Twp	539-8388	1820 N US 31 Pellston, MI 49769		County Zoning
Pleasant View Twp	526-8140	2982 S Pleasonton Rd Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	Township Zoning
Readmond Twp	526-9601	6008 Wormwood Ln Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	County Zoning
Resort Twp	347-7915	2232 Resort Pike Rd/PO Box 848 Petoskey, MI 49770	www.resorttownship.org	County Zoning
Springvale Twp	347-3077	8198 E Mitchell Rd Petoskey, MI 49770	www.emmetcounty.com	County Zoning
Wawatam Twp	436-5274	123 W Etherington Mackinaw City	www.emmetcounty.com	County Zoning
West Traverse Twp	526-7361	8000 S M-119 Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	Township Zoning
Alanson	548-5431	7631 Burr Ave Alanson, MI 49706		Village Zoning
Harbor Springs		160 Zoll St Harbor Springs, MI 49740	www.harborinc.org	Village Zoning
Mackinaw City	436-5351	102 S Huron St Mackinaw City, MI 49701		City Zoning
Pellston	539-8342	125 N Milton St Pellston, MI 49769		Village Zoning
Petoskey	347-2500	101 E Lake St Petoskey, MI	Www.ci.petoskey.mi.us	City Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/Zoning Control?
Grand Traverse County	922-4622	400 Boardman Ave Traverse City, MI 49684	Www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us	No
Acme Township	938-1350	6042 Acme Rd Williamsburg, MI 49690	www.acmetownship.org	Township Zoning
Blair Twp	276-9263	2121 Co Rd 633 Grawn, MI 49637	www.blairtownship.org	Township Zoning
East Bay Township	947-8647	1965 3 Mile Rd N Traverse City, MI 8647	www.eastbaytwp.org	Township Zoning
Fife Lake Township	879-3963	134 Morgan St/POB 87 Fife Lake, MI 49633	www.fifelake.com/township	Township Zoning
Garfield Twp	941-1620	3848 Veterans Dr Traverse City, MI 49684	www.garfield-twp.com	Township Zoning
Grant Township		8986 Davis Rd Buckley, MI		Township Zoning
Green Lake Twp	276-9329	9394 10th St Interlochen, MI 49643	www.greenlaketownship.com	Township Zoning
Long Lake Township	946-2249	8870 N Long Lake Rd Traverse City, MI 49684	www.longlaketownship.com	Township Zoning
Mayfield Township	263-4599	2991 W Center Rd Kingsley, MI 49649		Township Zoning
Paradise Township	263-5251	2300 E M-113 Kingsley, MI 49649		Township Zoning
Peninsula Township	223-7322	13235 Center Rd Traverse City, MI 49686	www.peninsulatownship.com	Township Zoning
Union Township	369-3261	5020 Fife Lake Rd Fife Lake, MI 49633		Township Zoning
Whitewater Township	267-5141	5777 Vinton Rd/POB 159 Williamsburg, MI 49690	www.whitewatertownship.org	Township Zoning
Fife Lake Village	879-4291	616 Bates St/POB 298 Fife Lake, MI 49633		Village Zoning
Kingsley Village	263-7778	207 S Brownson Kingsley, MI 49649	Www.villageofkingsley.com	Village Zoning
City of Traverse City	922-4460	400 Boardman Ave Traverse City, MI 49684	www.ci.traverse-city.mi.us	City Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/Zoning Control?
Kalkaska County			www.kalkaskacounty.net	
Bear Lake Township				County Zoning
Blue Lake Twp	587-8354	10599 Twin Lake Rd Mancelona, MI 49659	www.kalkaskacounty.net/bluelk.asp	Township Zoning
Boardman Township	369-2211	4859 Pine St South Boardman, MI 49680		Township Zoning
Clearwater Township	587-8633	5440 River St/POB 1 Rapid City, MI 49676		Township Zoning
Coldsprings Township	587-8633	6515 Co Rd 571 NE Mancelona, MI 49659	www.coldspringsexcelsior.org/	County Zoning
Excelsior Township	258-6108	987 Co Rd 571 NE Kalkaska, MI 49646	www.coldspringsexcelsior.org/	County Zoning
Garfield Twp	369-2483	466 W Sharon Rd Fife Lake, MI 49633		Township Zoning
Kalkaska Township	258-9305	209 Laurel St Kalkaska, MI 49659		County Zoning
Oliver Township	258-4206	5472 Kriss Rd SE Kalkaska, MI 49659		County Zoning
Orange Township	369-3470	O28 Boardman Rd S South Boardman, MI 49680		County Zoning
Rapid River Township	258-2943	1010 Phelps Rd Kalkaska, MI 494646		Township Zoning
Springfield Township	879-4541	5253 Ingersoll Rd Fife Lake, MI 49633		County Zoning
Kalkaska Village	258-9191	200 Hyde St Kalkaska, MI 49659	www.kalkaskavillage.com	Village Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Leelanau County	256-9711	8527 S Government Center Dr Suttons Bay, MI 49682	www.leelanaucounty.com	No
