



Focus 2020

The Future of
Grand Traverse County

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**The Future of
Grand Traverse County**

December, 1995

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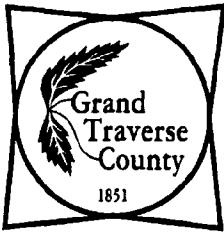
THE FUTURE OF GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

Summary. In the next twenty-five years, Grand Traverse County will witness more change than it saw in the preceding one hundred years. The population will nearly double, bringing with it more economic opportunity, more services, more cultural activities and more social diversity. It will also bring more traffic congestion, significant loss of open lands, inefficient infrastructure expansions, more pollution, greater loss of natural resources and a broad range of social troubles typically associated with population concentrations. There are few socially or legally viable mechanisms available to stop growth or to even significantly slow it down. However, there are a number of techniques to channel and direct it and to manage its impacts on the community. In this report, we look at the likely future of the County from the perspective of a "business as usual" approach to growth and then from the perspective of how some growth management techniques might be used to control and mitigate the negative impacts of growth.

In two recent planning sessions, a group of County residents took up the challenge to look into the future of the County and help describe what they saw (see Appendix 1 for a list of participants). This report presents their impressions and those of the project's consultant. It begins with a discussion of those forces that are largely beyond the influence of local government. These may either be positive, negative or both, depending on the response of local decision-makers. This discussion of "threats and opportunities" leads naturally into an exploration of what the County will be like in the year 2020 and what steps local officials may take to respond to threats and/or to capitalize on opportunities.

Without a concerted effort by local officials to address the effects of growth, the likely pattern of development will essentially be an extension of the trends of the past twenty years. Residential and commercial developments will spill outward from the urbanized areas consuming well over fifty square miles of land currently dedicated to agriculture or open space. This sprawling growth will result in greater congestion, wasteful strip commercial development, and it will leave underutilized infrastructure in its wake.

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...The County's best chances for successfully managing the enormous challenges of the future will be founded in a frank and broad-based discussion...

On the other hand, since there are mechanisms to manage this growth, it is possible for the County to achieve significant growth and economic expansion without the far-reaching negative impacts that can be expected from a "business as usual" response. Virtually all of those mechanisms, however, will require shifts in the way development is viewed in the County and most will require unprecedented levels of inter-governmental communication, cooperation and, in some cases, resource sharing.

This report does not claim to answer the multitude of questions associated with such mechanisms. Its primary purpose is to continue the County-wide dialogue about the issues of growth and the range of approaches that may be taken. The County's best chances for successfully managing the enormous challenges of the future will be founded in a frank and broad-based discussion of all the issues.



THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

It is an accepted fact that the population of Grand Traverse County will grow significantly at least through the 25-year planning horizon of this study. There is little that the County or its residents can do to stem the pace of growth. It is an inexorable fact of market and demographic forces. No matter how the growth itself is regarded, the effects of growth may be perceived as either threats to the current quality of life, or opportunities for existing residents and businesses; or, in some instances, both depending on the local response.

In a series of discussions on this subject, a group of County residents identified the following as significant threats and opportunities facing the County:

Opportunities:

- *The aesthetic appeal of Grand Traverse County.* There is little argument that Grand Traverse County is one of the most beautiful areas of Michigan. The aesthetic appeal of the County has been one of its greatest strengths and, in spite of the anticipated growth, its beauty will continue to present important opportunities for the future.

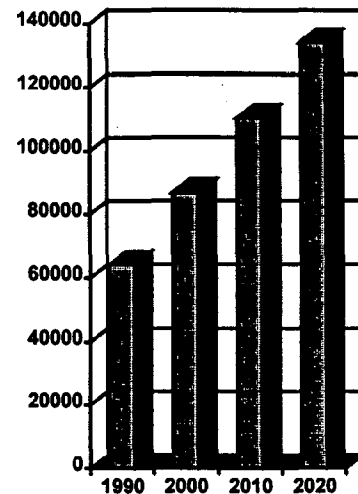


Figure 1. Grand Traverse County projected population.





- The quality of life of the region.* Grand Traverse County offers a pleasant balance of rural and northwoods amenities with modern comforts and convenience. The area's superior schools, relatively efficient and responsive local government, safe streets, regional health care services and solid family values combine to create an attractive lifestyle for local residents.
- Job creation and economic development.* The aesthetic characteristics of the region and its quality of life offer good opportunities for further high quality job creation activities. With the anticipated growth of the region, many new jobs in construction and services industries will naturally follow. Through effective business attraction and retention efforts, even more high-skill and high-wage job creation is possible.
- Openness to inter-governmental cooperation.* There is a tradition of cooperation among the units of local government in the County. The fact that the County is undertaking a Master Planning effort in cooperation with the other local units is good evidence of this. Many seemingly insurmountable challenges can be met easily with cooperation among local units of government.

Threats:

- Sprawling growth.* Left unchecked or undirected, the growth that the County will experience will certainly sprawl over much of the northern half of the County. The aesthetic beauty of the region and its quality of life will face a withering assault of challenges. Without the attention of local decision makers, this sprawl threatens the region's environment, its aesthetics and the quality of life that have made the County so attractive in the first place.



- *Pollution and the degradation of natural resources.* In addition to being important to the aesthetic values of the community, the County's natural resources are vital to its economy and ecology. With unmanaged growth will come the destruction of important wildlife habitat and the loss of agricultural, tourism and forestry resources, key elements in the economy of Northern Michigan.

The clear air and pristine fresh water of the County's lakes and streams are certainly placed in jeopardy by the sprawling growth that is anticipated. However, the pollution that comes from development and growth can be readily managed, if the County and local government have a comprehensive plan in place to do so.

- *Overloaded infrastructure and public services.* The expected doubling of the County's population in the next twenty-five years will place enormous demands on roads, utility systems and on public services. But, like the effects on natural resources, with effective preparation and planning, the community has the resources to properly manage this challenge.



FUTURING REPORT

Perhaps the most important element of competent public and private stewardship is the realistic assessment of the forces that will threaten the County in the next twenty-five years and the opportunities that will present themselves. With the preceding descriptions of the most important opportunities and threats, it is appropriate to turn the discussion to the likely impact of those forces on life in Grand Traverse County.



