

WEST BENZIE JOINT
MASTER PLAN
including the 5-year park & recreation plan



BENZONIA AND PLATTE TOWNSHIP
MICHIGAN

2023

Final Draft
Adopted by
Benzonia Township & Platte Township
February 8, 2023



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Acknowledgments

BENZONIA TOWNSHIP

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

Jim Sheets
Sheila Priest

TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

Jason Barnard

TOWNSHIP CLERK

Diana Heller

TOWNSHIP TREASURER

Karen Burns

PLATTE TOWNSHIP

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

Robb Bollenberg
Dan Haswell

TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

Paul Solem

TOWNSHIP CLERK

Alison Michalak

TOWNSHIP TREASURER

Cindy Gottschalk

WEST BENZIE JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION

Jim Sheets, Chairman
Bruce Wildie, Secretary
Alison Michalak, Recording Secretary
Tim Flynn, Treasurer
Matt Wieber
Robb Bollenberg

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Jason Barnard

PREPARED BY

Sara Kirk, ASLA, LEED AP
SRP Design Studio, llc



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1. Introduction

This plan is prepared as authorized under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA33 of 2008) and is used to satisfy the requirement of section 203(1) of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA110 of 2006), MCL 125.3203 for the jurisdictions of Benzonia Township and Platte Township located in Benzie County, Michigan. This Master Plan will also serve as the joint Park and Recreation Plan.

Why Plan?

A Master Plan creates a blueprint for the preservation of a community. It is the essential foundation upon which communities are built. They guide not only physical and economic development, but also accommodate social, environmental, and regional concerns. They also help adjacent jurisdictions coordinate future planning and development. The planning process offers an opportunity to look broadly at local programs such as economic development, public infrastructure and services, environmental protection, and how they relate to one another by presenting a “big picture” look at the community today and then articulating goals for the future. The land use plan resembles a series of goals and policies that are then used to guide future land use regulations and decisions, including zoning. A good plan engages the public and clearly defines the hopes, needs and aspirations of a community.

The Master Plan is intended to take a long-range view of the Townships, guiding growth and development for the next twenty years and beyond, while also providing flexibility to respond to changing conditions, innovations, new concepts and available resources.

Background & Key Players

This master plan will be the first master plan created solely for Benzonia and Platte Townships. In 2010 Benzie County eliminated its planning department and repealed its zoning ordinance. It was at that time that Benzonia and Platte Townships decided to work together and created the West Benzie Joint Planning Commission (WBJPC). They adopted the Benzie County Comprehensive Plan in order to meet the criteria of the Michigan Enabling Act in order to base the Township’s zoning ordinance.

Benzonia and Platte Townships also have previously adopted the recently completed Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural Plan (2019-2024) in order to be considered for funding through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). As a part of this master plan process, it was decided that a park and recreation plan also be updated at the same time so that WBJPC will then have control of their own park and recreation plan as well. When this updated plan is adopted in 2023 and approved by the MDNR, the Park and Recreation Plan will then be valid through 2028. After then it will need to be reviewed per the MDNR guidelines every 5 years.

How Is It Used?

- A master plan gives guidance to property owners, developers, neighboring jurisdictions, and county and state entities about expectations and standards for public investment and future development.
- Establishes the basis for the zoning ordinance, capital improvements, land use policies, and other implementation tools and programs.
- Provides the framework for day-to-day planning decisions by staff and land use policy decisions by the Planning



Crystal Lake

Commission and Township Board.

- Identifies and evaluates existing conditions and characteristics, community values, trends, issues and opportunities.

Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances are “living documents.” Meaning, they each respond to changing conditions. As social norms shift over time each document should be updated to reflect the new changes. That is why the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires municipalities to review their Master Plan every 5 years. If this review finds the Plan does not align with current trends then it should be updated. This allows the Zoning Ordinance to effectively respond to the needs of Township residents.

2. Community Profile

Regional Context

Benzonia and Platte Townships are located within Benzie County. Benzie County is located in Northwest Lower Michigan, and is the smallest county in the state (refer to Figure 1.0).

Benzonia Township is comprised of 33.84 square miles, of which 6.1 square miles is water. It includes the southeast end of Crystal Lake and also a portion of Big Platte Lake. The Betsie River also runs through Benzonia Township as well as a portion of Platte River as it enters Big Platte Lake. The Township is bisected by two major highways, US-31 and M-115. It also includes two Villages, the Village of Beulah and the Village of Benzonia. Both Villages have their own zoning ordinances, the Village of Benzonia has an active planning commission.

Platte Township is slightly larger than Benzonia and is comprised of 36.47 square miles, only 0.2 square miles is water. A small portion of Little Platte Lake is in the southwest corner, the North Branch of the Platte River flows into Little Platte Lake. M-22, a scenic highway runs through the western edge of Platte Township. Much of Platte Township is government controlled lands of either the National Park Service (Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore) or Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) properties.

Previous Planning History

As mentioned previously the Townships have not previously completed their own master plan. There are a number of planning studies that have been completed under the County Government, as well as the adjacent Villages that have been referenced during the development of this Master Plan. In addition, the County also recently completed the “Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural Plan 2020-2024. The WBJPC chose to adopt this for their Park

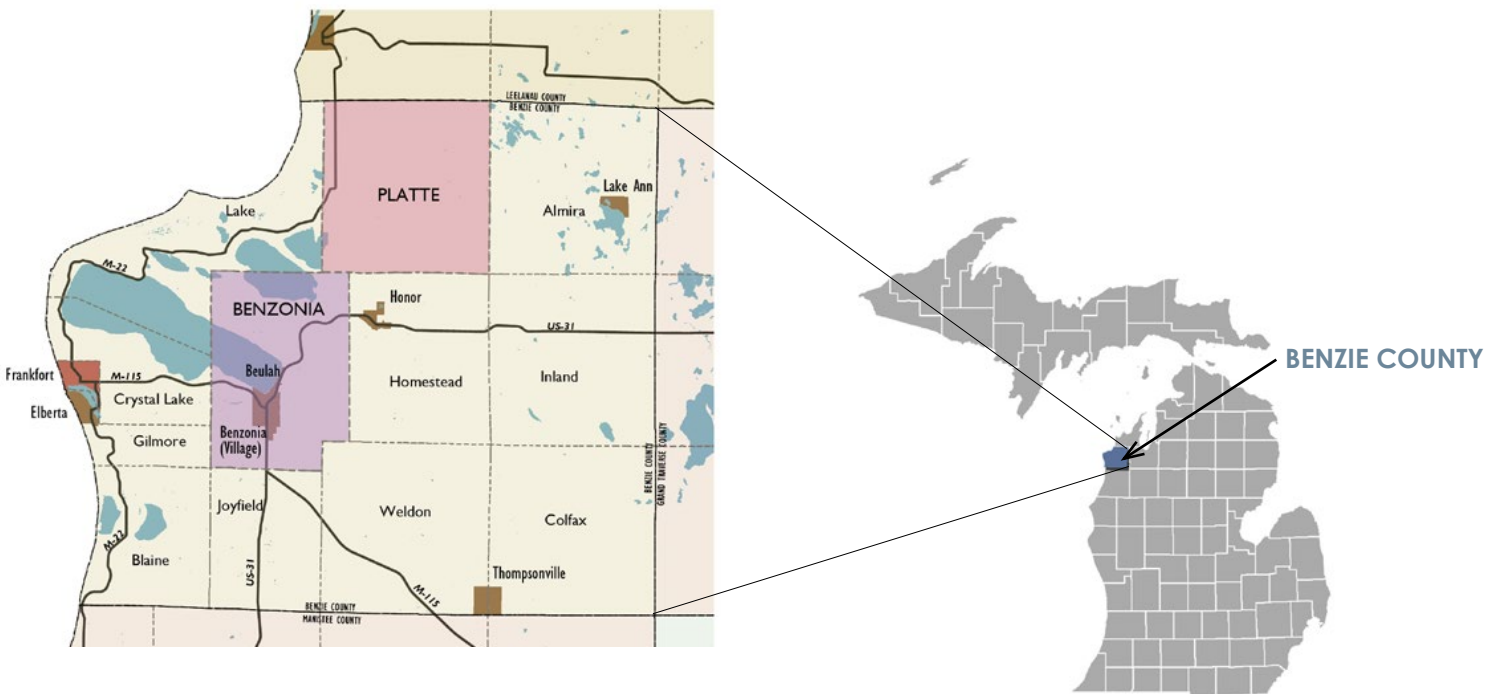


Figure 1.0 Township Vicinity Map

and Recreation Plan, making them eligible for MI MDNR grant funding. As a part of this master plan development, the WBJPC has decided to include the Park and Recreation Plan. The intent is for the WBJPC to now have their own master plan and own park and recreation plan that will be on the same 5-year review and update cycles.

The following is a list of previous plan documents that were reviewed.

- Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural Plan, A Joint Recreation Plan with Benzonia Township, 2020-2024
- Benzie County Comprehensive Plan 2020.
- 2017 Benzie County Master Plan, Networks Northwest, 2017.
- Benzie County Recreation And Cultural Plan 2015-2019, Benzie County Parks And Recreation Commission With Networks Northwest, 2015.
- Benzie County Open Space And Natural Resource Protection Plan, Open Space And Natural Resources Protection Committee, April 2002.
- Benzie County Planning Commission, Annual Report, 2016
- A Housing Market Analysis Of Benzie County, Alliance For Economic Success. 2017.
- US-31 Benzie County Corridor Transportation Management Tool. Michigan Department Of Transportation - North Region, 2018.
- Northwest Michigan Regional Non-Motorized Strategy, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments and Michigan Department Of Transportation, 2008.
- Framework For Our Future, A Regional Prosperity Plan For Northwest Lower Michigan. (Various Chapters) Networks Northwest, 2014.
- Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2018-2022

In addition, the current Township zoning ordinance and its associated overlays and amendments were also reviewed, along with neighboring community zoning ordinances.

Township Snapshots

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The following is a brief background on the formation of both Platte and Benzonia Townships.

Much of the early settlement in Benzie County was in the area of the Village of Benzonia and Benzonia Township. In 1858, Charles E. Bailey an educator at Oberlin College in Ohio, led a group of Oberlin Alumni including ministers, teachers, farmers, and business people to the area with the idea of forming an “educational Christian Colony”¹.

The colonists’ “Articles of Agreement and Plans for a Christian Colony and Institution

¹Mills Community House, <https://www.millscommhouse.org/history.html>

Benzonia, Michigan



Photo Source: Benzie County Historical Society

2. Community Profile

of Learning” provided that a quarter of the stockholders’ lands were to establish and endow the college. The original political organization of government for the colony was Crystal Lake Township, and part of Grand Traverse County. In 1861, Benzonia Township was organized from this, and so the new college chartered in 1863 was named Grand Traverse College and operated until 1890.² It was then the name of the college was changed to Benzie College, and was providing college level education. The school was finally changed to Benzonia Academy and operated until 1918. Mills Community House is the only remaining structure from the school and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972¹.

The Township of Benzonia originally included a much larger territory in Benzie County, it was from this larger territory that the townships of Platte, Almira, Inland, Weldon, Joyfield and Homestead were eventually organized.

The Township of Benzonia includes a number of Benzie County’s historical and cultural icons. Just some of the most significant places include; Mills Community House, the Benzonia Historical Museum, Gwen Frostic’s Print Shop and the Cherry Bowl Drive-In Theater. In addition, there are 4 (four) State Historical Markers in the Village of Benzonia (Benzonia College, Bruce Catton, Mills Community House and First Congregational Church). There is also a historical marker that

was established by the County in the Village of Beulah regarding the tragedy of Crystal Lake.

The township of Platte, was first settled in the year 1864. The early settlers had a hard time with the heavily forested lands and lack of roads. Many used the beach of nearby Lake Michigan as a way to convey their goods and supplies, until about the year 1866 when several roads were developed connecting the area to Glen Haven and Traverse City. It was in 1867 that the Township of Platte was officially organized.

It was in that same year the first school district was also organized. School was held in one room of the Thurston residence. It was in the spring of 1868 a log schoolhouse was built in district No. 1. District

Gwen Frostic Print Shop



Gwen Frostic established her print shop in the woods along the Betsie River in Benzonia Township in 1964. Gwen was a renowned Michigan artist, famous for her Linocut block print artwork featuring elements from the natural world. The unique building, built into the natural landscape, included her print shop, retail store and personal office and residence. A popular tourist destination, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.

The Drake School, Platte Township

Photo Source: Benzie County Historical Society



No. 1 was eventually listed as the Morgan School.³ The first post office was also established in that same year, Abel Briggs was appointed postmaster.²

Another school district was created, District No 2., was established about 1876, and is now know as the Drake School. This school was initially known as the Getchell School, and was later changed to the Drake School in 1913. The school was in operation until it closed in 1943. In 1988, the property and school was donated to the Benzie Area Historical Society, by a woman named Katherine Maley.

The Platte Grange, #1328, assisted the Historical Society in restoring the property to an early 1900 time period. It was rededicated as the Drake School museum on May 13, 1989. It is currently open for visitors on weekends in the summer.

¹Mills Community House, <https://www.millscommhouse.org/history.html>

²Michigan Pioneer And Historical Society Collections Volume 31 (1901) Pages 114--125), A History Of The Early Settlement Of The Township Of Benzonia And The Founding Of Grand Traverse College By William A. Betts.

³Benzie Historical Society, "The Drake School", <https://benziemuseum.org/the-drake-school/>

2. Community Profile

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following demographic summary will look specifically at statistics for Benzonia and Platte Townships. The idea is to identify overall trends to help the Townships make informed decisions regarding planning that will be in the community's best interest. Comparisons will be made to County, State or National data as available to help illustrate these trends. All of the census data is referenced from the latest information available (2019/2020) from American Fact Finder data by the U.S. Census Bureau.

GENERAL POPULATION

Benzonia Township had a population of 2,740 as of the 2020 census data. The male and female population is almost equal, with slightly more female population. The 2020 population shows another decline from the 2010 and the 2000 census for Benzonia Township. (FIGURE 2.0). This is in contrast to Benzie County as a whole, as the County population has increased from 2010 to 2020 by about 1.5%.

Platte Township had a population of 382 as of the 2020 census data. The male and female population is almost equal, with slightly more male population. The latest 2020 population number is a decline from 2010 census, whereas the 2010 census had shown an increase from the 2000 census (FIGURE 2.1).

HOUSEHOLDS

Households and families are basic units used in the analysis of demographic information, however they are not the same thing. A household is comprised of one or more people who occupy a housing unit, not all households contain families. Under the U.S. Census Bureau definition, family households consist of two or more

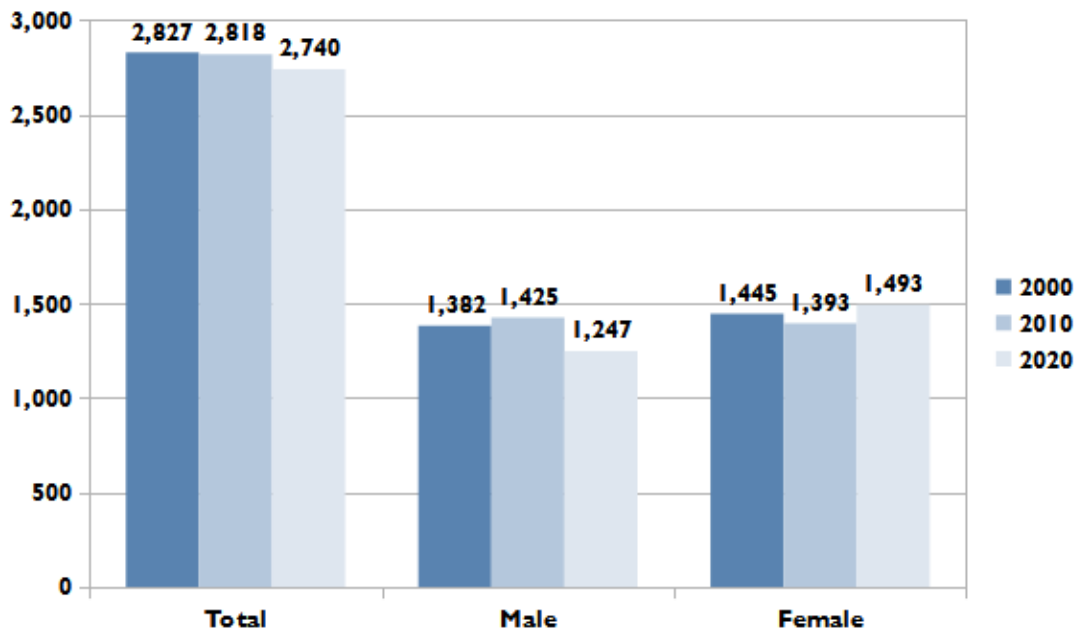


Figure 2.0 Benzonia Township Population

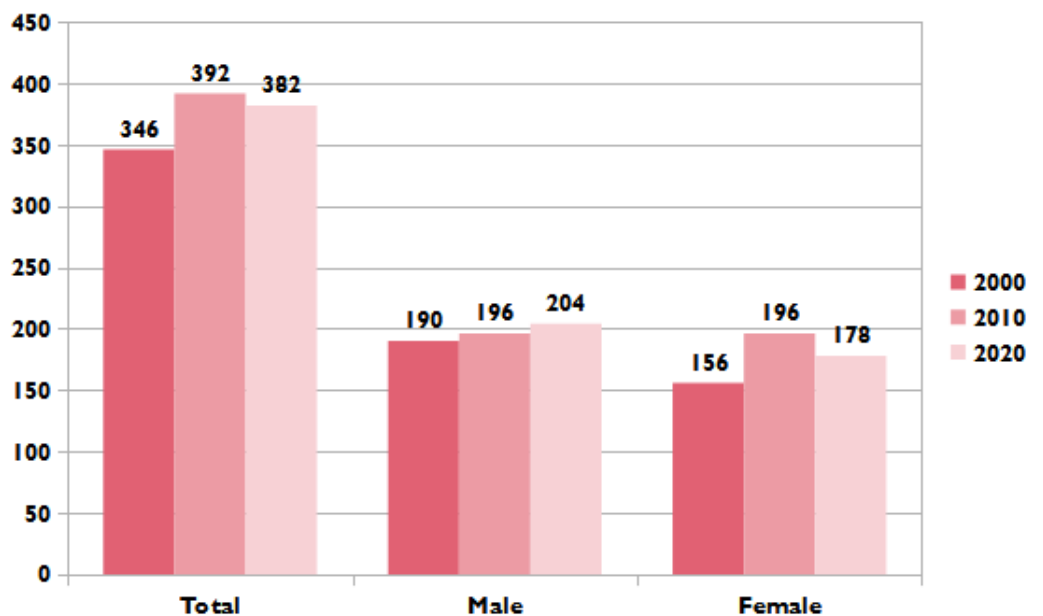


Figure 2.1 Platte Township Population

individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. Non-family households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals.

An individual's living arrangements usually change at different stages of life. The average size and composition of households are highly sensitive to the age structure of the population. But they also reflect social and economic changes. In the United States, the mix of household types has changed enormously over the last three decades. One of the most notable nationwide changes is the declining proportion of family households and the rise in single-person households.

Households in both townships had similar trends, with both showing increased households from the 2000 to 2010 census and then a decrease from 2010 to the 2020 data. Family households in both townships are trending lower with both showing less family households in the most recent data than the previous decade.

In both townships households with individuals over the age of 65 is increasing. (FIGURES 2.3 and 2.4)

Benzonia Townships family households have steadily decreased since 2000, (FIGURE 2.2) while the average household size and family size has steadily increased (FIGURE 2.4). This is in contrast to the County growth pattern, as the County Master plan indicates that average household size has been dropping by about 4% across the region. In addition, total housing units have risen since 2000 for both Townships, while it is interesting to note that owner occupied houses have declined in both Townships. (TABLE 2.0 and 2.1)

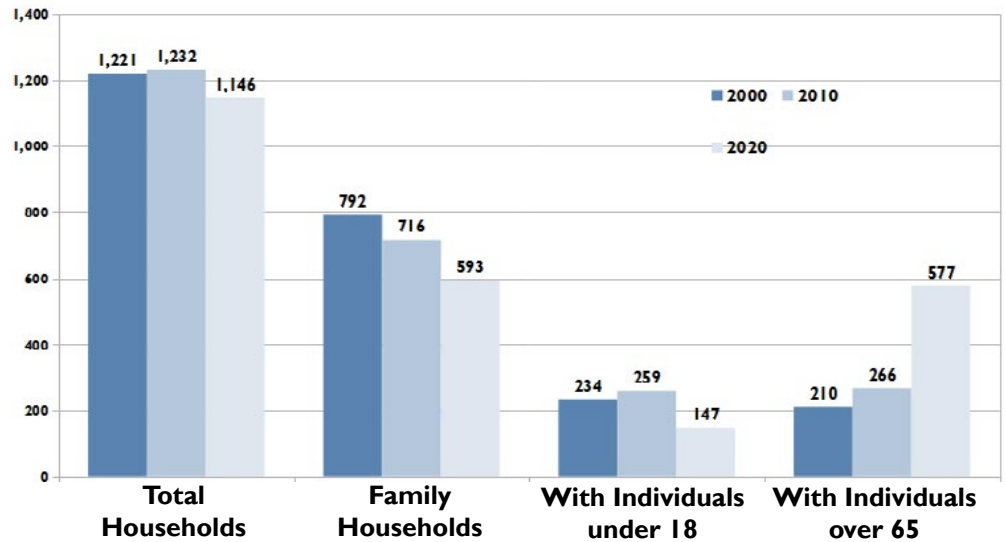


Figure 2.2 Benzonia Township Households

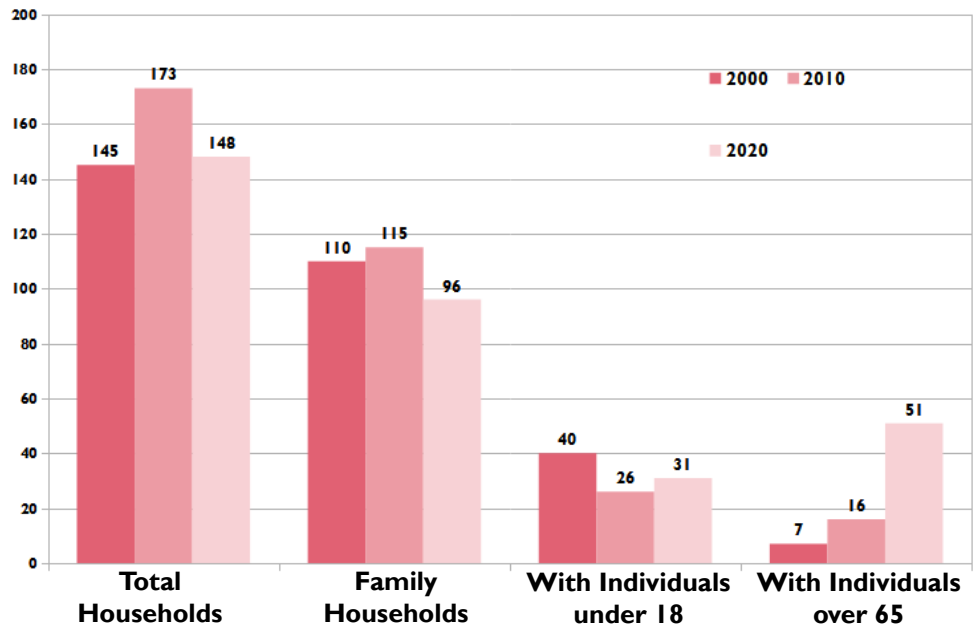


Figure 2.3 Platte Township Households

2. Community Profile

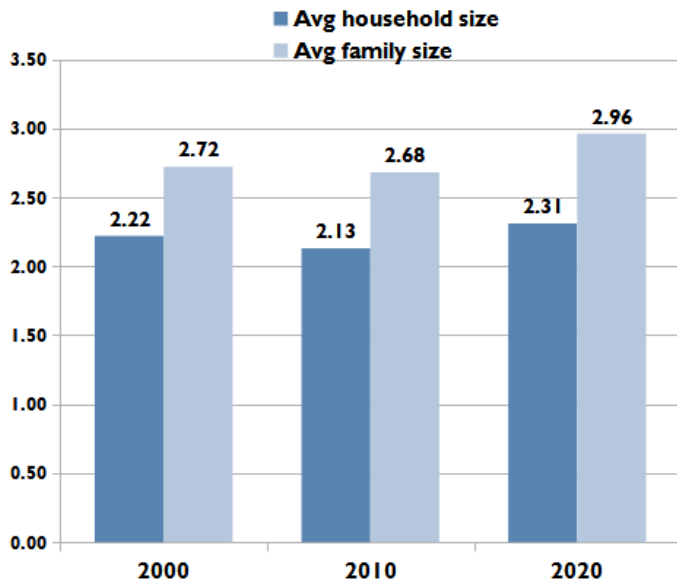


Figure 2.4 Benzoncia Township Household & Family Size

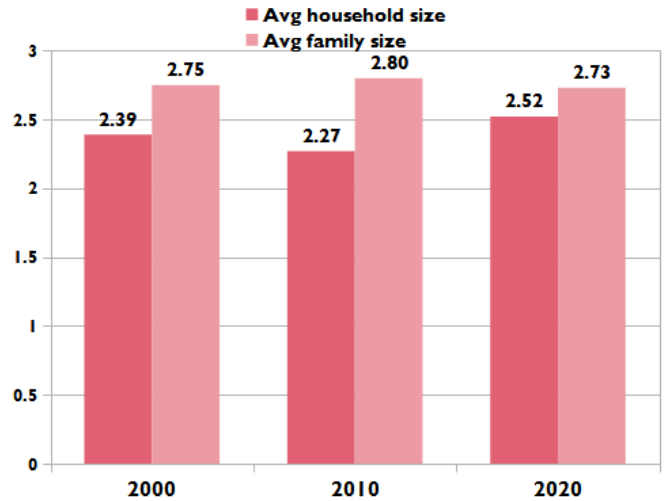


Figure 2.5 Platte Township Household & Family Size

KEY FINDINGS & COMPARISONS FROM THE 2020 CENSUS ⁴

- The U.S. population is on track to grow at the slowest rate since the 1930s, which could have wide-ranging impacts on the labor supply and the demand for goods and services, including new homes, over the coming years.
- More than half of U.S. counties have experienced net population loss since 2010, with more than 550 counties losing at least 5 percent of their residents.

NOTE - this is not the case for Benzie County as its population showed an increase of about 4% since 2010.⁵

- The percentage of U.S. residents ages 65 and older is increasing at the fastest pace in U.S. history, with significant implications for public spending on programs for older adults.
- Fewer households are being established, due in part to the growing share of young adults who still live with their parents.

NOTE - this trend is shown in Benzoncia and Platte Townships.

⁴Population Bulletin, Vol. 74, No. 1, June 2019, Population Reference Bureau, www.prb.org

⁵Benchmarks Northwest: A Collection of Data Resources for Northwest Michigan, Networks Northwest, 2020.

HOUSING

This section deals with the more physical makeup of the housing characteristics in the townships. In order to be able to plan for the future, it is important for community leaders to have an understanding of the current housing situation in their community. The northwest region of Michigan is fortunate to have access to a wealth of housing and economic data available from the Networks Northwest organization. The planning commission should always be sure to access and review the latest housing data when making planning decisions as many data resources are updated annually. The following is a snapshot of current data available for both townships as compared to the County and region.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY: OWNERSHIP VS. RENTAL

The shortage of available housing of all types continues to be a major issue. It is currently not just a Northwest Michigan issue but a national concern as well. Total housing units in Benzonia are up slightly over the last decade, while total housing units in Platte township has actually decreased (TABLE 2.0 and 2.1).

An important consideration when analyzing housing markets is how those units are held by its users. There are two primary methods, owning and renting, with advantages and disadvantages to each. The main advantages to home ownership is that it includes shelter provision and asset building. However, the existence of a strong rental market is also important as it can provide lower-cost shelter option for those in the community, which is sometimes more suitable for new households, or residents more likely to be mobile due to seasonality, educational or family circumstances. It is important to provide enough rental options in a community for these types of transitional residents.

Current housing in both townships is dominated by owner occupied housing units, this hasn't seemed to change a great deal for either Township since the 2000 census. There is a greater percentage of rental homes available in Benzonia Township, likely due to the denser zoning around the Villages of Benzonia and Beulah. The percentage of rental homes in Benzonia Township in the 2019 data was 16.4% and 6.4% for Platte.

Comparatively for the State of Michigan, the current owner occupancy rate is 71.7% and rental occupancy is 28.3%, - both townships have a much lower rental occupancy than the state average.

VACANT HOUSING

The US Census Bureau defines a housing unit as vacant if no one is living in it at the time of the interview, unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. Vacant units may be unavailable for rent or sale for any number of reasons. A vacant unit may be one which is entirely occupied by persons who have a usual residence elsewhere. They may be under renovation. They may be newly built and

HOUSING OCCUPANCY- BENZONIA			
	2000	2010	2020
Total (Housing Units)	2,033	2,011	2,215
Occupied	1,219	1,232	1,146
Owner occupied	742	1,027	1,015
Renter/Seasonal Occupied	195	205	131
Vacant		779	1,069

Table 2.0 Benzonia Township Housing Occupancy

HOUSING OCCUPANCY - PLATTE			
	2000	2010	2020
Total	238	284	236
Occupied	149	173	148
Owner occupied	40	162	129
Renter/Seasonal Occupied	4	11	19
Vacant		111	88

Table 2.1 Platte Township Housing Occupancy

2. Community Profile

Housing in Benzonia Township



Housing in Platte Township



not sold or leased yet. They may be used part-time for a purpose other than the owner's primary residence: for example, as a short term rental. The vacancy rate for both townships is relatively high, and could be having an effect on the amount of housing available to year round residents. For Benzonia Township it is 51.5%, which is higher than the County rate of 45.8%. The vacancy rate for Platte Township is 40.6%. Comparatively, the current vacancy rate for the State of Michigan is 13.7%. Both townships have a much higher vacancy rate than the state average. Due to the known tourist and seasonal living characteristics of the northwest Michigan region, it is quite possible vacancy rates are high due to seasonal residents and short term rentals.

SHORT TERM RENTAL

The growth and issues of the short term rental industry over the last few years has again been not only a Northern Michigan issue, but a national issue as well. While short term rentals do increase a community's bed base for tourism, it can also results in fewer home for sale and long term rentals available for people who actually live and work in the community. It also tends to increase prices and reduce the inventory of homes for sale. This can be especially detrimental to smaller communities as long term effects could include loss of population, fewer families with students, fewer community volunteers for boards and commissions and emergency services such as first responders and volunteer fire departments. This is becoming a critical issue in many areas, especially those that rely heavily on tourism, and should be carefully considered in all future decisions related to the regulation and development of housing.

HOUSING VALUE

At the same time that vacancy rates are rising in the housing units available to the community, the median housing values are sharply increasing as well. Both Benzonia and Platte Townships have had significant increases in housing value in the last decade and both median values are over the County average (TABLE 2.2).

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. Generally that means that households should spend about 2.5 times their annual income on their home.

In looking at the median income for both townships, if that is multiplied by about 2.5 times, the median home value that most families can afford is approximately in the \$128,000-\$147,000 range. With the current median home values at \$212,2100 in Benzonia and \$199,200 in Platte, one can see how affordable homes may be extremely unattainable for many residents.

Adding affordable housing to the community has been and will continue to be a complex problem. Oftentimes there are

HOUSING VALUE – COMPARISON			
	2000	2010	2020
Benzie County	\$104,700.00	\$160,200.00	\$195,400.00
Benzonia Township	\$118,600.00	\$175,600.00	\$212,100.00
Platte Township	\$98,500.00	\$169,600.00	\$199,200.00

Table 2.2 Median Housing Value Comparison

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Year	2000	2010	2020
Median Income/Year (benzonia)	\$32,837.00	\$42,689.00	\$50,882.00
Median Income/Year (county)	\$37,350.00	\$44,718.00	\$64,257.00

Table 2.4 Benzonia Township – Median Income

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Year	2000	2010	2020
Median Income/Year (platte)	\$36,979.00	\$45,250.00	\$61,500.00
Median Income/Year (county)	\$37,350.00	\$44,718.00	\$64,257.00

Table 2.5 Platte Township – Median Income

2. Community Profile

LABOR FORCE – BENZONIA			
Year	2000	2010	2020
Total (persons 16+ working in area)	2329	2375	2346
Employed	1156	1140	1134
Unemployed	81	151	69
Year	2000	2010	2020
Unemployment rate (benzonia)	6.5	11.7	4.9
Unemployment rate (county)	6.2	11.7	4.5
Unemployment rate (state)	3.8	12.3	5

Table 2.6 Benzonia Township – Labor Force

LABOR FORCE – PLATTE			
Year	2000	2010	2020
Total (persons 16+ working in area)	273	329	196
Employed	179	206	181
Unemployed	18	17	15
Year	2000	2010	2020
Unemployment rate (platte)	6.5	5.1	7.7
Unemployment rate (county)	6.2	11.7	4.5
Unemployment rate (state)	3.8	12.3	5

Table 2.7 Platte Township – Labor Force

stigmas attached to affordable housing as many people think of government housing projects with crime and drug issues. There is also negative perceptions of tax dollars being spent on housing projects that are detrimental to the neighborhood. The following is from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s “Affordable Housing Myths Fact Sheet:

In many areas, high land costs, construction labor shortages, rising material costs, limited and expensive infrastructure, and taxes, make it almost impossible to put together financially viable projects that are affordable to the workforce. These developments require some level of subsidy, whether it’s from grants, tax incentives, or land donations. There are a few public funding programs available to support affordable or workforce housing, but the dollars are limited

ADDITIONAL HOUSING RESOURCES

- *Housing North* - <https://www.housingnorth.org/>
- *Networks Northwest, Housing* - <https://www.networksnorthwest.org/community/housing/>
- *Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency* - <https://www.nmcaa.net/>
- *Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Statewide Housing Plan* - <https://www.michigan.gov/mshda/developers/statewide-housing-plan>

Many aging baby boomers have not saved sufficiently for retirement, young people are entering the worst job market in years, and middle-class incomes have stagnated. According to AARP, there is a significantly widening gap between median household income and median home prices and rents.

