

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Rationale of a Comprehensive Plan

In order to function in an orderly fashion and plot out their future, individuals, organizations, and businesses require some form or method of operation. Processes and operations of these entities generally fair better when future tasks are planned prior to actions being taken.

The same applies to a community of people. Once all of the facets of the community and its residents are set down in writing, all positive and negative elements are analyzed. Ideas and concepts in the form of goals and objectives are formulated. The community then has a guide to help it function in an orderly and consistent manner progressing toward the type of overall environment the people desire. This guide to development is called a Comprehensive Plan.

The overall Comprehensive Plan is not meant to be too detailed or to prescribe specific actions at specific times, because it is a comprehensive approach over a twenty-year planning period. That is, this plan concerns itself with the general aspect of the various personalities and activities that make up Livingston Township. However, specificity, for the short term, is essential to allow the Township to act in the best interests of its citizens. Consequently, this plan will have specific recommended actions for the short term (5 years) and much more general recommendations and directions for the long term (20 years) planning process.

Legal Jurisdiction

Livingston Township has been given the authority, by the State of Michigan through the Michigan Township Planning Act (Act 168 of 1959, as amended), to "make and adopt a basic plan as a guide for the development of unincorporated portions of the Township". One of the primary purposes of this Act is to secure the general, health, safety, and welfare of the Township by distributing wisely the Township's resources - physical, economic, and social - "in accordance with their character and adaptability".

Location and Description

The rural community of Livingston Township is located in Otsego County, which is situated in the northeast region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The regional map (**Figure 1**) on the following page shows the location of the community. The Township is approximately 35 square miles in size, consisting of the majority of the government survey township, T.31N. – R.3W. Portions of Sections 33 and 34 are incorporated into the City of Gaylord. Both I-75 and Old 27, as well as the former D&M Railroad right-of-way, travel north-south through the Township, all of which are almost in the center of the Township. State highway M-32 travels east-west along the Township's southern boundary. **Figure 2** shows the highway system of the community.

Hold Page for Figure 1
Location Map, Livingston Township

Hold Page for Figure 2
Transportation and Base Map, Livingston Township

Efforts of the Livingston Township Planning Commission

No comprehensive planning effort is possible without the concern and input of the residents of the community. The Livingston Township Planning Commission is appointed by the Livingston Township Board. In 1999 Livingston Township's Planning Commission began working to update the 1991 plan. A number of meetings were held by the Planning Commission to formulate Township goals, objectives, and policies to be included in this plan. As this document benefits the residents of Livingston Township, it was the desire of the Planning Commission that the people of the community become involved in making this updated plan a reality. With this in mind, the Planning Commission members conducted an extensive survey, which was mailed to resident property owners of the Township in September of 1998. Survey results were tallied in March of 1999. Results of the survey are discussed in detail later in a section of this report. Appendix A includes the survey questions and results.

The Planning Commission members then updated the *Comprehensive Plan* by preparing a revision of the 1991 plan. In 1996, the Township conducted a *Community Growth Management Study and Citizen Forum*. The Study and Forum provided direction to the Township that was consistent with past surveys. The residents provided the same basic direction that had been expressed in previous surveys. The residents of Livingston Township preferred rural living, wished to continue that lifestyle in Livingston Township, and were not in favor of expanding commercial or industrial growth in the Township.

Description of Planning Approach

The drafting of a comprehensive plan requires a logical method of collecting data, analyzing this data, and forming a set of guidelines for future development. Equally important is the input of the residents of the Township, both historical and current. As with all planning approaches, the Planning Commission is building upon work completed previously, making changes in the goals and objectives of the Township and the attitudes and wishes of its residents.

The Township Planning Commission prepared this plan with the citizen survey compiled in 1999 as its primary basis. The commission also relied on past planning efforts and the *Community Growth Management Study and Citizen Forum of 1996*. Imaginative as well as realistic thinking is necessary to encourage the best future for Livingston Township consistent with the wishes expressed in the *Livingston Township Citizen Survey*.

Regional Description and Goals

Our Federal system has been established so that a division of responsibilities and privileges exist among the various levels of government. Certain functions, through enabling legislation, are allocated to cities, villages, townships, and counties, as well as states. Those responsibilities, which are best suited for local units of government and which the state does not have the capacity or will to administer, are given to counties, townships, and cities, with each varying in extent of its authority. Even though each type of local government fulfills a different need, there must be a process of communication and coordination. As part of an eight county area in Northeastern Michigan, Livingston Township should be analyzed in relation to this region, as well as the county in which it belongs.

The counties in Northeastern Michigan contain 3,256,649 acres (5,088 square miles), of which 3,078,000 acres (96 percent of the total area) are land surface and 122,000 acres are inland waters (lakes and streams). From the higher elevations of the region's western boundary, the terrain gently slopes toward Lake Huron, giving way to less undulating topography on the eastern boundaries. Water resources include numerous lakes and streams within heavily forested areas, as well as important watersheds such as AuSable, Pine, Ocqueoc, Thunder Bay, and Cheboygan.

This region has been and still is primarily dependent upon its land and water resources. From the advent of the lumbering industry, through the utilization of cleared land for agricultural production, to its popularity as a recreation/second home area, the natural amenities of the physical environment have been the primary mainstay of the population. The protection of these resources and amenities is important to both the economic and social future of the Township. Overdevelopment and excessive growth can erode these amenities and destroy both the economic future and attractiveness of the Township.

The Northeast Michigan Region, in order to alleviate problems and inadequacies, set forth various regional economic development goals in its *2003-2004 Northeast Michigan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* report. The report was prepared by Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG).

The primary goal of that regional report is:

“Create, retain, expand, and attract business and industry throughout the Northeast Michigan Region, especially that which leads to the creation of permanent employment with higher wage opportunities, while employing environmentally sound management practices and retaining a high quality of life in the area.

The objectives to implement the goal are:

1. Facilitate support for and access to technical assistance for private sector developments which will lead to the creation or retention of permanent jobs, increase the tax base, or have other public benefits.
2. Create, maintain, and improve infrastructure and services to attract and support business development.
3. Maintain, expand, and improve education and training opportunities.

While this goal and objectives are fairly broad and encompass the entire region, they provide guidelines which each county, township, city, or village can follow in attempting to coordinate in its plans with surrounding communities. At the same time, the generality allows each community to develop its own particular plan to fit its specific characteristics. The *Livingston Township Comprehensive Plan* therefore, addresses the special concerns of the Township while broadly conforming to regional goals and policies. Where regional goals conflict with the direction provided by the citizens of Livingston Township, the preferences of the residents will prevail.

The residents of the Township support the continued wise use of our natural resources to enhance growth in the agricultural, forestry, and recreation industries. The citizens of the Township also support the improvement of transportation systems within the Township. The residents are cautious about the Township's involvement in a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) or water and sewer authority.

This update of the *Livingston Township Comprehensive Plan* is being developed with the following goals:

- A. To reflect the wishes of the residents of the Township.
- B. To provide the Township clear direction for development in the Township.
- C. To provide mechanisms to preserve farmland and forests in the Township.
- D. To identify infrastructure needs consistent with the goals of the Township plan.