THE "BUSINESS AS USUAL" SCENARIO

While there may be general agreement that the growth that is coming will present a series of threats and opportunities to the residents of Grand Traverse County, there is less consensus about what should be done to manage the growth. Furthermore, the patchwork of local governmental agencies with minimal accountability to one another makes comprehensive approaches difficult. Finally, there is the factor that the threat is relatively slow-moving and not immediately obvious. Residents generally take little notice of its effects until it is too late to address them very effectively.

As a result of these factors, the most likely pattern of growth management in Grand Traverse County over the next twenty-five years may best be described as "business as usual" (BAU). One by one, developments will push ever farther outward from the core, public utilities will be upgraded and expanded, roads will be widened and shopping centers, fast food and convenience stores will follow as soon as there are enough residents nearby to support them (see Figure 2). Decisions to approve the sprawl of development will happen incrementally in one Township and then the next. Owners of larger tracts of land will be offered ever higher prices for their real estate until eventually they (and ultimately the community) will be hard pressed to resist. Master plans and zoning designations will be shifted toward more intense uses and agricultural land uses will diminish in scope and importance.

In the wake of the press outward, the fully developed portions of the County will, for a time, continue to flourish. However, as utility systems are extended further outward and/or as new systems are developed, the cost of maintaining water and wastewater systems and roadways located in the core will fall on a declining percentage of residents and businesses and on an ever-shrinking percentage of total equalized valuation.

The Shape of Business as Usual in Grand Traverse County. It is impossible to predict with precision the exact pattern that growth will take in the BAU scenario, but a meaningful, general approximation is provided in Map A. It is based on the input of a number of local residents and planning professionals, a review of utility systems and roadways, local master plans and natural features. It describes the

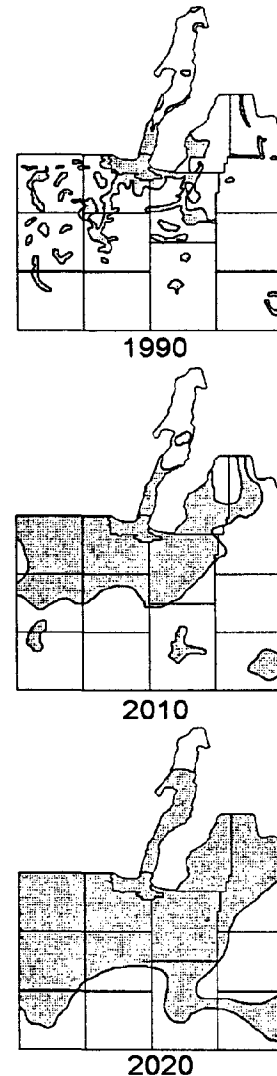
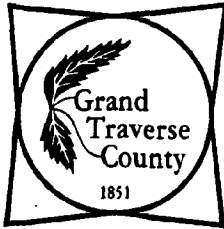


Figure 2. The developed portions of the County reflected in the upper map are expected to spread ever outward, eventually sprawling over two-thirds of the land area.



*...a total of 30,000
acres, or about 47
square miles, will be
consumed by
the residential
development alone*

outward movement of urbanized development consuming most of Long Lake, Green Lake, Garfield, East Bay and Acme Townships with significant encroachments into Blair, Paradise, Peninsula, Fife Lake and Whitewater Townships. Relatively smaller parts of Grant, Mayfield and Union Townships will be affected, but the proximity of growth will certainly impact the lifestyle of residents there.

The population density in the outlying portions of the County ranges from about one household per acre to well over ten acres per household. Map A is based on an average of 1 acre per household and it assumes that most of the growth anticipated in the next twenty-five years will occur in these outlying areas with some increased densities in the urbanized parts of Garfield, East Bay, Long Lake Townships and the City of Traverse City. The addition of about 66,000 residents with an average household size of 2.2 persons, means that about 30,000 new households will be needed. (An average household size of 2.2 persons is appropriate for this projection since household size has been declining in the County and is likely to reach about 2.2 persons by 2020). At 1 acre per household, a total of 30,000 acres, or about 47 square miles, will be consumed by the residential development alone. To give this figure some perspective, there are 36 square miles in the typical township. Thus, at lower average densities of 1 acre per household, an area approximately equivalent to all of the currently undeveloped portions of Garfield, Long Lake, Green Lake, and the northern half of Blair Townships will be consumed by development by the year 2020.

Northern Sub-Area. In the northern portion of the County including the City of Traverse City, and Garfield, Acme, Peninsula and East Bay Townships, development will be virtually complete by the year 2020. About one-half of the anticipated population growth will reside in these five jurisdictions. Map A assumes that a new east-west corridor will be built along an alignment described generally as Gray, Hartman, Hammond, South Bates and Saylor Roads. This will form another high-volume east-west corridor and spur even further development.



In the BAU scenario, the improvements to this corridor will accelerate development and sprawl both along the corridor and to the south. Its influence will essentially extend to the southern reaches of Garfield Township, through the Arbutus/Spider Lakes area of East Bay Township and well into the eastern portions of Long Lake Township and much of Acme Township.

In Peninsula Township, the purchase of development rights program will be somewhat effective at mitigating sprawl, to the extent that funds are available.

The core of Traverse City will remain relatively vital due to its proximity to the recreational amenities of the Bay and the established infrastructure. Retail and commercial activities in the core will continue to struggle against competition from strip commercial, mall developments and office parks in suburban areas.

Map A shows the extent of urban development and urban influences. Urban development includes fully improved streets, urban or suburban densities of at least two units per acre, and public water and wastewater systems. Urban influence areas are less dense, but are planned and poised for further growth only awaiting sufficient market demand. The balance of the northern sub-area falls into this category.

Western Sub-Area. In the western portion of the County including Long Lake, Green Lake and Blair Townships, significant residential development will have occurred with expanding pockets of commercial at Chum's Corners, and along US-31 and at Interlochen. Urban influence areas will predominate, but there will be pockets of fully urbanized areas. The "Gray/ Hartman/Hammond" improvement will have its most significant impact in Long Lake Township. Existing residential development on the major lakes will necessitate the development of new wastewater systems or the extension of the Traverse City system to serve these areas. Utilities will likely be extended to the new High School and these will stimulate further development where service is available.