It should be kept in mind that affordable housing may include a variety of housing types and scenarios. Affordable housing is housing for your neighbors, children, first responders or a teacher. It can be workforce housing, for veterans or for persons with disabilities, senior housing, transitional housing for students or recently graduated, or for just typical working families. Affordable housing isn’t always subsidized with tax credits; it could simply be smaller unit sizes to reduce costs of a housing unit, alternative construction methods such as manufactured home communities, or ANY other creative construction means to achieve a more specific and affordable price point.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

INCOME

The median income for both townships has risen over the last 20 years. Benzonia's rate of growth has remained on par with the County, while Platte Townships median income in the last 10 years has risen and was significantly higher than the county income level in the 2020 dataset (TABLE 2.4 and 2.5).

A look at the most recent employment and income trends shows that both townships currently have a higher unemployment rate than the County and State rates. Benzonia Township has a significantly lower unemployment rate than it did in 2010, while Platte Township's rate is about 2.5% higher than it was ten years ago (TABLE 2.6 and 2.7).

EDUCATION

Table 2.8 and 2.9 show the data for school enrollment in each township since the 2000 census. Overall, school enrollment is trending lower since 2010. Educational attainment, or the highest level of education a person receives is generally related to an individual's earning capacity. In other words, people with more education tend to make higher total incomes over their lifetime. A community's average educational achievement, therefore, can be an indicator of its economic capacity. In Benzonia Township 76.8% have a high school diploma or greater, for Platte Township it is 100%. The regional average is 93.1%. In Benzonia Township 36.4% have at least some college or above while for Platte Township it is 17.3%.

POVERTY

The key poverty statistics summary on this page as well as the ALICE Households Summary on page 21 provide data on poverty in the region and county as compared to Benzonia and Platte Townships. The overall poverty rate for Benzie County at 9% puts it at the lowest overall poverty rate in the Northwest region.

KEY POVERTY CHARACTERISTICS

SNAPSHOT (from the 2020 American Community Survey estimates)

Benzonia Township

- % below the poverty level: 17.4% (this is an increase from 2015 estimate of 14.5%)
- For those Employed: 11.3%
- For those Unemployed: 49.3%
- Highest Rate per Age Group: 35-65 years at 20.3%
- Lowest rate among education level: Those with a bachelors degree or higher at 7%

Platte Township

- % below the poverty level: 7.9% (this is a decrease from 2015 estimate of 10.5%)
- For those Employed: 9.3%
- For those Unemployed: 21.1%
- Highest Rate per Age Group: 60 and over 13.6%
- Lowest rate among education level: Those with some college education at 2.4%

2. Community Profile

TRANSPORTATION

Having an understanding of where people work and how they get there can help make planning decisions regarding both housing and transportation - either vehicular or pedestrian related. Benzie County has approximately 445 employers and offers about 4,900 jobs, this puts it at the lowest rate of jobs available in the Northwest Region. Grand Traverse County offers the highest number of jobs by a considerable amount⁶. This means that a large population of the work force in Benzie County likely travels outside the County for work.

The total amount of people who drive to work everyday has not changed significantly in either township since 2000, however the latest dataset does show a decrease overall from the previous decade. The people that take public transportation to work in Benzonia Township has risen since 2010. The initial 2019 data indicated a significant number of people (23) bicycling to work in Benzonia Township, however this data appears to be included in "other" in the 2020 data.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT - BENZONIA TOWNSHIP			
	2000	2010	2020
Enrolled In School	598	550	398
Preschool	15	27	29
K	22	30	20
Grade1-4	283*	102	166*
Grade5-8	*combined	109	*combined
Grade9-12	181	157	92
College	97*	75	91*
Graduate or Professional	*combined	50	*combined

Table 2.8 Benzonia Township - Means of Transportation

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT - PLATTE			
	2000	2010	2020
Enrolled In School	37	68	42
Preschool	0	3	0
K	0	4	0
Grade1-4	12	18	19*
Grade5-8	18	19	*combined
Grade9-12	3	11	15
College	4	7	8*
Graduate or Professional	0	6	*combined

Table 2.9 Platte Township - Means of Transportation

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK - BENZONIA			
	2000	2010	2020
Total	1135	1079	1120
Car, Truck, Van - Alone	895	842	976
Carpooled	107	141	23
Public Transportation	12	2	16
Walk	50	56	11
Other	7	9	39
Worked at Home	64	29	55

Table 2.8 Benzonia Township - Means of Transportation

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK - PLATTE			
	2000	2010	2020
Total	177	206	164
Car, Truck, Van - Alone	128	138	131
Carpooled	18	12	17
Public Transportation	2	4	0
Walk	10	4	1
Other	0	0	0
Worked at Home	19	48	15

Table 2.9 Platte Township - Means of Transportation

ALICE HOUSEHOLDS & WHAT IT MEANS

WHAT IS ALICE? (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

The ALICE project is a partnership with United Way and several other organizations across Michigan to gain a better understanding of the people in Michigan communities that are employed yet still struggle to make ends meet. These households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county they live in (the ALICE threshold). When you combine the ALICE households with the poverty-level households, that equals the total population in the community that is struggling to afford their basic needs⁷.

This is important to understand during a master planning process because these households (and poverty level households) may not provide as much economic support to local commercial areas as non-poverty households. These households will generally consume differently, spending more money on basic necessity type retailers and less on 'extras' like specialty shops and gift stores. These households may not travel as far for recreational needs and require more support for a healthy lifestyle from recreation sources close to their homes, in the Village. These households may require various types of rental and more affordable or non-traditional housing options.

Community Summary – 2021 Data⁸

Michigan:

13% in Poverty 25% in ALICE = 38% in Poverty or ALICE



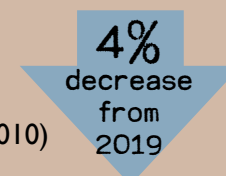
Benzie County⁷:

Population: 18,223 Households: 6,940

Median Household Income: \$64,257

BENZIE COUNTY:

9% in Poverty 29% in ALICE = 38% in Poverty or ALICE
(while this is a decrease from 2019, this percentage has remained similar since 2010)



SENIOR HOUSEHOLDS (AGE 65+) are slightly higher than the County Average, with 40% either in Poverty or ALICE.

2021 HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL BUDGET FOR MICHIGAN

	Single Adult	Senior (1 Adult)	2 Adults, 1 Infant, 1 Preschooler
Monthly Total:	\$1,950	\$2,187	\$5,343
Annual Total:	\$23,400	\$26,244	\$64,116
Hourly Wage Req'd.	\$11.70	\$13.12	\$32.06

⁶County Dashboard - Benzie County, Networks Northwest, <https://www.networksnorthwest.org/data/regional-data/county-dashboards/county-dashboard-benzie.html>

⁷ALICE in Michigan: A Financial Hardship Study, 2021 Michigan Report, Michigan Association of United Way.

⁸2021 Quick Facts, United States Census Bureau, data.census.gov

3. Existing Physical Conditions

Existing Conditions

The existing conditions map (Figure 3.0) shows the general relationship of both Benzonia and Platte Township to the County. Benzonia includes the Village of Beulah and the Village of Benzonia. Benzonia Township contains much of the commercial areas in Benzie County. Platte Township is comprised primarily of state and federal lands and is heavily forested. The two townships are in stark contrast to each other in terms of land use. Also shown on this map is forest cover from the latest U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) shapefile dataset.

Natural Features

HYDROLOGY

Benzie County and its Townships are well known for their incredible natural resources, and in particular the lakes and waterways. Michigan residents are fortunate to be surrounded by one of the most unique lake systems on the planet and home to over 20% of the world's freshwater. In addition to lakes, other components of an area's hydrology include the watersheds and their associated rivers, streams and wetlands. It is critical to have a good understanding of a region's hydrologic conditions when considering current and future land use planning decisions, as increased development and resulting land use changes have a significant impact on both water quality and water quantity. Land use plans (and resulting planning and zoning activities) must consider the impacts of potential land use changes on water resources if protection of water quality is to be achieved.

BENZONIA TOWNSHIP

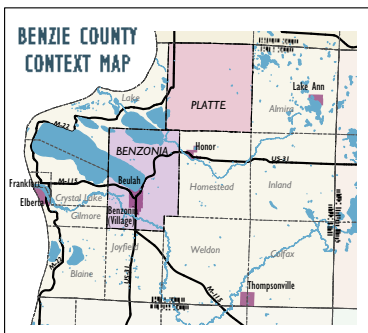
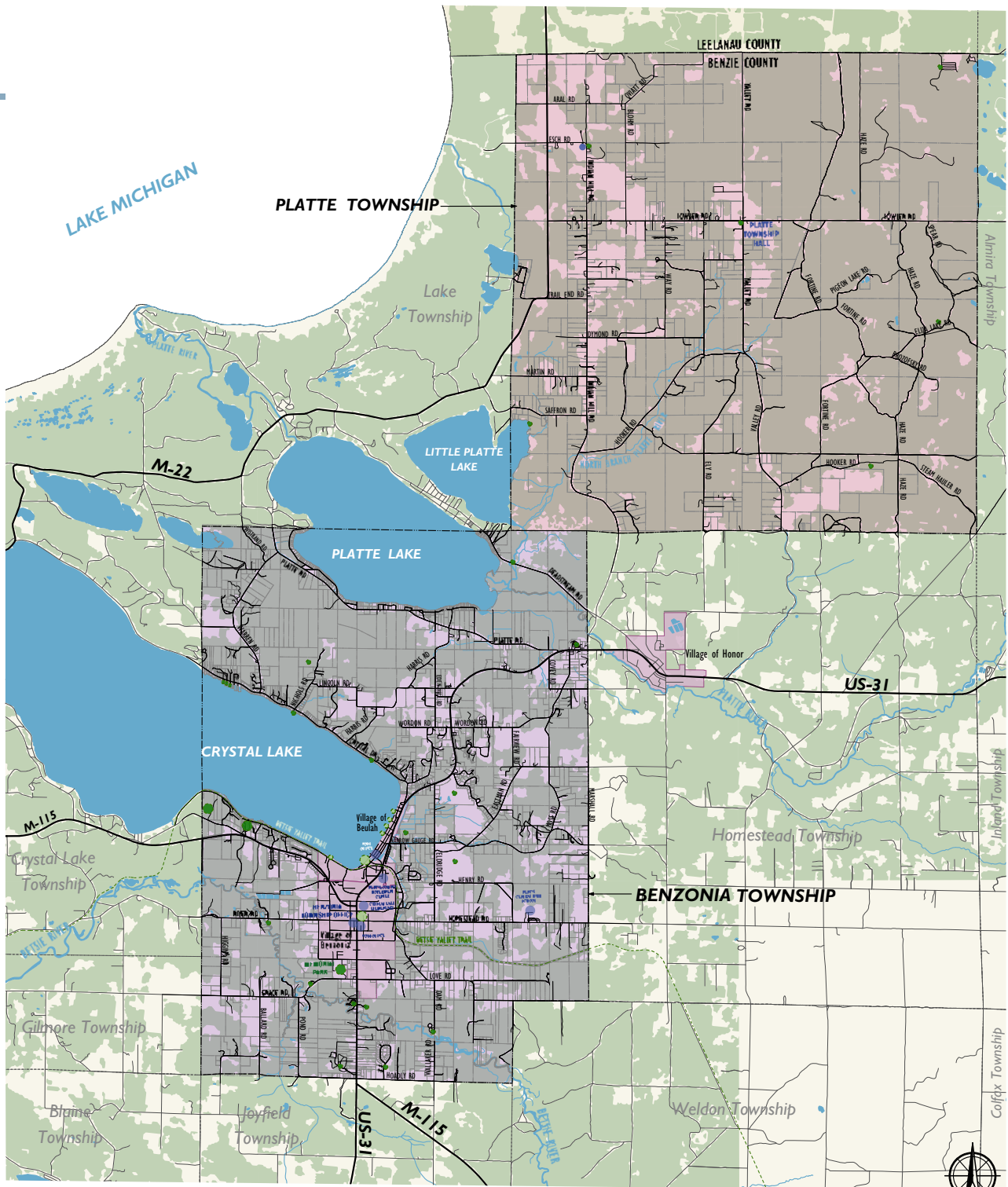
Lakes:

Large portions of both Crystal Lake and (Big) Platte Lake are in the Township boundaries. A small portion of Rush Lake is included in the northwest corner of the Township. In all, about 6.1 square miles of lakes are found in the township borders.

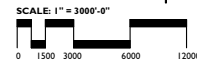
Crystal Lake at 9,854 acres is the ninth largest lake in Michigan. As the name implies, its waters are crystal clear and the bottom is generally sandy. It is a unique inland lake due to the infamous and well documented 'Tragedy of Crystal Lake', that accidentally drew the lake down about 20 feet creating a beautiful sandy coastline around the entire lake that forever changed the development pattern in Benzie County. This prime and much desired real estate that was created by the 'Tragedy' now includes areas of dense residential and resort development around the lake shore. There are also a few recreational and natural areas around Crystal Lake, however, there are relatively few locations for public access. These are highlighted in the Community Facilities section of this Chapter and Chapter 5, Parks & Recreation. This uniquely created lakeside development pattern brings the challenge of balancing the dense development, the immense economic impacts of tax dollars and tourism money to the local economy, and the competition for public access to the lake, with the environmental responsibility of protecting the lake, its ecosystems and surrounding natural habitats.

Platte Township includes portions of Little Platte Lake and Otter Lake along its western boundary and

¹River Restoration in Northern Michigan, <http://www.northernmichiganstreams.org/>



- LEGEND**
- township boundary
 - parcel boundary
 - state owned roadway
 - other local roads
 - major river/stream
 - municipal boundary (villages)
 - Park or Public Access Areas (Township)
 - Park or Public Access Areas (Non-Township)
 - Civic/Public Uses
 - Woodlands (USGS data)



mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center; 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Figure 3.0 Existing Conditions Map for Both Townships

3. Existing Physical Conditions

Garey and Lime Lake on the eastern boundary. There are a few smaller lakes scattered throughout the township, only about 0.2 square miles makes up the lakes found in Platte.

Rivers:

The Betsie and Platte River are found in Benzonia Township, these are two of Benzie County's largest and most heavily used rivers. Cold Creek is a major tributary that flows from the southeastern portion of the township through Beulah and into Crystal Lake. Rice Creek is located in the southwest portion of the township and flows near Pond Road into the Betsie River near Grace Road.

With its headwaters at Green Lake in Grand Traverse County, the Betsie River flows through Manistee County and then enters the Thompsonville area and Weldon Township. It then runs from the southeast to the west through Benzonia Township into Crystal Lake Township where it eventually flows into Betsie Lake in Frankfort and then Lake Michigan. The Betsie is well known for its fishing, in particular steel head and salmon. The Betsie River mainstream is 52 miles long and drains a surface area of 259 square miles. The largest tributaries are the Little Betsie and Dair Creek, both valuable for trout spawning habitat. There have been tremendous planning, protection and restoration efforts over the years regarding the Betsie River and its watershed¹.

The Platte River is recognized as one of Michigan's Blue Ribbon Trout Streams. The Platte is a relatively shallow and slow moving waterway, getting its name from the French word for "level" or "flat". The Platte River Watershed covers 193 square miles and the river valley is 14 miles long, with a total of 90.5 miles of river and connecting streams¹.

A small portion of the Platte River is located in the far southwest corner of the Platte Township as it flows from Little Platte Lake to Big Platte Lake. The North Branch of the Platte River is the most significant waterway in the township and flows into Little Platte Lake along and near the vicinity of Hooker Road.

A variety of partners work on conservation-based projects in the watershed, including Conservation Resource Alliance, Benzie Conservation District, Platte Lake Improvement Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa

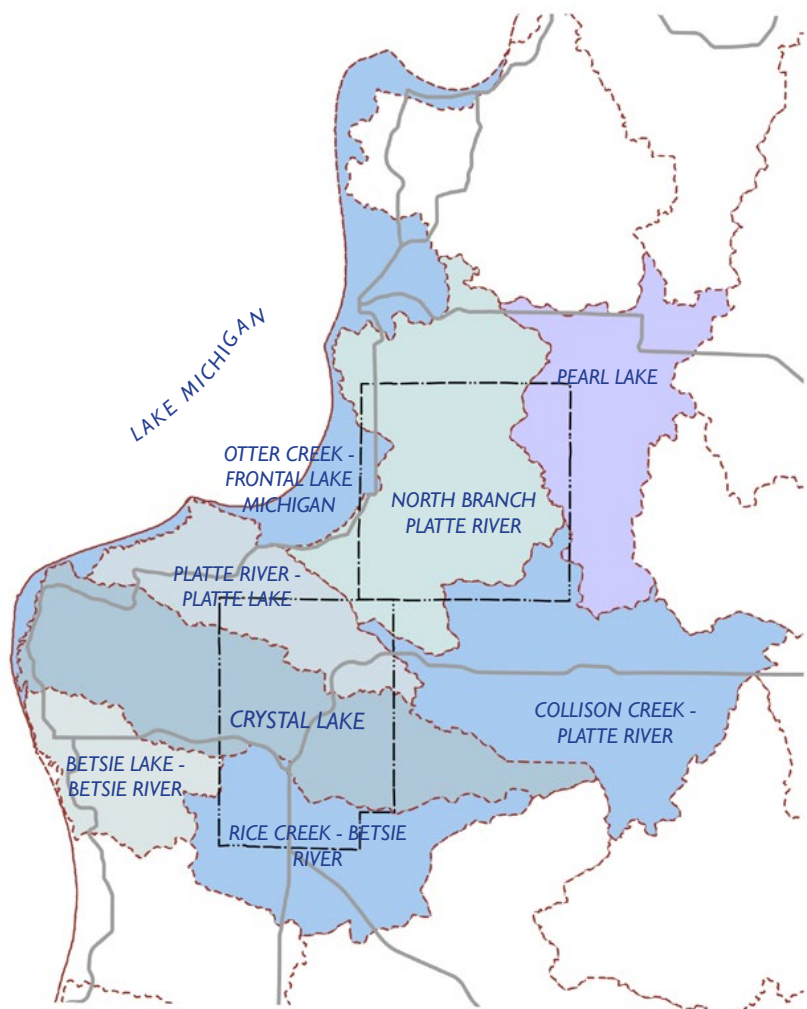
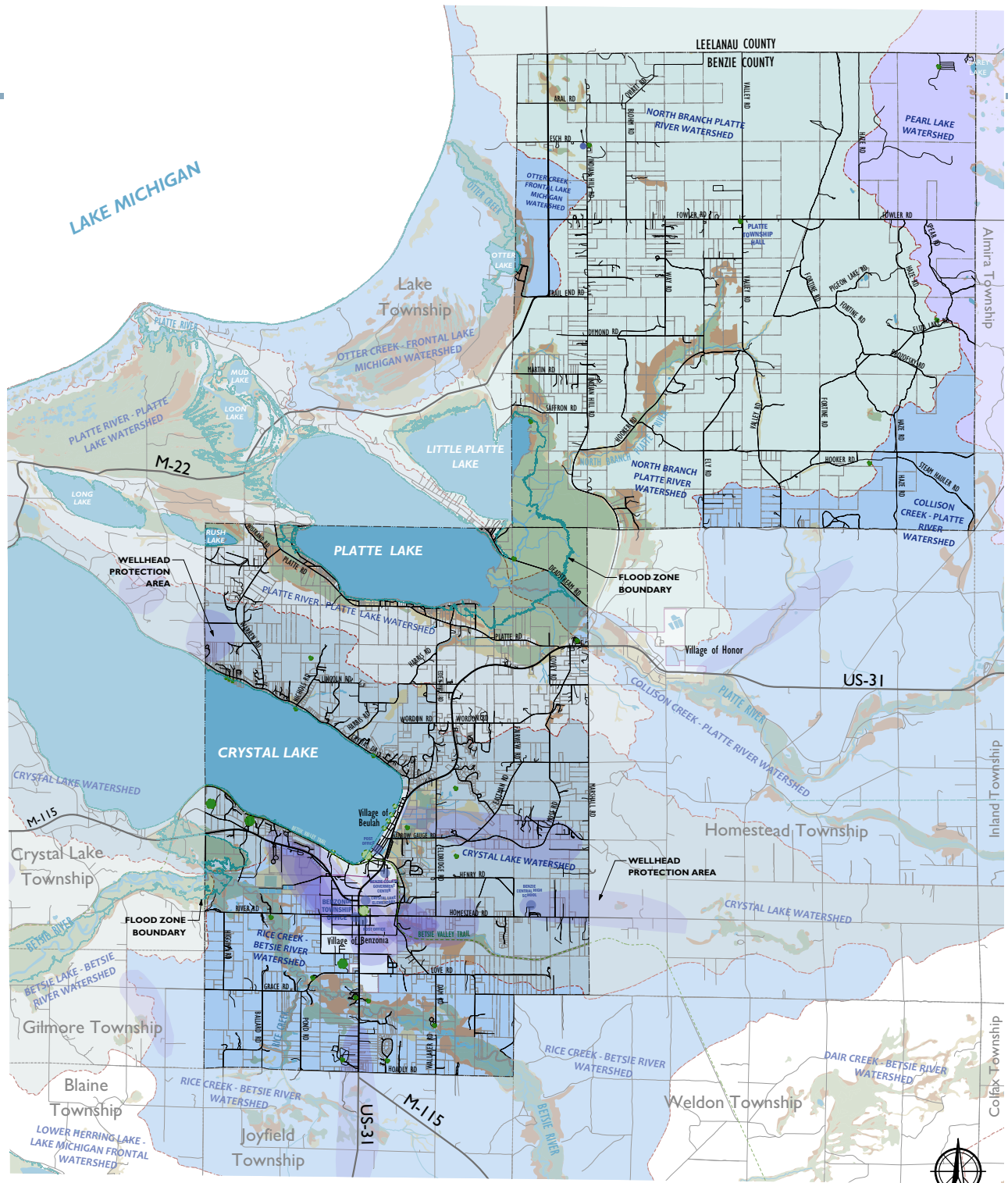


Figure 3.1 HUC-12 Watersheds Located in Benzonia & Platte Townships

¹River Restoration in Northern Michigan, <http://www.northernmichiganstreams.org/>



LEGEND

SCALE: 1" = 3000'-0"

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile; U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

EXISTING HYDROLOGY/NATURAL FEATURES

Figure 3.2 Existing Hydrology Map for Both Townships

West Benzie : Benzonia & Platte Townships

3. Existing Physical Conditions

Betsie River west of the Homestead Dam



Indians, and other state, federal and private entities.

Watersheds:

There are 8 watersheds located in Benzonia and Platte Townships. While the concept of watershed is often the same, how watersheds are delineated and described is slightly different, depending on the scale and data included. The 8 watersheds discussed here are HUC-12 delineated watershed. The Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) maps the full areal extent of surface water drainage for the U.S. using a hierarchical system of nesting hydrologic units at various scales, each with an assigned hydrologic unit code (HUC). HUCs are delineated and georeferenced to U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 1:24,000 scale topographic base maps according to compilation criteria monitored by the national Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data.

A watershed is defined as the geographic area within the boundary of a drainage divide. Watershed boundaries follow the highest ridge line around the stream drainage area; the bottom of the watershed or the pour point is the lowest point of the land area where water flows out of the watershed. Hydrologic unit boundaries do not always surround a complete watershed but may delineate truncated portions of a larger watershed—for example, the mid-stem of a larger stream or river along with the tributaries in that area. Hydrologic units are generally synonymous with watersheds when their boundaries include all the source area contributing surface water to a single defined outlet point. This distinction between watersheds and HUCs is important in the context of water resources data analysis and water quality monitoring, because the area contributing to the downstream outlet point in a single HUC may extend beyond its boundaries in an upstream direction to include a number of other sub-basin HUCs.

There are 6 HUC-12 watersheds located in Benzonia Township. The major watersheds (those that cover the most surface area) include; Crystal Lake, Platte River-Platte Lake and Rice Creek - Betsie River. Also included in the boundaries are small portions of the North Branch Platte River, Collison Creek - Platte River and Betsie Lake- Betsie River Watersheds.

The Crystal Lake Watershed Association is a nonprofit (501c3) organization of concerned citizens committed to protecting the beauty and water quality of Crystal Lake and its surrounding environment. It engages in monitoring, education, and advocacy on behalf of the broad community for whom Crystal Lake is a vital economic, recreational, and aesthetic resource.

GROUNDWATER

WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS (WHPA)

Delineation:

The federal SDWA (Safe Drinking Water Act) defines a WHPA as “... the surface and subsurface area surrounding a water well or well field, supplying a public water system, through which contaminants are reasonably likely to move toward and reach such water well or well field.” In simpler terms, it is that area which contributes ground water to a public water supply. Michigan’s Wellhead Protection Program (WHPP) requires a hydrogeologic study to identify the contributing area, these areas are shown on the hydrology map (REFER to FIGURE 3.2).

Why These Areas Need Protecting:

A safe and reliable source of drinking water is essential for life. Because our water supply is limited, it needs to be properly protected and managed. Implementing a WHPP is a cost-effective way for communities to protect the health of their citizens and the natural resources of Michigan. In addition to protecting a communities groundwater and drinking water source, communities with a WHPP receive a higher level of environmental review in the state permitting process. In addition, permitting for underground and aboveground storage tanks, spillage of polluting materials, and discharging to groundwater include more stringent requirements within WHPAs. Consequently, communities that have designated WHPAs are able to better safeguard their groundwater from contamination. Financial assistance is also available for the development of management practices (e.g., planning and zoning) and the searching and plugging of abandoned wells within the WHPA. The state WHPP does not dictate what businesses can or cannot locate within the wellhead protection area, nor does it prevent the use or storage of hazardous materials in the wellhead protection area. It is the responsibility of the local unit of government to determine how to protect the water supply through planning, zoning, and proper management techniques. These techniques need to be developed by the community to fit specific needs.

Potential Sources of Contamination:

Land use associated with agricultural operations, commercial facilities, manufacturing and industrial facilities, institutional facilities, and utility companies may also be considered potential sources of contamination. Abandoned wells left improperly sealed provide a direct conduit into the ground water system through

Platte River near Deadstream Road



3. Existing Physical Conditions

which contaminants may migrate and should be considered potential sources of contamination.

Management:

The goal of WHPA management is to provide mechanisms which will prevent existing and potential sources of contamination from reaching the public water supply well or well field. Communities are encouraged to develop management strategies which may be unique to their situation and specific to the contaminant source inventory developed for the WHPA. Management approaches may entail a broad range of activities including facility inspections, land-use regulations, operational policies, best management practices, public information and education. Management strategies should serve to generate support and attention to the WHPA for local, county, state, and federal regulatory activities. The strategies should attempt to minimize (eliminate if possible) land use activities which pose a significant threat to the PWSS, motivate landowners within the WHPA to take appropriate steps to reduce threats to the PWSS, and provide education to residents, businesses, and industries located within the WHPA to emphasize their role in making wellhead protection work.

FLOODPLAINS

Both townships have floodplains within the limits. Any stream, river or lake has a floodplain associated with it. The State of Michigan defines the 100-year floodplain as the land adjacent to a river, lake or stream that will be inundated by water during a flood which has a 1% chance of occurring of being exceeded in any given year. Almost everyone lives in a flood zone, a flood zone describes the risk of living in a particular area. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) breaks down flood zones into low, moderate and high risk. Moderate to low-risk flood areas are designated with the letters B, C, and X on FEMA flood maps. These are areas where the risk of being flooded is reduced, but not completely removed. High-risk flood areas begin with the letters A or V on FEMA flood maps. These areas face the highest risk of flooding. Someone that owns property in a high-risk zone and has a federally backed mortgage, is required to purchase flood insurance as a condition of that loan. All of the flood zone areas shown in the townships are designated as Zone A (area inundated by the Base Flood with no Base Flood Elevations determined). The flood zone boundary is shown on the map in Figure 3.2. It is located primarily in the wetland and low areas around the east end of Platte Lake and the wetland near the Outlet of Crystal Lake & Betsie River.

TOPOGRAPHY and SOILS

The topography of both townships is shown on the hillside elevation diagram (Figure 3.3). A larger hard copy printout with 20ft contours on the hydrology map was provided to the WBJPC for reference. One of the highest elevations in Benzie County lies just to the east of Benzonia Township and east of Marshall Road, Champion Hill. This hill lies at the end of a major ridge that runs between Crystal and Platte Lakes. Benzonia township also has two areas with relatively low elevations where the Platte River runs into Platte Lake and also where Cold Creek runs into Crystal Lake. The low marsh lands on the east end of Crystal Lake were once important farmlands for vegetable crops. In general, Benzonia Township has a more varied topography around the lakes and rivers. Platte's topography, while still containing steep areas, is generally more level.

²Web Soil Survey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

Soil data is available for the entire Benzie County through the National Soil Survey. The data can be found on the Web Soil Survey (WSS). The data and information is produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The soil survey shows the predominate soil series in Benzonia Township is Benzonia Sands, which comprise about 15% of the total soils and Kaleva Sands comprise another 6%. Houghton Adrian mucks on 0-1% slopes also are a big portion of the soils and found in the low lying areas. Due to the lake and river topography in Benzonia Township there is a more varied soil make up than Platte Township. For instance, in Platte, two soil series dominate the Township - with Benzonia Sands making up nearly 40% of the soils and Kaleva Sand comprising another 20%.

Benzonia sands are typically found around lakes, out-wash plains and moraines. They are generally well drained and suitable for cropland and in particular for fruit trees, such as cherries and apples. However they soils are susceptible to drought conditions. For building development, erosion and cut-bank caving is a concern on slopes. However, due to the drainage characteristics there is typically low site runoff. While soils do drain well, the sands are classified as having poor filtering capacity in regards to septic absorption fields. Pockets of clay soils that do not perc have been notoriously found around the Benzonia/Beulah Area, making development challenging due to the difficulty of putting in septic systems in some areas.

VEGETATION & LANDCOVER

Understanding landcover and how it is changing over time is an important tool when making land use and planning decisions. For this plan, the data available through the Multi Resolution Land characteristics Consortium (MRLC) was reviewed along with USGS woodland cover data. The MRLC produces the National Landcover Database (NLCD), a nationally standardized land cover and land change information product for the United States. Satellite imagery is used to document changes in various types of land cover. The MRLC is able to produce a report with a summary of data for the County.

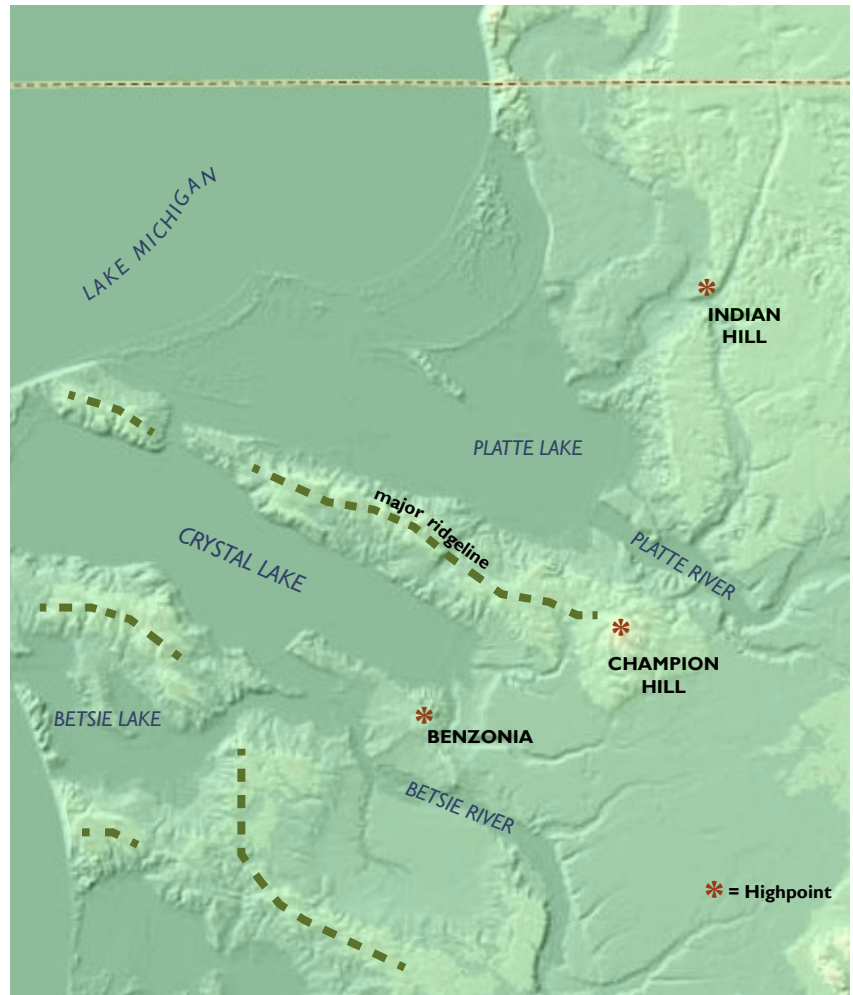


Figure 3.3 Hillside Elevation from 3DEP USGS National Map

3. Existing Physical Conditions

Forests make up a dominant portion of both Township’s land cover, the latest woodland cover data set from the USGS is shown on Figure 3.0. The latest County Master Plan indicates just over half of the county is considered forested. The MRLC report breaks down the various forest types (deciduous, evergreen, etc.) and indicates their general locations, however specific data per township is not available. The MRLC data shows that about 12% of evergreen forests were lost in the County from 2001 to 2019. However, it is important to understand the type of forest and why it changed. For instance, the satellite data shows the loss was primarily from forested to shrub lands, which is typically due to timber harvesting. This does not necessarily mean the forest is being lost to development. In all, very little of Platte Township is developed. Benzie County as a whole indicated 3.12% of development and under 1% as impervious surfaces. Much of this areas in concentrated in the Villages and City of Frankfort. The MRLC report states that, “ More development means more impervious surfaces, which translates into a greater risk for increased flooding and decreased water quality. Areas with impervious surface rates approaching or exceeding 12 percent to 15 percent will likely experience negative impacts to water quality.” Overall, the total impervious areas in the County and Townships is relatively low.

