

CHAPTER 6 – COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

One of the primary contributors to the quality of life in a community is the type and variety of services available to both local residents and visitors to the area. In many cases, a smaller community does not have the financial resources to provide all or even most of the services which would normally be considered essential in an urban area. The more populated the community, the greater the variety of public, semi-public, and private services made available to residents.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will identify the types and extent of services now available to residents and businesses in Livingston Township. Even though these services may be sufficient for the needs of the current population, future development may increase the demand to upgrade or expand the services and facilities the Township needs to maintain a satisfactory living environment in the future.

Township Government

It is a fact of our system of government that policies adopted by decision makers at the Federal, State, or local levels are the primary catalysts for the general shape of a community. Although national and state programs are not specifically designed to deal with local concerns, they do indirectly influence actions taken by both local leaders and private investors. Fiscal policies are a good example of this influence. Local government, through its powers given to it via state enabling legislation, has the capacity to determine its own land use patterns through various development controls, such as zoning and subdivision regulations.

It is true that private enterprise, in particular the real estate market, may be directly involved with development. However, the pattern and type of development is in most cases guided by the zoning ordinances, sewer and utility placement, and fiscal policies of the local government. Livingston Township is a non-incorporated, general law township. It also is limited in its powers to guide its own development, as it is dependent upon Otsego County for zoning administration, road construction and maintenance, police and ambulance services, and health and welfare services. Livingston Township does not maintain a full time administrative staff.

The Township Board is composed of five members, one Supervisor, one Clerk, one Treasurer, and two Trustees. This body has the responsibility of overseeing the general welfare of the Township, including the establishment of several sub-committees to study issues and activities relative to each sub-committee and report these issues and activities to the Township Board.

The Township Planning Commission was established in 1973 and consists of five members. This commission, established under Act 168 of 1959, is given the "power to make, adopt, extend, add to or otherwise amend and to carry out plans for the unincorporated portions of the Township as provided in this Act."

Transportation

An important measure of the "vitality" of a community is its transportation system, which also helps define its physical pattern of development. The Township's road network has been constructed and maintained by the State and the County. Specifically, Old 27, M-32, and I-75 are under the State's jurisdiction, while all other roads in the Township are basically primary and secondary roads. The Otsego County Road Commission clears those roads in the winter which are normally used as access to residents, as well as all major, more heavily traveled streets.

Circulation and transportation are important to the development of any community. The proximity of Livingston Township to major transportation routes, such as I-75 and M-32, can be an asset by increasing the normal rate of growth. On the other hand, it may be a liability for the same reason, particularly if accelerated development is detrimental to the social and physical welfare of the community and its residents.

As the City of Gaylord develops and expands, Livingston Township can be expected to grow. Both communities will likely experience further development in the areas adjacent to existing Federal and State circulation routes. The City of Gaylord's growth center is adjacent to I-75 and will likely see more pronounced growth. But, Livingston Township, because of its proximity to Gaylord, will share in at least part of the future development pressures. **Figure 2** in the first chapter indicates the general highway network surrounding and running through the Township.

The potential for commercial and industrial development within the Township is enhanced by major transportation routes. Commercial locations along Old 27 North and along the north side M-32 West can become logical extension of the City. Recent development has demonstrated this expansion. Parcels adjacent to I-75 may someday become prime industrial sites. However, the lack of an I-75 exchange in the Township is a negative factor for future industrial development.

State thoroughfares (M-32, I-75, and Old 27 North) are maintained and plowed by State equipment and employees. The remainder of the roads within Livingston Township are local collector streets and minor thoroughfares, which are maintained and plowed by the County Road Commission.

Public transportation via bus is provided throughout the County on request by the Otsego County Bus System. The Detroit and Mackinaw Railroad runs parallel to Old 27 North and terminates in the southern portion of the Township. The termination at the southern end of the Township limits any further industrial development dependent upon rail service that may have wished to locate in the Township. Freight transportation via rail has been available on the Detroit and Mackinaw (D&M) line running from Gaylord to Bay City, with 90 percent of all out bound freight being lumber products from the Georgia Pacific Corporation plant in Gaylord. The D&M line north from Gaylord is no longer in operation. The old railroad right-of-way is now owned by the MDNR and is used as a year-round recreational trail. Wheeled motorized vehicles are not permitted on the trail.

Air transportation is available at Otsego County Airport, located south of Livingston Township in adjacent Bagley Township. The County-owned, public-use facility has two runways, 5,000 ft. x 100 ft. and 3,000 ft. x 75 ft. Passenger service is available on a charter basis only, but the airport may be used by private planes. A portion of the airport is reserved as an air industrial park, and is used by United Parcel Service, United States Postal Service, Federal Armored Service, Federal Express, and United States Federal Reserve.