Bingham Township	922-6767	7171 Center Hwy Traverse City, MI 49684	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Centerville Township		Cedar, MI 49621	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Cleveland Twp	228-6488	955 W Harbor Hwy Maple City, MI 49664	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Elmwood Township	946-0921	10090 E Lincoln Rd Traverse City, MI 49684	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Empire Township	326-5300	10088 W Front St/POB 234 Empire, MI 49630	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Glen Arbor Township	334-3539	6394 W Western Ave/POB 276 Glen Arbor, MI	www.glenarbortownship.com	Township Zoning
Kasson Township		Maple City, MI 49664	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Leelanau Twp	386-5138	119 E Nagonaba St/POB 338 Northport, MI 49670	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Leland Township	256-7546	POB 112 Leland, MI 49654	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Solon Township		8907 Railroad Ave Cedar, MI 49621	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Suttons Bay Township	271-2722	321 N St Joseph St, Suite C POB 457 Suttons Bay, MI 49682	www.leelanaucounty.com	Township Zoning
Empire Village	326-5466	POB 253 Empire, MI 49630	www.leelanaucounty.com	Village Zoning
Northport Village	386-5182	116 W Nagonab/POB 336 Northport, MI 49670	www.leelanaucounty.com	Village Zoning
Suttons Bay Village	271-2722	321 N St Joseph St Suttons Bay, MI 49682	www.leelanaucounty.com	Village Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Manistee County	256-9711	415 Third St Manistee, MI 49660	www.manisteecountymi.com	
Arcadia Twp	889-4463	3422 Lake St/PO Box 318 Arcadia, MI 49613	www.arcadiatwpmi.org	Township Zoning
Bear Lake Twp	864-3620	7771 Lake St Bear Lake, MI 49614	www.bearlakemichigan.org	Township Zoning
Brown Twp	723-4481	8233 Coates Hwy Manistee, MI 49660		Township Zoning
Cleon Twp	378-2616	16505 Imhoff Dr Copemish, MI 49625		Township Zoning
Dickson Twp	477-5885	14270 Brethren Blvd Brethren, MI 49619		Township Zoning
Filer Twp	723-3138	2505 Filer City Rd Manistee, MI 49660	www.filertownship.com	Township Zoning
Manistee Twp	723-6507	410 Holden Street Manistee, MI	www.manisteetownship.com	Township Zoning
Maple Grove Twp	362-3825	9213 Aura St Kaleva, MI 49645		Township Zoning
Marilla Twp	378-2149	9991 Marilla Rd Copemish, MI 49625		Township Zoning
Norman Twp	848-4564	PO Box 143 Wellston, MI 49689	www.wellstonmichigan.org/ normantwp	Township Zoning
Onekama Twp	889-3308	5435 Main St Onekama, MI 49675	www.onekama.info	Township Zoning
Pleasanton Twp	864-2584	8958 Lumley Rd Bear Lake, MI 49614	www.pleasantontownship.org	Township Zoning
Springdale Twp		14492 Glovers Lake Rd Bear Lake, MI 49614		No
Stronach Twp	723-7983	2471 Main St Manistee, MI 49660		Township Zoning
Bear Lake Village	864-0175	PO Box 175 Bear Lake, MI 49614	www.bearlakemichigan.org	No
Copemish Village	378-4652	1678 First St Copemish, MI 49625		Village Zoning
East Lake Village	723-9558	175 S Main St East Lake, MI 49626		Village Zoning
Kaleva Village	362-3366	9219 Aura St Kaleva, MI		No
City of Manistee	723-2558	70 Maple Street/PO Box 358 Manistee, MI 49660	www.ci.manistee.mi.us	City Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Missaukee County	839-4967	111 S Canal/PO Box 800 Lake City, MI 49651	www.missaukee.org	No
Aetna Township	826-3797	2950 E Kelly Rd Falmouth, MI 49632		No
Bloomfield Twp	824-3472			No
Butterfield Twp	328-4467	3920 S 13 Mile Rd Merritt, MI 49667		No
Caldwell Twp	839-7105	9510 W Walker Lake City, MI 49651		No
Clam Union Twp		766 E Prosper Falmouth, MI 49632		No
Enterprise Twp	328-4544	9022 Burns Rd Merritt, MI 49667		No
Forest Twp	839-3159	1181 N Decker Lake City, MI 49651		No
Holland Twp		7000 E Finkle Rd Falmouth, MI 49632		No
Lake Twp	839-7655	8105 W Kelly Rd McBain, MI 49657		No
Norwich Twp	229-4650			No
Pioneer Twp	229-2747	2914 W Moorestown Lake City, MI 49651		No
Reeder Twp	839-3343	2970 W Kelly Rd Lake City, MI 49651		No
Richland Twp		8299 S Lucas Rd McBain, MI 49657		No
Riverside Twp		2900 W Geers Rd McBain, MI 49657		No
West Branch Twp	229-4484	2860 E Walker Rd Lake City, MI 49651		No
Lake City	839-4561	POB 1 Lake City, MI 49651		City Zoning
McBain	825-2011	508 W Maple St McBain, MI 49657		City Zoning