Transportation

MOTORIZED

The major highways that traverse the Township’s are US-31 (federal highway) and M-115 and M-22, both a part of Michigan’s State Highway system. This along with the ADT (Average Daily Traffic) counts are shown in Figure 3.4. US-31 is the most traveled highway in the county, the highest level of traffic is consistently in the Village of Benzonia and then again north of Honor. Scenic Route M-22 has a much lower traffic rate compared to the other highways. The county roads are maintained by the Benzie County Road Commission (BCRC), while individual Villages (Beulah and Benzonia) are responsible for local roads in the Villages.

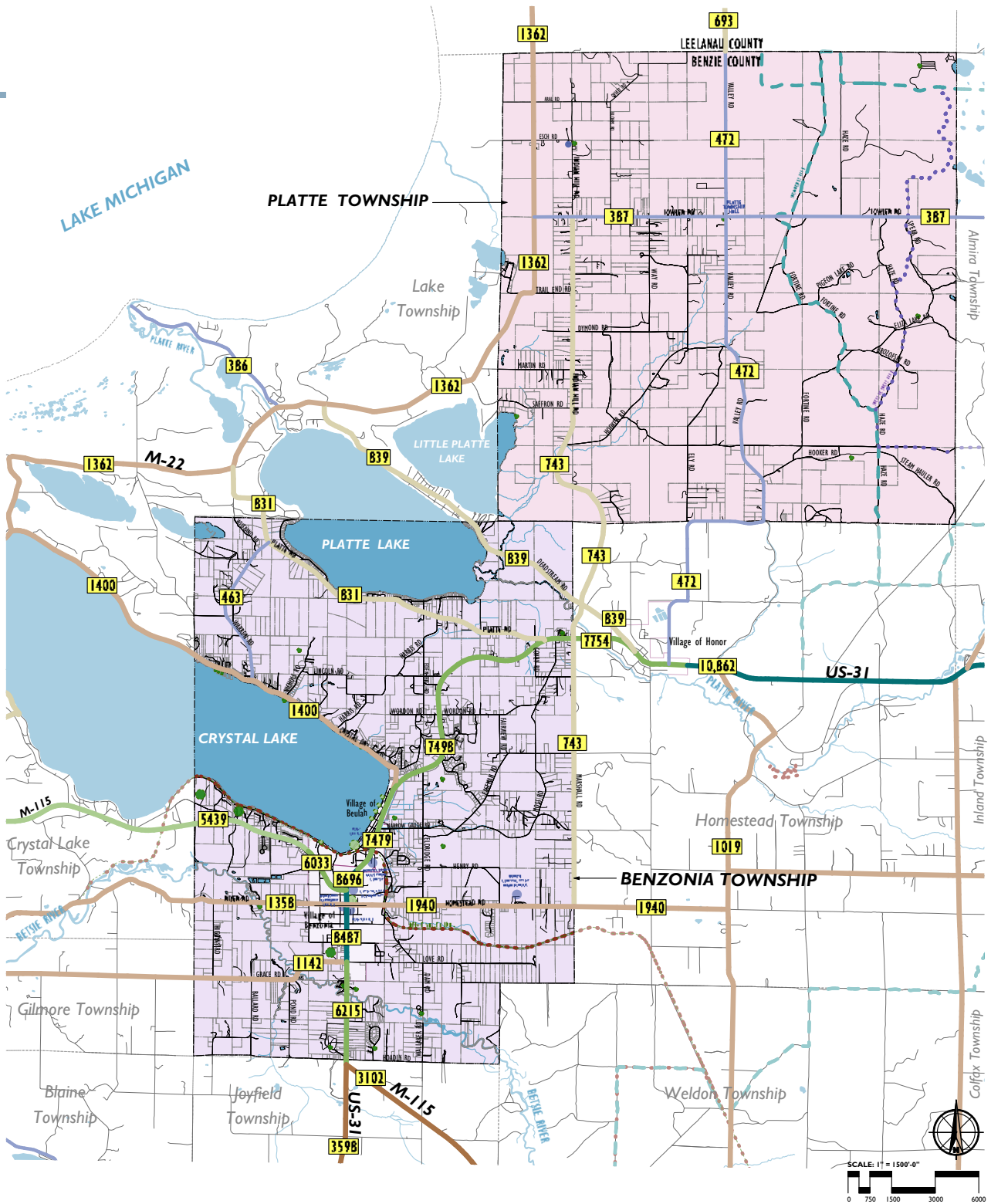
The Villages have arrival or ‘gateway signage’ indicating to motorists when they are entering the Village limits.

NON-MOTORIZED

These items include bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, trails and on-street bicycle facilities such as bike lanes, signed wide-outside lanes and shared shoulders. These facilities are important to a community’s transportation system, as they provide alternative routes of transportation which can reduce traffic congestion and pollution. They also promote healthy and active lifestyles, which in turn enhances the quality of life within a community.

Until recently there were few sidewalk facilities in the communities. In 2020 MDOT completed a road improvement project in the Village of Benzonia that included 5 foot wide sidewalks on both sides of US-31. The Village of Beulah also recently completed a downtown streetscape improvement project which included sidewalk facility improvements. However, there are still many missing pedestrian connections in the areas of concentrated development in Benzonia Township.

There are also a number of trail facilities in the Townships, The Betsie Valley Trail traverses east/west through Benzonia Township. It is currently mostly a gravel trail in the township, with plans underway for future paving. Platte Township has MDNR snowmobile trails and the Shore-to-Shore Trail which is utilized by equestrians, snowmobiles and ATVs. Platte Township has an ordinance that regulates where ATVs are permitted to ride.



LEGEND

- | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---|--|-------------------|
| | Township Boundary | | Park Or Public Access Areas In Township | | 8000+ ADT |
| | Parcel Boundary | | Park Or Public Access Areas In Village(s) | | 6000-8000 ADT |
| | State Owned Roadway | | Community Facility | | 4000-6000 ADT |
| | Other Local Roads | | Betsie Valley Trail | | 2000-4000 ADT |
| | Major River/stream | | Snowmobile Trails (MDNR) | | 1000-2000 ADT |
| | | | Shore-to-Shore Trail (non-Motorized) | | 500-1000 ADT |
| | | | | | LESS THAN 500 ADT |

ADT - AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC COUNT
(SOURCE: MDOT - 2020 DATA)

**EXISTING
TRANSPORTATION**

Figure 3.4 Existing Transportation Map for Both Townships

3. Existing Physical Conditions

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Benzie bus provides public transportation for township residents and has been in operation since 2007. It provides both fixed routes and a dial-a-ride system. The only fixed route stop is located in the Shopping Center in the Village of Benzonia.

Community Facilities, Safety & Emergency

For descriptions of community facilities refer to Chapter 5: Parks and Recreation.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Benzonia Township is home to the Station 5 Fire Department. The department provides fire and medical first responder coverage for Benzonia Township, including the Villages of Benzonia and Beulah, and Joyfield Township. They also assist the other 5 fire departments in Benzie County as well as the departments of Manistee County. The Station is volunteer/paid per call department with one full time employee, (the fire chief). In 2022 there are 20 members including the Chief and Captain as well as 18 firefighters. A medical first response truck provides first response EMS for the community. The department also has extrication tools (Jaws of Life). In 2021 there was a record breaking 532 calls for service. As of 2022 there are 5 trucks in service; Engine 1: Rosenbauer Pumper (2021), Engine 2: Class A CAF pumper (2009), Tanker (2006), Rescue (2012) and Medical Responder (2009).

Platte Township contracts with Homestead Township Fire Department to provide fire and emergency services and with the City of Traverse City to provide HazMat Emergency services.

Utilities

WATER AND SEWER

There are no water or sewer services provided by either Township. The Village of Benzonia has a municipal water system. The Village of Beulah has a municipal water and sewer system for residents. The lack of/and limited capacity of existing sewers has been a long recognized issue in the Beulah and Benzonia area, and for the residential development surrounding Crystal and Platte Lakes. The area along US-31 near the Villages serves as the main commercial corridor for the entire County and provides much needed day-to-day shopping, commercial and office space (i.e. many of the jobs in the County) and denser residential development patterns. The lack of sewer and the existing soil conditions limit development potential. The County, Township of Benzonia, Village of Beulah and the Village of Benzonia recently (2022) formed a partnership and Sewer Task force to fund a sewer feasibility study for the US-31 Corridor and related area. The study also intends to look at the feasibility of areas for potential sewer along the lake shores. The study is expected to be completed in early 2023 with the hope to secure funding to move forward with some form of sewer infrastructure to help alleviate development limitations and provide a route for additional commercial and residential development growth.

ELECTRICITY & NATURAL GAS

Electricity is provided by Consumers Energy. All facilities are overhead distribution systems. Natural gas is

provided in some areas by DTE Energy. Areas not served by DTE that use gas are required to use a propane tank service.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Garbage pick up is not provided for Township residents by the Township. Service is available but must be organized and paid for by the home/business owner.

CABLE/INTERNET

Cable access is provided in the area of the Villages and in some other limited area (along Homestead Road) by Charter Communications. The lack of high-speed Internet is a known issue in the County. The problem was even more apparent with the COVID-19 lock downs that required students and workers to stay home for learning and work. Currently, high speed/cable access and Internet is available in limited places. The areas around the Villages of Benzonia and Beulah that are served by Charter also have access to their high-speed Internet. Other Internet providers are Eclipse Communication and a few wireless options (typically through cellular or satellite plans).

Betsie Valley Trail at Case Road



4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

Existing Land Use

Understanding land use patterns and how they relate to each other, along with the existing physical and natural resources of the land, as well as the township's current needs, are critical components in understanding how to plan for the future. The existing land use is shown in Figure 4.2 for Benzonia Township and 4.4 for Platte Township. The information shown on these maps is the current land use at the time this master plan was created - it is not related to what the land is zoned. For example, a parcel may be zoned residential, but its current land use may be shown as 'VACANT' on the existing land use map if there is no current 'use' or structure located on the parcel.

Zoning is different from land use, as it identifies what is permitted for development (or redevelopment) and that given parcel. This means what people are legally allowed to build/occupy the land on a parcel by parcel basis. The Zoning Ordinance then regulates what that development may physically look like, its size and placement on the parcel, and other similar types of regulations from a legal standpoint.

The reason that a master plan process looks at existing land use and the current zoning is to help set the stage for the creation of the future land use map and zoning plan descriptions. This is what is then used by the Planning Commission and Township officials to help guide future land use recommendations and guide development in the coming years. The master plan should be reviewed every 5 years to make sure that the goals and objectives and other data remains current to continue to guide development in the most appropriate way. The results that are envisioned in a master plan are not immediate. They take time to develop and may evolve over time. The Vision, Goals and Objectives developed with this master plan should aim to lead towards the desired outcomes that the community has envisioned through the public process associated with this master planning effort.

The existing land use categories associated with the master plan are summarized in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2. Uses were determined by both review of aerial

Benzonia Township - Existing Land Use			
Total Land = 27.743 Sq. Miles			
Total Water = 6.1 Sq. Miles			
Total Area = 33.843 Sq. Miles			
Category	Sq. Miles	Acerage	Percentage
Residential	11.49	7,353.60	43.7%
Vacant	7.83	5,011.20	29.7%
Agriculture	1.44	921.60	5.5%
Commercial	1.01	646.40	3.8%
Exempt	3.53	2,259.20	13.4%
Industrial	0.02	12.80	0.1%
Timber	0.28	179.20	1.1%
Unknown	0.72	460.80	2.7%

Table 4.1 Benzonia Township - Existing Land Use

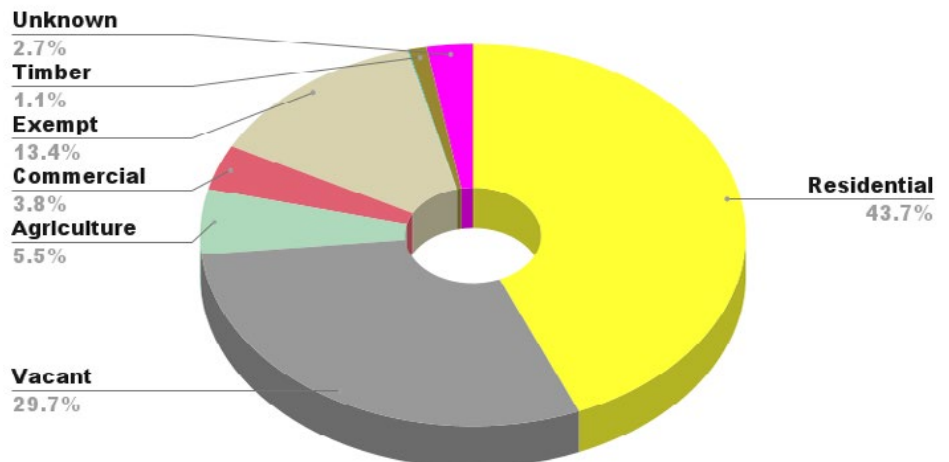
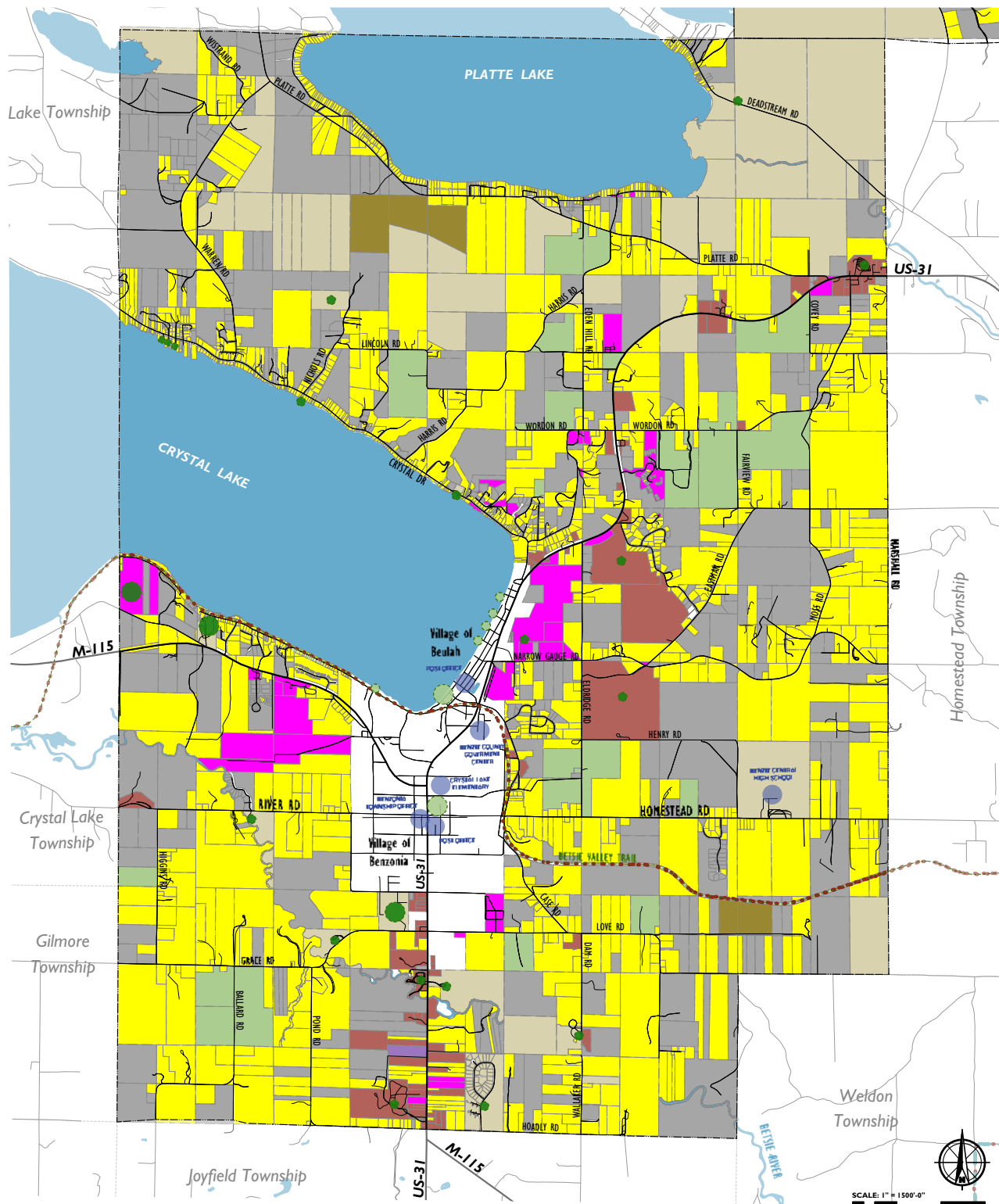


Figure 4.1 Benzonia Township - Existing Land Use



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Township Boundary | Residential | Exempt (Local, State, Federal) |
| Parcel Boundary | Vacant | Timber |
| State Owned Roadway | Agriculture | Unknown |
| Other Local Roads | Commercial | Park or Public Access Areas |
| Major River/stream | Industrial | Community Facility |
| | | Betsie Valley Trail |

SCALE: 1" = 1500'-0"

0 750 1500 3000 6000

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

**EXISTING LAND USE
BENZONIA TOWNSHIP**

Figure 4.2 Existing Land Use Map Benzonia Township

4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

photography and the parcel search records from the County Equalization Department. Any areas that are questioned or unknown will require a physical review in person, which was not a part of the scope of this project. These could be reviewed over time and updated in future updates.

RESIDENTIAL

Residential land use makes up the largest land use in Benzon Township at 43.7% and makes up 18.1% of Platte Township. Most of the parcels can be classified as single family residential use. The size and conditions of the homes vary greatly as the areas that make up the Townships are varied and relatively large and spread out. Homes along the lakes shores are typically more 'vacation' type homes and are large and relatively well kept. There are many areas of 'typical' single family farmstead or ranch type homes in many of the more rural locations. There are also some mobile or manufactured housing in areas. While many houses are well kept, there are also pockets of homes that are in disrepair, poorly maintained and are in blight conditions.

COMMERCIAL

Existing commercial areas are located almost exclusively along US-31 in Benzon Township. Platte Township does not currently show any existing commercial use. The area south of the Village of Benzon includes mainly a mix a commercial and residential. The lot sizes are varied. Larger lot uses include businesses such as Xpert Fullfillment Services or Vacation Trailer Park and Campground. Smaller lot uses include areas such as Wesco Gas Station or Benzie Express Tire and Lube. There are a few scattered commercial uses along US-31 North of the Village of Beulah, these are also mixed among residential uses. The commercial uses away from US-31 are the two golf courses and the Gwen Frostic Print/Gift Shop/Museum on River Road.

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural lands continue to be on the decrease, as has been the case for decades. As an example, the 2017 USDA agricultural survey shows that orchard lands in Benzie county were down nearly 700 acres from the 2012 to 2017 survey. In 2017, there were 197 farms in Benzie County totaling 18,516 acres. Benzon Township has approximately 920 acres, just over 5% of the Township's land use, and Platte Township has just over 1000 acres of agricultural lands or about 4% of the township's land.

Platte Township - Existing Land Use			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Category	Sq. Miles	Acerage	Percentage
Residential	6.59	4,217.60	18.1%
Vacant	4.97	3,180.80	13.6%
Agriculture	1.57	1,004.80	4.3%
Exempt	22.09	14,137.60	60.7%
Timber	1.2	768.00	3.3%

Table 4.2 Platte Township - Existing Land Use

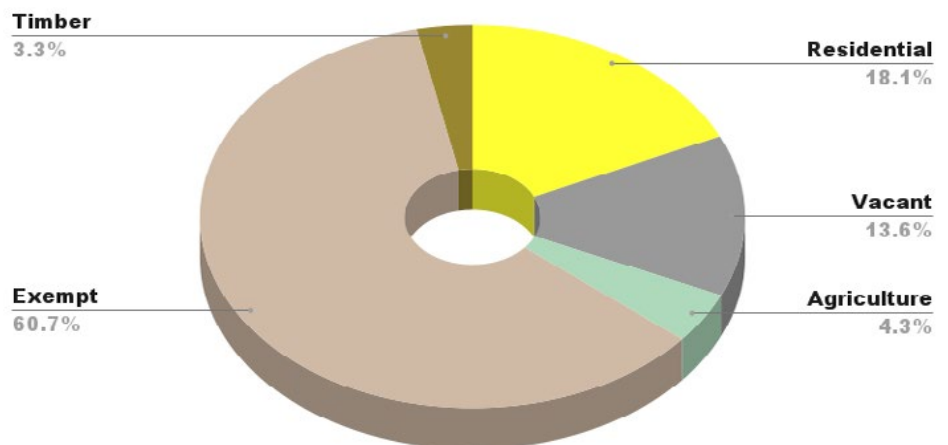
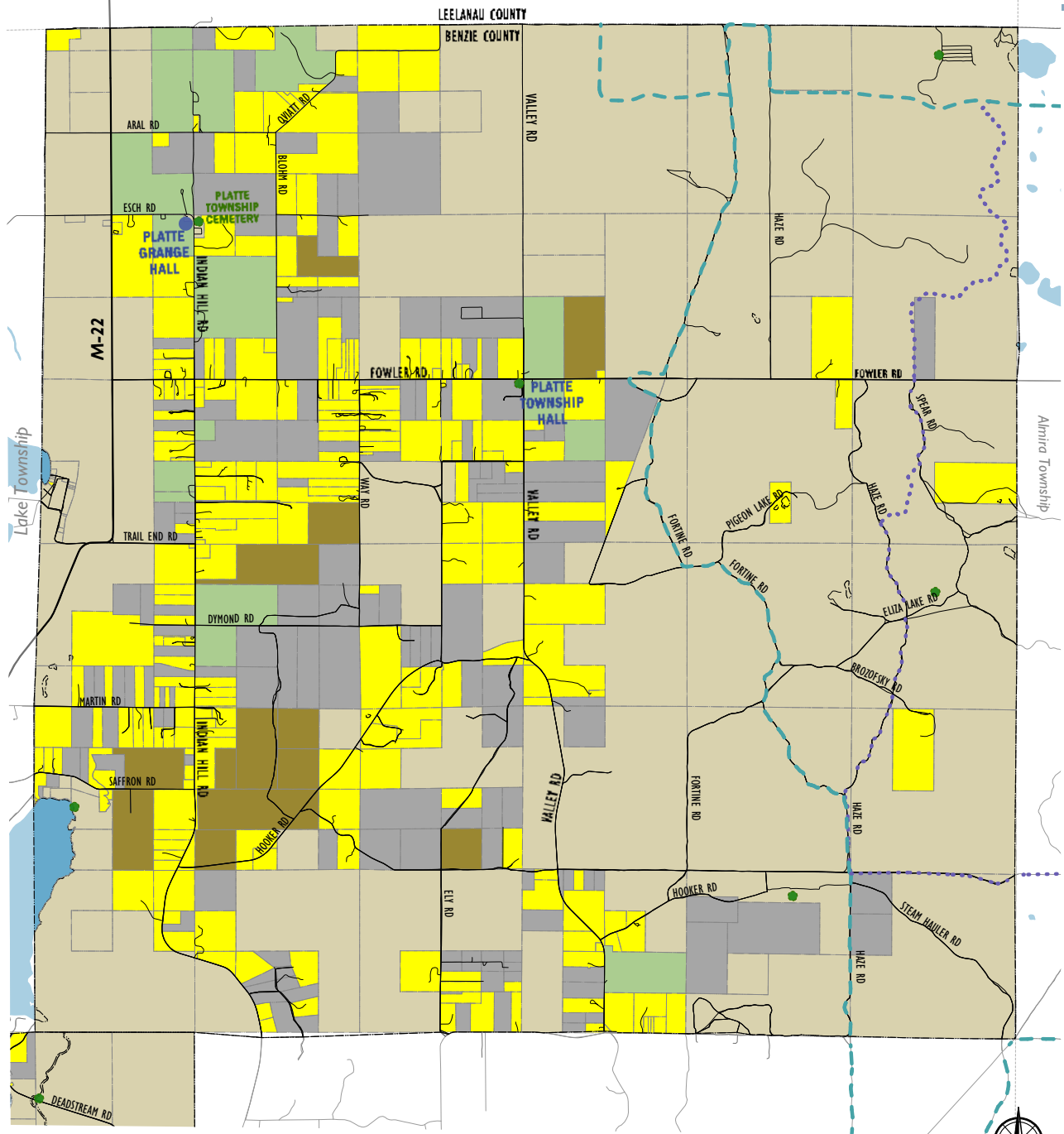
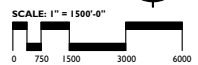


Figure 4.3 Platte Township - Existing Land Use



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Township Boundary | Residential | Unknown |
| Parcel Boundary | Vacant | Park or Public Access Areas |
| State Owned Roadway | Agriculture | Community Facility |
| Other Local Roads | Exempt (Local, State, Federal) | Snowmobile Trails (MDNR) |
| Major River/stream | Timber | Shore-to-Shore Trail (non-Motorized) |



mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

**EXISTING LAND USE
PLATTE TOWNSHIP**

Figure 4.4 Existing Land Use Map Platte Township

4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

INDUSTRIAL

There are few lands that are utilized for industrial use in either township. There are none located in Platte Township and only one area in Benzonia Township on US-31 South of the Village of Benzonia.

EXEMPT

These are lands that are exempt from paying property taxes and primarily include government land such as National Park, Michigan DNR or Township owned properties. Both townships have a relatively large amount of land that falls into this category. Benzonia at just over 13%, while Platte Township is comprised of nearly 60% exempt land use. This relationship is significant to understand and always consider in land use planning for both townships. Public lands can contribute greatly to the preservation of natural resources, but they also limit the tax base and the funds generated to help provide economic support.

TIMBER

These are lands that are managed for timber harvesting. There are few acres devoted to this use, about 1% in Benzonia and just over 3% in Platte Township.

VACANT

Vacant lands make up a significant portion of the current use in both townships. This means there is currently no 'active' use or development on the land. Sometimes parcels that are vacant may be that way for a reason. For instance, they may be unbuildable due to steep slopes, soils or lack the ability for sanitary sewers.

OTHER/UNKNOWN

There are some parcels classified as unknown at the time of this master plan. As stated above, the current scope of work does not include investigation of these parcels. However, if development is occurring near them, the planning commission or zoning administrator must consider them for deliberation

Benzonia Township - Existing Zoning			
Total Land = 27.743 Sq, Miles			
Total Water = 6.1 Sq, Miles			
Total Area = 33.843 Sq, Miles			
Zone	Sq. Miles	Acerage	Percentage
R-1	0.543	347.52	2.0%
R-2	1.158	741.12	4.4%
R-3	1.89	1,209.60	7.1%
RP 2.5	8.41	5,382.40	31.7%
RP 5	6.55	4,192.00	24.7%
RP 10	3.33	2,131.20	12.5%
RP 20	3.56	2,278.40	13.4%
C-1	0.64	409.60	2.4%
C/R	0.27	172.80	1.0%
LI	0.2	128.00	0.8%

Table 4.3 Benzonia Township - Existing Zoning

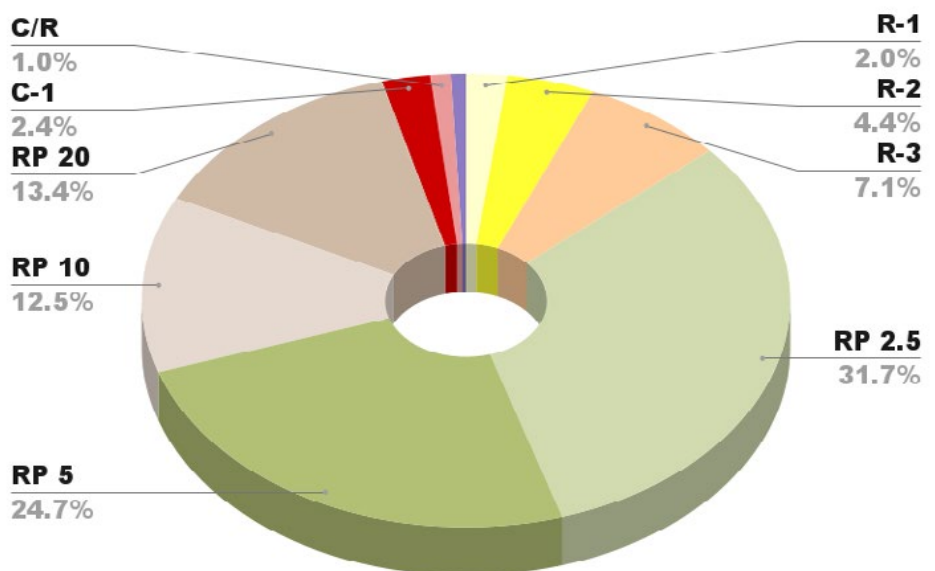
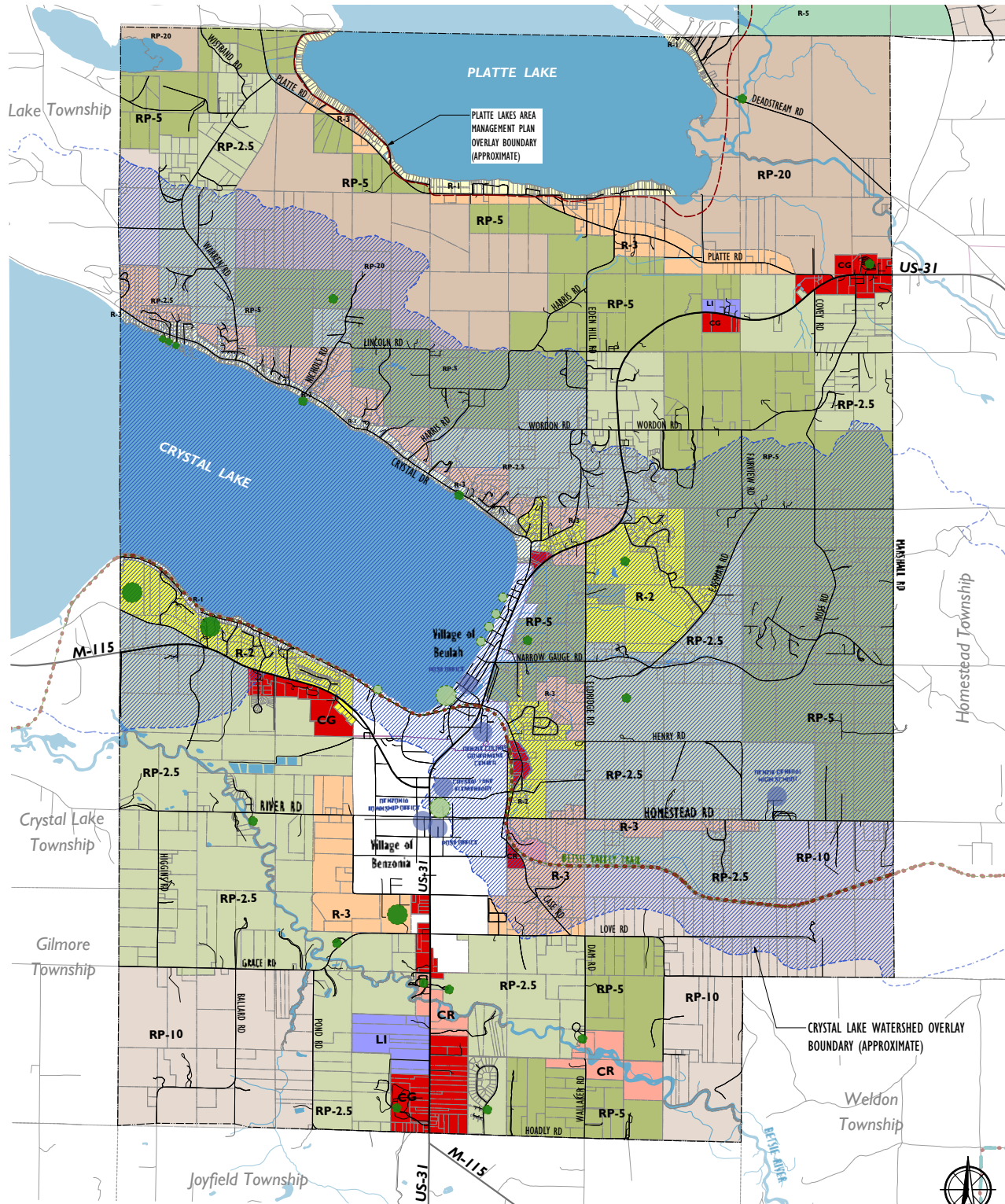


Figure 4.5 Benzonia Township - Existing Zoning



LEGEND		
R-1 Lakeshore Residential	RP-2.5 Rural Preservation (2.5 Acres)	CR - Commercial/Resort
R-2 Single Family Residential	RP-5 Rural Preservation (5 Acres)	LI - Light Industrial
R-3 Rural Residential	RP-10 Rural Preservation (10 Acres)	Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay
R-4 Multi-Family Residential	RP-20 Rural Preservation (20 Acres)	Platte Lakes Area Management Plan Overlay
R-5 Recreational Residential	CG - Commercial General	Park or Public Access Areas

SCALE 1" = 1500'-0"

0 750 1500 3000 6000

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

EXISTING ZONING BENZONIA TOWNSHIP

Figure 4.6 Existing Zoning Map Benzonia Township

4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

to make a well informed planning decision, Their current use should be investigated at the time of new proposed development or other zoning decision.