Regional commercial air service is available at Pellston Regional Airport in Emmet County and at Alpena County Regional Airport, located west of the City of Alpena. Commercial air service at both facilities is provided by Northwest AirlinK (Mesaba Airline), offering transportation between Alpena and Detroit Metro Airport, with regularly scheduled daily flights. The Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City has commercial passenger service provided by Northwest AirlinK to Detroit Metro Airport and United Express and American Eagle to Chicago O'Hare Airport.

Communications

Many of the activities, opinions, and ideas expressed during daily events and circumstances are the result of various forms of communications. The variety and quality of the different communication media available to the residents of Livingston Township contributes to the area's quality of life. Television, radio, and newsprint help form attitudes and opinions on various political subjects, introduce new products through advertising and provide the entertainment to which we are accustomed. The forms of mass communication available to Livingston Township residents are described below.

Radio

Radio is a media which has no definite boundaries in its ability to attract a listening audience. Certain stations, because of their locations, have specific broadcast or market areas, yet listeners outside those broadcast areas may also occasionally receive the station's transmission. Such is the case in Livingston Township. Several FM stations, WAVC, WCCW, WGFM, WKPK, WMJZ, WMKC, and WPHN in Gaylord, and WJML and WTCM in Petoskey serve the Township. Two Christian radio stations also serve the area. Because of the power of their transmissions, many other stations outside the area emit clear broadcasts to the community. These stations have an effect upon listeners in this area, especially because they transmit local as well as national events. Other radio stations in the State of Michigan, as well as surrounding states, can often be heard during the evening hours, particularly those broadcast on AM frequencies.

Television

Television, like radio, has the capacity to reach a large number of people, even in remote locations. The location and number of television stations in northern Michigan enable residents of this part of the State to partake of a wide variety of network programming. The following television stations may be received within the Township: WPBN Channel 7 (NBC - Traverse City); WTOM Channel 4 (NBC - Cheboygan); WWTV Channel 9 (CBS - Cadillac); WWUP Channel 10 (CBS - Sault Ste. Marie); WGTU Channel 29 (ABC - Traverse City); WGTQ Channel 8 (ABC - Sault Ste. Marie); and WCMU Channel 6 (PBS - Mt. Pleasant). Cable television service for portions of the Township and the City of Gaylord are provided by Charter Communications. Television programming via cable enables residents of the Township and the City of Gaylord to enjoy a wide variety of programming beyond the network broadcasts. Residents may also obtain television programming similar to cable through satellite dish systems.

Newspapers

International, national, state and local events can be explained in greater detail, when published in newspapers. Advertising, including the selling of non-commercial items, is also more widespread in newspapers. At the local level, household items are often sold using this form of communication.

Several publications are offered in the immediate area, including *Detroit News/Free Press*, *Bay City Times*, *Traverse City Record Eagle*, *Wall Street Journal*, *U.S.A. Today*, and several small newspapers from towns in the area outside the County. The larger newspapers have daily circulation and the smaller have weekly circulation. The *Herald Times*, a bi-weekly newspaper printed in Gaylord, and the *Northern Star*, a weekly advertising supplement, also from Gaylord, provide up-to-date coverage of events occurring in and affecting Otsego County.

Energy Supplies

Livingston Township is fortunate enough to have access to a variety of energy sources, including natural gas, LP gas, electricity, fuel oil, and wood. The variety of fuels available to the Township enhances the chances of locating a variety of activities in the area. Commercial and industrial, as well as residential land uses, can be developed in a more uniform and cohesive fashion if there is a planned distribution of energy supplies. That is, the timed and sequential expansion of utility lines can aid in the determination of when, where, and how large future development will be.

Natural gas is supplied to the Livingston Township area by DTE Energy (formerly Michigan Consolidated Gas). This utility serves the eight county Northeastern Michigan Region via two main transmission lines paralleling U.S. 23 on the east and 1-75 on the west. The line runs through Livingston Township, enabling the residents of the community a greater variety in the choice of heating and cooking fuel than others may have that reside in areas further removed from this main line. In addition, industries look favorably upon sites offering a variety of energy supplies, especially natural gas.

Electrical service is available to all section of Northeastern Michigan, including Livingston Township. Consumers Energy and Touchstone Energy Company serve the Township and surrounding areas.

Propane fuel is also available, primarily from distributors in Gaylord and surrounding areas. Many seasonal and recreational homes in the Township use bottled, tank, or LP gas for heating. Additionally a large proportion of the homes in the Township use fuel oil for heating purposes.

