

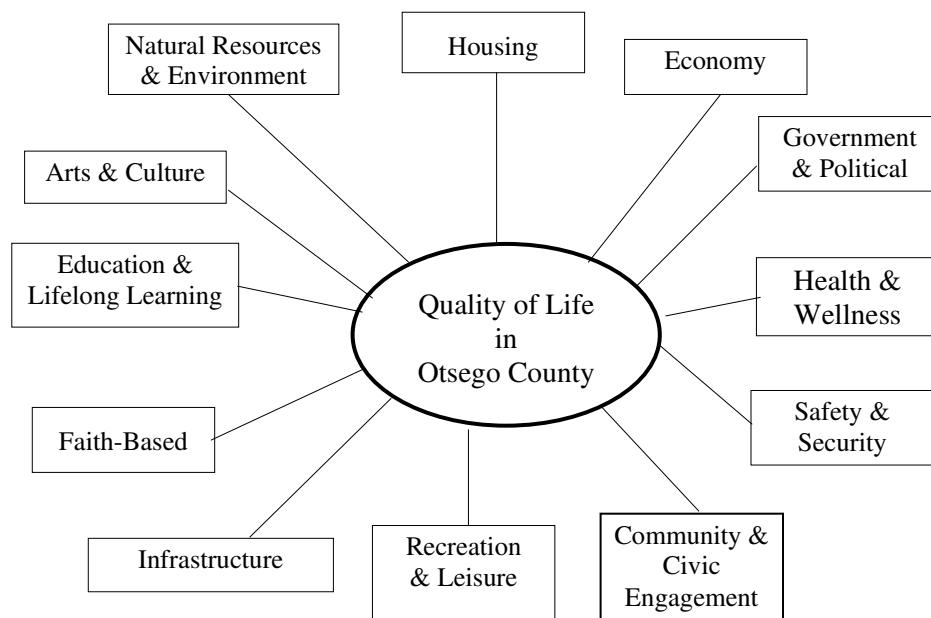
# Quality of Life Assessment - Otsego County

## Plan of Action

**Situation:** What makes Otsego County a desirable place to pursue a career, raise a family, and retire in comfort? Is it the variety of restaurants and shopping options, friendly neighbors, or abundance of outdoor activities? On the other hand, are there conditions that need to be improved such as traffic congestion, affordable housing, and jobs that pay a living wage?

Finding the answers to these and other concerns is the purpose of conducting a Quality of Life Assessment in Otsego County. Several local groups are pursuing need assessments to provide information specific to their mission and program. This Quality of Life Assessment is a macro version of those individual efforts and will offer a view of the bigger picture.

The diagram below illustrates the main categories that will be used to measure the quality of life in Otsego County.

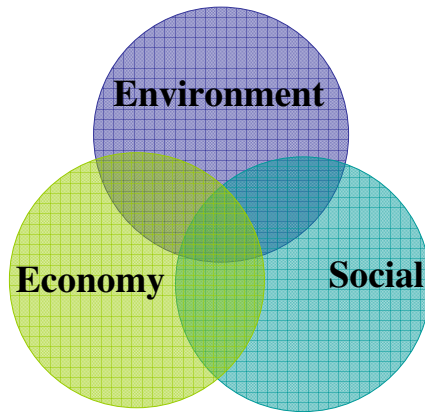


**Who:** Key stakeholders: Public officials with local units of government (county, city, village, and townships), businesses, and nonprofit volunteer organizations. The program is administered through the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) with Phil Alexander as the project manager. A steering committee of 6 people and an advisory committee of 35 people who represent diverse interests, sectors, and geographic areas assist throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation process.

**What:** A comprehensive assessment that uses a holistic approach to examine current economic, social, and environmental conditions and the future aspirations of the people of Otsego County. By looking at all three aspects of our county simultaneously, we can better understand their relationship, interdependence, and relative balance. Baseline information will be obtained from existing reports and used as a launching point for identifying additional

information needed. Citizen participation through perception questionnaires and focus groups will be sought to fill in the missing, necessary data.

This assessment will evaluate the current quality of life in Otsego County and compare it to recent trends as well as desired future conditions. Measuring the gap of “what is and what is desired” will clearly point out collective actions we can take to preserve and continuously improve the quality of life in Otsego County.



**The quality of life assessment focuses on the interrelationship of the local economy, environment, and social well-being.**

**Where:** Throughout the 515 square miles of Otsego County including the 9 townships and the communities of Elmira, Gaylord, Johannesburg, Vanderbilt, and Waters.

**When:** June 2011 – November 2012

**Why:** Help Otsego County residents and community leaders:

- Identify community assets and needs
- Focus on high priority issues
- Identify gaps and reduce overlap
- Increase collaboration
- Make better informed decisions
- Become more proactive in creating our desired future

**How:**

1. Create a steering committee and advisory committee.
2. Prepare a detailed plan of action, budget, and timeline.
3. Identify and contact potential key sponsors, partners, and funders.
4. Gather and review recent studies and information (year 2000 and newer) such as: Census, One County – One Vision, Search Institute, 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Otsego County, Otsego County Master Plan, Community of a Lifetime

Assessment, surveys, Otsego County Government Services Survey 2003, Otsego County Profile 2006, and the Gaylord & Otsego County Guide published annually by the Herald Times.

5. Create a web site and post copies of the existing information and assessment results so that resource materials are easily accessible to the public. [www.otsego.org/qol](http://www.otsego.org/qol)
6. Select indicators by which to measure the level of well-being, fulfillment, or satisfaction for each Quality of Life category illustrated on page 1. Indicators provide a snapshot of one important piece of the puzzle. Indicators are also referred to as benchmarks that are used to measure the progress toward meeting community goals.
7. Conduct an inventory of community organizations showing how their programs and services address the Quality of Life categories. The findings will be summarized showing which of the categories each program relates to so it can be cross-referenced.
8. Identify key pieces of missing / needed information for each Quality of Life indicator.
9. Seek to obtain the missing information by conducting:
  - a. a resident survey in printed and on-line formats to assess opinions and perceptions
  - b. focus groups to elaborate on the survey results and explore potential action
  - c. Community Assessment Team (CAT) - A highly structured visit by outside experts who tour our county, meet with local residents, and investigate our highest priority issues. The CAT produces an exit report that lists its observations, recommendations, and suggested courses of action
  - d. targeted input from area youth
10. The steering committee and project manager will utilize all of the above to document the current quality of life in Otsego County. The findings will be summarized in a Quality of Life Progress Report that includes a comprehensive community profile listing the county's assets and notable features.