Where public water and wastewater services are not available, average densities of about one unit per acre overall are expected. However, there will be numerous subdivisions with wastewater service and developers will push for greater densities to offset utility costs.

As shown in Map A, residential subdivisions and "keyhole" plats will develop in the vicinity of the lakes and in the northeast part of Long Lake Township suburban subdivisions will likely predominate, especially if municipal, or private

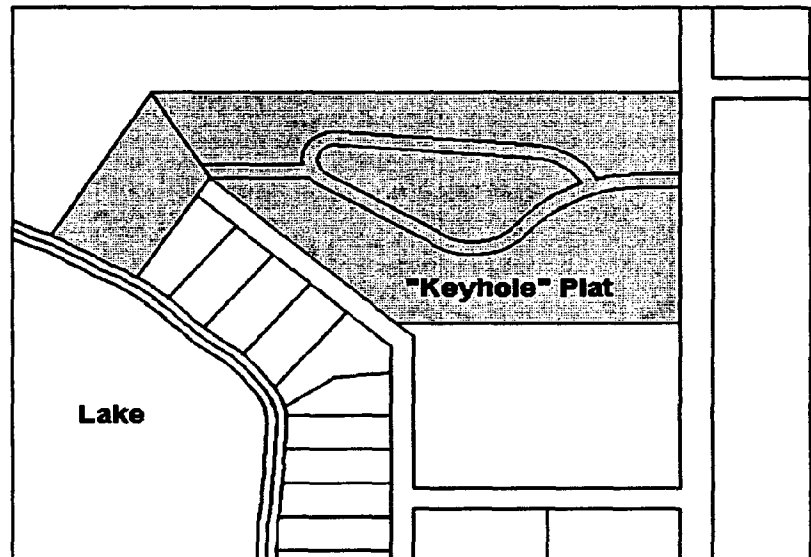


Figure 3. "Keyhole" developments increase development impacts on inland lakes.

utility services are provided. The abrupt rise in elevation overlooking the Bay provides numerous opportunities for subdivisions with high quality views of the surrounding countryside. The southern-most reaches of Blair Township will retain much of its woodland and agricultural uses, but the current trend of single family homes being placed on large acreage parcels will continue to reduce the viability of the area's agricultural, wetlands and forested areas.

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

MAP
A

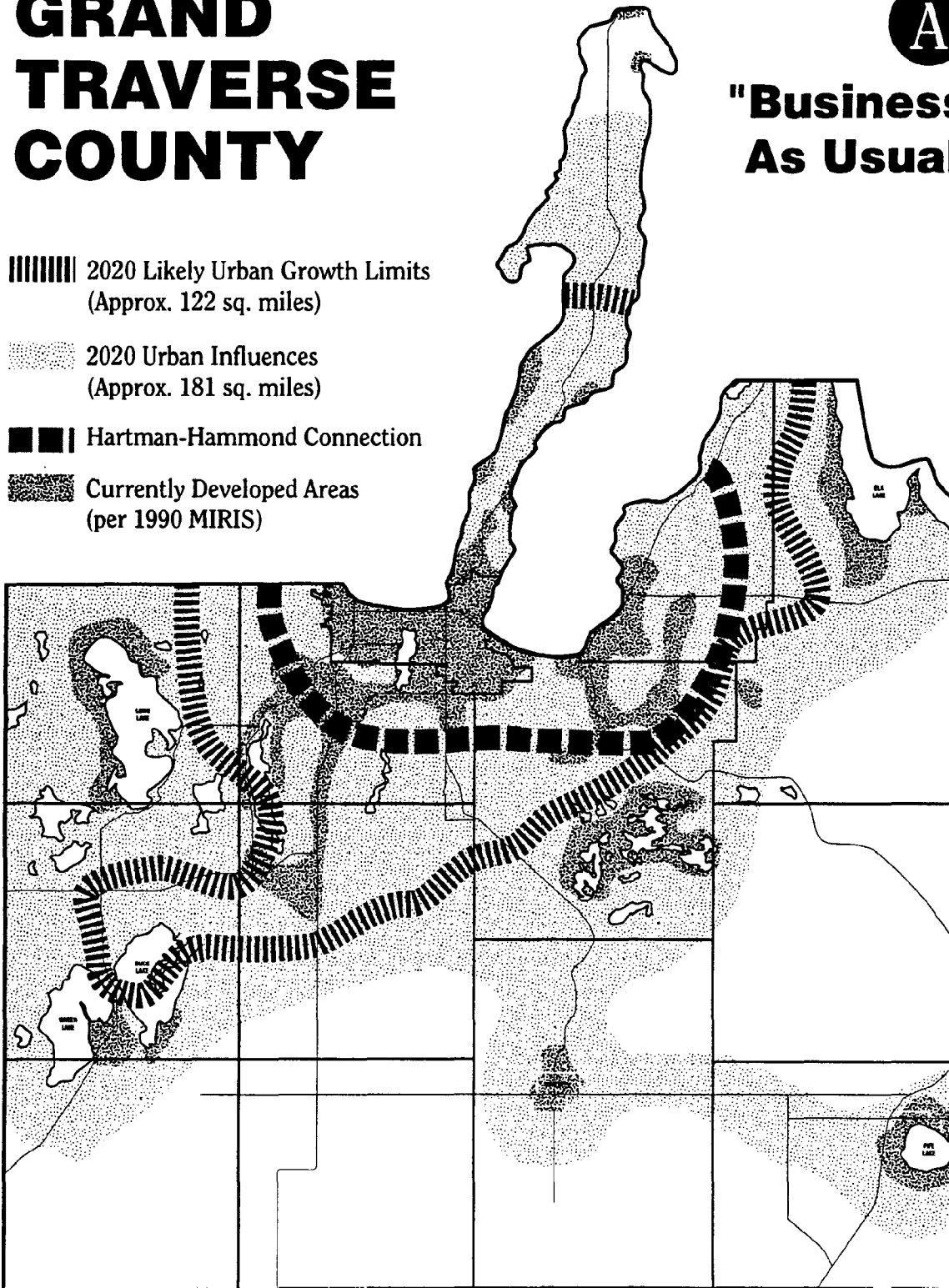
**"Business
As Usual"**

||||| 2020 Likely Urban Growth Limits
(Approx. 122 sq. miles)