Existing Zoning

There are currently twelve (12) designated zoning districts in Benzonia Township with two (2) overlay zones (Figure 4.6). There are five (5) zoning districts in Platte Township with one (1) overlay zone. (Figure 4.8). Both Townships use the same zoning descriptions, not every zone is present in each township.

CURRENT ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

The following is a brief description of each zoning district, the approximate size breakdowns are shown in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, as well as Figure 4.5 and 4.7.

R-I LAKESHORE RESIDENTIAL

Purpose: To regulate land uses in the immediate vicinity of the shores of lakes and to allow reasonable use within the shores of the lakes.

Township Area: 2% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Dwelling

Accessory Uses:

- Private Garage
- Green House
- Tool Shed
- Solar Collector
- Compatible Non-Commercial Recreational Facility
- Agricultural Uses Limited To Personal Gardens

Dimensional Standards-

Min. Lot Width: 100

Setbacks (ft.)

- Front: 25 (58 ft from traveled roadway)
- Side: 10
- Rear: 15 (25 or 35)

Max. Height: 28 ft.

Min Lot Size: 12,000sf

Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

What to Know: This zoning district is unique in the fact that many small and odd shaped lots (due to topography and other natural features) existed around the lakes before the adoption of the zoning ordinance. While not all lots may be suitable for building they are suitable

Platte Township - Existing Zoning			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Total Area = 36.466 Sq, Miles			
Zone	Sq. Miles		Percentage
Unzoned - G	20.85	13,344.00	57.45%
RP 5	0.56	358.40	1.54%
RP 10	3.42	2,188.80	9.42%
RP 20	11.46	7,334.40	31.58%

Table 4.4 Benzonia Township - Existing Zoning

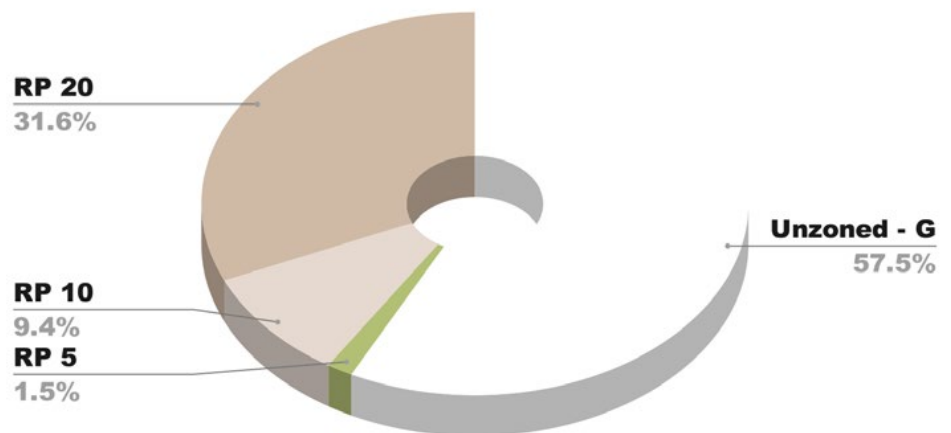
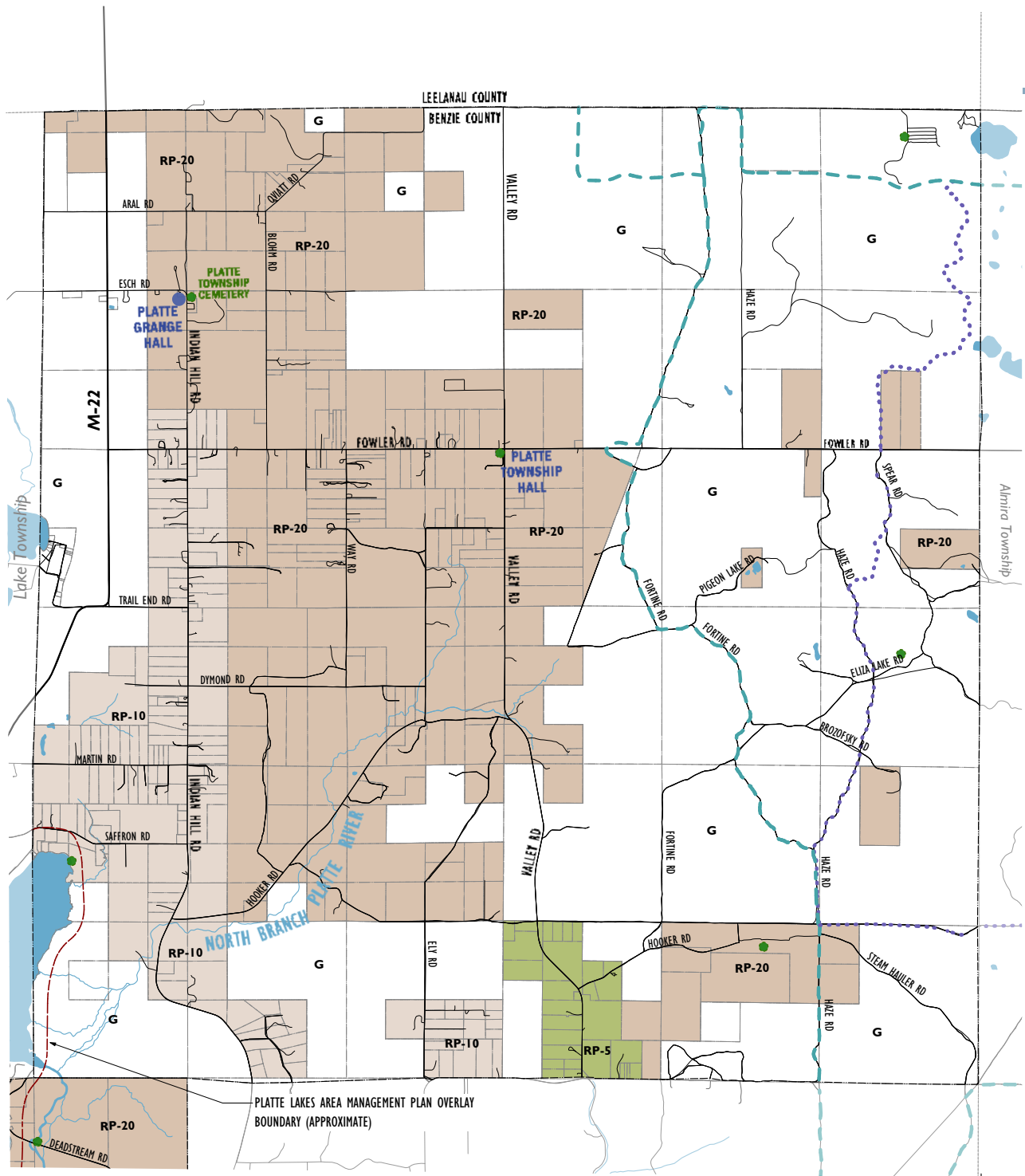
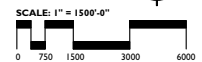


Figure 4.7 Platte Township - Existing Zoning



LEGEND

- RP-2.5 Rural Preservation (2.5 Acres)
- RP-5 Rural Preservation (5 Acres)
- RP-10 Rural Preservation (10 Acres)
- RP-20 Rural Preservation (20 Acres)
- Platte Lakes Area Management Plan Overlay
- G-Government Owned Lands
- Park or Public Access Areas



mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

EXISTING ZONING PLATTE TOWNSHIP

Figure 4.8 Existing Zoning Map Platte Township

4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

for a number of accessory uses such as beach access, beach storage, or parking. These atypical lots would also be suitable for uses such as stormwater treatment/reduction and natural resource preservation.

R-2 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Purpose: Low-Medium Density Residential. This district also includes existing one-family developments which have similar lot area and character, or for areas where single family home development appears likely and desirable.

Township Area: 4.4% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Dwelling

Accessory Uses: (Same as R-1, except larger gardens)

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 100

Front: 25 (58 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 10

Rear: 15 (25 or 35)

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 15,000sf

Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

What to Know: These are to establish slightly larger lots than R-1 zoning. They are also included in areas where development patterns may be denser due to **future public water or sewer potential**.

R-3 RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Purpose: To accommodate the development of residential properties of a semi-rural character:

1. Much of this district parallels the shores of lakes but is inland of the Lake Shore Residential District. Typically, the land rises from the lake plane to the higher ridges above and will likely never be provided with public services including water and sewer.
2. This district also includes existing one-family developments within the Townships which have similar lot area and character, as well as areas within which such development appears likely and desirable.

Township Area: 7.1% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Residential

Accessory Uses: (Same as R-1, except agricultural uses allows crops)

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 125

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 15

Rear: 40

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 1 acre

Maximum Lot Coverage: 20%

What to Know: Intended for areas with smaller lots but will likely never be serviced by municipal water/sewer.

R-4 MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Purpose: To accommodate the development of multi-family residential development.

Township Area: 0% Benzonion, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Residential, Two-Family Dwelling, Multi-family residential, Rooming Houses.

Accessory Uses: (Same as R-1, R-2, and R-3; The serving of meals from a common dining room or kitchen; Private garage or community garage for the storage of noncommercial vehicles; Maintenance and management buildings incidental to the multi-family units; Social clubs and community recreation facilities, including restaurants.)

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 100

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 15

Rear: 25

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 20,000 sf.

Maximum Lot Coverage: 50%

What to Know: There are no lands currently zoned to this classification at this time. As this zoning is accommodating a denser development pattern, future developments of this type would typically be best suited to areas that are served by a water or sewer system of some capacity.

R-5 RECREATIONAL RESIDENTIAL

Purpose: To accommodate organized large scale recreational development along with residential use. The intent to work existing soils and topography that might normally dictate to lower densities and accommodate cluster residential development where possible.

Township Area: 0% Benzonion, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Residential, Two-Family Dwelling

Accessory Uses: Private Garage; Green House; Tool Shed; Solar Collector; Agriculture – Crops

State Forest Lands – Platte Township



4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 100

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 10

Rear: 15

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 1/2 acre

Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

What to Know: This zoning designation is entirely located in Platte Township.

RP-2.5 RURAL PRESERVATION 2.5 ACRES

Purpose: The next few zoning designations describe the Rural Preservation (RP) Districts which were amended to the ordinance in 2014. They are intended to recognize the unique rural character of Benzonia and Platte Townships and to preserve, enhance and stabilize existing areas which are presently being used predominately for farming, forestry and other natural resource and open space uses. They are recognized as important to establish large acreage holdings and such holdings are deemed desirable and appropriate by current owners. It is also recognized that there are other lands that may be more suited to more intense development and these are provided for by Special Land Use (SLU) or Planned Unit Development (PUD) provisions.

Township Area: 31,7% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Dwelling; Local Government; Botanical & Zoological Gardens; Commercial Agricultural-Crops and Orchards; Commercial Forestry

Accessory Uses: Private Garage; Green House; Tool Shed; Solar Collector; Compatible Non-Commercial Recreational Facility; Noncommercial Agriculture – Crops

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 150

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 2.5 Acres

Maximum Lot Coverage: -

What to Know: There are no lands currently zoned to this classification in Platte Township.

RP-5 RURAL PRESERVATION 5 ACRES

Purpose: Same as RP-2.5.

Township Area: 24.7% Benzonia, 1.54% Platte

Principle Use: Same as RP-2.5.

Accessory Uses: Same as RP-2.5.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 300

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)
Side: 25
Rear: 50
Max. Height: 28
Min Lot Size: 5 Acres
Maximum Lot Coverage: -

What to Know: These lands are primarily located in Benzonia Township.

**RP-10 RURAL PRESERVATION
10 ACRES**

Purpose: Same as RP-2.5.

Township Area: 12.5% Benzonia, 9.42% Platte

Principle Use: Same as RP-2.5.

Accessory Uses: Same as RP-2.5.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 300

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 10 Acres

Maximum Lot Coverage: -

What to Know: These lands are almost equally designated in each township.

**RP-20 RURAL PRESERVATION
20 ACRES**

Purpose: Same as RP-2.5.

Township Area: 13.4% Benzonia, 31.58% Platte

Principle Use: Same as RP-2.5.

Accessory Uses: Same as RP-2.5.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 660

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28



4. Existing Land Use & Zoning

Min Lot Size: 20 Acres
Maximum Lot Coverage: -

What to Know: This designation is the second largest percentage in Platte Township.

C-I COMMERCIAL GENERAL

Purpose: To accommodate retail business and service activities which serve the particular needs of the area residents and for users of the highway corridors. Typically these uses are allowed along the major highways in the Townships. The protective standards for site development applied to this district are intended to minimize the undesirable effects of commercial strip developments along highways.

Township Area: 2.4% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Typical retail and commercial uses such as restaurants, office, etc.

Accessory Uses: Accessory buildings, structures, or uses customarily incidental to the permitted principal use.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 150

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 1 Acre

Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

What to Know: The side and rear setbacks are relatively large as is the minimum lot widths. These dimensions could be substantial on smaller lots. These are areas primarily along US-31, none in Platte Township.

C/R COMMERCIAL RESORT

Purpose: To accommodate residential and resort developments, which are designed to take advantage of the natural qualities and scenery of Benzonia and Platte Townships. It is intended that such uses include appropriate commercial facilities such as restaurants when located and constructed in a manner which is in keeping with the regulations of the Environmental Control Acts and other related laws, ordinances, and regulations.

Township Area: 1% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Single Family Dwelling; Local Government; Hotel, Motels, Tourist Courts, and Resorts; Agriculture - Crops; Eating And Drinking Places; Multi-family dwellings

Accessory Uses: Accessory buildings, structures, or uses customarily incidental to the permitted principal use.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 150

Front: 40 (73 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 1 Acre

Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

What to Know: The side and rear setbacks are again relatively large as is the minimum lot width. These dimensions could be substantial on smaller lots. None located in Platte Township.

LI LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

Purpose: To accommodate those industrial uses, storage, and related activities that generate a minimum of noise, glare, odors, dust, vibration, air and water pollution, fire and safety hazards, or any other potentially harmful or nuisance characteristics. It is designed to accommodate wholesale, warehouse and industrial activities, whose operational and physical characteristics do not detrimentally affect any of the surrounding districts. The LI District is established to permit the manufacturing, compounding, processing, packaging, assembly and/or treatment of finished or semi-finished products from previously prepared material. It is also intended to permit limited retail enterprises if they are directly related to the distribution of products manufactured or warehoused which are not suitable for wholesale distribution.

Township Area: 0.8% Benzonia, 0% Platte

Principle Use: Agricultural Services; Local Government; Light Manufacturing; Warehousing And Commercial Storage; Agriculture - Crops; Forestry; Wholesale And Retail Sales; Eating And Drinking Places

Accessory Uses: Accessory buildings, structures, or uses customarily incidental to the permitted principal use.

Dimensional Standards-

Setbacks (ft.)

Min. Lot Width: 330

Front: 50 (83 ft from traveled roadway)

Side: 25

Rear: 50

Max. Height: 28

Min Lot Size: 2.5 Acres

Maximum Lot Coverage: 40%

What to Know: The only lands with this designation are in Benzonia Township.

G GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED LANDS

What to Know: These areas are public lands controlled by government entities, such as State Forest Lands (MDNR) and property owned by the National Park Service. These areas are exempt from the zoning ordinance. If a publicly owned parcel is transferred to a non-government ownership then it is either subject to the zoning surrounding it, or if surrounded by two or more zoning districts, it is subject to rezoning approved by the Township. This is found in the general provisions of the zoning ordinance.

LI Zoning District, US-31, Benzonia Township



5. Parks & Recreation

Community Description

The description of the community can be found in Chapter 2: Community Profile and Chapter 3: Existing Physical Conditions.

Administrative Structure

Benzonia Township:

Benzonia Township has one part time staff position dedicated to park maintenance and one part time position dedicated as a sexton for the Cemetery. The park and recreation facilities are developed and maintained under the direction of the Township Supervisor and the Board of Trustees. The Township Supervisor makes any necessary day-to-day decisions. There are no committees devoted specifically to park and recreation matters.

Platte Township:

The Board or Trustees oversees park and recreation matters, with day-to-day decision made by the Township Supervisor or Clerk. Platte Township has a forester who recommends maintenance/tree trimming for Township park properties.

FUNDING SUMMARY

Neither Platte or Benzonia Townships have dedicated funding/budget for Parks and Recreation items. Traditionally as park (or cemetery) needs arise, money is allocated from the general budget by the Township Board of Trustees. There have occasionally been donations, such as an 80-acre pine planting in Platte Township that was donated by a Platte resident over 40 years ago. The history of Benzonia Township's Memorial Fields is noted on page 58.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

There are several local and regional agencies related to recreation that are active in both Benzonia and Platte Townships. The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) owns park facilities in both Townships. The Betsie Valley Trail is another joint partnership which passes through Benzonia Township and is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and is operated and maintained by Benzie County and The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail (FBVT) - a Michigan not for profit corporation formed in 1993. Another recreation property with joint cooperation is Railroad Point in Benzonia Township - it is a working partnership between several agencies including; Benzie County, GTRLC, the Michigan DNR, and the FBVT.

Inventory of Parks, Natural Areas, and Recreation Facilities

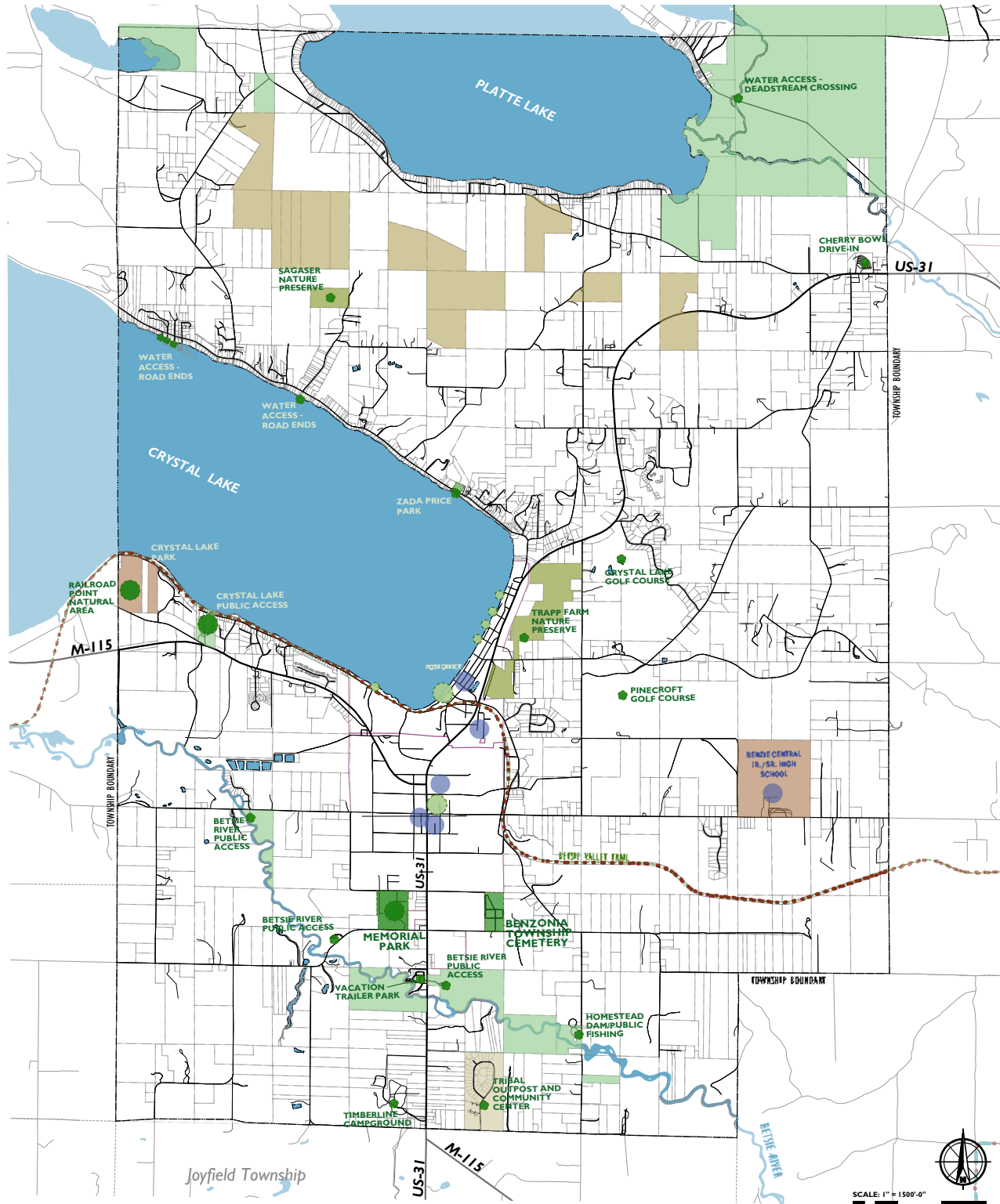
The parks were inventoried as a part of the Benzie County Joint Recreational and Cultural Plan 2020. The list was reviewed by the consultant and the planning commission to assure accuracy. The consultant then completed an updated physical field assessment of Township owned park and recreation properties. An accessibility evaluation was completed by comparing the park facilities to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, an accessibility ranking was given to each park facility. In addition, the facilities were given a connectivity evaluation based on how easily identifiable they are

ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION



CONNECTIVITY EVALUATION





LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Township Boundary | Township Park Property | Park Or Public Access Areas In Township |
| Parcel Boundary | MI DNR Property | Park Or Public Access Areas In Village(s) |
| State Owned Roadway | Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy | Community Facility |
| Other Local Roads | County Property | Betsie Valley Trail |
| Major River/stream | National Park Service | |

SCALE: 1" = 1500'-0"

0 750 1500 3000 6000

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

**PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
BENZONIA TOWNSHIP**

Figure 5.1 Existing Park & Recreation Facilities Benzonia Township

5. Parks & Recreation

as a public park facility and their connection and access to multiple modes of transportation (automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and public).

Accessibility Evaluation: score of 1-5, where 1=none of the site elements meet the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2 = some, 3 = most, 4 = all, 5 = the facility meets Universal Design Standards

Designing spaces that are ADA accessible only addresses minimum requirements set forth by the law. Universal Design is a process that looks beyond the written codes and laws and seeks to design the built environment in a way that looks to the population and the myriad of physical challenges or disabilities across all age groups. These may be people with health issues like low vision, hearing loss, what many refer to as their “bad back” or similar. It includes attention to the small details that provide additional comfort for all users, no matter the degree of disability.

Connectivity Evaluation: score of 1-5, where 1=no site elements are provided to identify or facilities provided to connect the park to the community, 2= some, 3= fair amount, 4=good, 5= the site is easily identifiable and well connected with parking, trails or sidewalks, and access to public transportation.

Of the facilities listed below just a few are owned and maintained by the Townships. Benzonia Township maintains 3 facilities; Memorial Park, Benzonia Township Cemetery and the Benzonia Township Hall. Platte Township owns a community open space (while it allows access to nature for residents, no facilities are provided) and the Platte Township Cemetery.

The following tables provide an inventory of all recreation facilities in each township. The Township owned facilities will be described in more detail on the following pages.

BENZONIA TOWNSHIP						
Name	Type	Description	Size	Ownership	Service Area	ADA
Memorial Park	Community	Athletic Fields, Picnic, Dog Park, Disc Golf, Veteran’s Memorial	30 Acres	Township	Community	1
OTHER						
Zada Price Park	Community/ Water Access	Primarily a water access site. Small picnic area and parking.	5 Acres	County	Community	
Railroad Point Natural Area	Community	Natural Area, hiking trails, parking, water access.	200+ Acres	GTRLC/ Benzie County	County/ Region	
Sagaser Nature Preserve	Nature Preserve	Protected wooded area. There are no amenities on the property.	20 acres	GTRLC	County/ Region	
Trapp Farm Nature Preserve	Nature Preserve	Wetlands with 2000 feet of Cold Creek tributaries. Closed to the public. Located east of the Village of Beulah.	140 acres	Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC)	County/ Region	

Crystal Lake Public Access, Nichols Road



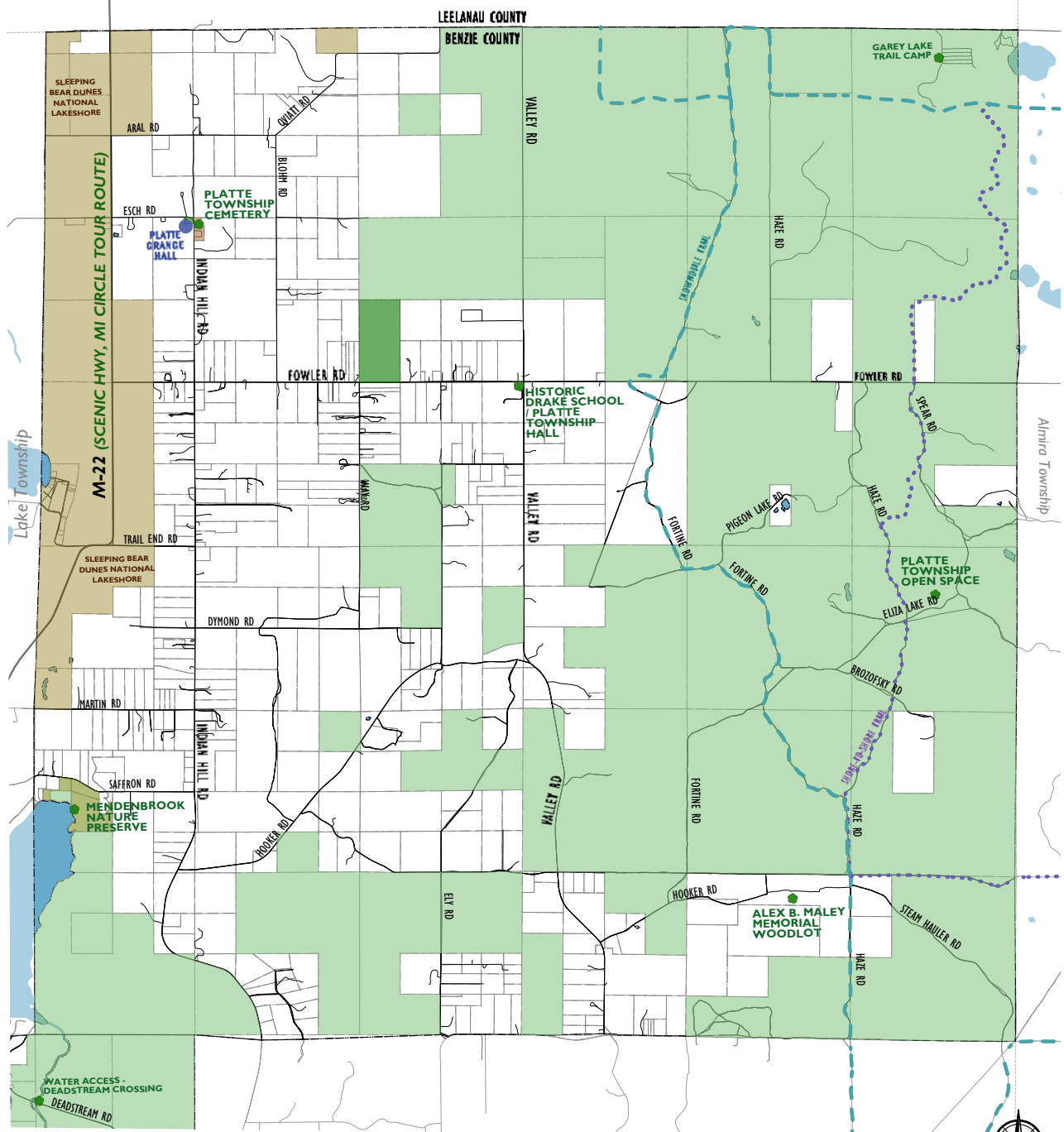
Betsie Valley Trail	Trail	Paved and Unpaved multi-use trail system with multiple trail heads.	22 miles	MDNR/Benzie County	County/Region	
Homestead Dam/ Public Fishing Site	Water Access	Boat launch, parking, spillway, and pit toilets. North side of the river open from spillway to US-31 access site.	1 mile	MDNR	County/Region	
Betsie River Public Access Site – River Road	Water Access	Canoe, kayak, and boat launch, fishing, and parking. Located on the SE side of the River Road crossing.		MDNR	County/Region	
Betsie River Public Access Site – Grace Road	Water Access	Canoe and kayak launch, pit toilets, and parking. Located on the NE side of the Grace Road crossing.		MDNR	County/Region	
Betsie River Public Access – US-31	Water Access	Parking, pit toilets, and trails. NE of where US-31 crosses the Betsie River.		MDNR	County/Region/State	
Crystal Lake Access Site – Mollineaux Rd	Water Access	Developed access site on Crystal Lake. Parking on site. Located off M-115 and Mollineaux Road.		MDNR	County/Region/State	
Dead Stream Road Crossing of Dead Stream	Water Access	Access site for canoe and kayak launching and fishing.		MDNR	County/Region	
Platte Lake Road-end	Road-End Water Access	Access from Lake Street		BCRC	County/Region	
Zada Price Park	Road-End Water Access (Crystal Lake)	Designated County road endings at the waters edge of Crystal Lake, providing limited access to the water.		Benzie County Road Commission (BCRC)	County/Region	
White Avenue						
McKinley Street						
Alden Street						
Nichols Road						

5. Parks & Recreation

OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES						
Benzonia Township Hall	Municipal Building	Township Offices, meeting space, polling location and Benzonia Township Fire and Rescue Facilities		Benzonia Township	Community	I
Benzie Central Junior Senior High School	School	Football and track, baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, gymnasium and auditorium			Community/Region	
Benzie-Manistee Tribal Outpost and Community Center	Community Center	For health and social services, residential complex for Grand Traverse Band Tribe members.	80 acres		Benzie and Manistee Counties	
Benzonia Township Cemetery	Cemetery	Cemetery	40 acres	Benzonia Township	Community	I
PRIVATE FACILITIES						
Timberline Campground	Private	200+ campsites, cabin and trailer rentals, showers, pool and playground		Private		
Vacation Trailer Park	Private	100 campsites, cabin and trailer rentals, pool, canoe rental and sport shop		Private		
Crystal Lake Golf Course	Private	18-Hole public Golf course and driving range		Private		
Pinecroft Golf Course	Private	18-Hole public Golf course and driving range		Private		
Cherry Bowl Drive-In Theater	Private	Drive-In Movie Theater, food facilities, playground		Private		

Memorial Park, Benzonia Township





LEGEND			
	Township Boundary		Township Park Property
	Parcel Boundary		MI DNR Property
	State Owned Roadway		Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
	Other Local Roads		County Property
	Major River/stream		National Park Service
	Park Or Public Access Areas In Township		Snowmobile Trails (MDNR)
	Park Or Public Access Areas In Village(s)		Shore-to-Shore Trail (non-Motorized)
	Community Facility		

SCALE: 1" = 1500'-0"

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES PLATTE TOWNSHIP

Figure 5.2 Existing Park & Recreation Facilities Platte Township

5. Parks & Recreation

Gwen Frostic Prints	Private	Printing press/wildlife sanctuary and gift shop, facilities listed on National Register of Historic Places		Private		
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PLATTE TOWNSHIP						
Name	Type	Description	Size	Ownership	Service Area	ADA
Platte Township Open Space	Community	Open space for walking and hiking	80 Acres	Township	Community	0
PUBLIC FACILITIES						
Platte Township Hall	Municipal Building	Township Offices, meeting space, polling location		Township	Community	1
Platte Township Cemetery	Cemetery	Cemetery		Township	Community	0
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	National Park	Campgrounds, hiking trails, cultural facilities, museums, etc.	70,000 acres+	Federal	National	
Medenbrook Nature Preserve	Nature Preserve	Wetlands with 900 feet of frontage on Little Platte Lake, some hunting, no facilities.		GTRLC	County/Region/State	
Garey Lake Trail Camp	Camp-ground	Campground with hitching posts and pit toilets, Garey Lake State Forest		MDNR	Region/State	
Alex B. Maley Memorial Woodlot	Open Space	Managed woodlot, soil and water conservation, environmental research and education		Benzie Conservation District	County/Region	
Platte River Snowmobile Trail	Trail	Designated snowmobile trail system maintained and groomed with state funds. Seasonal roads, trails and easements.		MDNR	County/Region/State	
Michigan Shore-to-Shore Trail	Trail	Horseback riding and hiking trail that runs between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron		MDNR	County/Region/State	
M-22 Lake Michigan Circle Tour Route	National Touring Route	Driving tour following the shore of Lake Michigan		MDOT	Region/State	

OTHER FACILITIES						
Historic Drake School	Historic Building	SW Corner of Fowler and CR677, Managed by the Benzie Area Historical Museum		Benzie County Historical Society	Community	
Platte Grange Hall	Historic Building	SW corner of Esch and Indian Hill Road, historic building and school.			Community /Region	



Figure 5.3 Diagram of Memorial Park, Benzonia Township

5. Parks & Recreation

1. Memorial Park

Type: Community Park

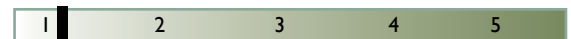
Description: This is the only active park space maintained by Benzonia Township. It has a wide-reaching user base, as the athletic fields provide space for various ball and soccer leagues in the community. It is situated near the Village limits of Benzonia and within walking distance of US-31 and a few residential areas, refer to Figure 5.3. The park was originally established in 1956, refer to “Brief History of Memorial Fields” on page 58.

