

## Appendix B

### HISTORY OF THE GENERAL PLAN PLANNING PROCESS

#### INTRODUCTION

In June, 1989 Leelanau County officially began a project ultimately designed to revise its outdated Comprehensive Development Plan. County officials agree the Plan currently in effect, adopted in 1975, does not provide adequate guidance for today's decisions. During the past several years development-related controversies have flared in virtually all areas of the County. County officials and an increasing number of permanent and seasonal residents believe those controversies are due, in part, to the lack of an overall "plan" or system for dealing with the management of the growth that is occurring. The county's popularity and desirable location are contributing to the problem. Increasing population and inadequately directed growth have great potential to exert significant pressure on the "quality of life" which has historically been Leelanau County's hallmark.

#### OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE PLANNING

When considering this essential planning project, County leaders saw an opportunity to approach comprehensive planning in a unique way. The traditional approach to community planning assumes an internal effort by the responsible governing agency. Generally speaking, this approach often means less risk, less chance for criticism and opposition from administrators or elected officials. As stated in the text ***Taking Charge: How Communities are Planning their Futures***, the newer, more open approaches (such as that being undertaken in Leelanau County) bring to the planning effort the combined resources of the community - both public and private. These strategies require new management approaches and techniques. Progress is made by consensus rather than by directive. Those involved in managing the project master new methods of leadership, taking risks by giving up some traditional control but increasing the likelihood of positive community support and benefit.

Ideally, this technique would involve all of the local units of government in the county in a consistent, integrated approach to growth management. **The best way to accomplish this goal is to involve as many county citizens as possible in the actual thinking process.**

Involving people in the planning process means acknowledging that everyone has something of value to contribute. This system seeks to avoid setting up citizens, developers, environmentalists, or local governments as "the enemy". Recognition of this fundamental can change the dynamics of growth management from "us against them" to "we're all in this together."

Those involved in planning realize a successful community planning program does not simply "happen." Project supporters must develop an understanding of growth policies as they currently exist. They must also be willing to communicate their concerns and ideas, work with anyone else officially or unofficially associated with the plan, and be willing to develop an understanding with fellow citizens regarding issues of conflict.

#### CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the Leelanau program an informal stakeholder analysis was performed to determine who would be most affected by a new county plan. This analysis triggered an intense schedule of public participation events that have been characteristic of the project. Following several weeks of advertising, the county received more than 60 applications from citizens wishing to participate in the as yet unnamed planning process. From this group of applications, 33 citizens representing each category identified in the stakeholder analysis were chosen by the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners to serve on an advisory committee that became known as the Citizen Advisory Committee.

The Citizen Advisory Committee was the focus of an intense nine (9) month exercise that took into account the basic principals discussed above. The Committee was introduced to a number of new growth management techniques, exposed to extensive data regarding the current state of planning in Leelanau County, and subjected to an immense body of public opinions regarding the future of Leelanau County. The analysis and recommendations that follow are the subject of Working Paper Number Four.

The 70-member General Plan Steering Committee, the group charged with overseeing the development of the

*Leelanau General Plan*, is composed of members representing every local unit of government in Leelanau County as well as citizens at large, regional government, state government, federal government, and counties bordering Leelanau. Many citizens at large have taken part in plan-related projects as well. This group was formed following the recommendation of the CAC to continue the process designed to create a "unified physical county plan."

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this process to date has been exceptional. Over 2,500 individuals have chosen to partake in this unique process with many individuals choosing to attend more than one event. The CAC and General Plan Steering Committee have spent many hours deliberating on the facts and opinions related to the critically important growth management issues facing Leelanau County communities. It has been estimated that these groups have directly spent more than 4000 person hours in a "think tank" mode during this planning project. This does not include the many hours invested in meeting with various community groups and in face-to-face discussions with concerned fellow citizens. Thus, their recommendations are the product of a great deal of reflection, analysis and dialogue. These recommendations are deserving of very careful review and consideration by all individuals concerned about the future of Leelanau County.

## **THE GO/NO GO DECISION**

At the end of Phase I, the work program adopted by the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners called for a "Go/No Go" decision. The "Go/No Go" decision was really a decision as to the feasibility of implementation of an overall intergovernmental approach to growth management as opposed to a more traditional, separate county government approach.

At first, there were fears of a county "take-over" attempt where local land use controls were concerned. To calm those fears, county staff and CAC members attended regularly scheduled township board and village council meetings to present program concepts. In order to attain the optimum intergovernmental planning program, township and village commitment is essential. To that end, it was explained that no secret county "take-over" plan existed. Instead, the county and CAC were promoting a more efficient and economical planning venture founded on a sincere interjurisdictional commitment. The City of Traverse City, having recently annexed some 235 acres in Leelanau County, was also asked to consider participating in the program.

In March, 1991 the county staff secured Memorandums of Understanding from all sixteen (16) Leelanau county municipalities. With this unprecedented vote of support, the county adopted a work program for the final phases of the project. The 70-member steering committee was established to help write the plan. The steering committee, like the CAC, is composed of a representative cross section of county citizens, government officials and interest groups. Through the Memorandum of Understanding, each municipality agreed to appoint three individuals to the steering committee including one elected official, one planning commission member, and one citizen at large.

While public participation events continued throughout the county, data base and GIS work was conducted in order to establish the most accurate and reliable information system possible. This unprecedented data collection effort resulted in five (5) additional working papers documenting economic trends, transportation and infrastructure status, environmental conditions, land use trends, and demographics. The information collected is available in many forms to all interested public and private agencies as well as the public at large.

Finally, the project has set forth a mechanism designed to develop an understanding and agreements regarding the roles and respective responsibilities of all local government units where land use decisions are concerned. In all likelihood, achievement of such goals will increase municipal efficiency in an economical manner while fostering a strong spirit of intergovernmental coordination.

The Leelanau General Plan was adopted July 11, 1994 by the Leelanau County Planning Commission and by the Leelanau County Board of Commissioners on May 1, 1995. In 1999, the Planning Commission established a 19-member sub-committee which assisted in the first update of the General Plan. The update was adopted by the Leelanau County Planning Commission on May 23, 2000, and endorsed by the County Board of Commissioners on June 20, 2000. A second update, largely reflecting "concrete" changes to the population, current conditions, and policy initiatives on the Peninsula, was completed by the Planning Commission in 2005. The update was adopted by the Planning Commission on October 26, 2005.