..... 2020 Urban Influences
(Approx. 181 sq. miles)

■ ■ ■ Hartman-Hammond Connection

■ ■ ■ Currently Developed Areas
(per 1990 MIRIS)



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Eastern Sub-Area. Consisting of Whitewater and Union Townships, the eastern area will experience the full range of development pressures in the next twenty-five years. Commercial and residential growth emanating eastward from Acme Township along M-72 and the high quality views above Elk Lake will spur further large lot residential development in Whitewater Township. On the other hand, all of Union Township is designated State Forest land with about two-thirds of the Township actually in State ownership. This factor, and the relatively remote location and sparse population of the Township will slow growth there. One factor that may offset these inhibitions is the planned improvements to US-131 in Kalkaska County and the potential of an interchange in the vicinity of Supply Road, eventually. The timetable for these improvements is not yet established, but the TC-TALUS Long Range plan does envision better access to the southern portion of Whitewater and the north-central part of Union Township through improvements to Supply Road east of High Lake Road.

Little of the Eastern Sub-Area is expected to achieve urban or suburban development patterns during the planning horizon of the Master Plan. However, urban influence areas will extend well into Whitewater Township along M-72 and west and south of Elk Lake. In addition, there will be an increasing trend toward the development of single family homes on large acreage parcels in both townships, reducing the value of the lands for agriculture, forestry or wildlife habitat.

Southern Sub-Area. This area consists of Grant, Mayfield, Paradise and Fife Lake Townships and the Villages of Kingsley and Fife Lake. This area is the most remote from the outward sprawl of the urban area, but it will experience significant effects as a result of that sprawl in the BAU scenario. Some urban influences emanating from the sprawl of the region will likely be experienced in Paradise Township along the Garfield Road corridor and in Grant Township south of Green Lake. In addition, however, expansions to the Kingsley and Fife Lake wastewater collection and treatment systems will likely spawn more intense development in these areas and planned improvements to US-131 will significantly impact Fife Lake Township.

...there will be an increasing trend toward the development of single family homes on large acreage parcels in both townships, reducing the value of the lands for agriculture, forestry or wildlife habitat.



The effect will be to fragment otherwise viable tracts of farmland and forestry properties into a patchwork...

The primary development feature in the Southern Sub-Area over the next twenty-five years, however, will be loss of agricultural lands. As in the Eastern Sub-Area, there will be an increasing trend toward the development of single family homes on large acreage parcels. The effect will be to fragment otherwise viable tracts of farmland and forestry properties into a patchwork that makes commercial agriculture and forestry infeasible. This trend will be accelerated by the already marginal returns available from agriculture.

Of course, densities will not be uniform around the county, nor will development be equally dispersed in all parts of the county. Certainly there will still be large tracts of undeveloped lands, forests and farm lands in the County in the year 2020 regardless of the growth management efforts of local government. But those areas that do remain will be significantly reduced in scope, quality and viability for agriculture, and wildlife habitat and recreation will be compromised.

The BAU approach to growth management is the pattern of growth found in most communities facing a surge in development. There is much that can be learned from the communities that have taken this path. The market in Grand Traverse County is likely to demand the suburban lifestyle that has become the American model for middle class life. The beauty of the County and its desirable quality of life will further strengthen this trend. As new jobs are created more people want that lifestyle and with automobiles within the price range of virtually all consumers, the increased commuting times and distances will be regarded as minor inconveniences. In short, if the demand is there, it will be met. The pattern is well established in other communities and it is becoming apparent in Grand Traverse County: With growth will come wasteful, ugly urban sprawl.

If the BAU course tends to be the one most frequently followed—either by active choice or by passive resignation to the marketplace—it is appropriate to ask what life will be like in Grand Traverse County in the year 2020, if we follow that path. And beyond that, what will life be like for the next generation in the year 2040 or the one that follows in the year 2060?



The answers to these questions are apparent from a brief look at the history of other BAU regions. Communities that have already peaked, and now are in decline, have traced many of their problems to the persistent spreading out of the fabric of the community leaving the core weakened and dying and isolating the many neighborhoods on the edges from one another. Utility systems are stretched into unworkable networks, with newer portions overtaxed while large sections of the existing infrastructure go under-used.

The lifestyle of residents in these areas is often unpleasant, characterized by extended commuting, harried excursions from strip center to strip center and long waits in gridlock at suburban intersections. There is little sense of connectedness to the place. Residential development spread out over tracts which only the year before had been productive farms or orchards. Greenspace and forests are dozed into parking lots and gas stations.



In communities which have allowed sprawl to occur, convenience services are no longer convenient. One can no longer walk anywhere. Children must be bussed to remote schools with no connections to their neighborhoods and they must be driven by parents to virtually every after-school activity they may attend.

In areas which have failed to plan for their growth, the natural environment has often been subjugated to the effects of human activity. Natural streams and drainage courses are diverted to underground tubes. Air quality suffers from industrial and auto emissions, light pollution masks the night skies and the constant din of traffic and human activity overpowers the natural sounds of the region. As wildlife habitat is dozed under or paved over, ecosystems



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begin to collapse and, with a balance gone, only the most hardy insects and rodents remain to share the environment with the human population. Residents in these sprawling metropolitan regions must use their autos even to bring them into proximity with unspoiled landscapes.

Of course, people do manage to live useful and productive lives in these communities. Most find good jobs and are able to raise their families. Many sprawling metropolitan regions are recognized for their high standards of income, their cultural resources and their economic power. Therefore, the BAU course of development must be viewed realistically in Grand Traverse County. Certainly it will mean loss of many of the natural features that have characterized the area in the past and a shift to a faster-paced urban lifestyle, but it will also have its compensations in terms of higher incomes and greater cultural diversity. Nevertheless, the heritage of Grand Traverse County is that of a much higher quality lifestyle in harmony with nature, not in domination over it.

Therefore, the question that must be addressed in the County Master Plan is: If we have a choice, how can we accommodate the growth that is coming without the wholesale degradation of our natural environment?

The Growth Management Alternative may provide some answers to this question.



THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE

The population of Grand Traverse County will double in the next twenty-five years and, based on past practice, the conventional pattern of growth will follow the path of least resistance. As a result, unless the community takes some concrete steps to alter its approach to growth, there is little reason to expect that the ugly urban sprawl described in the previous section will not occur. Therefore, recognizing that there will be some negative impacts associated with growth, what steps can be taken to assure that those impacts are minimized and that the development that occurs is of the highest quality possible?

It is certainly important to conserve and preserve the natural character of the region, but it is equally important to recognize that the new urbanized environment that is coming need not be characterized by the ugly sprawl that is the typical result of the BAU course. The new environment must be on a par in terms of its quality, functionality and aesthetics with the existing environment—while accommodating the added population.

Fortunately, there are a number of proven techniques to manage growth. These vary from stringent, centralized controls that attempt to manipulate market forces, to guidelines and persuasion that seek to alter the perceptions of consumers. Some may be more applicable than others and in the final County Master Plan, a series of strategies will be set forth for use by the County and by units of local government to alter the patterns of growth in the County. For the purposes of this futuring report, it is necessary only to describe the shape of an alternative to the BAU scenario and the range of techniques that may be considered to accomplish it.

Accepting that there will be about 66,000 additional residents in Grand Traverse County by the year 2020 and that the population will spread over the landscape at approximately the same densities as today, it is appropriate first to examine the BAU assumptions about density. If, for example, instead of assuming average densities of one household per acre, one assumed 1.5 households per acre, the amount of land needed to accommodate the growth will decrease from about 47 square miles to about 31 square miles. If development is

The new environment must be on a par in terms of its quality, functionality and aesthetics with the existing environment—while accommodating the added population.



encouraged in proximity to currently developed areas, and discouraged in areas currently in agriculture or forestry, the effect is to significantly reduce the sprawl effect. Therefore, a series of strategies intended to shape and guide growth will be needed to accomplish this.

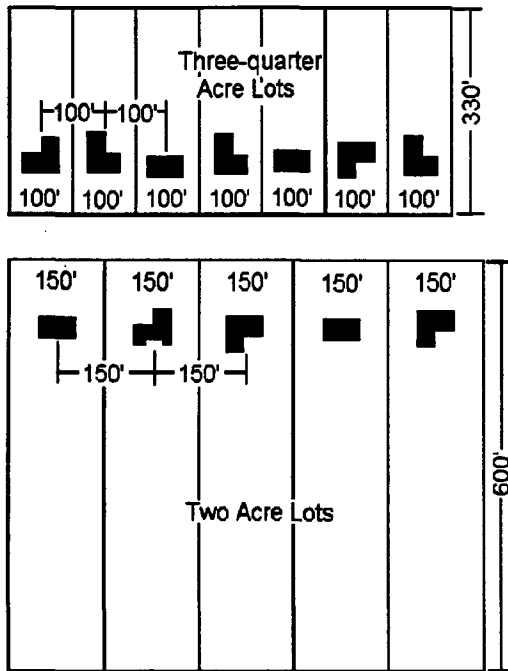


Figure 4. A 50% increase in average densities can be accomplished without significant reductions in privacy. This illustration shows that a reduction in average lot sizes from 2 acres to 3/4 acre, only decreases the distances between homes by about 60 feet. Privacy can best be achieved through plantings and screening.

Many communities around the country have implemented such strategies with the result being the definition of *urban development areas*, *urban influence or reserve areas* and *rural use areas*. Urban development areas are those portions of the community that are already significantly developed or in the immediate path of development. These are areas where the community is able to provide public services and where compaction is encouraged. The essence of policies directed at these areas is to foster high quality and efficient growth and development. Urban influence or reserve areas, are those parts of the community that will likely be needed to accommodate further growth within a limited planning horizon. Policies in these areas are intended to direct development in ways that will later complement further urbanization without significantly compromising current property rights. Development in rural use areas is restricted to very large acreage uses, such as agriculture and forestry, with limits on subdivisions.

The essential concept is to discourage urban sprawl, improve existing infrastructure to support development and redevelopment where appropriate and discourage development of rural lands. These objectives, when supported by realistic and rational strategies, will create boundaries within the community in which varying policies are applied to guide growth. In concept, this approach offers an elegant solution to balance growth pressure with the protection of important natural features and quality of life. However, in practice, a broad spectrum of difficult property rights and



jurisdictional issues must be carefully considered. This is especially true in Michigan with its fragmented local planning structure. Nevertheless, if it is founded on a broad-based consensus, such an approach to growth management can dramatically reduce the sprawling nature of development without significantly compromising the economic future of the region.

Map B illustrates the likely urban growth limits in 2020 assuming the County implements a series of strategies intended to increase densities in targeted areas by about 50%. Comparing Maps A and B, it is clear that significant portions of Green Lake, Blair, East Bay, Acme and Whitewater Townships will be left relatively untouched in a moderate growth control scenario. A moderate growth control scenario would be characterized by a set of policies intended to encourage intense urbanized growth along a boundary described by the proposed Hartman-Hammond connection, southerly along M-37/US-31 to Chum's Corners and along US-31 in Acme Township. Outside that boundary, some urban influences in the form of subdivisions and cluster development may be anticipated. The largest such area will be found east of Long Lake. This scenario also envisions a set of policies intended to encourage the growth of "village centers" in such places as Kingsley, Fife Lake, Williamsburg, Mapleton and Interlochen. These villages should be encouraged to develop as smaller, self-contained communities with a broad range of economic and social amenities. In addition, green areas formed by open lands, agricultural uses and/or forests should be used to provide buffers that will enable these centers to retain their separate identities.

Also illustrated in Map B is a very stringent growth limit, which is defined by the existing utility systems. However, such a restriction on growth will result in unrealistically high densities, uncharacteristic of the area, which will handicap the economic potential of the County.