Size: 31.4 Acres (approx)

Inventory & Analysis of Facilities:

- Softball Fields (4), 1 lighted.
- Field #1: 195ft, 2 sets of bleachers, chain-link backstop and fences, 2 brick dugouts
- Field #2: 195ft, 2 sets of bleachers, chain-link backstop and fences, 2 brick dugouts
- Field #3: 275ft, 2 set of bleachers, chain-link backstop and fences, 2 wood team bench
- Field #4: 275ft, 2 sets of bleachers, chain-link backstop and fences, 2 brick dugouts, lighted.
- Restroom by field #3 and #4
- Soccer Field, 6 movable nets, limited lighting.
- Restroom Facility by Soccer/Ballfields
- Equipment Storage (shed) by ball field #2)
- Playground & Picnic Shelter with water fountain.
- Picnic Tables
- Trash Receptacles
- Restroom Facility by Picnic Shelter Play area
- Dog Park
- Disc Golf
- Veterans Memorial and Picnic Shelter
- Grill (8)
- Bicycle Racks (0)
- Informal Parking, no accessible spaces
- Open Space

ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION



CONNECTIVITY EVALUATION



Accessibility Analysis: Poor. No accessible parking spaces and there are no accessible routes to any of the facilities.

Connectivity Analysis: Poor. Pedestrian connectivity is lacking in between facilities inside the park as well as facilities that lead to the park. The park is served by two gravel drives that serve as ‘main entrances’ from South Street. A smaller gravel/dirt drive allows users to exit only from a one-way parking loop, this does alleviate congestion of cars around the ballfields when in use. Another park entrance is provided off of Grace Road for the dog park. Entry and identification signs are minimal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The park serves a diverse user base, all future improvements would greatly benefit by completing a more detailed inventory and analysis of park amenities and a master plan for the park with a public process. Past improvements appear disjointed and the space feels the same. Better pedestrian circulation is needed, especially for accessibility. The county population is increasing, especially the aging population. Providing accessible recreation amenities should always be a priority. The following are some initial considerations summarized from the public surveys and meeting feedback that should be further addressed in an in-depth master planning and needs assessment process.

Memorial Park, Grace Road Entrance and Parking



Memorial Park, Practice on Field No. 3.



5. Parks & Recreation

BRIEF HISTORY OF MEMORIAL FIELDS

The following is a summary, a more detailed account can be found on the Township's website.

- In 1956, a local landowner started the formation of Benzonia Township park by selling 20 acres of land at a great discount to Benzonia High School for a football–baseball field with the provision that it would always be used for public use.
- In 1979, the Benzie Central High School created new fields on Homestead Road and sold the 20 acres of the Township Park to Benzie County for \$1.00. In 1980, a county committee was formed and representatives of field users were incorporated into a County Recreation Committee.
- In 1980, the Benzie County Board approved the enlargement and development of the now 30 acre parcel.
- From 1980 to 1989 a volunteer committee developed a full-scale park with four ball fields — one lighted and a soccer area. All this was accomplished by volunteer labor, donations, and grants that were available
- The Benzie County Board of Commissioners recognized that the county could not continue to maintain that area, so in keeping with the provision, Benzonia Township stepped forward and accepted the park and all maintenance and development responsibilities.
- Various improvements have been added by the Township since 1989. Some include a playground area, pavilion, picnic area, soccer enlargements, restrooms, and a volleyball area. There have been over \$100,000.00 in improvements at no direct cost to the township or to taxpayers.
- Several Eagle Scout Projects have been completed including the picnic tables, the entry garden area ,and the storage shed used for equipment for soccer and little leagues.
- The township retains a full-time maintenance person for the nine-month active season. The township has kept the volunteer committee intact and the park remains a non-fee township park open to all people wishing to use it.

The playground, while it is well used, is old and some playground equipment is reaching the end of its maintenance life. The playground lacks trees and shade. The overall park in general would benefit from additional trees for shade and screening. There is significant room for parking improvements at the ball fields, the current situation is unsafe, especially for small children, during busy game days. Designated parking areas with clear pedestrian routes to the ballfields playing areas and bleachers should be provided in the future. All signage should be reviewed and updated with a coordinated look. Consider naming the fields for clarification for users.

2. BENZONIA TOWNSHIP CEMETERY

Type: Cemetery/Community Facility

Description: This cemetery is located just outside the Village of Benzonia between South Street and Love Road. The main entrance is off of Love Road. It has served as Benzonia Township's Cemetery since the first settlement was

established in Benzie County and many prominent community members are buried here. Some include, Charles Bailey and family (founders of Village of Benzonia), Bruce Catton and family members (Pulitzer Prize winning author) and Gwen Frostic, to name a few. The cemetery is situated on a significant hill and provides several extraordinary views of the township, it also has many large trees and beautiful gravestones.

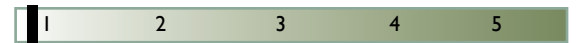
Size: 19.3 Acres (approx)

Inventory & Analysis of Facilities:

- Asphalt and Gravel Drives
- 2 Maintenance Buildings
- Water Spigots are available throughout

Accessibility Analysis: Poor. No accessible parking areas and there are no accessible routes.

ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION



Connectivity Analysis: Poor. Both entrances are typically gated. The Township opens the gates April - December. No sidewalk facilities are provided. There is minimal signage provided at the main (Love Road) entrance, and a chain link fence is located along the entire front edge.

CONNECTIVITY EVALUATION



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cemeteries can be valuable passive park spaces, as they have always served several important functions for communities over time. Typically, cemeteries are designed to take advantage of natural features, incorporate trees, landscaping and open spaces. They provide a place for users to honor and remember family members, as well as provide places for quiet reflection. Cemeteries should embrace the public and allow access easy. They should encourage people to use the cemetery for walking, quiet contemplation, as a nature retreat and place of quiet rest,

Benzonia Township Cemetery



5. Parks & Recreation

Consider making the entrance more inviting with better signage and removing the chain link fencing. Sidewalks to the cemetery would be a long term goal. Maintenance should be a priority so that people with loved ones in the cemetery feel they are always being respected. Dead and dying vegetation should be pruned and removed regularly. Weeds and grass should be regularly maintained. Some of the gravel roads may be difficult for cars to navigate and may need improvements in the near future. Consider adding benches in a few key places to allow users places for reflection. A gated and inactive space tends to attract more vandalism than one that is open, inviting and well maintained.

3. BENZONIA TOWNSHIP HALL

Type: Community Building

Description: The Township Hall is located in the center of the Village of Benzonia. It serves as the Township offices, the Township polling place, meeting room and also the Township Fire Department. Members of the community are allowed to use the meeting room for various meeting or community functions. The Village of Benzonia often utilizes the meeting room for community meetings. In 2021, voters passed a millage to build a new Township Office and Fire Station further South on US-31. The project is currently on hold due to the extreme costs of construction. A schedule to move forward is not known at this time. Once the move to the new building does take place, careful consideration should be given to the use and future of the existing building. It is in a prominent location in the Village and has great opportunity for mixed-use redevelopment that could greatly benefit the community.

Benzonia Township Hall & Fire station



4. PLATTE TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE

Type: Community Park/Open Space

Description: There are no facilities at this location. The land is open to the public for walking and hiking.

Size: 80 Acres (approx)

Accessibility Analysis: Poor. No accessible parking areas or accessible routes.

Connectivity Analysis: Poor. Park is unsigned and not well known to the community

RECOMMENDATIONS:

If it is the desire for the public to utilize this space, basic signage and a parking area could be provided to help identify it to community members. A public open space provides value for people who like to walk or hike, explore nature, birdwatch, or those seeking a quiet place for relaxation. Other simple amenities would be to provide a picnic table for users - signage could indicate that garbage is the responsibility of the user.

5. PLATTE TOWNSHIP HALL

Type: Community Building

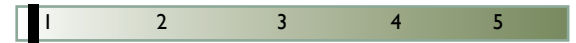
Description: The Township Hall is located near the intersection of Fowler and Valley Roads. It serves as the Township offices as well as the Township polling place. Members of the community (residents or non-residents) may reserve the Hall for small gatherings for a fee. The Township also provides a way for residents to utilize the high-speed Internet available at the hall on certain days of the week or by scheduling a time with the Township Supervisor.

6. PLATTE TOWNSHIP CEMETERY

Type: Cemetery/Community Facility

Description: This cemetery is located near the corner of Esch and Indian Hill Roads.

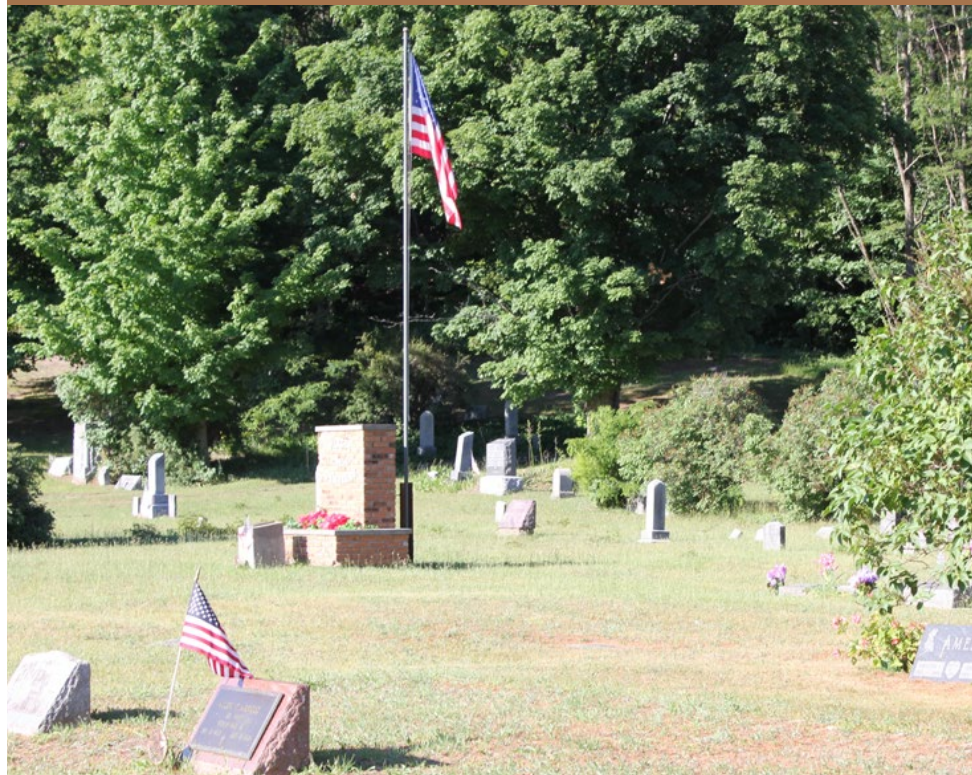
ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION



CONNECTIVITY EVALUATION



Platte Township Cemetery



5. Parks & Recreation

Size: 5 Acres (approx)

Inventory & Analysis of Facilities:

- Gravel Drives
- Maintenance/Storage Shed

Accessibility Analysis: Poor. No accessible parking areas and there are no accessible routes.



Connectivity Analysis: Adequate: The access to the cemetery is in a remote location, the 2 existing driveways are adequate, improvements to the gravel driveway may be needed in the near future.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

As mentioned earlier, cemeteries can be valuable public park spaces. Platte Township is a rural community and the facilities currently at the cemetery are adequately serving the population. In the future, basic facility upgrades such as new entry signage, providing some improved and designated parking or even a few benches for users to be able to sit and reflect may be desired.

REGIONAL PARKS INVENTORY

In addition to park resources in both Townships, a review of park and recreation facilities in a 10-mile radius is also provided. While both townships may have limited park facilities, they are both close to a wealth of other premium park and recreation facilities in the region (FIGURE 5.4). A ten mile radius is shown from the approximate center of both Townships - one can see within 10 miles there is access to park facilities that range from Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, a number of facilities managed by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, playgrounds and park facilities from other municipalities such as Frankfort, Elberta, Beulah and Honor, roadside parks and many public access points to various lakes and rivers. These resources are not listed in-depth as it seems to be general consensus during the planning process (feedback from public during the visioning sessions and survey comments) that one of the main and most treasured features of this area in Michigan is the abundance of, and access to, beautiful natural park and recreation resources.

Previously Grant Assisted Facilities Summary

Neither Platte nor Benzonia Township have previously received grant funding for park and recreation facilities from the MDNR grant programs.

Natural Resource Inventory

The description of natural resources can be found in Chapter 3: Existing Physical Conditions, under Natural Resources.

Description of the Planning and Input Process

PLANNING METHODS

Per the MDNR recommendations the Township's park land and facilities were compared to the guidelines set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). NRPA has recently updated its guidelines to recognize the complexities of applying standards to varying types of municipalities. NRPA also states that each community should

be considered on an individual basis in order to tailor the most appropriate range, quantity and quality of recreational facilities within the Department's fiscal limits. This plan will focus on each Township's own particular resources, the relationship with nearby resources, and resident preferences and demands to best suit the community's desires for recreation. Because of the relatively low population of the Townships and the abundance of nearby recreational

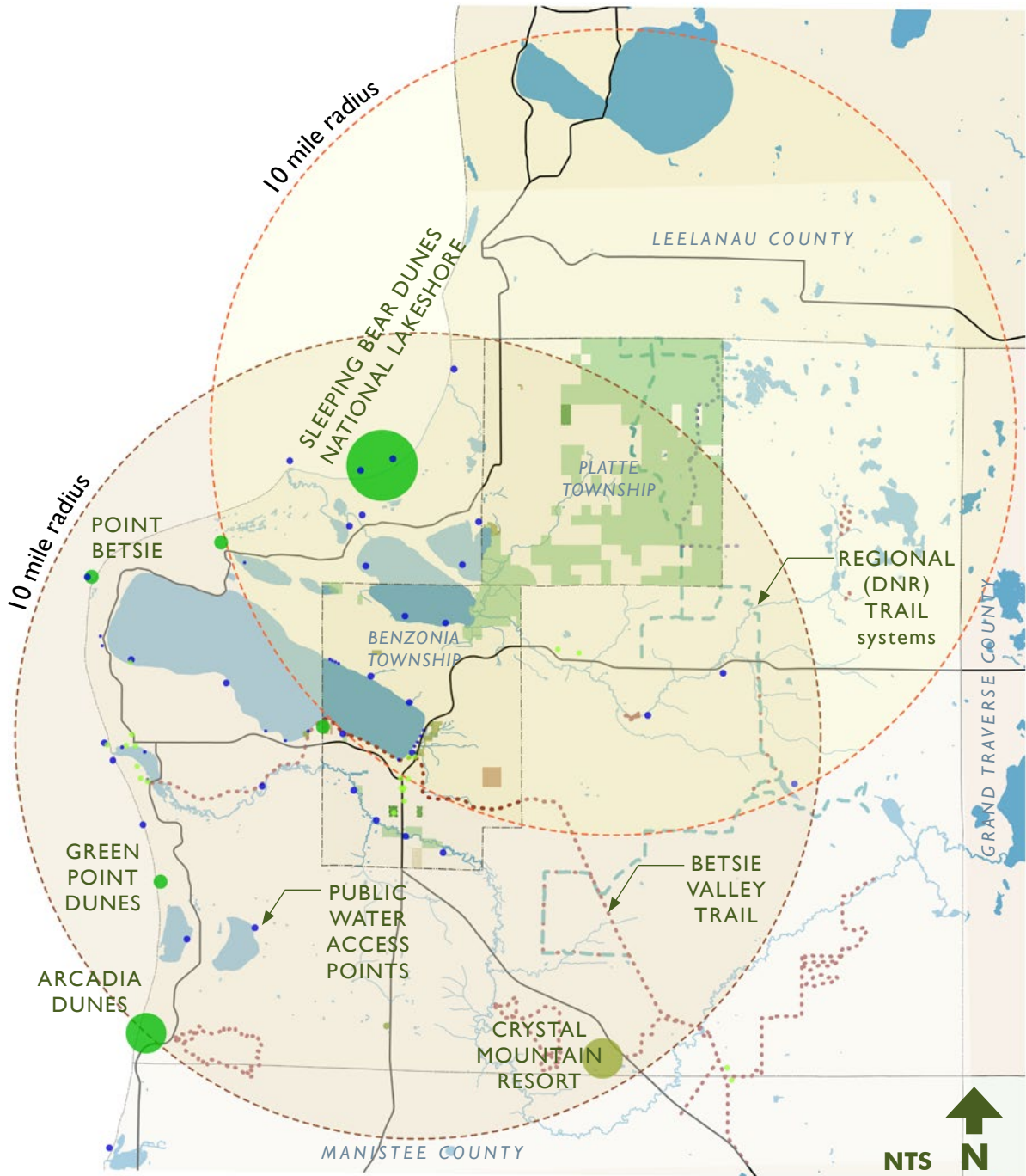


Figure 5.4 Regional Park Facilities within a 10-mile Radius

5. Parks & Recreation

resources this plan will focus on public input to gauge the needs for a particular community rather than relying solely on the national guidelines.

Two open houses were held at the beginning of the master plan project, one at the Benzonia Township Hall and another at the Platte Township Hall. The open houses were advertised in the local paper, the Township website and shared on social media pages. Several members of the community were asked to complete stakeholder surveys. Some detailed questions were asked in regards to parks.

In addition, a public survey was distributed at the public open houses, a QR code link to the survey was displayed in several places around the community, and it was shared on the websites and social media pages. In addition, the monthly planning commission meetings were advertised on the township website and the public was invited to all meetings.

In recognition of these increased complexities, there are no longer any nationally accepted standards for parks and recreation planning. Each community must determine its own standards, level-of-service (LOS) metrics, and long-range vision for its parks and recreation system based on community issues, values, needs, priorities and available resources.

- From, "A New Approach to Parks and Recreation System Planning." David Barth, Ph.D., CPRP, AICP, October 29, 2020

COMPARISONS TO NATIONAL STANDARDS

In comparing the types of recreation facilities and amenities offered that exist in the Townships to the NRPA guidelines - the Townships will be more than adequate when compared to nearly all of those standards. This is primarily due to the small size of the community, as the total population for both Townships is 3,115. For instance, the range of park acres recommended for Townships is between 6.9 and 19.7 acres/1000 residents. At the highest end of the recommended range there should be about 60 acres of park-lands available to Township residents. Therefore as mentioned previously, the facility recommendation for this plan will be based more heavily on public comments. A bigger challenge here is providing adequate connectivity to park and recreation facilities, due to the rural aspect of the region - park users typically must travel by vehicles to get to park facilities.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

The summary of the public meetings can be found in Chapter 6: Public Participation. There were two (2) advertised public Open Houses held during the inventory phase, one in Benzonia Township (June) and one in Platte Township (July). The public was also invited to share comments at each of the regular Planning Commission meetings that were held throughout the duration of the project. The public was also notified (advertised in the local paper) of the final public hearing to present the draft of the Master Plan and Park and Recreation Plan on February 2, 2023. No additional comments were received at the final public hearing in regards to parks and recreation for the Townships.

STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

Respondents in general did not have a lot of comments related specifically to the Benzonia Township Parks. All seem to think parks are good and a much needed public benefit. Volunteers or students may be useful partnerships to help

improve park spaces. There were comments regarding how nice the ‘trail’ (Betsie Valley Trail) is and it should continue to be improved and expanded. The idea that trail and bicycle connections are important and expansion/connections should continue to be pursued was also mentioned. The respondents were not familiar with the park and recreation facilities in Platte Township. One mentioned when trying to find information on the facilities they were unable to find out any information.

Comments mention that future improvements should be based on analysis of park usage (how are fields and dog parks being used), and that maintenance and maintaining accessible access is important. It was commented to encourage paving walkways and trails when possible for maximum accessibility. The responses in general supported consideration of new park facilities in the future. There was some concern that, at this time, it would not be a good idea to add expenses and long term costs. Some ideas for future consideration included: protecting forested lands, providing places with minimal public access for less environmental impacts and encouraging the Benzie Aquatic Center (if feasible). There was support that public lands are always a rich resource for the community.

The more specific ideas included: Nature trails, hunting and fishing with oversight, Benzie Aquatic Center, accessible access to waterfront or beach resources citing example of Betsie River access in Thompsonville.

PUBLIC SURVEY SUMMARY

The summary of the public survey can be found in Chapter 6: Public Participation. Full survey results are found in the appendix. All responses related to Parks and Recreation are noted under a Parks and Recreation Section in the survey and associated summary.

Goals, Objectives & Action Plan

The Goals and Objectives related to the Parks and Recreation Plan can be found in Chapter 7: Looking Forward, under the Park and Recreation Section.

The action plan items can be found in matrix shown in Chapter 9: Moving Forward under the Implementation and Action Plan.

Platte Township Hall

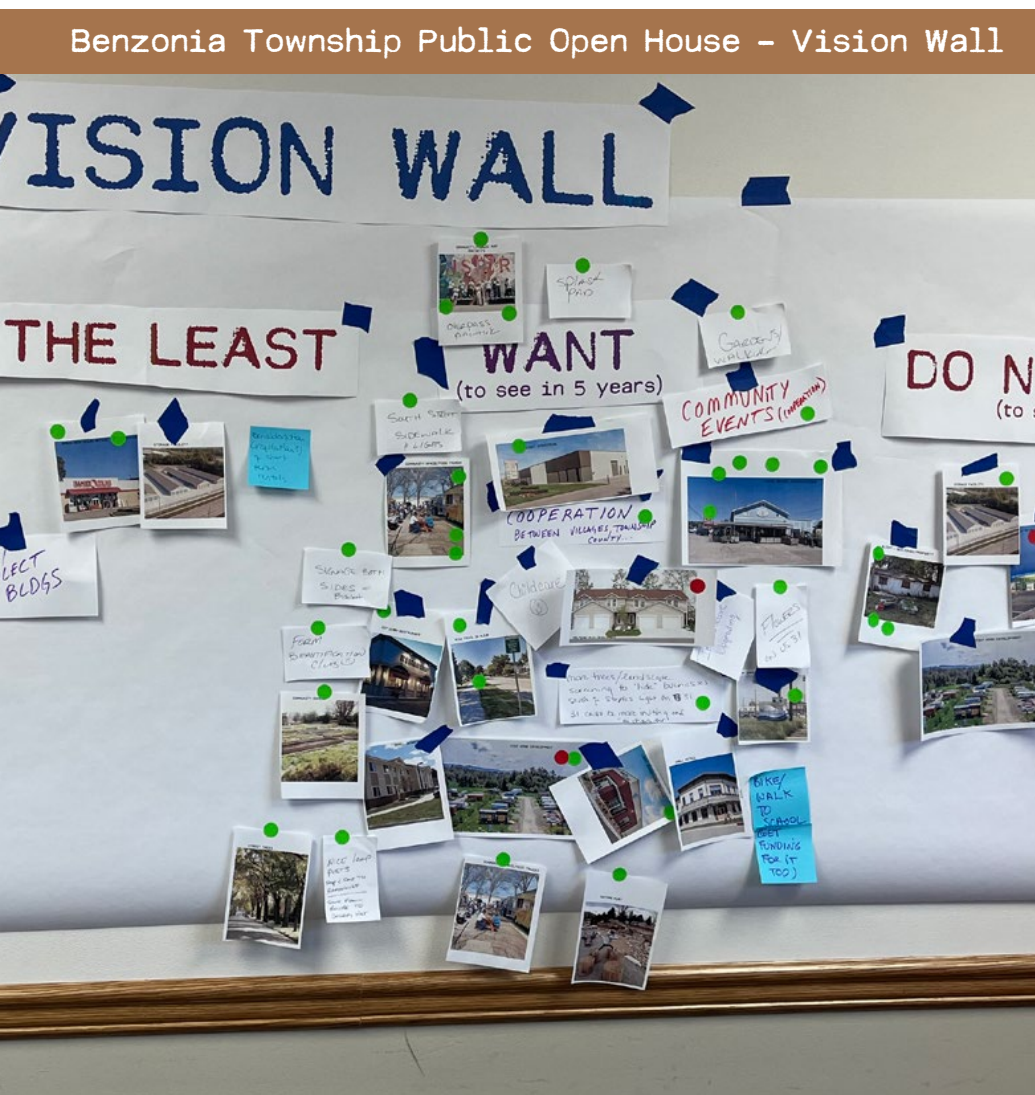


6. Public Participation

Public Outreach Process

The public participation strategy for this master plan utilized the following 6-fold approach.

1. Stakeholder Feedback
2. Public Open Houses: One each for Platte and Benzonia Township, 2 hour open format meeting with opportunity for feedback on project maps, and interactive visioning exercise and comment forms. Each meeting was advertised in local paper, websites and social media pages.
3. Public Survey: Made available in hard copy format at public meetings, advertised hard copies available for pick up in both Township offices, on-line availability, survey was open for approximately 2 months.
4. Social Media & Website: Meetings, announcements and public survey links were made available on Township websites and social media pages, and announced in the Platte Township email list.
5. Open Meetings: The Planning Commission meetings are open to the public and the master plan was on the agenda and public comments were encouraged the entirety of the project.
6. Final Public Hearing: Advertised in local paper, website and social media pages and open for public comment.



Stakeholder Feedback

Community members representing – real estate, park and recreation groups, community facilities, and natural resource groups in the townships.

The following are summaries of their responses.

1. It's well documented that lack of affordable housing and housing in general is a major issue in this area. Do you have any specific ideas for creating more affordable housing options?

All respondents mentioned the idea/need for more multi-family type housing and smaller homes, either owner-occupied or rental. Several also mentioned the idea of creating some type of work force / dormitory style housing for seasonal workers. There was an idea to create housing with some sort of support by county/township (infrastructure, providing land, other

zoning incentives to make it easier?) Responses also mention these should consider rural character, vegetation and green spaces and common areas (recreation components) which would help maintain property values.

2. Do you have ideas for creating more housing choices (types, sizes, styles, etc.) in general?

Many of these responses were along the same lines as the prior question. There was again mention of creating more multi-family type houses, supporting seasonal worker housing and smaller housing footprints in general. Concern with the environmental impacts that some housing is creating along the lake shores was voiced. Many residents live here for the quality of life that the lakes and forests provide – we must protect the reason people live here to begin with! Also Other regional housing studies (Manistee Housing Survey/Networks Northwest) should always be referenced and are likely helpful.

3. What is your opinion of the current housing stock (look, quality, type)?

Responses indicated that it depends on the area. The Townships cover a relatively large geographic area when comparing housing styles. For the most part, respondents said look of housing seems good. There is mention of a lack of housing stock especially for low income and working/single family home owners. Also there are areas where more programs are needed to help those under the poverty level.

4. Are you familiar with the Zoning Ordinance? Do you know of anything in the current zoning ordinance that you feel negatively affects residential development?

There were two main areas that respondents focused on. The first were comments regarding strengthening environmental protections, especially for environmentally sensitive areas such as lakes, waterways, forests and steep slopes. The other was comments focused on the types and look of development. The ordinance should support safety and security of residents, ensure character of development matches the area/environment and support the local economy. There was also concern about the minimum parcel size of 10 and 5 acres, in some areas this is too restrictive to support other types of development (smaller homes, alternative development, etc.) Need to examine PUD language to make sure it allows appropriate development that supports working families and senior communities.

5. What are your thoughts on short term rental housing? Should it be regulated in any way?

All respondents shared some concerns for the effects of short term rental properties on the local community. Concerns ranged from how they may affect the resources of police/fire/safety, and additional impacts on local roads, traffic, parking and increased noise. Other concerns had to do with protecting existing neighborhoods and not taking away long term or other housing from local residents. Overall, there was strong support for regulating short term rentals in some ways (even if it was just requiring them to register and follow good neighbor guides). Most respondents thought limits should be considered as well as restrictions in certain areas. There was also support for taxing short term rentals, similar to hotels.

6. Do you feel like the current township zoning regulations allow appropriate opportunities for commercial businesses?

The respondents did not have a lot of strong opinions on this question. The few that commented mentioned they were not aware of any commercial developments that have had issue with the current ordinance.

7. Are there improvements in either Township you would like to see to make it easier for commercial businesses to thrive?

6. Public Participation

Some of the items that were mentioned include: being thoughtful where future commercial is located so it protects the character of the areas, assuring it works so that housing is available for potential employees, planning for commercial and industrial parks in the future would be good planning practice, plan for bicycling and alternative forms of transportation, consider bike lanes and bike/pedestrian safety improvements, sewer system, better zoning enforcement for rules in place, increasing violations and fines for those that don't follow the ordinance.

8. Do you have concerns with ANY other non-residential zoning regulations?

There were several additional comments on concerns with environmental items including: additional protections to prevent invasive species, protection of wild/forested areas to be used more sustainably in order to support natural resources and public recreation areas, ensuring responsible land use as land is not an infinite resource, building on slopes and tree removals should be regulated more closely. There were also concerns about lack of infrastructure, particularly in providing water and sewer to areas where commercial development is needed.

9. Would you support the development of some type of sewer system (mainly for Benzonia Township) that would allow for additional development options? Do you have any concerns regarding future sewer development?

There was overall concern about lack of sewer system and its effects on environmental quality of the lakes and in areas of more concentrated development. In general, there was support for sewer development in the area and it would benefit in the long run, however all respondents had concerns about costs. One respondent voiced concerns that costs would be too much with all the other items the community has recently been asked to support (school bond, fire department) and that it would be hard to support sewer as well.

10. Are there any regulations in the Zoning Ordinance that you would like to see strengthened, expanded on or new?

Respondents voiced strong concerns regarding blight and lack of enforcement for the current rules in the ordinance. The concerns with blight appear to be issues that have been long standing, several references that conditions on some properties have been there 'year after year'. Response seems to realize this is a difficult issue but one that should not be ignored as it drives down property values, creates environmental hazards, and only gets worse over time. There was also again comments about ways the zoning ordinance may support the development of affordable housing with mention of incentives and appropriate regulation to both allow and assure that environmental impacts are not negative.

11. How do you feel about the existing park and recreation facilities in Benzonia Township (OK as is or need improvements)?

Respondents in general did not have a lot of comments related specifically to the Township Parks - there was one comment that basketball courts are well used in County and could be improved. All seem to think parks are good and a much needed public benefit. Volunteers or students may be useful partnerships to help improve park spaces. There was comments regarding how nice the 'trail' (Betsie Valley Trail) is and it should continue to be improved and expanded. Also the idea that trail and bicycle connections are important and expansion and important links should continue to be pursued.

12. How do you feel about the existing parks and recreation facilities in Platte Township (OK as is or need improvements)?

The respondents were not familiar with the parks and recreation facilities in Platte Township. One mentioned when trying to find information on the facilities they were unable to find out any information.

13. Are there specific improvements you would like to see to existing park spaces (either township)?

Comments mention that improvements should be based on analysis of park usage (how are fields and dog parks being used). Also, mention that maintenance and maintaining accessible access is important. Encourage paving walkways and trails when possible for maximum accessibility.

14. Do you feel the townships should consider any acquisition of new parks or recreation areas/lands/facilities in the future?

The responses in general supported consideration of new park facilities, but resources should also focus on maintaining what exists. There was some concern that, at this time, it would not be a good idea to add expenses and long term costs. Some ideas for future consideration included: protecting forested lands, providing places with minimal public access for less environmental impacts, encouraging the Benzie Aquatic Center (if feasible), and support that public lands are always a rich resource for the community.

15. If you said yes, do you have a particular recreation area or type of facility in mind that would benefit the public?

The specific ideas included: Nature trails, hunting and fishing with oversight, Benzie Aquatic Center, accessible access to waterfront or beach resources citing example of Betsie River access in Thompsonville.

16. What do you feel is the biggest issue currently affecting the community?

There was a range of responses to this question, they included: concerns over growth and development and how its impacting the environment and character of the community, drugs and crime, availability of workers for full-time and seasonal jobs, lack of both affordable housing and affordable child care.

17. Do you know if there is anything in the township zoning ordinance that negatively affects your organization/ business?

There were not many that voiced concerns about the current ordinance specifically, except for the concern that the watershed ordinance for Crystal Lake is not currently strong enough and concerns it will not provide enough protections for future development.

18. What community sharing/joint program/ or outreach type opportunities do you see that should be expanded on, improved or implemented in either township?

Responses echoed the importance of community programs and supporting youth and those in need. It was mentioned the Township should have an understanding of the mission of community groups and be able to support, help expand and house programs where needed. There was mention of the possibility of a community workshop/meeting to organize and get people interested and gain support for the right programs. Programs like SEEDS, supporting other school programs, and the possibility of Aquatic and Wellness Center that could support community programs were mentioned.

19. Thinking about Townships environmental issues; Do you think the protection of natural resources (trees, air, water) is enough?

In general, the answers all reflected concern that the current ordinance does not provide enough protection of

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environmental resources, especially with the increase in development pressure in certain areas (new lake front homes). In particular, nearly all discussed concerns with the protection of water resources. Several of the answers discuss the lack of sewers and the impact that may have on water quality of the lakes or future problems the lack of sewers may cause. Some of the more detailed answers also discussed minimal tree and vegetation protections. There seem to be support for stronger tree removal and forest management standards and promoting planting of new trees. Again, there was concern with lack of enforcement and even following the standards that are in the current ordinance.