Water

There is no public water system within the Township at this time. The availability of groundwater and low density of the area has in the past precluded the need for a distribution system. However, if the Township should increase in density to the point where seepage into groundwater from a variety of sources creates pollution problems, a public water system may have to be considered.

With this in mind, the Township retained Granger Engineering, Inc. of Gaylord in 1983 to prepare a water system study. The five service areas included in the study covered the more populous subdivided areas north of Gaylord. Additionally, in late 1984 a test well was drilled at the northwest corner of McLouth and Hayes Roads, just south of the Alpine Center.

The water quality test results from this well were well within the standards for municipal water supplies. In terms of capacity, the well was anticipated to pump 375 gallons per minute or better. While the well shaft was partially cased, the pump and distribution system were not installed, due in part to system construction costs. To offset high water system development costs, Livingston Township investigated possible shared utilities with Bagley Township. To that end, a joint water and sewer authority was organized between the two municipalities. The water system feasibility study was revised and updated in 1987 to reflect the service needs of both communities.

In 1987, Bagley Township reached agreement with the City of Gaylord to provide water service to a portion of that township. Therefore, plans for joint service between Bagley and Livingston have not been carried out, and the water and sewer authority has been dissolved. Future municipal water supply for Livingston Township may depend either on the Township deciding to reform a water and sewer authority with Bagley Township or controlling development such that these systems would not be needed in the future. Unless the City of Gaylord revises its position that the provision of sewer and water services can only be accomplished under an Act 425 agreement, the Township should not consider further discussions with the City. The *Citizen Survey* indicated that 76.2 percent of respondents were not interested in any further annexations to the City for the provision of sewer and water services.

In 1995, when Otsego Club (formerly Hidden Valley) was developing a planned unit development, attention was again focused on developing the Township's well site for providing water to the Otsego Club development. Aquifer testing was again performed on the well during this effort. In addition, conditional approval was received from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Michigan Department of Health to place the existing well into service and construct an additional production well.

In 1999 Wade-Trim, Inc. prepared an additional study on the feasibility of supplying water and fire protection services to the core commercial area along Old 27, north of McLouth Road utilizing the Township well site as the source. Again in 2003 Wade-Trim conducted an additional study on the feasibility of developing the Township well site and extending the water main to the two large parcels located along Hayes Road. The study reviewed several development options based on immediate and future needs. The study also presented financing options, expectant demands on the system, fire protection needs, procedures for developing the system, and operation and maintenance.

Sewer and Septic Systems

At present, there is no public sanitary sewer system in Livingston Township. Residents rely on private septic systems. This solution works well in many areas of the Township. However, in areas of concentrated residential development and private water wells, pollution is a real risk. Perhaps the most challenging area in this regard is the Five Lakes area, where high water tables and wet soils around the lake make siting private systems difficult. This situation illustrates the direct relationship between public utilities and future growth potential. Additional growth in these areas may require developers to provide package waste water treatment systems and include restrictive deed covenants for the operation and maintenance of them.

Solid Waste Disposal

Livingston Township does not presently offer solid waste management or municipal waste disposal service. Residents and business owners rely on private waste haulers, who must dispose of the rubbish in a licensed landfill. The primary private waste haulers that pick up solid waste in the Township are Waste Management, Inc., PAC Sanitation, and Arrow Sanitation. Solid waste collected in the Township is hauled to the licensed Waste Management landfill facility, located in northern Crawford County. The Township also sponsors an annual household clean-up day held in June each year, allowing residents to dispose of large items at no charge.

Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) is the designated solid waste management planning agency for Otsego County. Operating in this role, NEMCOG prepared the *County's Solid Waste Management Plan* as required by P.A. 641 of the State of Michigan.

Public Safety

A critical function of a local government is the protection of health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. The majority of townships in Michigan, especially the more rural townships, are unable to provide their own police and fire protection. Rather, it is somewhat standard for townships to contract with their respective counties to obtain police and join a coalition of townships for volunteer fire protection. Such is the case for Livingston Township.

Law Enforcement

The Otsego County Sheriff Department patrols Livingston Township as well as all other unincorporated sections of the County. The County office and jail are located at 124 South Court Street in Gaylord and have a complement of one sheriff, one under sheriff, six deputies, five dispatchers, six correction officers (part-time and full-time) and a Marine Officer in June, July and August. As the County increases in population, it can be expected that personnel, facilities, and equipment will have to be expanded to provide quality public safety programs.