It is clear that the edges of urbanized development in Grand Traverse County will need to expand. Modest increases in density, (i.e., 1.5 to 2 units per acre) supported by a broad public understanding of the need for this shift in development patterns and driven by a set of public policies to encourage density will have the greatest potential for success. This is a very simplistic formula for growth management, but it has been proven in other communities. It will only be effective, however, if it is supported by the entire community including those

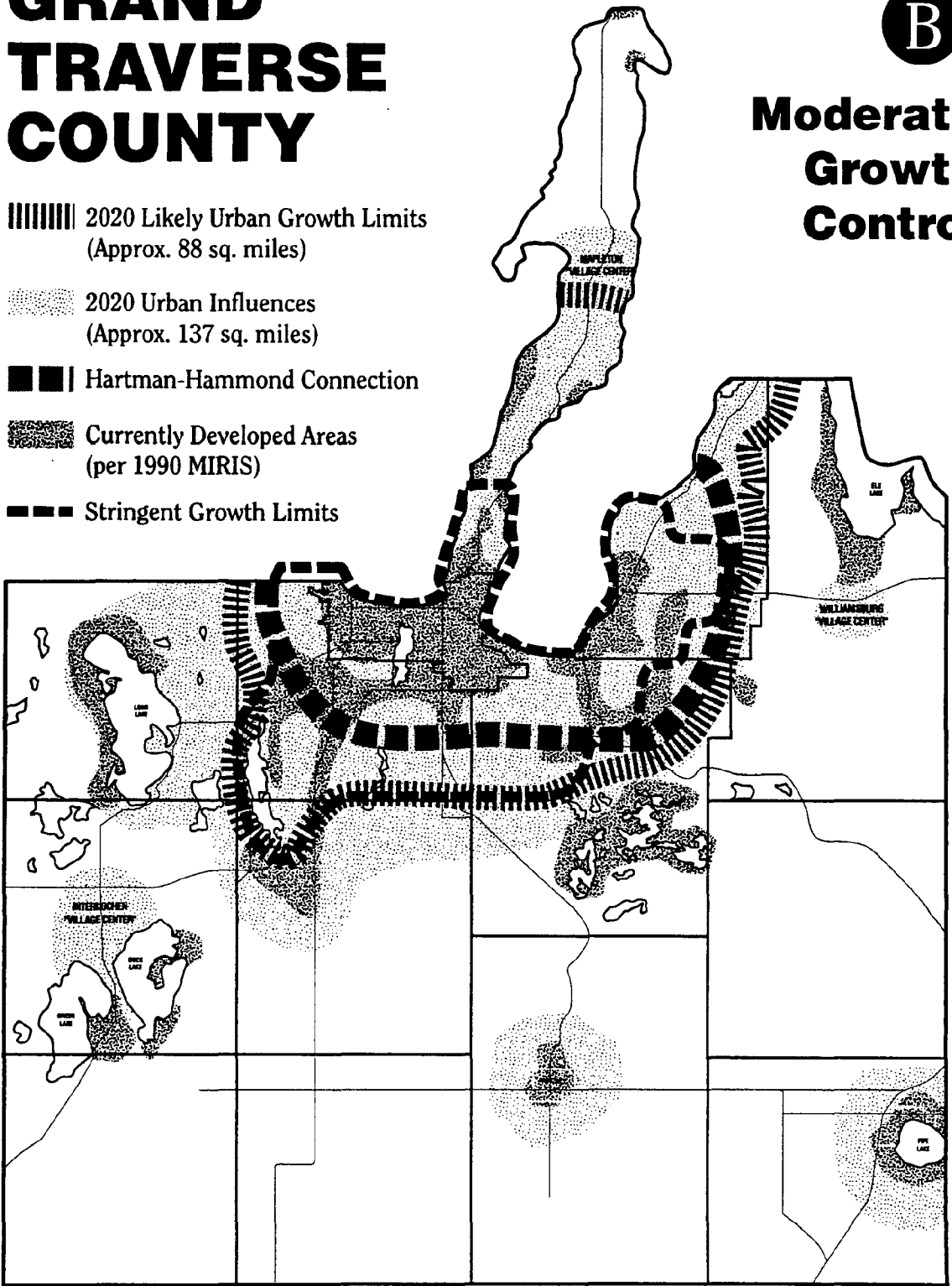
...a broad spectrum of difficult property rights and jurisdictional issues must be carefully considered.

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

MAP
B

Moderate Growth Control

- ||||| 2020 Likely Urban Growth Limits
(Approx. 88 sq. miles)
- 2020 Urban Influences
(Approx. 137 sq. miles)
- ■ ■ Hartman-Hammond Connection
- ▨ Currently Developed Areas
(per 1990 MIRIS)
- Stringent Growth Limits



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that may see greater short-term economic gain in the BAU scenario. Therefore, it is critically important that there be a solid consensus about the need for some level of growth management in the County and public support for the regulatory and financial commitments needed to carry it out.

Growth Management Strategies. At this stage of the Master Plan development process, it is premature to advance specific strategies for growth management directed at specific locations. However, the following paragraphs describe techniques applied in other areas with significant success.

- **Urban Growth Limits.** Through the cooperative efforts of all the jurisdictions in the County, it is possible to establish a limit for urban growth and growth influenced by urbanization. Of course, simply drawing a line on a map will not influence the shape of growth. In addition to cooperation at the local level, a well developed and consistently implemented set of growth management strategies must be applied to land uses within each area. Some such growth management tools are described below.
- **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).** This technique is familiar in Grand Traverse County, since Peninsula Township is the first community in the State to approve a millage to establish a fund to acquire development rights for farm property, enabling the owners to capitalize on the development potential of their land without abandoning their farming operations. This technique could be utilized in other parts of the County both to retain agricultural uses and to preserve natural features.
- **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).** Coupled with the PDR program, it is also possible to encourage greater densities in targeted areas by shifting the acquired development rights from one location where the community seeks to limit growth to another location where development is

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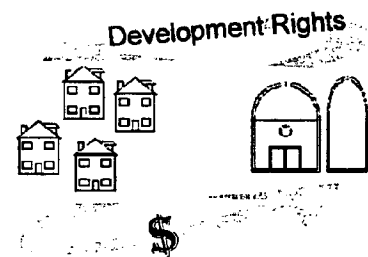


Figure 5. Development rights may be transferred from areas where development is to be discouraged to areas where it is desired.



desired. Such a program may be established either to operate privately between two cooperating property owners, or through a public sector oversight agency.