"The culture, history and beauty we have is a double edged sword. Developing further is a salvation economically, but there is a fine line which, when crossed, destroys the very quality you love so much. If we are careful we can have both. I believe that the upper Midwest with abundant water, and welcoming climate in the face of global warming will be ripe for over development in a few decades, if not sooner. We must guard against allowing the destruction of what we love the most."

- Quote from Stakeholder Survey Response

20. Do you think there are enough social support resources in the area?

Respondents seem to feel there are quality resources in the community to support those in need. They discuss food pantries, health department, BACN, Benzie Bus, Meals on Wheels, and the Benzie Senior Resource Center. There may be room to improve the communication and the ability to connect these resources with those in need. There was concern about assuring that the area youth are supported enough by programs. There were multiple mentions of the need for shelter assistance, and the idea that is hard to do, but with the state of housing in the area it is probably a big issue and one of the social support areas that is lacking in the Benzie Community.

21. If you could make ONE improvement to the way of life in Benzonia or Platte Townships, what would it be?

Answers include – further environmental protections, safety/security, low cost reliable Internet service, support tourism related businesses, protect the resources we have, affordable housing, affordable child care, legal support and zoning enforcement of ordinance, ensuring township officials are accessible and responsive.

22. What do you love the most about this area?

Answers include – Natural features, characteristics of lakes/rivers/trees/forested hillsides, wildlife diversity, small town/ rural way of life, sense of community, culture, history and beauty, environment, the people, beautiful scenic views of landscape beaches and water, small community life, water, sand, friendships with a full spectrum of individuals.

23. What do you like the least?

Answers include – Urbanization of the shorelines, new 'resort size' development on the lake shores, amount of residents at or below the poverty line and negative impacts that has (especially on youth), crime, cost of living, harsh winters with seasonal exodus, necessary evil of tourist dependent economy, need to travel to Traverse City for shopping, lack of concern for environment by those who have relocated here for it, disrespect for the land and zoning by some, summer traffic.



Figure 6.1 Stakeholder thoughts on what they like the BEST and LEAST about either Township

24. What are the top 3 things you'd like to see improved. IN 5 YEARS

Answers include – Environmental protections, coordinated effort for environmental protections, improvement/ opportunities for those at/near poverty, planned communities, efficiency of services (libraries, post offices, etc), diversification of economy (tech oriented who work from home may be a plus), encourage responsible agriculture, update zoning ordinance with enforcement, housing for working families and those needing a primary home not a second resort home, support quality education and health services for children, don't restrict short term rentals and be clear in both Townships what's allowed, continue the great communication between Townships and the community and continue to maintain the parks and gardens and open spaces that each Township has.

25. What are the top 3 things you'd like to see improved. IN 10 YEARS

Answers include – continued focus on environmental protection, job training, housing opportunities for local employees, youth protection programs, housing, planned communities around commerce, roads/bridges, protection from harmful over development, maintain the character we love, continue to update zoning ordinance to reflect changing development patterns, continued enforcement of ordinance, increase funding of parks and recreation, more support for those who choose Benzie County as their home, maintain public lands and quality of life.



Platte Township Public Open House – Residents working on Vision Board

Public Survey Summary

89 responses (85 on-line, 4 hard copy)

BACKGROUND

Approximately 60% of respondents live in Benzonia township and 40% from Platte. The others do not live full time in the Townships but indicate they are familiar and spend a significant amount of time there, either as a landowner, owning a vacation home, working, or renting. There was a fairly even representation when indicating how long they have lived in the area. In general, the people that said they didn't live in the townships, said they own a second home, work, or own a business or land in the Townships. Of the people that filled out the survey, most live in 2-3 person households and over 70% indicated they did not have children in the home with them. This doesn't mean they don't have children, but if so, that they may be older and no longer living at home. Of the people that did have children the ages were equally split between elementary through college age.

When asked about where they work, the majority of respondents indicated they were retired, the second highest response indicated they work from home. The third highest response was that they work in other areas in Benzie

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county outside the townships or in Benzonia Township (approximately 20% each). This makes sense as a majority of the commercial areas are in the Frankfort/Thompsonville area or the Villages of Beulah/Benzonia. Approximately the same percentage of people (10%) travel outside the County for work or work in Grand Traverse County. Fewer people (approximately 5% each) work in Platte Township or travel to Leelanau or Manistee County.

Take Away- Of the people that responded to the survey, there are a lot of retirement age households and people that work from home in the Townships.

COMMUNITY

When asked what people like best about living here the overwhelming response was the natural beauty of the area and the quiet, small town feel.

When asked what they like the least, the responses were more varied. A common theme was the higher cost of living, concern for environmental degradation, unsafe road conditions (high speeds and pedestrian safety concerns) and blighted property.

The next set of questions asked for an overall feeling of what people felt like living in the Townships. All responses were nearly unanimous and agree that respondents enjoy living here, feel like it is generally safe and a good place to raise a family.

A majority of people like the general look of the Township, however only 26% strongly agreed, and about 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked about how they felt about the overall quality of life in the area, again while most agreed, only about 35% strongly agreed.

Take Away- While most people enjoy living here and generally like how things are going, there still appears to be agreement that there are things that could be improved that would increase the overall quality of life.

SERVICES

The next section dealt with community facilities and services such as roads, trails, sidewalks and utilities. Of the people that responded about half (slightly more in Benzonia) said they used the roads or trails to either walk or ride bicycles.

While 60% of respondents felt the current sidewalks were adequate (10% strongly agree and 50% agree), 20% also strongly disagree. The next question asked in particular about sidewalks on US 31 in Benzonia Township, there was about 75% agreement that more sidewalks should be considered along US-31. About 60% of respondents said they felt safe when using the sidewalk/trail facilities and about 12% had strong concerns about safety. Some of the concerns listed in the following responses were; speed of traffic on the roads, lack of safe pedestrian crossings, and lack of space for sharing the road with bicycles. Full responses can be found in the appendix.

Most respondents agree that the roads were adequately sized and maintained in both Townships, those that had concerns likely listed them in the write in questions. Full responses can be found on the appendix.

There were few respondents that said they regularly or even occasionally use the Benzie Bus services and of those, most were located in Benzonia Township. About half of respondents felt like there were enough public transportation options available.

A majority of people responded that they felt garbage pickup was adequate, 25% thought that it was not (11 responses from each township). When asked if there was enough community clean up days or opportunity to drop off large garbage items, the responses were almost evenly split between yes and no. There were the most 'no' responses from Benzonia Township.

When asked about availability of high speed Internet, most that responded to this survey said yes. Note, it's possible most said yes, as many of the responses to the survey were completed on-line. There was deliberately not many questions devoted to high speed Internet as the County had just completed an extensive survey and study - and that data is available for use in this planning effort.

The last few questions asked about the township cemeteries. Most respondents said they were satisfied with the state of both township cemeteries. However, the next question asked what they would change and there were several responses that indicated respondents didn't know a lot about them.

Take Away- Most of the detailed responses in the section had to do with roads, traffic and pedestrian/bicyclists safety concerns.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The next series of questions focused on factors affecting residential development in the townships. When asked if there should be more residential development in the coming years nearly 70% of respondents agreed, with 23% strongly agreeing.

When asked what types of residential development they'd like to see there was the strongest consensus for single family homes with a smaller footprint (2000sf or less), the next largest response was for affordable housing options, closely followed by small multi-family developments (duplex, triplex, tiny homes). Other options that received a majority of responses were for: accessory dwelling units and senior housing options. There were many thoughtful additional comments, full responses can be found in the appendix.

While most people are satisfied with the general look of residential housing, there were about 25% that either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over 70% of respondents agreed that improving the quality of residential housing is important.

When asked if there was anything that limited housing development in the zoning ordinance many respondents again gave thoughtful answers. While answers were varied, many raised valid point that should be considered. There seemed to be the most comments related to the minimum lot and structure sizes limiting residential development and housing options, especially related to Benzonia Township. Many responses from Platte Township supported the large lot sizes and didn't want to see changes to residential zoning.

Many respondents (nearly 70%) supported the idea of local tax incentives or other programs to boost development or the rehabilitation of old/derelict structures, while 12% strongly disagreed.

The next few questions asked for long answer responses. When asked to list reasons they thought more housing is NOT being developed, the responses were varied but some similarities could be found. Many of the responses focused on high costs (cost for materials, costs for land, costs of living in the area). Other responses with some consensus were lack of sewers/infrastructure support, lack of builders and social issues (such as lack of childcare, poor area in general).

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Take Away- Most people agree that providing opportunities for more residential housing should be supported (in particular smaller homes and affordable type housing). There was consensus that some current development standards as well as a lack of sewer limits residential development options.

When asked if there was anything at a Township level that would make it easier for residential housing there were again, many thoughtful responses. There was again great consensus around providing more local incentives for residential development. Other frequent comments were related to the lack of sewers and how that limits certain residential development (in particular in Benzonia Township). There were also several comments that had to do with adjusting the zoning ordinance to accommodate alternative residential developments.

HOUSING ALTERNATIVE – CO-HOUSING

SNAPSHOT – What is Co-Housing?

- Traditionally it is an intentional community of private homes clustered around shared space. The term originated in Denmark in late 1960s. Each attached or single family home has traditional amenities, including a private kitchen, bathrooms and bedrooms.
- While the types may vary, the developments typically feature a common house, a large industrial kitchen, dining area, and ample common green spaces to share.
- In the U.S. this movement has largely been spearheaded by aging adults who were tiring of their large, single-family homes, and seeking an alternative as they grew older.
- "A lot of people also realize that not everyone has to have their own washer and dryer, their own lawn mower, and their own backyard pool. Sometimes it makes sense to share." – Raines Cohen, a board member of the Co-housing Association of the United States.

When asked how the township might support additional long term rental options the comments ranged from regulating short term rentals, supporting long term rental with the zoning ordinance and tax incentives, to providing more rental facilities (like small apartments, senior housing, etc.).

The next few questions dealt specifically with short term rentals (STR). Over 70% of respondents felt that STRs should be regulated in some way. When asked to be specific about how they should be regulated, the most popular response was that all STRs should be required to follow good neighbor guidelines (this would require some sort of registration at minimum). Other popular ideas were to limit the maximum occupancy of STRs, and that they should be required to register and pay a fee. There was also strong support for STRs to provide proof of legal in-state or US legal residency and being required to provide a local agent. There were also



several concerns about regulating foreign property owners in the written comments. About 50% of responses said they would favor a limit on the total number of STRs allowed in the Townships. 46% felt that STRs should be required to pay a local tax (similar to a hotel tax). 15% of respondents felt like STRs should NOT be regulated in any way.

Take Away- There seems to be support to make revisions to the ordinance to create better opportunities for housing as well as support for various incentives to help increase residential development. There also seems to be support for STR regulations.

NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

When asked if they thought there was enough commercial/retail development in Benzonia Township, about 75% of people felt like the current situation was just right, while 23% felt there should be more in the coming years. Of the people with an opinion about owning a business in Benzonia, most thought it was a good place to own a business.

When asked if they thought there was enough commercial/retail development in Platte Township, about 80% of people felt like the current situation was just right, while 18% felt there should be more in the coming years. Of the people with an opinion about owning a business in Platte, again, most thought it was a good place to own a business.

When asked about the general look of commercial development in the townships, about 60% agreed they liked the look, 35% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if they thought there were enough 'everyday' shopping options the responses were nearly split 50/50.

The next question asked respondents to list types of commercial development they'd like to see MORE of in either townships. For Benzonia the highest responses were for restaurants, followed by recreation types (gyms/entertainment), and then small neighborhood commercial/retail. For Platte the two categories with the highest responses were for restaurants and small neighborhood commercial/retail. Other categories with high responses were for recreation types, recreational lodging (RV parks, campgrounds) and cultural types developments (museums, galleries, etc.). There were also several responses for Platte township that said they don't want ANY new commercial/retail development.

The next question asked respondents to list types of commercial development they'd like to see LESS of in either township. The highest responses were for regional retail stores (big box/chain type development), then industrial development. Other categories with high responses were for lodging and recreational lodging. Many of the write-in comments said less marijuana shops.

When asked about mixed use development there appeared to be high support, with (50%) supporting it in some areas and (35%) supporting it in all commercial areas. When asked where they would support new commercial development, there was general consensus that it should be along the US-31 corridor in Benzonia Township. When asked about Platte Township, there was consensus that there shouldn't be a lot of new commercial or retail development.

Take Away- There was consensus that most commercial type development should remain in the US-31 Corridor. There was not a strong support for commercial/retail development in Platte Township. There wasn't strong agreement on the look of current development and there is likely room for improvement. The types of development desired steer more towards smaller neighborhood types.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

The next section of the survey asked various questions about community and social issues.

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Almost all respondents were aware that the Townships have a zoning ordinance. When asked if they were satisfied with the zoning ordinance only 33% said yes. 17% think the current ordinance is not restrictive enough, while 11% said it was too restrictive. About 25% said they didn't know enough about it to comment.

When asked what areas of the zoning ordinance needed improvement there was strongest consensus for more short term rental regulations. Other areas that received strong support were for improved noise regulations and environmental protections (trees and stormwater/water quality). There was also support for improvements to sign and lighting regulations. There was also support for improved site development and buffer regulations. In the written comments there were several additional concerns about environmental regulations and blight regulation and enforcement.

There were nearly identical concerns about blighted property in both Townships, about 75% agreed or strongly agreed it is an issue. When asked if code enforcement was adequate, only about 50% agreed, 12% strongly disagreed.

The next series of questions were asked to gauge opinion about the level of support for a number of social/community issues related to potential future development.

Over 90% of respondents feel like historic preservation is important. Nearly all (98%) of respondents feel that preservation of agricultural lands is important, while 100% either agreed or strongly agreed that support of local agriculture and local food sources is important for the community

When asked if the ability to utilize alternative forms of energy is important, most people agreed, only about 18% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. There was again unanimous support for the preservation of natural resources and significant views, as well as for the protection of water resources (lakes, streams, groundwater).

The last question related to the zoning ordinance asked if there were specific issues that they felt could be improved. There seemed to be the most consensus on improved blight control/enforcement and also on issues related to natural resource protection/environmental regulations and short term rentals. There were also a lot of responses that also said they didn't know, or none.

Take Away- Most people support making improvements/updating the zoning ordinance in regards to environmental, short term rental, development standards, and blight regulation/enforcement. There is strong support for preserving natural resources and protecting environmental resources. There is also strong support for agriculture and providing for and supporting local food sources.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The first series of questions were asked for facilities in Benzonia Township. It should be noted that many of the respondents to this survey either said they did not use the park facilities at all or used them only occasionally.

The respondents did feel like Memorial Park in Benzonia Township was generally in good condition. When asked if they knew about the current planned improvements to the park over 70% said they did not know anything about them, only 5% had heard of the planned improvements.

When asked if they use the Betsie Valley Trail, there was more "yes" responses. About 30% say they frequently use the trail, while 25% said they never use it. When asked if they use the trail in Platte Township, most respondents (85%) said they do not.

The next question asked what other recreation facilities they use in the Township. The highest response was for the

Sleeping Bear Dunes (NPS) facilities in Platte Township. The next highest responses were nearly equal and were: the MDNR water access sites, GTRLC properties, and Railroad Point. Other places that received high responses were private recreation facilities (golf/campgrounds) or Crystal Lake Access (road ends).

When asked why they may NOT use recreation facilities, there were many varied responses. Many appear to say they try to use them but can't find the time. There were some concerns about safety, or that they were not accessible (either lack of ways to get there or mobility issues using the facilities).

The next question was to gauge how active the respondents of this particular survey are in general. About 50% say they participate in any outdoor recreation 4 times per week or more, and another 30% say they participate 2-4 times per week. About 10% say they get outdoors for recreation less than once per week or never.

Take Away- Respondents of this survey were not heavily active in regular outdoor activities. Also there is significant room to improve the awareness and communication for township parks and recreation facilities. When only 5% of a group of people are aware of major planned improvements to a public park facility, there is likely an issue with a lack of communication to residents.

The next series of questions was related to cultural resources in the Townships.

Almost half of the respondents say they never participate in activities at the Benzonia Historical Museum. Only about 10% say they regularly utilize the Mills Community House (Benzonia Library and programs). About 7% regularly use the Darcy Library in Beulah. 86% say they have never participated in programs or visited the Historic Drake School in Platte Township.

Take Away- Based on these responses, there was limited community participation in cultural events and facilities. There may be opportunities to better engage, communicate and inform the residents on available community and cultural programs.

The next series of questions asked more detailed quotations about the types of recreation facilities people would like to see and what was most important for their households. Detailed responses can be found in the appendix. The overwhelming consensus was for additional trails and trail improvements. 87% said trails were the most important recreation facility for their household. Other responses for the types of facilities that people would like to see more of included: picnic facilities, open spaces, playgrounds and athletic fields. Some of the other types of facilities that people think are most important for their household include: picnic areas and open spaces, the ice rink (Benzonia Village), sledding hills and playground and athletic fields.

90% of respondents felt they would support the development of new recreation facilities, nearly the same amount said they would support the acquisition of property for additional future recreation facilities.

When asked what their specific concerns were for park and recreation facilities, there were many responses that thought the current state of facilities was OK, and there were also several other thoughtful responses. Some comments had to do with improving maintenance and upkeep of facilities that exist. The final park and recreation question asked if there were any specific ideas for improvements, There were several responses that were related to trail type improvements and maintaining what exists. Also mentioned that there should be thoughtful and organized planning efforts for any new improvements. Other similar comments were for additional indoor recreation options and easier accessibility.

The final survey questions asked respondents to be brief and list the one thing they thought would improve their

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quality of life the most (in either township). Many responses were related to housing and the need for more affordable housing. Other areas of consensus were for better environmental protections for water resources and trees, etc. There were also several responses related to better communication and cooperation/coordination for residents on various issues. (refer to word cloud graphic)

Take Away- Overall there seems to be support for improving parks and recreation facilities. Trail and bicycle facilities and providing places to walk/hike seem to be the most popular, this is similar to national trends.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A majority of respondents (55%) that filled out the survey were in the 35-65 age group range, the second highest age range was 65+ (40%). No one under the age of 18 filled out the survey. Future surveys should engage with local student populations to gain more perspective from those under 18. A majority of respondents (63%) were women. 65% had either a graduate or 4-year college degree, while another 24% of respondents had at least some college experience. The annual household income of respondents was somewhat evenly divided among the categories, with 20% of respondents of this survey having an annual household income of \$150,000 or more, while another 20% have an annual income of over \$100,000. About 27% have an annual income of \$50,00 or less.

Analysis of Inventory

The following is an analysis of the inventory gathered in previous chapters of this document along with the public feedback gathered including stakeholder feedback, public survey comments and comments and discussion at the public open houses and regular planning commission meeting held throughout the process. This analysis is important to review in developing community goals and objectives.

Another important tool is to use this analysis to identify community assets and problem areas. These are also sometimes called opportunities and constraints. These are key points that should be considered in the development of the goals and objectives and also in all future planning and regulation decisions.

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- When looking at the demographics for the townships, Benzonia Township has been showing a slight decline in overall population since the 2000 census, while Platte has been holding relatively steady.
- There is a national trend that shows that family households are declining and single family households are on the rise. This is generally true for both townships as well, with households for individuals over 65 shown to be on the rise. This tends to reinforce the demand for smaller type and transitional housing needs, especially for senior populations.
- Owner occupied housing is on the decline in both Townships as shown from the 2010 to current census data. Rental occupancy rates are also much lower in the Townships when compared to the State averages. This may be an indicator of the trend in higher numbers of housing being used for short term rentals (STRs).
- Lack of housing options is still a strong concern, particularly in Benzonia Township where there is more of a need for 'workforce' type housing to support denser commercial development.
- Both townships show a significant decline in the labor force from the 2010 census. There are less people aged 16 and over working in the area than shown in previous census data.

- Poverty rates remain high, however there is a slight decrease in the overall households in Benzie County considered in ALICE (38%) from the 2019 report. However, Benzonia Township shows a significant increase in poverty rates with 17.4%, while Platte Township shows a slight decrease about 8% of population in poverty. Of those who work, about 10% still live in poverty.
- Overall school enrollment is trending down in both Townships, this is supported by the trend indicating the increase in senior households.
- There appears to be an increase in those that use alternative means of transportation (bus or bicycle) to get to work in Benzonia Township.
- Both Townships have significant natural resources, particularly in regards to water resources with both Crystal and Platte Lakes and with significant land on both the Platte and Betsie Rivers.
- There seems to be very strong support for the protection of natural resources in the review of feedback during the public input. In all meetings and surveys there were residents that voiced concerns about protections of water and forest resources. This is a trend that is also seen in the review of all previous planning efforts across Benzie County over the last decade or more. Residents are continually passionate about protecting the natural beauty of this area and it should remain a driving factor in planning decisions and ordinance regulations.
- US-31 continues to be the most heavily traveled road in Benzie County. M-115 and Homestead Road along with Crystal Drive are the more heavily traveled roads in Benzonia. Indian Hill Road and M-22 are the most heavily traveled in Platte.
- In review of the public survey comments many of the concerns regarding traffic had to do with bicycle and pedestrian safety. There are almost no bicycle facilities in the County beyond the off-road trail systems. There were major safety concerns in the responses and seems to be great opportunity and interest in improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities. They should be considered in all new development, planning and regulations.
- There were many comments and concerns on the lack of sewer facilities across the board in the public feedback, especially in Benzonia Township, and the effect that it has on limiting development opportunities. There were also concerns about increases in residential development around both lakes and the effects that many individual septic systems may have on water quality.
- There was concern regarding blight in the Townships during all facets of the public input. This should be an area that is continuously reviewed and updated to make needed revisions to the ordinance or other policies and procedures made to support blight control. This may also be an area where coordination, cooperation and sharing of resources across jurisdictions may be beneficial to the entire community.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Stakeholder and public survey supports the desire for additional single family housing options, in particular smaller scale options. There was support for small multi-family developments, senior options and accessory dwelling units.
- There were many comments and concerns raised about minimum lot sizes and required structure sizes may be limiting residential housing options. These seemed to primarily be for areas in Benzonia Township.
- Many responses during the public comment and surveys supported the existing Residential Preservation (RP)

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zoning in Platte Township and there seems to be little desire for change in the residential zoning in Platte Township.

- There was strong support for the use of local tax incentives to help provide and support housing options. These were seen in the comments on several different questions in the public survey.
- There was discussion of a STR (short term rental) tax at a regular public meeting. The State of MI charges a 6% tax on STRs (stays of 30 days or less), however there are no current local taxes added to STR property rental in Benzie County. AirBnB lists Kent and Genessee County as the only Counties in Michigan that charge an additional 'occupancy' tax on STRs, both at 5%. There is currently (May 2022) a proposed 6% tax on STRs for all Upper Peninsula counties that (if implemented) is estimated to generate 7-10 million dollars (annually) in funds for UP Counties, to be used for things like police/safety and local housing needs. There was about 50% support for some type of local STR tax in the public survey for this master plan.
- While there was strong support for some regulations for STRs in the Townships, there were varied degrees of what people felt the potential regulations should entail.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

- There was some support for the increase in non-residential development in the Townships. However, most of the responses during the public feedback thought the amount of commercial development was about right.
- Most people did not want to see any increase of development in Platte Township (particularly non-residential development).
- There was a somewhat large response that did not agree with the current look and feel of commercial development, indicating that there is likely support to improve development standards in the ordinances or other design standards whenever possible.
- When discussing types of development it was clear that smaller local retail type development would be desired over larger chain-type retail/commercial options. In general, there seemed to be support of mix-use type development as a way to include residential into development projects.
- Most people felt that new commercial/retail development (including mixed use) should be concentrated in areas near US-31 or areas of denser development patterns.
- There is strong support for the preservation of agricultural lands and supporting local food resources.

PARKS AND RECREATION

- There is great access to parks and recreation facilities within a short distance of all residents of the Townships, even if they are not "Township" controlled park lands. Lack of recreation facilities is not a major issue for area residents.
- There seems to be a lack of communication and community participation in some areas of parks and recreation. This may indicate too many local jurisdictions having to coordinate and communicate various programs to the community which may be losing the effectiveness to users. This should be studied further. Continued communication with residents regarding parks and recreation matters should be a focus.
- Many of the parks and recreational comments were focused on trails. There does seem to be strong support and interest for trail use – in both walking/hiking and bicycling. There are likely great opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and provide for missing connections. Because of this support and high interest these types of facilities should be a focus of recreation development efforts.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities:

- **Location:** Benzonia Township is well situated as a central location in the County with direct access to the 2 most major highways - there are great opportunities for economic development.
- **Location:** Platte Township with the amount of state and federal land, agricultural uses and with large residential lots, is well suited to support the rural way of life that seems to be greatly desired for residents of that community.
- **Environment:** It is well documented in this report that there is strong desire to protect the natural features of both Townships with support from local agencies such as the Crystal Lake Watershed, Conservation District, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, etc.
- **Cooperation:** There are great opportunities for the Townships and Villages to work together which can be incredibly beneficial for small communities with limited resources. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan discussed that when jointly engaging with other jurisdictions on larger issues (housing, resource protection, trail systems, etc.) common ground can be found for the most effective and efficient solutions.

Constraints:

- **Infrastructure:** The lack of sewer system, particularly in Benzonia Township, is continuously recognized as an issue that is holding back development and poses potential environmental threats to the area's water resources.
- **Environment:** While there are tremendous natural resources, providing the proper protection and preservation of those resources and assuring the compatibility with new development will always be a delicate balancing act moving forward.
- **Housing:** The lack of housing options has been a hurdle for many years. Providing the right amount of smaller, transitional type housing will continue to be a challenge. It will need to be balanced with the needs to support an adequate labor force along with an aging demographic.
- **Rural Community:** While this can be seen as both a strength and a weakness, living in a rural community presents unique challenges. In particular, things are further away and typically require vehicular travel. However, there seems to be a great interest in bicycling and trails. Providing safe and adequate facilities on roads and intersections is desired and will be important considerations moving forward.

7. Looking Forward

VISION STATEMENT

We strive to protect the culture, history, natural resources, the beauty and the quiet way of life in the Townships, while allowing responsible development that respects these qualities we love, while also supporting a healthy, sustainable and economically viable community. *-West Benzie Joint Planning Commission*

The primary function of this Master Plan is to guide future development and growth within the Townships. The Master Plan identifies a vision for the future and a series of goals and objectives to guide decision making. The goals and objectives in this chapter provide guidance for the future planning, and are based on the input gathered during the public planning process, stakeholder input, public survey feedback, discussions with the Planning Commission, and review of previous community planning efforts.

Goals provide statements that describe the desired future for the Townships and provide general direction for local decision makers. Objectives are more detailed descriptions of actions needed to achieve the goals. The following pages identify the goals and accompanying objectives of the West Benzie Joint Master Plan.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE

A community's "character" is an intangible item which identifies the attributes that make a community unique. While a community's character continually changes over time, attempting to preserve it can be a very important part of maintaining a community's cultural heritage and traditions. A community's "quality of life" are those factors, and when taken in totality, help define the viability of a community as a place to live, work, and play.

Oftentimes during master planning efforts the word 'character' tends to be thrown around frequently. People may think it as an overused or meaningless term. However when in the throes of a master planning effort - it is an important tool or piece of the puzzle that provides insight into how residents view themselves and helps to prioritize the goals and objectives.



7. Looking Forward

Goals & Objectives

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE GOALS

- 1. GOAL 1: The West Benzie Joint Planning Commission (WBJPC) will be a leader in working with other units of government, state agencies, schools, and special authorities to manage growth and service to the residents and businesses of the community in the most efficient and transparent manner possible.**

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1 Coordinate planning efforts with surrounding municipalities to create and promote well-planned and cooperative communities.
- 1.2 Cooperate with other area communities in the evaluation and implementation of any feasible joint approach to service delivery.
- 1.3 Work with the County Board of Commissioners to determine efficient methods to deliver county services within the Townships.
- 1.4 Consider partnerships with the Villages (Beulah and Benzonia) where possible to increase economic vitality and opportunities for residents and businesses.

- 2. GOAL 2: WBJPC and the Townships will preserve valuable natural resources, and the shorelines along the lakes and waterways. These natural assets provide a cultural identity and add economic value to the community.**

Crystal Lake near Railroad Point



OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1 The sensitive natural resources that distinguish the Benzonia and Platte Township landscape will be identified and protected, which include but are not limited to: wetlands, high risk erosion, steep slopes, floodplains, key watersheds and all water resources.
- 2.2 Develop and implement shoreline protection standards such as riparian buffers, erosion protection with native vegetation plantings, and low-impact development. Begin by adopting the updated Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay Ordinance and consider other similar protective ordinances in the future.
- 2.3 Limit the amount of impermeable

surface with all new development to minimize surface runoff and maintain infiltration.

2.4 The Township will take thoughtful measures to ensure residents will have long-term sustainable water sources, and consider updates to the zoning ordinance to include wellhead protection areas.

2.5 Develop best management practices to prevent the introduction, and spread, of invasive species and diseases transmitted by flora and fauna.

2.6 Encourage forest stewardship practices through public education. Consider additional tree protection measures such as limited removal policies and tree replacement programs.

2.7 Work with county and/or state departments to effectively administer and enforce regulations such as soil erosion and sedimentation control and adopt needed ordinances such as storm water controls in order to best protect sensitive environmental resources.

GOAL 3: The preservation and enhancement of natural features of the community will be a central consideration in all municipal decisions for WBJPC and the Townships. Buildings and infrastructure will be planned, constructed and maintained to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment while serving the needs of the population and allowing residents and visitors appropriate access to enjoy natural features.

3.

OBJECTIVES:

3.1 Utilize environmentally friendly design and construction standards, including Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and stormwater best management practices when making improvements to Township parks and facilities, and during the private sector development process.

3.2 Strive to protect and restore water quality, stream channels, and riparian corridors in public parks by implementing erosion control measures, soft shoreline stabilization techniques, and “no mow” areas.

3.3 Encourage the proper maintenance and preservation of open space and wooded areas.

3.4 Preserve the critical view-sheds of the Townships by minimizing encroachment into riparian areas, floodplains, and steep slope areas within the Townships. These have been identified in previous planning efforts.

3.5 Recognizing the importance and value of tree coverage the Townships will evaluate the need and feasibility of implementing a tree planting policy in addition to tree protection and replacement ordinances.

3.6 Incorporate the use of renewable energy whenever feasible.

GOAL 4: WBJPC and the Townships will strive for transparency and efficiency within leadership and improved communication with residents to support an inviting and safe lifestyle for all residents.

4.

OBJECTIVES:

4.1 Continue to prioritize leadership by operating in an open and financially stable manner, focusing on maintaining high levels of public involvement and communication with residents, reviewing and changing as needed to achieve measurable results.

7. Looking Forward

4.2 Review the zoning ordinance (at least annually) and make updates when required and continue to require proper site plan review and approval for all uses.

4.3 Adequately review and support appropriate amendments of the Township Zoning Ordinance to ensure conformity and ultimate alignment with the goals and strategies of the Master Plan.

4.4 Ensure that all government units, including the Township Board of Trustees, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Township staff are aware of the goals and objectives of the Townships and are working toward the same goals.

4.5 Improve upon the enforcement procedures of existing and new ordinances to ensure compliance with the zoning ordinance and harmony within the Townships.

5. GOAL 5: WBJPC and the Townships will adopt appropriate development requirements to ensure that the qualities that make Benzonia and Platte Townships a desirable place to live, including its open spaces, natural beauty, clean air and water, stable property values, and a sense of community, are maintained.

Example Of Conservation Development¹



OBJECTIVES:

5.1 Support a Township land use policy and ordinances that results in a well-balanced, but diverse pattern of land uses that incorporates sustainable growth principles to achieve the targeted growth that is aligned with the future land use plan.

5.2 Preserve the desired rural and small town character of the Township by implementing development regulations to protect the natural resources, thriving agricultural operations, and successful agri-businesses, which include roadside stands and farmers markets.

5.3 Refine and enhance (or create) the Planned Unit Development (PUD) and other residential development ordinance measures to ensure that larger residential developments are designed to meet the desires of preservation and resource protection noted by community feedback in this Master Plan,

¹Growing Greener, Conservation by Design. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and Natural Lands Trust, 2009

Goal 6: The Township's public facilities, including its roads, utilities, parks, and public buildings will be carefully planned, constructed and maintained to efficiently serve the needs of current and future generations.

6.

OBJECTIVES:

- 6.1 Establish a policy to ensure public participation and feedback in the development of all public projects.
- 6.2 Maintain effective communication with the public through news media, social media or other proactive methods to ensure public awareness and engagement of any public facility development project.
- 6.3 Encourage the continued development of public and alternative transportation options for the benefit of township residents.
- 6.4 Continue to support the County Government and other adjacent jurisdictions; particularly in the development of high speed Internet connectivity for the entire county, and the development of sewer infrastructure.

GOAL 7: Land use and development within the Township's most environmentally fragile areas such as its lakes and streams and wetlands, and near other natural resources, will take into account the need to maintain water quality and views to these features, as well as ensuring adequate setbacks and preserving sensitive features.

7.

OBJECTIVES:

- 7.1 Utilize buffers, recreation areas and other preservation areas to maintain forest cover and minimize disturbance of sensitive ecological areas.
- 7.2. Work cooperatively with adjacent communities, agencies, and organizations to develop studies and institute programs that address watershed, woodlands, wildlife, and ecosystem management.
- 7.3 Support studies that identify techniques to protect critical resources, wildlife habitat, water resources, ecological corridors, scenic areas and vistas, and other important ecological resources.
- 7.4 Encourage the adoption of zoning ordinance language to protect greenbelts, farmlands, forestlands, groundwater, and surface water.
- 7.5 Encourage the county and townships to effectively administer and enforce regulations, such as soil erosion and sedimentation control, and to adopt needed ordinances, such as stormwater control.
- 7.6 Support natural resource education and technical programs to assist landowners, businesses, and communities.
- 7.7 Determine effective methods to work with other local governments for natural resource protection.