The City of Gaylord has its own police department which patrols the incorporated portions of the City. Since nearly 20 percent of the County's population resides in Gaylord, the existence of the Gaylord Police Department substantially aids the Sheriff Department in providing services that concentrate on the remainder of the County. In addition, the Michigan State Police maintain a post in Gaylord. This operation also contributes to the quality and quantity of police protection available to the County.

Fire Protection

Livingston Township is located within the Otsego County Volunteer Fire District. This district encompasses the City of Gaylord, all of Bagley, Dover, and Livingston Townships, as well as parts of Hayes and Chester Townships. The department facility is located in Gaylord. The department is administered by a fire board, composed of two members from each of the involved townships and the City of Gaylord. There are 30 regular and five auxiliary volunteers who respond to calls 24 hours a day. Fire calls are received through the County Sheriff Department, and are paged to the 30 regular volunteers. The district currently has a fire protection rating of seven.

Equipment consists of four pumpers and two 2,000 gallon tankers which can also be used as pumpers, an 85-foot snorkel, and a utility van. All vehicles, except one pumper used solely by the City of Gaylord, are equipped with two-way radio communication. The department has mutual aid contracts with the four other departments in the County, as well as with three departments in Antrim County.

As the County continues to increase in population, the number of fire alarms per year can be expected to increase. As expanding population puts more pressure on the existing personnel and facilities, it can be expected that additional facilities and staff will be required. Through maintaining membership in this fire protection district, Livingston Township can contribute to the operation and expansion of adequate fire prevention, at a reasonable cost.

Ambulance Service

The Otsego County Emergency Medical Service provides emergency service to all sections of the County. The organization is staffed with full time paramedics, EMT's, and EMT specialists. Ambulance service available to the area includes a mobile intensive care unit with air ambulance provided by North Flight. The organization is incorporated as a non-profit corporation, and the service provided to the community is highly regarded. The service is fully supported by user fees, which is used to purchase new equipment as needed. Once equipment is purchased, ownership of the equipment is turned over to the County.

Health Services

Health care services are an important element of the community facilities available to County residents. Otsego Memorial Hospital provides a wide range of medical services including emergency and extended care facilities, surgery, intensive care units, medical laboratory services, and a walk-in clinic. Additional health related services are provided by Northwest Community Health, Otsego County Family Independency Agency, Northern Michigan Substance Abuse Services, and several other health related agencies.

Community Facilities and Organizations

Because of its close proximity to Gaylord, Livingston Township residents can easily avail themselves of the numerous facilities and activities located in and around the City of Gaylord. The following organizations are active in the area: American Red Cross, American Association of University Women, Boy Scouts of America, Eagles Club, Elks Club, Gaylord Area Resource Center, Gaylord Little League Inc., Northern Michigan Computer Commodore Club, Gaylord Masonic Lodge, Girl Scouts of America, Jaycees, Kiwanis Club, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, Optimists Club, Otsego County Fair Association, Otsego County Ministerial Association, The Shrine Club, Rotary, Senior Citizens (Otsego County Council on Aging), Otsego Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Royal Arch Masons, Sportsman Club, Vanderbilt Masonic Lodge, Zonta Club, and the American Cancer Society.

Local churches (there are several Protestant, one Roman Catholic, and one Conservative Catholic located in Livingston Township on Murner Road at Parmater Road) and the Community Center located in Gaylord have facilities available for meetings. Several private clubs have facilities available for meetings, although not all are open to the general public. The Livingston Township Hall, located on Old 27 North, has facilities available for public and private functions.

Educational Facilities and Programs

The quality of the present and future of Livingston Township is affected by the type and number of educational facilities available to its residents. The teaching of employable skills as well as more formal secondary education adds to the capabilities of the local labor force.

Livingston Township is within two separate public school districts - Gaylord Community School District and Vanderbilt School District. The northeastern five sections of the Township (Sections 1, 2, 3, 11, and 12) are in the Vanderbilt School District, and the remainder is in the Gaylord Community Schools. Several private schools also serve the area.

Evening adult classes are offered at Gaylord High School. Vocational education courses or courses for collage credit are offered through North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, with extension courses in Gaylord. Central Michigan University, Michigan State University, Spring Arbor University, and Davenport College all currently offer extension courses for college credit at the Gaylord High School.

Two and four year technical and computer programs are also offered through Kirtland Community College and AREC/MTEC facility adjacent to the Gaylord High School. The variety of educational opportunities available to the residents of Livingston Township are many and of the highest quality. While not comparable to those offered in a community with higher education institutions, extension classes and the MTEC facility have greatly increased educational opportunities in the County.