- Zoning - Lot Size Restrictions. Some communities have attempted to preserve open lands and limit population growth by establishing large minimum lot sizes. The effect, however, has been to divide large tracts of farmable lands into a patchwork of two to ten acre fragments that are essentially unused, except as private preserves. By establishing maximum lot sizes rather than minimum lot sizes in areas where growth is desired, the community will get more efficient development and yet maintain more of its rural character.

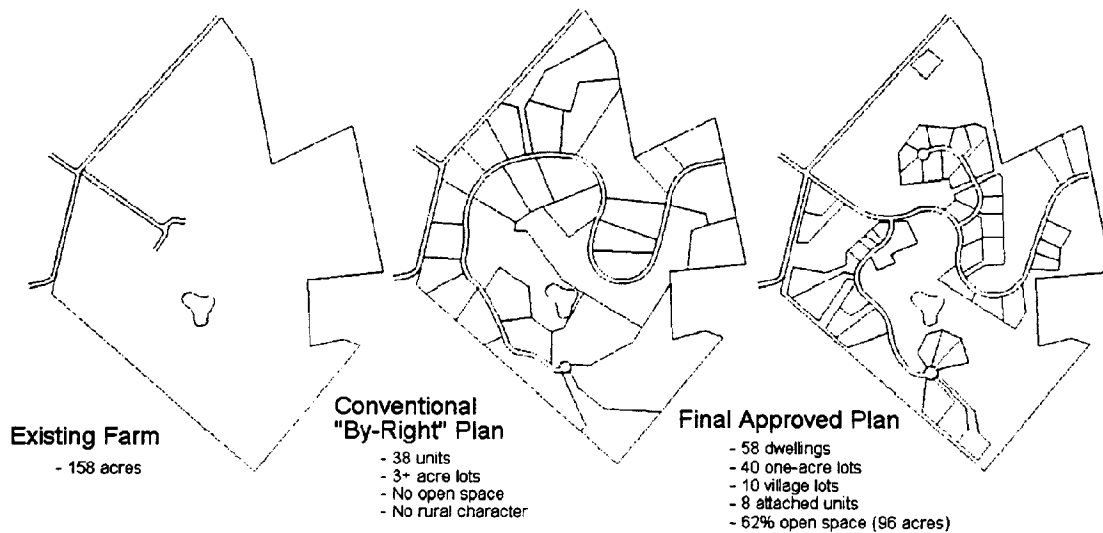
On the other hand, in order to permit "estate residential" development which does not foreclose the potential for agricultural uses in other parts of the community, significantly larger minimum lot sizes (e.g., twenty acres, or more) may be preferable. These large parcels would enable those that truly are seeking a private preserve to obtain one, and they will also make it possible for the land to be used for farming or other uses related to natural resource preservation.





- Zoning - Cluster Development. On the other end of the spectrum from establishing maximum lot sizes is the notion of cluster development. Here smaller lot sizes are encouraged along with tools to enable developers to customize their proposed developments to particular site amenities. Typically, cluster developments take advantage of open space development design (OSDD) techniques to cluster most of the units on one part of the site and set aside the remainder of the site for common open area. Well-designed developments of this type achieve higher market acceptance than traditional subdivisions.

However, many local zoning provisions work against such creativity. Furthermore, some developers and owner's associations struggle with liability issues related to maintaining common open lands. To overcome these difficulties, the County and local units may need to consider changes in local zoning and subdivision control ordinances.



**Figure 6. Alternative layouts preserve open spaces and increase density.
(Source: Brandywine Conservancy, 1992.)**



...the County may consider significantly higher permit fees as a means of helping to create greater parity in costs between areas with public utilities and those with on-site systems.

- Utility Systems as Growth Management Tools. There is an ongoing debate about whether utility systems can be effective tools to manage growth. In most communities, they cannot because current residents are unwilling to shoulder the cost of system expansions in anticipation of future growth. Instead, developers acquire property that they want to develop and petition for utility services at their expense, passing the costs on to the buyers of the lots developed. In addition, those developers that have invested in public utility systems often seek approval for higher densities on the sites served to spread the utility costs over a greater number of users. While leaving investments in utility extensions to the private sector minimizes the capital costs to the community, it results in the developer determining where growth will go, not the community. To gain more control through utility system expansions, the community must be willing to invest in extensions of water and sewer lines to undeveloped areas and wait to recover that investment when the market is ready to develop the areas served.
- Restrict On-Site Wastewater Disposal. Complementing the notion of using public water and wastewater to guide development would be more stringent controls on on-site wastewater disposal (i.e., septic systems). There certainly is a public purpose in tighter controls, since septic tank drainfields can endanger groundwater and, at times, surface water. In addition, with a comprehensive plan for the orderly development of the County in place, it may be argued that unrestricted use of on-site wastewater disposal will work at counter purposes to public policy. Since it will probably not be possible to completely restrict the use of on-site wastewater systems in remote areas, the County may consider significantly higher permit fees as a means of helping to create greater parity in costs between areas with public utilities and those with on-site systems. The additional revenue from the higher



fees may be dedicated to offset some of the public investment in the extension of utilities into undeveloped areas where development is encouraged.

- Levy Development Impact Fees. A fairly controversial growth management tool used in other states, but currently not available in Michigan, is the application of development impact fees. This technique essentially requires the developer (and ultimately the consumer) to pay up to all the costs associated with their developments. These costs are paid in the form of impact fees which are used to support both infrastructure like wastewater, water and road, but also for schools, added police and fire protection. Although such fees are currently not authorized in Michigan, this technique has been successful elsewhere and legislation to enable local jurisdictions to levy impact fees for road-related improvements is currently under consideration in the State House Transportation Committee.