GOAL 8: The Township will recognize the need for areas of rural living where natural areas can be protected and enjoyed, privacy maintained, and larger lots preserved.

8.

OBJECTIVES:

- 8.1 Preserve the integrity of existing neighborhoods by protecting them from the intrusion of incompatible uses.

7. Looking Forward

8.2 Investigate the implementation of conservation-based open space or cluster development options as a means to protect community character.

8.3 Encourage the preservation of open spaces and agricultural lands at strategic locations throughout the Townships.

8.4 Maintain the Rural Preservation zoning in the Townships and review the ordinance as needed to assure that adjacent development remains compatible.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

9.

GOAL 9: Support multiple housing options and mixed-use developments for all segments of the population that place users near daily services in areas of denser development patterns (US-31).

OBJECTIVES:

9.1 Support the development of diverse housing types to expand choices available to current, and new Township residents.

9.2 Examine the need, and viability, of increasing densities in certain segments of the Townships. Consider alternative minimum lot and building dimensional standards to allow for alternative developments in areas of denser development.

9.3 Support and encourage senior housing and assisted living facilities (i.e., aging in place) and other transitional type housing. Encourage alternative and/or reasonable minimum square footage options to promote affordability.

9.4 Consider incentives (tax or other) to encourage residential housing with either new development projects, redevelopment or rehabilitation of derelict properties.

10.

GOAL 10: Recognize multiple types of home ownership and how they affect the community - including those that use their property for primary residences, secondary residences, or provide either long or short term rental opportunities, in order to best support local and year-round residents.

OBJECTIVES

10.1 Examine the need for Short Term Rental (STR) regulations to help support long-term rental options and maintain housing stock for local residents.

10.2 Recognize the benefits of STRs, as they provide an important source of income for local property owners - consider requiring local or in-state residency as a requirement for the operation of STRs.

10.3 Consider incentives for local property owners that provide long term rental options for residents, as local residents support year round community amenities (school, emergency services and year-round small businesses).

GOAL 11: Higher density residential land uses will be directed to areas where adequate utility services are available, roads are sufficient to accommodate greater volumes of traffic, and where other community services are conveniently located. 11.

OBJECTIVES

11.1 Encourage commercial and industrial development where utilities already exist or where utilities could be easily extended.

11.2 Explore reuse options or redevelopment incentives for vacant and blighted properties throughout the Townships.

11.3 Review zoning regulations so small and home-based businesses are encouraged within the Township.

GOAL 12: Support existing residential housing with adequate public services, financial assistance options and zoning regulations in order to maintain and/or increase property values. 12.

OBJECTIVES:

12.1 Pursue and promote grant and financial assistance to improve existing houses.

12.2 Encourage owners and/or occupants to maintain dwellings and yards properly so as to avoid blighted or unsafe conditions.

12.3 Consider design review standards by ordinance for residential subdivisions, multiple-family developments or for other affordable type modular homes to maintain quality and integrity of community character.

RP-10 Zoning District in Platte Township



7. Looking Forward

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

13. *GOAL 13: The Township will encourage the preservation of active farmland as a valuable resource for the community by supporting the desires of individual property owners who wish to keep their land in active agricultural production.*

OBJECTIVES:

13.1 Promote agricultural growth and recognize the importance of all agricultural farms in the Townships, and discourage residential and farming land use conflicts.

13.2 Encourage and support the preservation of farmland and woodlands, where feasible. Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses. Recognize farmland as contributing to the scenic and rural character of the overall County.

13.3 Consider the use of “Purchase of Development Rights”, “Transfer of Development Rights”, Clustering, and Conservation Easements to help farmers retain their agricultural acreage.

Roadside Farm Stand in Platte Township



13.4 Recognize farmland as part of the County’s active economic base and potential source of jobs for county residents.

13.5 Support the maximum potential for use of agricultural lands, while encouraging environmentally sensitive farming practices to protect water quality without unnecessarily limiting the economic rights of agricultural landowners.

13.6 Encourage agricultural landowners to work cooperatively with supportive public agencies, such as MSU Extension, the Conservation District, USDA, and National Resource Conservation District.

13.7 Encourage farmers to produce, process, and market wholesale and retail products grown on their property and continue to support roadside stands and small markets on their farm lands.

13.8 Support programs that educate residents and local officials on Michigan’s Right to Farm Act and encourage the use of Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs), update ordinances as needed to support.

GOAL 14: Continue to recognize that commercial development in Platte and Benzonia Townships are different. Benzonia Township will continue to be a vital economic center that includes a balance of small local retailers, professional and personal service, light industrial uses, the arts, hospitality, retail, commercial, and institutional employment.

14.

OBJECTIVES:

- 14.1 Research the viability of creating future development plan (corridor management or other incentive based plans) for all land uses that may incorporate future utilities, mixed uses, trail and pedestrian connections to best support economic development.
- 14.2 Identify and support areas that are suitable for commercial or light industrial development but will not adversely impact adjacent land uses.
- 14.3 Support the expansion, and improved access, to high-speed and reliable wireless broadband service.
- 14.4 Continue to support the development of a sewer system, in particular along US-31 and the lake shores.
- 14.5 Research the potential of alternative energy systems, in various scales, such as solar farms and consider revisions to the zoning ordinance to support the development of local alternative energy sources.

GOAL 15: Preserve the community's historic and rural character while supporting future development that promotes an establishment of place and a quiet rural community.

15.

OBJECTIVES:

- 15.1 Require high-quality design standards that contribute to the positive image of the Townships, this includes requiring building material and architectural standards for new developments, parking, landscaping and screening standards.
- 15.2 Enhance understanding of the Township's history and historic character. Support projects which incorporate local history, historical markers, and public installations about the Township's history.
- 15.3 Encourage adaptive re-use of buildings by promoting rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures and considering development incentives for these types of projects.
- 15.4 Avoid locating commercial uses at every intersection of major roads. Commercial development should not be located in an area which could negatively impact residential developments or the areas rural character.
- 15.5 Avoid unchecked "strip commercial" development, because it may result in increased traffic conflicts/accidents, excessive hard surface parking areas and signs, and impair land values for existing and future residential areas.
- 15.6 Consider the development and regulation of streetscape improvements that improve safety, promote walkability, connectively and economic development.
- 15.7 Require that Township-owned facilities exemplify the design standards that are required of the private sector and are well-maintained.

7. Looking Forward

PARKS AND RECREATION GOALS

16. **GOAL 16: Provide quality of life benefits for Benzonia and Platte Townships that promote active living, healthy lifestyles, and accessibility to recreation.**

OBJECTIVES:

16.1 Maintain this Parks and Recreation Plan for the Townships and conduct 5-year reviews of the plan to ensure that the existing and future recreation needs of the community are met.

16.2 Provide opportunities for a variety of recreation activities, both active and passive, throughout the Township and ensure the preservation of existing public and private parks.

16.3 Coordinate with the school district or other community programs to upgrade/improve the recreational potential, environmental qualities and connections to the existing and future school sites or other community centers.

16.4 Continue to seek out partnership opportunities for park and recreation facilities with adjacent jurisdictions.

17. **GOAL 17: Provide well maintained park and public facilities for Township residents and visitors.**

OBJECTIVES:

17.1 Continuously maintain current park facilities and other township owned public facilities such as cemeteries and buildings to ensure they are safe for public use.

17.2 Review park and other public facilities and buildings and associated amenities annually and maintain a list of items that need to be repaired or replaced in order to be accommodated in the annual budget.

17.3 Regularly review and evaluate maintenance requirements and assess the future maintenance and safety needs of the community,

17.4 Coordinate with park user groups to understand the needs for the most desired amenities or support facilities at each park facility for the desired programming.

17.5 Coordinate with other adjacent municipalities to provide the community with diverse programming and event opportunities that are efficient and cost effective.

18. **GOAL 18: Residents and visitors in Benzonia and Platte Townships will have safe and convenient access to multi-modal trails, bicycle and/or walking paths and where possible the trails will provide key connections to recreation areas, neighborhoods and commercial areas.**

OBJECTIVES:

18.1 Expand and improve the Townships' trail /pathway system to promote community health and to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and mobility.

18.2 Consider partnership opportunities for trail planning efforts (as trail systems are often multi-jurisdictional). A multi-modal trail (bicycle and pedestrian) plan may be beneficial in the future.

18.3 Work with the County Road Commission to create a plan or policies to promote best practices for trail/road intersections, road signs for pedestrian and bicyclists, bicycle lanes or pathways in the right-of-ways.

18.4 Coordinate current and future development projects with the Benzie County Road Commission (BCRC) and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to provide for comprehensive and safe multi-modal facilities.

GOAL 19: Plan current and future parks, recreation services and cemetery services in a manner that is responsive to the needs of the community.

19.

OBJECTIVES:

19.1 Public input through citizen involvement shall be provided in all phases of park, recreation and cemetery services planning.

19.2 Encourage public feedback from a wider array of Township residents, including youth, young families, seniors and seasonal residents. Consider adding a comment section on the website to make it easy for residents to voice parks and recreation thoughts and ideas.

19.3 Actively seek grants and outside funding sources such as Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for community parks, land acquisition and recreational development.

19.4 Actively seek out alternative funding sources or other partnership opportunities for the maintenance of parks, cemetery, grounds, ROWs and public facilities.

19.5 Coordinate park planning, cemetery services and recreation or cultural programming with other local municipalities (Village or Township) and other local community outreach programs.

19.6 Encourage and support volunteer and other coordination efforts to maintain and enhance recreational and cultural programs, sites and facilities.

School Field Trip to the Historic Drake School



Photo Source: Benzie County Central Schools Facebook Page

8. Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

Future Land Use

The Michigan Planning Enabling act of 2008 requires the inclusion of a future land use map and zoning plan in the master plan. The future land use map and districts identify a generalized, preferred organization of future land uses in the Townships. This will act as an overall framework to guide land use and policy decisions over the next 10-15 years. The Zoning Plan is based upon the Master Plan and is intended to guide in the development of the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the future development of Benzonia and Platte Townships.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map (FIGURE 8.1 and 8.2) presents the desired future land use in each jurisdiction to accommodate growth, while protecting the resources and community characteristics that were identified in the inventory and public process of this master plan. Since future land use is a vision about how each Township would like to develop, it should be noted the desired future land use plan may be adjusted in the future based on changing conditions within the community.

The future land use map is intended to provide a framework for future site-specific land use or zoning decisions that are brought before the Planning Commission and/or to make changes to the Zoning Ordinance. For example, a parcel currently zoned residential may be shown as mixed use district on the Future Land Use Map; the parcel will remain zoned residential until the property owner requests the zoning change and the Township adopts the zoning request.

It should be noted that some future land use classifications may be the same as the existing zoning for that area, while in some cases the recommended future land use will be different from the existing zoning or use. This means that in some cases, to use a property for a use as identified in the Future Land Use Map, re-zonings or zoning text amendments may be necessary. **It is important to understand that the Future Land Use Map does not change the existing zoning in an area without going through further steps.** A property owner must continue to use the property as it is currently zoned. Changes to zoning are subject to an application and review process that provides for legal review, Planning Commission, action by the Township Board, and numerous opportunities for public comment.

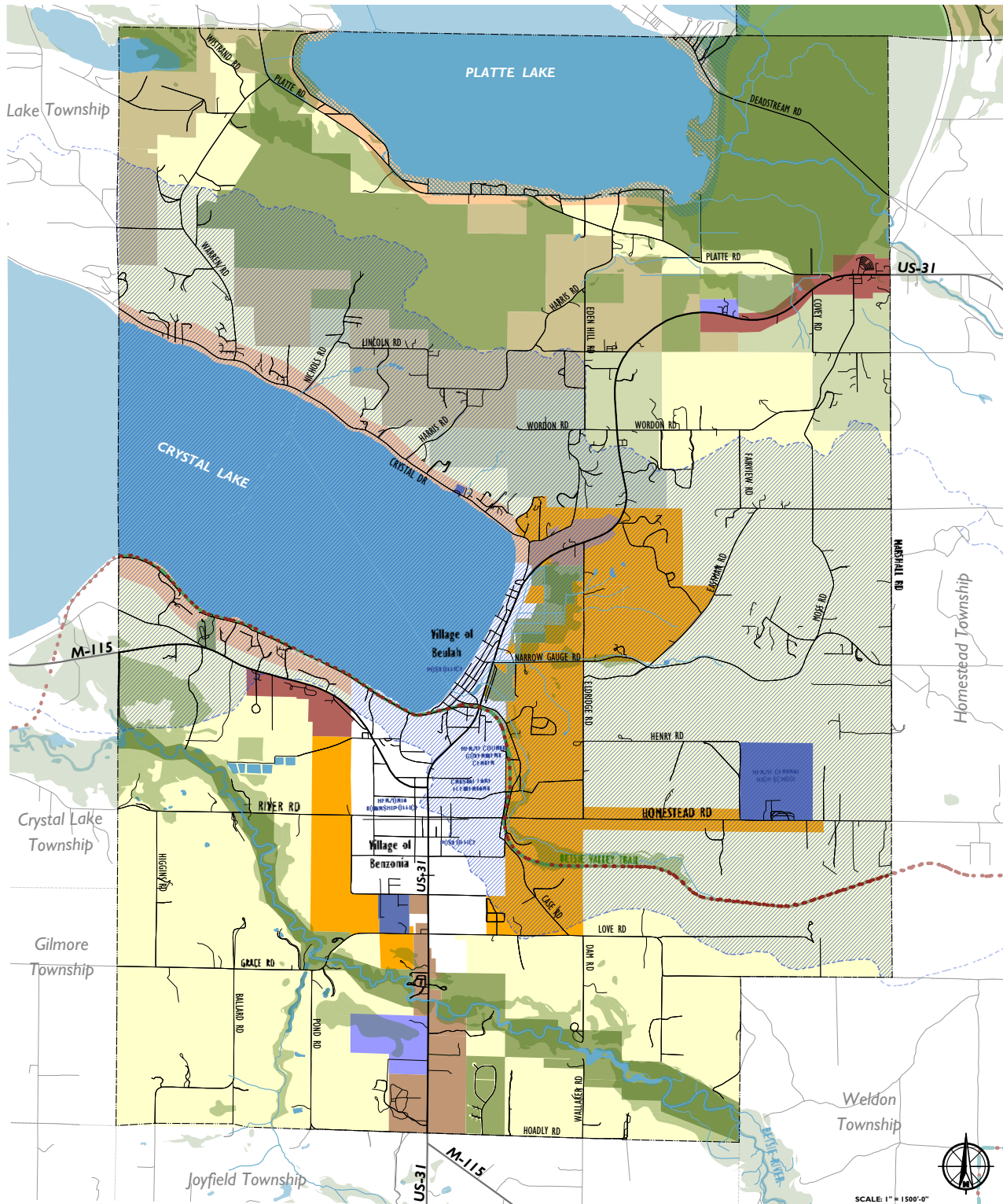
When creating the future land use map the existing data gathered in the inventory and public feedback phase was carefully reviewed and analyzed. Based on the community and quality of life, residential, non residential and park and recreation goals for the Townships - ten general categories of land use have been identified to serve existing and future development needs. These categories are listed below:

1. Agriculture/Preservation (A/P) - These are areas where the lot sizes would be the largest, and the intent is to preserve the agricultural and rural character.

Objectives: These use areas would consist of lot sizes with a minimum of 20 acres or larger, and primarily be located in the areas of existing RP-20 and RP-10 zoning. These areas are typically to permit one-single family house. Additional structures could be permitted depending on the lot size. Additional appropriate uses would be agriculture, recreation and forestry uses along with planned residential developments (such as conservation developments).

Land uses that are allowed in the Agricultural zoning district should correspond to the Agricultural Preservation land use designation and require a 20 acre minimum lot size. This will ensure that agricultural and rural lands are not subdivided into small parcels, which affect their ability to maintain adequate, contiguous areas for farm land and the preservation of rural character.

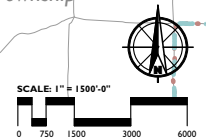
2. Rural Residential (RR) - This category is to maintain and build upon the rural character, while allowing a slightly denser development pattern. This “rural development” pattern is typically integrated, with or adjacent to, agricultural



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Township Boundary | Agricultural/ Preservation | Mixed-Use | Betsie Valley Trail |
| Parcel Boundary | Rural Residential | Commercial | Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay |
| State Owned Roadway | Low Density Residential | Industrial | Platte Lakes Management Overlay |
| Other Local Roads | Lakefront Residential | Recreation and Conservation | Betsie Valley Trail Overlay |
| Major River/stream | Medium Density Residential | Public/Semi Public | |
| MDNR Wetlands | | | |

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files



**FUTURE LAND USE
BENZONIA TOWNSHIP**

Figure 8.1 Future Land Use Plan Benzonia Township

8. Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

activities and generally there is a significant separation distance between homes. These areas would typically serve as a buffer between agricultural/preservation lands and areas of even denser residential development.

Objectives: These use areas would consist of lot sizes with a minimum of 5 acres or larger, and primarily be located in Platte Township. These areas are typically to permit one-single family house per parcel. Agricultural uses should also be permitted. Other large scale developments (including planned residential developments, mobile homes, or other subdivisions) shall not be created in this district unless it is developed as a Planned Unit Development. This form of regulation will enable the Township to control and moderate the size, scope and impact of future projects.

3. Low Density Residential (LDR) - This category is to maintain and build upon the rural character, while allowing a slightly denser development pattern as they are typically located near areas of adequate public infrastructure.

Objectives: These use areas would consist of lot sizes with a minimum of 2.5 acres or larger, and primarily be located in Benzonía Township. These areas are typically to permit one-single family houses per parcel. Agricultural uses should also be permitted. However, additional residential growth in the Township, even in areas master planned for such uses, must be carefully evaluated and should be permitted only where there is a demonstrated need.

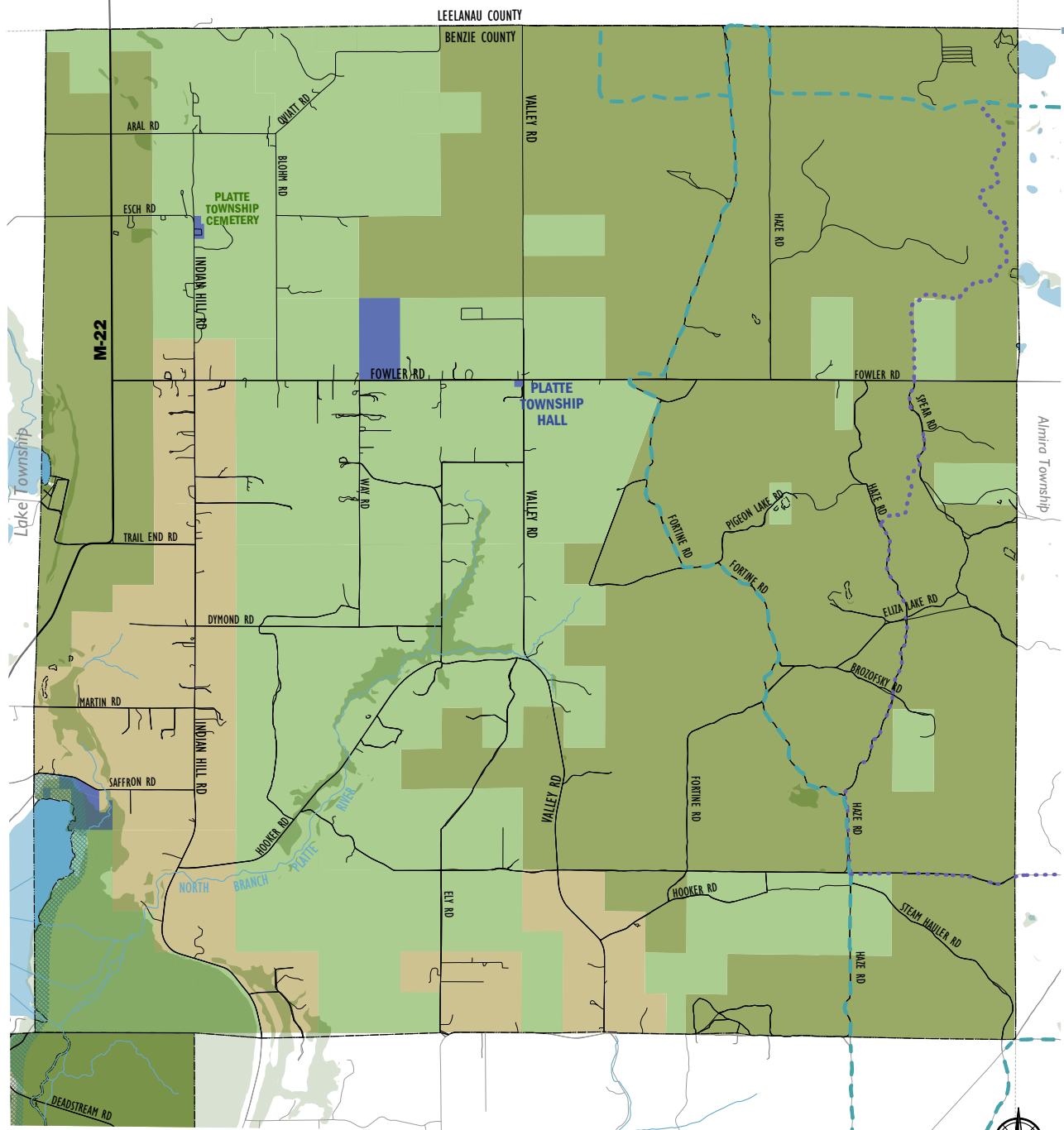
Example of Smaller Footprint Housing Types



To promote high quality development, Planned Unit Development (PUD) or similar requirements should apply to most future development in Low Density Residential areas that exceed single or two-family dwellings. While these development options may allow increased residential densities, they also promote innovative design techniques (e.g. open space preservation, public amenities, and mixed housing and land use types) which are supported by this Master Plan.

4. Lake front Residential (LR) - Much of this designated area is already built up with existing residential development on shorelines and waterways. This designation is intended to identify these areas that need special residential development standards to protect the water resources from the specific development problems found in waterfront areas.

Objectives: These use areas would consist of lot sizes with a minimum of 12,000 SF or larger, and primarily be located on Platte or Crystal Lakes. These areas are typically to permit one-single family house per parcel with limited accessory



LEGEND			
	Township Boundary		Agricultural/Preservation
	Parcel Boundary		Rural Residential
	State Owned Roadway		Recreation and Conservation
	Other Local Roads		Public/Semi Public
	Major River/stream		MDNR Wetlands
	Platte Lakes Management Overlay		Snowmobile Trails (MDNR)
			Shore-to-Shore Trail (non-Motorized)

SCALE 1" = 1500'-0"

mapping based on: <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/>, and U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, 20200708, USGS Topo Map Vector Data (Vector) for 7.5 x 7.5 minute Shapefile: U.S. Geological Survey, and Benzie County Department of Equalization Shape Files

FUTURE LAND USE PLATTE TOWNSHIP

Figure 8.2 Future Land Use Plan Platte Township

8. Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

uses due to the limited space due to environmental restrictions that are typically present in this designation.

5. Medium Density Residential (MDR) - This designation is to allow for a denser development pattern to serve as housing to support the commercial and economic center of Benzonia Township.

Objectives: These use areas would consist of lot sizes with a minimum of 15,000 SF or larger, and be allowed to support a variety of housing types that would support the residential goals identified in this report. These areas would support single family homes along with transitional housing (senior and workforce), affordable housing and multi family developments. Again, to promote high quality development, Planned Unit Development (PUD) or similar requirements should apply to most future development in Medium Density Residential areas that exceed single or two-family dwellings. Medium Density Residential PUD land uses should include a variety of housing types that act as a transition between a traditional single-family neighborhood to higher densities and more intense land uses of the commercial corridors or mixed use areas.

Commercial with Bike/Ped Facilities



Photo Source: Wyoming Pathways, <https://ruraldesignguide.com/>

6. Mixed Use (MU) - This land use category is shown along the current commercial corridors and intends to support a vibrant mixed use commercial district with residential, cultural, and recreational elements that can support both small retailers, office and larger commercial business. Many of these areas already include a mix of commercial and residential uses and are supported by current infrastructure that allows higher traffic volumes. While the current commercial zoning classification has some elements that support this land use, a new zoning classification to specifically allow mixed uses - one that allows these many different uses by right while establishing strict dimensional requirements to encourage density, walk-ability, and neighborhood appeal and may make it easier and more appealing for future development.

Objectives: Allow a variety of uses in a compact or higher density setting to promote walk-ability. Parking standards should be flexible to allow shared parking and reduce curb cuts. Development standards should be created to encourage quality development with appropriate materials, landscape treatment, lighting, and signage. A variety of higher density use types is encouraged for these areas. They should include Multi-family, retail, live/work, and office buildings. Single-type commercial uses would also be appropriate if sited in a way that promotes a walkable environment, such as facing the street, parking in the rear or sides and/or shared parking with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

7. Commercial (C) - This category is intended to be used much like the commercial zoning is used today to allow opportunity for commercial business, located primarily along the US-31 and M-115 Corridors.

Objectives: The intent here is to allow areas for retail, office or other larger type commercial businesses that may require more space and more room for things like parking. Unlike the mixed use areas, pedestrian connectivity should be encouraged between parcels but may be limited along the highways due to safety concerns. The development would tend to be more auto-oriented due to the location and that people would likely be driving to these locations.

8. Industrial (I) - This category is primarily for light industrial uses that would have limited impacts on the adjacent zoning districts.

Objectives: Currently, there are not many industrial uses in the Townships, Industrial uses are typically a vital part of a region's economy. However, due to the intensive nature of industrial activities, the area planned for Industrial is somewhat limited. Some light industrial uses are appropriate and should be carefully considered as they help support the mixed use and residential districts.

9. Recreation and Conservation (R/C) - These are areas that are currently being used for recreation uses, or government controlled lands.

Objectives: Residential development may be limited in these areas, due to a lack of services and also because of the shortage of land available as most is owned by the National Park Service or the MDNR. Should the State or Federal owned land become available, areas may be suitable for RP zoning.

10. Public/Semi-Public (P) - This designation accommodates schools, government facilities, public utilities, parks, natural or conservancy areas, and public recreational uses. It also recognizes churches, private recreational uses, and other community-oriented activities located on privately-owned land. These uses positively contribute to the quality of life for Townships.

OVERLAY ZONES

An overlay zone is a zoning district which is applied over one or more previously established zoning districts, establishing additional standards and criteria for covered properties in addition to those of the underlying zoning district. Communities often use overlay zones to protect special features such as historic buildings, wetlands and steep slopes. Overlay zones can also be used to promote specific development projects, such as mixed-used developments and developments along transit corridors.

The future land use map indicates the following overlay zones:

Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay - This overlay zone provides additional standards for development and is intended to provide additional protections to the water quality of Crystal Lake. An updated version has been created and adopted by the adjacent Crystal Lake Township and is currently under review of the WBJPC for adoption.

Platte Lakes Area Management Plan - This overlay zone provides additional standards for development and is intended to provide additional protections to the water quality of the Platte Lake.

Betsie Valley Trail Overlay - This overlay zone is located along the entire trail corridor and intended to protect the health safety and welfare of land owners and trail users and help prevent development conflicts in coordination with trail use.

OTHER POTENTIAL FUTURE OVERLAYS

Steep Slope - A common approach to regulate steep slopes through a zoning overlay district. Since steep slopes are often located throughout a municipality, the overlay approach enables their uniform regulation regardless of the municipality's base zoning-district provisions. This overlay zone would provide additional protections for properties containing slopes in excess of 15%. It is recommended that the existing zoning ordinance be amended or revised entirely to add additional steep slope protections. These protections will need to be carefully considered but may include: tree removal restrictions, additional soil and erosion controls, ridge protections, additional limits on septic systems, or require larger lot sizes.

8. Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

Corridor Overlay - For US-31 and M-115. This overlay zone could be developed along the highways to establish additional guidelines for development for areas that have the most intense and complex uses and development patterns. These should be coordinated with adjacent communities to present a cohesive feel and development pattern between jurisdictions.

The Zoning Plan

A “zoning plan” is required by the Michigan Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts. Section 33(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that the plan prepared under this act serve as the Basis for the zoning plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, as amended, requires a zoning plan be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. It must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to Zoning in the municipality and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted (as described in section 201 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act). The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises in the Village. These matters are regulated by the specific terms in the

Benzonia Township – Homestead Dam on the Betsie River



zoning ordinance.

The zoning plan is a key implementation tool to achieve the vision of the master plan. In order to realize that Vision, the Townships must ensure that ordinances and regulations permit the type and style of development recommended by the master plan.

In addition, to link the zoning ordinance to the Plan, the zoning districts will need to connect to the future land use districts described previously and displayed on the Future Land Use Map. The chart below shows how the existing zoning districts may correspond with the future land use districts and what new zoning districts may need to be created.

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION	CORRESPONDING ZONING DISTRICT
Agricultural/Preservation	RP-20
Rural Residential	RP-10 and RP-5
Low Density Residential	R-5, RP-5, RP-2.5
Lake Front Residential	R-1, R-2
Medium Density Residential	R-2, R-3, R-4
Mixed Use	Requires New Category. This district is intended to allow a wide range of retail/commercial, institutional, and residential uses and would include current R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, CG, CR, RP-2.5 and RP-5
Commercial	CG, CR
Industrial	LI
Recreation and Conservation	These uses would be allowed in all zoning districts.
Public/Semi-Public	These uses would be allowed in all zoning districts.
Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay District	For any district, parcels that are located in the Crystal Lake Watershed Boundary
Platte Lake Area Management Plan Overlay District	For any district, parcels that are immediately surrounding Platte Lakes
Betsie Valley Trail Overlay	For parcels adjacent or contiguous for areas along the entire length of the Betsie Valley Trail Corridor
Steep Slope Overlay Zone	Requires new Category. For any district, with areas with slopes 15% (approx.) or greater.
Corridor Overlay Zone	Requires new Category. For any parcel that fronts a major highway (US-31 or M-115)

9. Moving Forward

Plan Implementation

The West Benzie Joint Master Plan has been developed to provide a vision for the future of both Benzonia and Platte Townships. The plan should be used regularly as an important tool for the Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and the Township Board. Some of the key areas in which it should be used include:

- It will serve as a tool for decision making on future development proposals.
- Act as a guide for future public investment and service decisions.
- Guide township budget decisions, such as a capitol improvement plan (CIP) for public expenditures such as grant applications, road maintenance and township development projects.
- Guide and influence community group activities and cooperation among jurisdictions.
- Inform tax incentive decisions and administration of utilities and township services.

Planning is intended to guide the forces of change in ways that encourage desirable outcomes while striking an appropriate balance with development and preservation. Over time, conditions inevitably change and a reevaluation of goals and updated action items are needed. The Master Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis and the plan amended as necessary to help maintain it as a reliable planning tool.

BUDGET GUIDANCE - THE CAPITOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Many communities prioritize and budget for capital improvement projects (such as infrastructure improvements and, park improvements). Capital Improvements Plans (CIP) typically look five years into the future to establish a schedule for all anticipated capital improvement projects in the community. A CIP includes cost estimates and sources for financing for each project. It can therefore serve as both a budgetary and policy document to aid in the implementation of a community's Master Plan. Additional information can be found in the Tools and Funding Strategies section in this Chapter.

RECREATION PLAN

The Township must have a current MDNR approved Community Recreation Plan (CRP) to be eligible for recreation grant funding. MDNR approved recreation plans cover a five year planning period. It is the intent for this master plan to include the 5-year recreation plan, with the intent to be submitted in the year 2023. Once approved in 2023, it would require the recreation components of this plan to be updated and resubmitted again in 2028. Grant funds may be pursued for recreation projects identified in the Master Plan and Community Recreation Plan. Projects may include (but are not limited to) improvements to the baseball, softball and soccer fields, expansion of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, expansion of bike and hiking trails and improving public access to the lakes and streams. All recreation related development projects should be reviewed to see if it makes sense to pursue grant funding from the MDNR.

The following illustrates how the master plan should be used over time. It should be reviewed annually. State law requires that the Master Plan must be reviewed at least every five years to establish if updating is necessary. The plan may need more significant changes after 5 years. This will allow the Planning Commission to work on a proactive basis in order to better accomplish the goals identified in the master plan.

ANNUAL REVIEW ITEMS

1. **The West Benzie Joint Planning Commission will review the goals and objectives of the master plan and identify objectives to be completed that year.**
2. **The review should be shared with the Benzonia and Platte Township Board.**
3. **These identified priority items should then be the focus of the Planning Commission's activity throughout that particular year.**

5 YEAR MINIMUM REVIEW ITEMS

While the Planning Act does not provide specific guidance for the five-year plan review, the Planning Commission will utilize the following methods to keep the plan up to date. At minimum, these items should be reviewed and included in a plan amendment every 5-years:

1. Delete goals and recommendations that have been accomplished and add new recommendations as needs and desires arise.
2. Modify the Future Land Use Map to reflect any zoning decisions that have changed the direction of development in the township.
3. Update demographic information when Census data is available. Including Population projections and housing need.
4. Redevelopment opportunities of vacant, abandoned, or underused land.
5. Amount and capacity of undeveloped commercial and industrial land.
6. Current and planned sewer capacity and water availability and the condition of each.
7. Current Road and sidewalk system conditions.
8. Additional Public input.
9. Changing Environmental constraints and consideration of general impacts to desired protections of natural resources.