Jurisdiction	Phone	Address	Website	Planning/ Zoning
Wexford County	779-9453	437 E Division St Cadillac, MI 49601	www.wexfordcounty.org	
Antioch Twp	885-2398	4490 N 19 Rd Mesick, MI 49668		County Zoning
Boon Township	775-8012	204 S Myrtle St Boon, MI 49618		County Zoning
Cedar Creek Twp	824-3621	2530 N 41 1/2 Rd Manton, MI 49663		Township Zoning
Cherry Grove Twp	775-1138	4830 E M-55 Cadillac, MI 49601	www.cherrygrovetwp.org	County Zoning
Clam Lake Twp	775-5401	8809 E M-115 Cadillac, MI 49601	www.clamlaketownship.org	County Zoning
Colfax Twp		4964 N 31 Rd Manton, MI 49663		County Zoning
Greenwood Twp		6761 N 35 Rd Manton, MI 49663		County Zoning
Hanover Twp	269-3404	203 N 2nd St Buckley, MI 49620		County Zoning
Haring Twp	775-7319	515 Bell Ave Cadillac, MI 49601	www.haringtownship.org	Township Zoning
Henderson Twp		2076 W 46 Rd Cadillac, MI 49601		County Zoning
Liberty Twp	824-3603	7478 N 41 Rd Manton, MI 49663		County Zoning
Selma Twp	775-5071	4101 S 35 Rd Cadillac, MI 49601	www.selmatownship-mi.org	County Zoning
Slagle Twp		2971 S 7 Rd Harrietta, MI 49638		County Zoning
South Branch Twp				County Zoning
Springville Twp	885-2729	4785 N M-37 Mesick, MI 49668		County Zoning
Buckley	269-3700	106 Industrial Dr Buckley, MI 49620		Village Zoning
Cadillac	775-0181	200 N Lake St Cadillac, MI 49601	www.cadillac-mi.net	City Zoning
Harrietta		122 Davis St Harrietta, MI 49638		No
City of Manton	824-3572	306 W Main St Manton, MI 49663	www.mantonmichigan.org	City Zoning
Mesick	885-1646	119 E Mesick Ave Mesick, MI 49668		Village Zoning