- Encourage Village Centers. One of the most desirable qualities of a region like Grand Traverse County is the cultural and social amenities of such free-standing communities as Kingsley and Fife Lake. Unfortunately as urban sprawl proceeds, these communities are normally "swallowed up" in the trend toward suburbanization. This need not happen, if the community is committed to preventing it. Village centers are physically distinct from the balance of the region, separated by significant green areas, and they consist of free-standing residential and commercial land uses. The scale and design of the

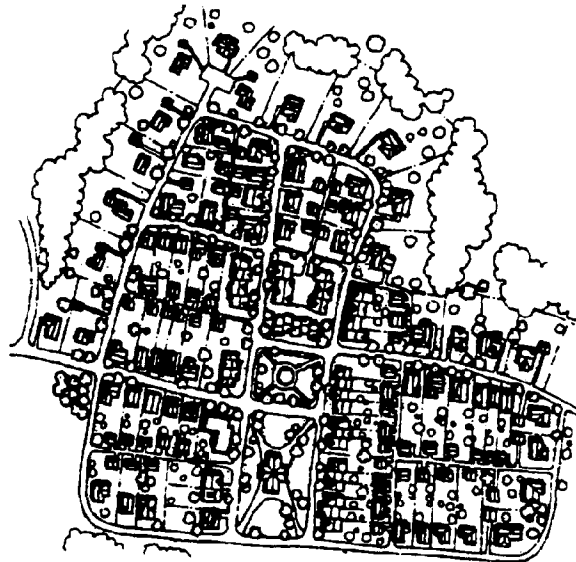


Figure 7. Traditional "village" design encourages pedestrian movement and discourages automobile through traffic.



...these techniques must be able to stand the scrutiny of an electorate that is rightly skeptical of regulatory or fiscal measures that impact their freedom or their pocketbooks.

village center is such that it encourages pedestrian movement and it discourages automobile through traffic. Implementing the village center approach in areas such as Kingsley and Fife Lake where the village is already defined as a political jurisdiction will be relatively easy, because formal representation exists for the area's residents and businesses. In other areas currently outside the area of urbanization but in its path, the process will require careful planning and the cooperation and support of many divergent interests.

- Limit Building Permits. Perhaps the most extreme growth management technique that the County may choose to employ is the imposition of limitations on the numbers and types of new residential structures that may be built in any given year. Such an approach appears simple and relatively certain in its results since it targets growth directly. However, the implementation begs numerous questions of equity and property rights that will be difficult to resolve. The allocation of growth allotments by jurisdiction would likely require central control. The further partitioning of those allotments by housing type would certainly prove to be a challenge to local planners. Nevertheless, many would argue that Grand Traverse County is facing a severe growth challenge and extreme measures to address it are appropriate.

As the Master Plan process proceeds, each of these techniques, and others, will receive consideration. The various impediments to implementation will be explored and some may be rejected. Others may prove to be unworkable in the short term and may require legislative support for complete implementation. Finally, many of these techniques must be able to stand the scrutiny of an electorate that is rightly skeptical of regulatory or fiscal measures that impact their freedom or their pocketbooks. Therefore, all of the techniques described above will be impossible to implement effectively in Grand Traverse County without solid community



consensus about the importance of the effort to manage local growth. County and local political leaders can take the first step, but they must have the support of their constituents, as well.

Therefore, the public consideration of the issues of growth management is vital to building that consensus. It is important that the Planning Commission and other leaders take on the hard work of meeting with community and business leaders and citizen organizations to describe and discuss the master planning effort so that the citizens of Grand Traverse County can make informed judgments about it.

APPENDIX I
FUTURING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

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FUTURING SESSION PARTICIPANTS**

County Planning Commission (CPC)

Lew Coulter, Grand Traverse Soil & Water Conservation Service
Eric Huft-Robbins
Jerry Inman
Larry Inman
Norm Kline
Mike Mayse
Bruce Orttenburger
Matt Skeels, TC TALUS
Marsha Smith
Maureen Templeton, County Drain Commissioner
Paul Van Valkenburgh

Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)

Joe Bartko, East Bay Township
Michelle Charters, Garfield Charter Township
Betty Cronander, Peninsula Township
Tim Goldsmith, Kingsley Village
Thad Ketchum, Whitewater Township
Doug Mansfield, Union Township
Jessica Sedlacek/Krysti Baker, Paradise Township
Dave Stremlow, Fife Lake Township
Mary Sullivan, Fife Lake Village
David Wineman, Blair Township

Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners

Jason Allen
Richard Crowe
Virginia Olds
Margaret Underwood

Community Resource Council (CRC)

Linda Anderson, Wexford County Planner
Bob Bach, Gourdie/Fraser & Associates
Jon Becker, Traverse City Arts Council
Tod Beynon, Forest Lodge Association
Russell L. Clark, R. Clark Associates, Inc.
Richard Campton, Traverse City Area Public Schools/Con Foster Museum Historical Committee
Bryan Crough, Downtown Development Association

Community Resource Council (CRC) (continued)

Beverly Cuthbert, Michigan Department of Social Services
Mike Dillenbeck, Grand Traverse County Road Commission
Jerry Dobek, International Dark-Sky Association
Brian Doyle, Environmental Testing & Consulting
John Faas, Grand Traverse Bay YMCA
Mary Jo Fifarek, Ameritech/Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
Robert Hammond, Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Sumitra Heinert, The Friendly Garden Club
Jim Holcombe, OCI Corp. of Michigan
Jeff Jones, North America VASA, Inc.
Diane Keelan, Women's Economic Development Organization
Holly Knibbs, Unitarian Universalists Fellowship of Grand Traverse
Joe Landis, Grand Traverse/Leelanau Community Mental Health
Andrew LaPointe, First of America
Anne Magoun, League of Women Voters/Unitarian Universalists Fellowship of Grand Traverse
Marlena McCall, B.E.A.D.
Michael McClelland, Grand Traverse County Deputy Administrator
Maxine Meach, The Friendly Garden Club
Joe Mikowski
Mark Mitchell, The Grand Traverse Resort
Mark Nadolski, Old Mission Conservancy
Dave Neiger, Benzie County
Sterling Nickerson, VISIONS, South Grand Traverse
Don Nixon, Traverse City Housing Commission
Jane Norton, League of Women Voters
Luci Novak, League of Women Voters
Ken Osborn, ICE
Laura Otwell, Cherry Capital Cycling Club
John Prokes, Environmental Testing & Consulting
John Rockershousen, Cherryland Electric Cooperative
A. Russell Schindler, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
Robert Sniff, Consumers Power Company
Larry St. Ours, Michigan State Police
Rick Stein, Traverse City Board of Realtors
Martha Vreeland, Traverse City District Library
Dan Wolf, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
Chris Wright, Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Initiative



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