5-10 YEAR REVIEW ITEMS

As conditions change in the future some additional items may need to be reviewed in more detail and the master plan amended as required. These may include:

1. Amending zoning regulations to allow denser development such as lessening building setbacks or increasing heights.
2. Assessing innovative stormwater management strategies to keep up with development trends in the Townships (more development may require additional or new and improved strategies).
3. Reviewing incentives to encourage the redevelopment of vacant lands or underutilized development sites.
4. Implementing other strategies to maximize use of land to accommodate job growth and to provide adequate housing for residents while providing preservation of natural resources that are so desired.

9. Moving Forward

Recommended Changes to the Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance must be based on a master plan, which is the guide for all zoning decisions. The main purpose of zoning is to improve the health, safety, and welfare of the population and to direct land use towards implementation of the Master Plan. Through land use planning and land use controls, including zoning, the Townships intend to allow for reasonable growth to be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts, while allowing for the continuation of existing industrial, commercial, residential and recreational uses.

After review of the public feedback, discussions with the zoning administrator and feedback from stakeholders and the planning commission the following are potential revisions to the current zoning ordinance.

A REVISED ZONING ORDINANCE SHALL:

1. Continue to ensure that it meets new and current enabling legislation.
2. Create new Zoning Districts descriptions as needed and dimensional standards with charts/tables and representative images to best illustrate development goals.
3. Incorporate additional info-graphics or charts to best explain the permitting process and procedure to the public and developers. Coordinate this with educational outreach efforts to best inform the public on major development projects.
4. Incorporate updated overlays into zoning to ensure desired environmental protections, such as the revised Crystal Lake Watershed Overlay and Platte Lakes Management Area Overlay if updated.
5. Review the existing permitting procedure and consider additional checks and balances between the Townships and County and State permitting agencies to avoid environmental and erosion control during development of any facilities.
6. Address accessory structure regulations, specifically reviewing Section 3.14, Temporary Housing, to provide updated standards that would prohibit living in unsuitable structures and allow for easier enforcement.
7. Include housing standards that allow alternative and other non-traditional housing types, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), per this Master Plan.
8. Include standards that promotes overall walk-ability, trail connections, general accessibility and a pedestrian-friendly environment. Also include standards for bicycle facilities, that promote safer facilities and connections to key areas based on use.
9. Ensure new developments are compatible with the character in the area of the Township where they are located and also with the Vision of this Master Plan.
10. Allow for mixed land uses by right (in buildings and in use) per this Master Plan. Mixed-use development must address at minimum: build-to lines, open store fronts, outdoor dining, minimum ground floor transparency and may also include streetscape components where appropriate.
11. Assure that any amendments are consolidated and listed within the overall document.
12. Establish environmental protection including but not limited to stormwater protections, existing tree protections, wetlands and steep slopes.
13. Discourage development in areas with slopes greater than 18 percent and create limited special development controls for construction on slopes between 12 and 18 percent.
14. Work to more clearly define special land use procedures, application and permitting process.
15. Work to more clearly define Planned Unit Development (PUD) procedures, land division, and other similar procedures as needed.
16. Improve upon the Zoning Enforcement procedures (complaint, violation, and penalty/infraction process).
17. Assure adequate buffering between different uses to minimize the negative impact on neighboring residents and businesses. Utilize charts, representative images or diagrams to illustrate development goals and update as needed.
18. Address lighting (dark sky) and noise standards in ordinance updates.
19. Provide for updated signage regulations with representative images or diagrams to help illustrate development goals.
20. Update environmental regulations that address tree removal, tree protection, landscape standards and native species

recommendations and prohibit invasive and non-native species.

21. Promote sustainable practices and incorporate green infrastructure concepts (low-impact development).
22. Limit the number of access drives along major corridors for individual residential or commercial developments, encourage shared access drives and shared/flexible parking standards when possible.
23. Direct commercial development to lands that have the capacity to support such development and are adequately served by existing public roads and utilities.

INNOVATIVE ZONING TECHNIQUES

OVERLAY ZONING

Overlay zoning allows municipalities to impose a new set of regulations on a special area within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zone is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones. Thus, the overlay district regulations supplement the regulations of the underlying zoning district. Overlay zoning has been used in other communities to address special conditions and features, such as historic areas, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas, without disrupting the underlying zoning plan.

A Master Plan should be an active document and continually reviewed and updated. It should be referenced during every development decision made by the Planning Commission. An annual, joint meeting between the Commission and Board is very helpful for reviewing the Master Plan and any amendments that may have become necessary.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

Although there is no explicit legislative authority for such agreements, many Michigan communities have used development agreements to achieve a mutual understanding between the developer and municipality concerning the conditions under which development can occur. Development agreements are often negotiated as part of a planned development approval, allowing the community and developer to address complex issues that cannot be adequately addressed on a typical site plan. Development agreements might prove useful to achieve desired developments, especially if or when a mixed-use development is proposed or on developments with significant natural features that require critical protection.

COMPLETE STREETS

A Complete Streets Plan or Strategies would address all facets of the transportation system in the Townships including roads, bicycle ways, pedestrian ways, and public transportation. It would describe the extent and character of the transportation system and its interconnections considering all legal users of the right of way. It can also address specific “fixes” for greater walk-ability and bike-ability. Policies that support complete streets should be considered in all zoning updates.

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Low Impact Development (LID) is incorporating green infrastructure into projects to manage storm water in an environmentally sensitive way. Utilizing LID strategies during the development design phase can improve water quality and aesthetics, and reduce costs. LID strategies include using permeable pavement, rain gardens, and bio-swales. The Townships should consider amending the zoning ordinance to encourage Low Impact Development strategies where possible. More information can be found under Sustainable Development Tools further in this Chapter.

9. Moving Forward

Implementation Program and Action Plan

This section presents tools and techniques that residents, community leaders, and staff from the Townships can use to implement this Master Plan. These implementation measures will count on leaders and other people in the community with vision and commitment who are willing to invest time and effort required to make them work. This section provides some specific recommendations for implementing certain objectives set forth previously. Not every objective will have a specific action item, and some action items will address multiple objectives. **The idea is to continuously work towards and update these action items to support the overall GOALS and the VISION.**





ACTION PLAN ITEMS

The West Benzie Joint Master Plan and its goals and objectives recommend a future vision for the community. This vision aims to build upon the Townships existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract new development and residents to the community while protecting the area's natural beauty and resources.

As mentioned, the goals and objectives of this plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision making by the Townships. Successful implementation of this plan will be the result of actions taken by elected and appointed officials, Township staff, the Planning Commission, County officials, public agencies, as well as private residents and organizations. This section identifies and describes actions and tools available to implement the vision created in this Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The charts on the following pages summarize the recommended action items for the Townships. The charts present a quick summary of the recommended implementation activities, the intended priority for completing the action and anticipated time-frame. The time frames are approximate and may change and be updated over the years. Some action items will list potential funding resources for each activity. The corresponding goal and objectives are also noted as well as which Township would be the target, in many instances it may be both.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX		
Priority	Time Frame	Color Key
A. Most Important	1 – 5 Years	
B. Very Important	5 – 10 Years	
C. Important	Ongoing	
D. As Available	As Possible, 10+	

COLLABORATION

Collaboration with others will often be a key priority - especially in regards to the redevelopment of transportation corridors (US-31 and M-115) and transportation projects (both vehicular and pedestrian) as such developments impact the larger region. Therefore, an additional column is added to each implementation matrix to indicate that the project should be a joint planning effort and accomplished with other entities.

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE ACTION ITEMS

GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
1.1	Review adjacent municipalities zoning ordinances and coordinate when possible.	C				Both
1.3	Coordinate with other jurisdictions in the County to coordinate training and education opportunities for staff and commissions	C			County	Both
1.3	Continue to invite County Commissioners and other County level staff to participate in monthly meetings.	C			County	Both
1.4	Consider an annual planning commission summit, or zoning administrator summit with other municipalities to share issues and ideas.	A			County-wide	Both
2.2	Review and adopt the Updated Crystal Lake Watershed Ordinance	A			CLWA	Benzonia
2.4	Update the zoning ordinance to include wellhead protection areas	D				Both
2.5	Include recommended (or required) native plant species in the zoning ordinance	D				Both
2.6	Include tree protection standards and consider replacement requirements in the zoning ordinance	A				Both
2.6, 7.2	Encourage and promote forest stewardship and educational programs that are available from State and local agencies.	C			GTRLC, BCD	Both
2.7, 7.5	Update the ordinance to include clear permitting procedures (with diagrams and flow charts). Include required follow up and to illustrate checks and balances such as soil and erosion control, wetland, shoreline, etc. procedures for all development permits. Create a zoning permit approval checklist.	A				Both
3.1	Update the zoning ordinance to include green infrastructure/Low Impact Development standards.	B				Both

GTRLC= Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, CLWA = Crystal Lake Watershed Association, BCD = Benzie Conservation District

9. Moving Forward

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
3.1, 3.6	Include green infrastructure methods in all Township development projects (minimum of 3 methods)	A				Both
3.2	Review lawn maintenance needs for Township properties to see if no-mow areas should be established.	C				Both
3.2	Research to make sure that the ordinance buffer and erosion control requirements are adequate for required protection of all water resources (lakes, streams and wetlands), update ordinance as needed.	A & C			CLWA, BCD, EGLE	Both
3.5	Participate in tree planting programs where possible, establish annual goals for tree planting in the Township	C				Both
4.1	Create a public engagement or participation plan/policy	A				Both
4.1	Update the Township website and provide a place for public feedback, create a feedback form	A & C				Both
4.1	Increase public awareness for all Township projects (website, media, and social media pages)	C				Both
4.2	Review the zoning ordinance annually and make a list of short falls and items that need to be revised.	C				Both
4.3	Review the zoning ordinance annually to assure it meets the goals of this master plan	C				Both
4.4	Review the Master Plan annually - provide an annual report and present at a joint Township Meeting	C				Both
4.5	Continue to enforce blight and other zoning violation uniformly	C				Both
4.3, 4.5	Review the nuisance ordinance and consider adding light and noise regulations	A				Both
4.5	Engage with community groups to help support blight issues	A & C			Adjacent Townships & Villages	Both

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE ACTION ITEMS

GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
5.1	Develop a Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP) to help align public investment with the future land use plan	A & C				Both
5.2	Support local markets and roadside stands	B				Both
5.3	Investigate Development Agreements as a zoning technique when issuing permits, to assure development meets the goals of this plan - especially for complex developments that require perpetual natural resource protection	A				Both
6.1, 4.1	Utilize public workshops and other public meetings or surveys during any Township development project	B				Both
6.2, 4.1	Assure that the public participation policy is followed.	C				Both
6.3, 18.2	Research the viability of adding bicycle lanes along key routes (US-31, M-115, Homestead Road and other key connection points).	B				Both
6.3	Coordinate with and support Benzie Bus to provide adequate public transportation options to all public facilities.	C			Benzie Bus	Both
6.4	Continue to coordinate with the County and other Jurisdictions on infrastructure improvements such as broadband and sewer	A & C			County-wide	Both
6.4, 14.4	Support and continue the sewer feasibility project	A			County, Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Benzonia
7.1, 7.4	Review zoning ordinance to assure buffer requirements are adequate for current regulations/conditions.	B				Both
7.1	Actively use the Natural Resources map to guide review of all development projects, consider making it a required checklist item in the permitting process.	C			County and State Permitting (EGLE)	Both

GTRLC= Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, CLWA = Crystal Lake Watershed Association, BCD = Benzie Conservation District, EGLE = MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

9. Moving Forward

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABORATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
7.2, 7.6	Promote programs from local organizations such as the GTRLC's regional forest protection program to residents.	B			GTRLC	Both
7.4	Develop and implement a 'no wake' ordinance for rivers to protect sensitive ecological areas	A				Both
7.5	Review adequacy of soil and erosion control permitting, review and enforcement for development projects	A & C			County, CLWA	Both
7.7	Review adjacent jurisdiction ordinances to determine where uniform or consistent standards and enforcements across municipal borders makes sense.	D			Adjacent Townships & Villages	Both
8.1, 8.2	Maintain RP Zoning and assure adjacent development remains compatible	C				Both
8.3	Research funding options and potential partnerships for farmland preservation	D				Both
8.2, 8.3	Develop standards for cluster development that allows structures to be sited closer together on properties with significant natural resources (wetlands, steep slopes, etc.)	C				Both

HOUSING ALTERNATIVE – ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU)

Resources from HOUSING NORTH

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) are small, secondary living units that are on the same lot as the main house. They are a critical piece of the housing puzzle.

Housing North is an organization in Northern Michigan that offers an incedible array or housing information specifically for Northern Michigan Communities. More information and an **ADU TOOLBOX** is available at the following link.

<https://www.housingnorth.org/accessory-dwelling-units-program-adus>

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEMS

GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
9.1	Update zoning ordinance to include variety of housing types, such as smaller footprints, accessory dwelling, etc.	A				Both
9.2	Consider allowing for smaller minimum lot sizes in medium density zoning districts	B				Benzonia
9.3	Work to implement a transitional housing project.	B			County, Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Benzonia
9.4	Research tax incentive programs to encourage residential development	A & C				Benzonia
9.4	Research tax incentives to renovate existing buildings for residential use	A & C				Benzonia
10.1	Develop a Short Term Rental (STR) Ordinance	A				Both
10.2	Research ways to support local STR home owners	D				Both
10.3	Research tax incentives or policies that support and encourage long-term rental	D				Both
11.1, 15.4	Consider Corridor Plans to coordinate planning efforts along the highways (US-31 and M-115)	B		MEDC	Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Benzonia
11.1	Actively recruit investors for vacant properties that are near existing utilities and highway corridors	B		MEDC	Beulah, Benzonia, and Honor Villages	Benzonia
11.2	Investigate a vacant building registry (with an annual fee) to DIS-incentivise owners from keeping vacant/blighted buildings.	B				Both
11.3	Review the zoning ordinance to assure home based business are adequately allowed, also explore ways to promote co-working opportunities for local business.	D				Both

GTRLC= Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, CLWA = Crystal Lake Watershed Association, BCD = Benzie Conservation District

9. Moving Forward

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABORATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
12.1	Research community programs (example: United Way's "Day of Caring Program" to assist homeowners with property maintenance	A & C				Both
12.2	Collaborate with other municipalities for 'Community Beautification' program (day event, or idea summit)	B				Both
12.2	Maintain a active registry of all blighted properties, establish a yearly goal to remove properties from the list.	A & C				Both
12.3	Consider updating the zoning ordinance to include simple residential design and material standards for new construction	D				Both

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABORATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
13.1	Work with agricultural land owners to mitigate uses/Ag practices that may affect adjacent residential property	C				Both
13.2	Consider significant view-sheds when reviewing all development proposals	C			County	Both
13.3	Continue to research and allow alternative zoning such as conservation easements or transfer of development rights, etc. for rural landowners	A & C				Both
13.4	Consider streamline permitting processes to assist local agricultural business where possible	D				Both
13.5	Review zoning ordinances along with any proposed overlay zoning to assure it doesn't create hardship for agricultural land uses.	C				Both
13.6	Encourage partnerships and support agricultural education programs	C			MSU Extension, Schools	Both
13.7	Promote Township farm markets, roadside stands and agri-tourism	C				Both

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION ITEMS

GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
13.8	Review the ordinance and incorporate GAAMP's if required to support appropriate agricultural uses	C				Both
14.1	Consider future planning projects (corridor plans, non-motorized plans, etc.) and actively seek funding.	B & C		MDNR, MDOT		Both
14.2	Coordinate future development projects with utility planning (sewers/water/broadband)	C			County, Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Both
14.3	Continue to support the County with the development of high-speed Internet access	A			County	Both
14.4, 6.4	Support and continue the sewer feasibility project	A			County, Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Benzonia
15.1	Revise the ordinance to include material and site development standards, especially along the corridor.	B				Benzonia
15.2	Encourage inclusion of local history in all Township development projects	C				Both
15.3	Research development incentives and tax programs for renovating existing buildings.	D				Both
15.4, 15.5, 11.1	Consider Corridor Plans to coordinate planning efforts along the highways (US-31 and M-115)	B		MDOT	MDOT	Benzonia
15.5	Review driveway standards and widths between driveways and encourage shared parking	A				Both
15.6	Review and coordinate all development projects with MDOT and BCRC standards	C			MDOT, BCRC	Both
15.7	Actively maintain all township properties to set an example of good development and maintenance	C				Both

GTRLC= Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, CLWA = Crystal Lake Watershed Association, BCD = Benzie Conservation District
BCRC = Benzie County Road Commission

9. Moving Forward

PARK AND RECREATION ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABO- RATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
16.1	Provide a separate annual summary of the review of park and recreation items in the annual review and report and the joint annual meeting	C				Both
16.2	Coordinate programming with local recreation programs and actively seek partnership opportunities.	A & C			MSU Extension, Schools, Lo- cal Leagues	Both
16.3, 18.2	Consider development of pedestrian and bicycle connection to school properties and facilities.	A		MDOT, (Safe Routes to Schools)	BCRC	Benzonia
16.4	Work with other communities to help reduce the Township's financial responsibility for funding parks and recreation facilities and services that benefit the entire County.	C			County	Both
16.4	Coordinate with the Villages on facilities for local sports leagues and programs to provide adequate field space for youth programs.	C			Local Leagues, Schools	Both
17.1, 17.3	Review annual maintenance needs for the cemeteries	C				Both
17.2, 17.3	Maintain a list of items for each park facility that required annual maintenance or replacement, coordinate with the CIP	C				Both
17.3	Complete an annual safety review of park facilities to assure public safety.	C				Both
17.4, 17.3	Meet with user groups when updating park facilities to assure adequate facilities are being provided.	A				Both
17.5	Partner/coordinate with other communities for all park and recreation programs to maximize participation.	A				Both
18.1	Consider the addition of bicycle facilities to link important community destinations.	B				Both

PARK AND RECREATION ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABORATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
18.1	Review all existing trail and park intersections to assure proper safety measures are being used.	A				Both
18.2, 18.1	Create a non-motorized (Bike/Ped) Plan, seek partnerships with adjacent communities.	B		MDNR, MDOT	County, Beulah and Benzonia Villages	Both
18.3	Review existing trail crossings and park facility entrances - install proper signage and lane markings where appropriate	A				Both
18.3, 18.1	Seek partnerships to promote alternative transportation, provide bicycle and pedestrian safety events, raise awareness for bicycling and pedestrian safety issues.	C				Both
18.3	Review the roads that had the most safety concerns (Crystal Drive, Indian Hill, US-31, etc.) and meet with the Road Commission to determine what facilities are needed to improve safety (improved signage, road striping, etc.)	A			BCRC	Both
18.4	Assure all future park and recreation development projects coordinate with MDOT and BCRC standards when crossing or using roadways.	C				Both
19.1	Assure that any park and recreation improvement project is well advertised with an opportunity for public feedback.	C				Both
19.1, 19.3	Consider a Master Plan for Memorial Park, with recommendations per this plan, to unify future improvements, gain better public feedback and improve accessibility.	A		MDNR		Benzonia
19.1, 19.3	Consider simple upgrades to Open Space parks in Platte Township, seek resident feedback for most desired amenities.	B		MDNR		Platte

BCRC = Benzie County Road Commission

9. Moving Forward

PARK AND RECREATION ACTION ITEMS						
GOAL(S) or OBJ.	ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	FUNDING	COLLABORATION	TARGET TOWNSHIP
19.2	Update the Township website to include a comment section specifically related to park and recreation issues, comments, suggestions, etc.	A				Both
19.3, 19.4	Annually review park and recreation needs to assess the possibility of seeking grant funding.	C				Both
19.5	Continue to encourage and allow local groups and organizations to use Township park facilities and cemeteries for educational programming	C				Both
19.6	Utilize the website and social media to recruit volunteers for park and recreation programming or to help with park maintenance.	C				Both

PERVIOUS ASPHALT AT MANISTEE MEIJER



Sustainable Development Tools

The definition of sustainability can have many broad interpretations and delve into areas such as the human and environmental world, business and technology disciplines, or even educational systems. This chapter will focus on environmental sustainability and specifically why it is important to consider in all aspects of the development of the Townships.

A hike along the river boardwalk, skiing in the winter, or even parking your car and walking to the grocery in the hot sun reminds us everyday that the environment around us is a living, moving system dependent on many pieces. When we look at environmental sustainability, a typical definition says that it means acting in a way that ensures future generations have the natural resources available to live in the same way or better than current generations.

A good way to introduce positive changes over time into everyday living is to incorporate sustainable improvements gradually. For areas with relatively small populations and financial resources, making these small incremental changes towards better environmental sustainability can very well end up making a big impact for future generations. Some ways to do that are in regulatory improvements by the way of Ordinance or Policy changes.

SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

The following is a GENERAL guide for sustainable considerations. These best practices should be referenced and/or required where applicable in any future zoning ordinance revisions or in the creation of any future design standards or operating policies for the Townships.

Regulations based on these general principles would seek to provide a strong foundation for future growth, conserve limited resources, and protect our natural environment for the long-term health of our planet and future generations.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE SITE

- protect ecologically sensitive sites
- minimize the development footprint (refer to low impact development section)
- integrate buildings with site topography
- site homes and developments in a way that celebrates natural habitats

IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Incorporate passive solar design strategies (proper orientation of structures, placement of windows, etc.)
- Use proper insulating techniques for the building envelope
- Design for efficient use of space (i.e. bigger isn't always better)
- Install high-performance windows and place to take advantage of natural light and cross ventilation
- Consider active solar or wind systems for energy or water heating

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP'S)

Some Nonstructural BMPs are:

- Cluster development
- Minimize soil compaction
- Minimize total disturbed area
- Protect natural flow pathways
- Protect sensitive areas
- Reduce impervious surfaces
- Stormwater disconnection.

Some Structural BMPs are:

- Bioretention (similar to rain gardens)
- Planter boxes or Tree Wells.
- Depressed Tree/Planter Islands in parking lots
- Vegetated Swales
- Infiltration Trenches
- Pervious Pavements
- Green Roofs
- Rainwater Collection/Reuse
- Native Vegetation Requirement

9. Moving Forward

USE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BUILDING MATERIALS

- Select materials that are appropriate and durable for harsh winter climates
- Select products that support local manufacturers and local economies
- Select materials with recycled content or that are recyclable
- Avoid materials that unduly deplete natural resources
- Avoid materials that generate excess pollution during manufacturing

CREATE A SAFE INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

- Avoid materials with high VOC (volatile organic compounds) such as some carpets, adhesives, paints, etc.
- Provide for proper ventilation in all buildings
- Maximize the control of indoor environments with proper window placement, lighting, and temperature controls

PROVIDE WATER EFFICIENT WATER USAGE

- Use low-flow plumbing fixtures
- Incorporate efficient hot-water delivery systems
- Consider gray water usage, provide for water storage for landscape use
- Incorporate water efficient landscaping

REDUCE GENERATION OF SOLID WASTE

- Provide for both construction and home waste recycling
- Purchase building materials so as to minimize waste
- Utilize recycled materials in new construction

CREATE A HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- Encourage home or community gardening
- Incorporate walking trails, especially nature trails with educational opportunities.
- Incorporate alternative forms of transportation (walking, biking, bus, etc.)

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

In order to protect our vital and important natural water resources (including drinking water) in the region it should be required for all new developments to incorporate low impact development practices in the construction of any projects. These are also known as **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE** or **STORMWATER BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs)**. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments created a “Low Impact Development Manual for Michigan” in 2008. Even though it was created some time ago, it is still a tremendous resource for Michigan communities.

The text-box shown on page 119 highlights just some of the BMPs and techniques that would be suitable to incorporate into development projects in the Townships, however creativity and ingenuity should be encouraged as the stormwater solutions can be incredibly varied across different sites.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN RATING PROGRAMS

There are several well known and accepted sustainable design rating programs for the development of building and site plans. Developers should be encouraged to utilize these programs (or at least follow their criteria even if they don't become fully certified) for all new projects. An incentive program or reduced permitting fees or time lines for projects that use one of these metrics and become certified projects could also be considered. Projects that use these rating systems bring an additional level of recognition and marketing power to the community.



LEED OR LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

This program is administered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). It is the most widely used green building rating system in the world. Developers can use this rating system when designing and constructing virtually all building, community and home project types. LEED provides a framework to create healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings.

Refer to www.usgbc.org for more detail.

SUSTAINABLE SITES INITIATIVE

This system is administered by Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), SITES offers a comprehensive rating system designed to distinguish sustainable landscapes, measure their performance and elevate their value. SITES certification is available for a wide range of development projects, with or without buildings.

Refer to www.sustainablesites.org for more detail.

THE NATIONAL GREEN BUILDING STANDARD™

The National Green Building Standard™ provides independent, third-party verification that a home, apartment building, or land development is designed and built to achieve high performance in six key areas: Site Design, Resource Efficiency, Water Efficiency, Energy Efficiency, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Building Operation & Maintenance. Refer to www.nahb.org for more detail.

ENERGY STAR

Energy Certified certified homes are designed and constructed to be significantly more energy efficient than those built to code while lowering homeowner utility bills and providing superior comfort, quality, and durability. Refer to www.energystar.gov for more detail.

9. Moving Forward

THE NEED TO MAKE CONNECTIONS: BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Future development in the Townships should consider necessary bicycle and pedestrian connection and safe crossing facilities with any and all future building and road improvement projects.

The public feedback made it clear that bicycling and/or being able to walk places is desirable and that there are many safety concerns for doing so throughout the Townships.

1. One area in particular is US-31 South of Benzonia - the sidewalks stop at the Village limits, leaving gaps for pedestrians. Expanding a pedestrian link to the denser areas of development along US-31 south, providing connection to the River and further south to M-115 should be a priority in future planning efforts.

2. Another consideration is that currently many families take advantage of walking or bicycling their children to Crystal Lake Elementary located in the Village of Benzonia. When the new school is completed at the high school campus, there will not be a similar strong pedestrian connection to the school for students as Homestead Road has no bicycle or pedestrian facilities.

The following is a list of potential connection opportunities that should be highly considered for new development or future road improvement projects:

3.+

- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities along US-31 from Benzonia south to M-115
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities along US-31 to the north near Beulah and along Crystal Drive
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities to the high school and new elementary campus
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities along M-115 west of Benzonia
- Sidewalk and stronger pedestrian connections into the Village of Beulah
- Sidewalk connection on South Street to Memorial Park
- Bicycle lane/safety signage for key bicycle routes in Platte Township such as Indian Hill Road and key intersections on M-22.
- Sidewalk or road crossing facility improvements near any other recreation areas (park), community facilities, or trail crossings.

BIKE LANE BESIDE RIVER OVERPASS



SIGNED & MARKED SHARED SHOULDER



Photo Source: Scott Wahl, Shasta County DPW (left), Western Transportation Institute (right)
<https://ruraldesignguide.com/>

Michigan Green Communities Challenge, is a program designed in collaboration with the state energy office, the Bureau of Energy Systems, to ensure that Michigan has the tools needed to implement short-term and long-lasting actions. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, through the stimulus recovery act, requires that all communities who wish to receive funds prepare a strategy for energy efficiency and conservation.

Tools and Funding Strategies

Successful implementation of the Master Plan will depend on the ability of the Townships to secure necessary financing. Besides the general fund, the following are other common sources of revenue:

GRANT TOOLS

The following are some common sources of grants that are typically available to help fund projects for communities such as Benzonia and Platte Townships. However, existing grant programs may change and evolve, and new programs may come available - grant funding must continually be researched to seek out the best opportunities to help fund projects. Professional consultants are an excellent resource to help navigate appropriate grant funding. Being prepared for funding opportunities by having appropriate planning in place is key.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MDOT)

The following are a few of the programs that are available through MDOT's funding tools.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS)

SRTS is an international movement and a federal program to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children, including those with disabilities, to bicycle and walk to school. Grants are available in several capacities, major and mini grants fund various projects from infrastructure improvements to educational programs.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP)

TAP is a competitive grant program, using federal funds, that in turn funds projects such as bike paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhances intermodal transportation systems, promotes walkability, and improves the quality of life for communities.

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (MEDC)

A variety of grant and funding programs are available through the various MEDC programs. The programs are outlined on the MEDC website. <https://www.miplace.org/programs/>

MDNR RECREATION GRANT PROGRAMS

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LCWF)

This program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high-quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States. Funds to local governments are provided on a 50/50 basis.

9. Moving Forward

MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND (MNRTF)

This grant program was established by the Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act (PA 204 of 1976) and uses revenues from oil and gas wells for acquisition and development of recreational lands on a 75/25 match basis. The MNRTF provides for natural resource protection and outdoor recreation. By law, no more than 25 percent of the Trust Fund revenues available for appropriation each year can be used for development, therefore the majority of funding is allocated for acquisition projects.

MICHIGAN RECREATION GRANT PASSPORT PROGRAM

This grant program was established by PA 32 of 2010 to be used for the development of public recreation facilities for local units of government. Money for this fund is derived from the sale of the Recreation Passport which replaces the resident Motor Vehicle Permit (window sticker) for state park entrance. The minimum grant amount is \$7,500 and the maximum grant amount is \$150,000.

MICHIGAN SPARKS GRANT PROGRAM

Administered by the MDNR, Michigan Spark Grants will support projects that provide safe, accessible, public recreation facilities and spaces to improve people's health, introduce new recreation experiences, build on existing park infrastructure and make it easier for people to enjoy the outdoors. This grant opportunity is possible because of the Building Michigan Together Plan, signed in March 2022, which included a historic infusion of federal funding in our state and local parks.

The grant application will launch in October and stay open for six weeks, with first-round grants awarded by the end of 2022. There will be two more rounds of applications and grant awards in 2023. The future of the program beyond 2023 is not known at this time.

Looking Southwest at Crystal Lake



OTHER FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW (BIL)

The passage of the landmark Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2022 saw the largest direct investment in community planning in a century. While some programs required almost immediate application for funds in 2022, some of the programs are intended to become annual grant programs. It will be important to review opportunities regularly. For additional guidance, the DOT Navigator from the U.S. Department of Transportation provides a resource to help communities understand planning and applying for various funding.

One of the key components will be expanding the Transportations Alternative (TA) Set-Aside funds which provides for programs such as Safe Routes To School as mentioned earlier. The expansion of this program will present opportunities to fund many smaller-scale multi-modal transportation projects which may provide additional opportunities to fund improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Townships over the coming years.

Some of the types of projects that the TA Set-Aside provides funding for include projects such as - pedestrian and bicycle facilities; construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management; environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity; recreational trails; safe routes to school projects; and vulnerable road user safety assessments. With its eligibilities including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, safe routes to school projects, and vulnerable road user safety assessments, Transportation Alternatives is a key program for helping communities build Complete Streets for all users and achieve safe, connected, and equitable on-and off-road networks.



9. Moving Forward

FUNDING STRATEGIES

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

A CIP is a tool to identify and prioritize the long term capital project requirements of a local unit of government. The CIP is a schedule of proposed improvements to a community's public facilities that includes a prioritization of projects, typically over a five (5) year period. The first year of the CIP is the capital budget and the CIP is updated annually. The CIP's relationship to the Master Plan, as stated in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008), is "to further the desirable future development of the local unit of government under the Master Plan."

To accomplish this, the planning commission, legislative body, or chief administrative official (depending on language in the charter), shall annually prepare the CIP to assist the planning commission and board or council in reviewing and approving public infrastructure projects, such as streets, parks, and utility infrastructure.

A TYPICAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) PROCESS

A process known to be successful in creating Capital Improvement Plans is as follows:

- I. Define Capital Improvement Plan Process & Roles
 - a. Appoint a CIP coordinator to lead the project
 - b. Identify participants and roles for CIP preparation
 - c. Establish a CIP Review Team
 - d. Review, provide input and update capital improvement policies
 - e. Collect data to assist with review, including budget projections, Master Plan amendments, policy changes and new regulations
 - f. Define cost threshold, lifespan and types of projects to qualify for CIP
 - g. Establish agreement on priority system to evaluate projects.

DEDICATED MILLAGE

Special millages can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose. For example, one Michigan community has a special land acquisition fund that is supported by a one-quarter mill property tax. A land acquisition fund would be a useful tool to promote open space preservation in the Township or assemble property for redevelopment. Millages can also be used to generate funds for capital improvements.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS

Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefited by specific public improvements (paving, drainage improvements, etc.) to defray the costs of such improvements. Special assessments are apportioned according to the assumed benefits to the properties that will be affected. Special assessments have been used for providing street lighting in certain areas, and street trees and streetscaping in highly visible areas. The most important point regarding special assessments to keep in mind is that they must be supported by those in the area of the assessment - without support from the public they will not work. Therefore, before a special assessment is presented to the public, it must be well thought out, and the benefits versus costs well demonstrated.

BOND PROGRAMS

Many communities use bonds as one of the principal sources of financing used to pay for capital improvements. There are generally two types of bonds. General obligation bonds are issued for specific community project and are paid off by the general public through property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for construction of projects that generate revenues. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project (an example of this is water and sewer service charges).

While bonding is a very common method of funding projects, it is important to remember that this is long-term debt, and that it is dependent on the growth in the tax base. Therefore, it is essential that property values are protected, and that the reputation of the community is well maintained to keep its bonds an attractive investment. Another important aspect is to understand how much debt a community can realistically afford. For instance, if a community is too heavily committed to paying off debt its credit rating can be damaged. While bonds can certainly be useful, their use should be balanced with the other methods of funding available to a community.

Soccer Practices at Memorial Park in Benzonia Township