Appendix E: Other Resources

New Designs for Growth

www.newdesignsforgrowth.org

New Designs for Growth is a program administered collaboratively by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments and the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce. The program is designed to promote planning and development best practices that accommodate growth and maintain the quality of life in Northwest Lower Michigan. The website includes a guidebook of best practices, implementation resources, and information on upcoming educational events.

Grand Vision

www.thegrandvision.org

The Grand Vision is a planning effort designed to develop a citizen-led blueprint for growth that will secure the future prosperity and quality of life in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford Counties. The website includes project history and information on current issues and activities throughout the region.

American Association of Planning

www.planning.org

The American Planning Association (APA) is a nonprofit education and membership organization. Members include practicing planners, planning students, elected and appointed officials, planning commissioners, and interested citizens.

Michigan Association of Planning

www.planningmi.org

The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sound community planning that benefits the residents of Michigan. MAP provides a variety of educational programs and resources for planning commissioners, elected officials, and the public.

Michigan Municipal League

www.mml.org

The Michigan Municipal League (MML) is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to support local government leadership and development. The MML engages in education, advocacy, and other services for cities, villages, urban townships, and other community associations.

Michigan Townships Association

www.michigantownships.org

The Michigan Townships Association (MTA) promotes the interest of township government by fostering strong, vibrant communities; advocating for legislation; providing educational programs and resources; and encouraging ethical practices.

Northern Michigan Community Media Center

www.upnorthmedia.org

Cable Channel 97 (analog) and 2 and 992 (digital)

The Northern Michigan Community Media Center supports the creation, production, and distribution of audio and video media which promotes and celebrates local achievement, civic engagement, local culture and art appreciation, and individual expression, which is intended to be available to everyone through cable television and the internet.

Relevant Statutes

Freedom of Information Act (Public Act 442 of 1976)

The Freedom of Information Act applies to nearly all records of a planning/zoning department, planning commissions, zoning boards, zoning boards of appeals.

Joint Municipal Planning Act (Public Act 226 of 2003)

The Joint Municipal Planning Act, adopted in December, 2003, allows a city(ies), village(s), and township(s) to join together to have one Planning Commission and zoning ordinance. This version includes 2004 and 2008 amendments.

Land Division Act (Public Act 288 of 1967)

The Land Division Act is the Michigan statute for dividing property (exempt divisions, divisions, bonus divisions, re-divisions, subdivisions), establishing local government review and approval of splitting a parcel of land, and is the enabling statute for county, village, city or township land division and subdivision ordinances. This version includes 2004 amendments.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008)

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act is the enabling statute for creation of a planning commission, and local government adoption of plans, master plans, and so on. This act is for counties, townships, cities, and villages. It took effect September 1, 2008 and replaces the County Planning Act, Township Planning Act, and Municipal Planning Act.

Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006)

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act is the enabling statute for creation of a zoning ordinance for counties, townships, cities and villages. It took effect July 1, 2006 and replaces the County Zoning Act, Township Zoning Act, and City and Village Zoning Act.

Open Meetings Act (Public Act 267 of 1976)

The Open Meeting act applies to planning commissions, zoning boards, zoning boards of appeals, and virtually all deliberations and voting at those meetings.

Regional Planning Act (Public Act 281 of 1945)

The Regional Planning Act is the enabling statute for creation of regional planning commissions.