#### **CHAPTER 7**

#### COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In developing community goals and objectives, it is important to analyze existing community characteristics, such as: social and economic features, environmental resources, available services and facilities, and existing land use. In addition to examining existing characteristics, another important tool in the development of community goals and objectives is to identify community assets, problems and other issues to be addressed.

In preparation for writing this Master Plan, the Elmira Township Planning Commission actively sought input from the Township residents, through a written resident attitude survey, community workshops and a photo tour exercise to visually document, as well as better understand and confirm the earlier survey findings.

# **Community Survey**

In September 2001, the Planning Commission with assistance from the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG), conducted a community survey to understand the views of the Township residents. The complete survey findings are provided in Appendix A.

Regarding commercial growth, 39 percent of the survey respondents believe the Township should "support", and 16 percent indicated they "favor" commercial growth. The survey also provides general community input as to where commercial development should occur, with the highest responses being split between "concentrated downtown" and "clustered in areas along M-32", followed by "spread along M-32".

The survey also provided community input regarding attitudes toward various types of business developments, the most favorable response was "farming" (83%), followed by "small business" (77%), "healthcare" (65%) and "senior housing" ranked the fourth most favorable (63%).

The survey findings clearly show the residents' strong concerns for the natural environment, including support of open space (55%), groundwater protection (80%), and a willingness to support a millage for natural resource protection (55%).

# **Community Workshop**

As follow-up to the survey, a community workshop was conducted in January 2002. At this workshop the community identified "Things to be Nurtured", "Weeds to Get Rid Of" and "New Seeds to Plant." The issues identified during this workshop are provided in Appendix B.

# **Goals and Objectives**

### Land Use Goal

#### GOAL:

Develop a district for small businesses, and revitalize and expand residential neighborhoods in the village of Elmira while maintaining an ecologically sound balance between human activities and the environment to retain the Township's scenic and rural character in the remainder of the Township.

- Encourage landscape requirements for new development, such as setbacks, retention of green space, buffer zones between differing land uses, screened parking areas, and roadside landscaping; and encourage the retention of open space and scenic vistas with Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), clustering, and conservation easements.
- Encourage the creation of a new county zoning district to zone large tracts of publicly held lands and establish a minimum lot size of 120 acres.

### Natural Resource Goal

#### GOAL:

Protect and preserve groundwater, surface water, woodlands, wetlands, open space, wildlife habitat, and steep slopes.

- Encourage a land use pattern that is oriented to the natural features and water resources of the area by evaluating type and density of proposed developments based on soil suitability; slope of land; potential for ground water and surface water degradation and contamination; compatibility with adjacent land uses; and impacts to sensitive natural areas like wetlands, greenways and wildlife corridors.
- Work to limit and control the density and type of residential and commercial development adjacent to lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands.
- Encourage the maintenance of greenbelt areas adjacent to lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands.
- Support groundwater protection and stormwater management regulations in Otsego County's Zoning Ordinance, while encouraging the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge, stormwater filtering and stormwater holding areas.
- Limit developments on steeply sloped areas and require erosion control measures where construction is permitted. Require slope stabilization and revegetation on disturbed slopes or in extraction areas.
- Encourage planting of native tree and shrub species when properties are developed.
- Encourage the retention and management of existing forest lands by appropriate zoning and by supporting the efforts of the Otsego County Conservation District.

# Agriculture and Forestry Goal

#### GOAL:

Acknowledge the importance of agricultural and forestry lands and encourage the sustained protection of operations.

- Recognize that the presence of agricultural land adds to the scenic and rural character of the Township.
- Work to provide economically feasible options for continued agricultural use of active prime farmland.
- Allow for and encourage farmland protection, such as through the transfer of development rights (when available), purchase of development rights, conservation easements, and the clustering of non-farm development.
- Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses.
- Participate in efforts to educate the community regarding agricultural preservation.
- Work to retain and manage existing forestland.
- Promote re-forestation and sound forestry management practices for areas with productive forest soils.

# Recreation Goal

#### GOAL:

Provide and maintain recreation lands and facilities for safe access and enjoyment by residents and visitors.

- Determine what legal agreements, such as easements, exist and work to supplement with new agreements to allow for the establishment of non-motorized recreational trail and pathway connections to publicly owned, semi-public and conservation areas within the Township.
- Recognize existing motorized recreational trails and their impact on the local economy.
- Develop a park system for the Township to include mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and Township parks to provide for both passive and active recreation areas.
- Prepare an overall development and maintenance plan for all recreation facilities and parklands.
- Seek grant funding for park improvements.

### Residential Goal

#### GOAL:

Provide for suitable housing opportunities for the varied economic and lifestyle needs of the residents, while retaining the Township's rural and scenic character.

- Encourage the availability of an adequate supply of low to moderate income family and senior citizen housing (rental and owner-occupied) that is located near community facilities and shopping areas.
- Designate areas appropriate for all types of residential development including single family, multi-family, condominium, low to moderate income rental complexes, and extended care facilities.
- Encourage participation with Northern Homes, Inc. and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) programs to rehabilitate substandard housing and to provide needed moderately priced housing in the Township.
- Preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods by protecting from intrusion of incompatible uses.
- Require a buffer between Residential uses and other more intensive uses.

### Economic Goal

#### GOAL:

Recognize the need for new commercial growth primarily concentrated in downtown Elmira and clustered in concentrated areas along M-32 utilizing sound land use planning principles.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Pursue the establishment of a Downtown Development Authority for the downtown area of Elmira.
- Promote existing and encourage new small businesses in downtown Elmira.
- Encourage light industrial manufacturing development in appropriate areas in the Township. "Appropriate" includes but is not limited to consideration of zoning, soils, groundwater, slope, highway visibility and safety, and compatibility with surrounding character.

### Infrastructure & Public Service Goal

#### GOAL:

Maintain and improve the Township facilities, programs and systems consistent with the community's needs, and the ability to finance the improvements.

- Continue to support the local emergency services including the Elmira-Warner Fire Authority.
- Participate in efforts to establish a county-wide comprehensive waste management approach, with emphasis on recycling.
- Monitor and explore the needs for sewer and water services as more development occurs.

# **Transportation Goal**

#### GOAL:

Provide and/or maintain safe and efficient routes in and through the Township while respecting the rural character.

- Encourage the improvement and maintenance of the county road network that serves the needs of Elmira Township residents, businesses and visitors.
- Work with the Otsego County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation to plan for vehicular and pedestrian safety at intersections and on roadways.
- Encourage shared road access where appropriate.
- Encourage the development of multi-purpose trails and pathways to serve the community.
- Encourage the continuation and expansion of public transit to better serve the needs of senior citizens and other transit dependent Township residents.
- Encourage roadside landscaping requirements for new developments.
- Encourage sound buffers to be required along major transportation corridors to reduce traffic noise.