Chapter 15
GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Achievement of the principal goal of this **General Plan** (see page vi) requires an effective program of coordinated local and county efforts. The principal institutional components of this program were presented in Chapter 14. This chapter describes the general process to be followed. Key priorities for inclusion in short range action programs and budgets are also identified. A more detailed process for implementation will need to be developed after adoption of the **General Plan** for annually updated work programs tied to local and county budgets.

As important a benchmark as this plan represents, the initiatives proposed in this **General Plan** will not implement themselves. It will take the concerted efforts of citizens, elected officials, local and county planners, and other administrative officials to bring this plan from concept into reality. It will take continued support and commitment for many years. However, the goals of this plan and the actions proposed to implement it offer the promise of a much better future than that likely to occur if existing trends continue unabated.

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The central ingredients to successful implementation will be commitment by citizens, by the County Board of Commissioners, and by support from local units of government. Benefits to all groups will be most visible in terms of lower infrastructure and maintenance costs for public facilities and retention of the rural character of the landscape (so cherished by residents and visitors). Many indirect benefits will also occur. For example, local plans and development regulations will be easier and less costly to prepare and maintain because the information in the Planning and Community Development Department's "county data center" can easily be updated and displayed on maps from the Geographic Information System and on the County-wide website. In working in partnership with the county in a manner compatible with this plan, local governments will be able to justifiably provide for a narrower range of land uses in their plans and zoning regulations. This could eliminate the continued scattering of commercial and industrial uses in inappropriate locations while improving the success of businesses established in appropriate locations. These and many other benefits previously identified will result from implementation of this **General Plan**.

The central ingredients to successful plan implementation will be commitment by the County Board of Commissioners and support from local units of government.

As this **General Plan** explains, county concerns related to growth and development issues are most significant on issues of greater than local concern. Such issues, while numerous, do not include the full range of land use issues that must be addressed by local communities, but they do overlap on certain issues. This should not be viewed as negative, or an obstacle to progress, but rather as an opportunity to insure that both local and peninsula-wide issues are adequately addressed before making decisions on issues of greater than local concern. All citizens will benefit, and future debacles over such issues as siting of golf courses and/or radio towers in sensitive natural resource areas could be avoided.

Process Leading to Plan Implementation

There are three basic steps that need to be addressed in implementing this **General Plan.** They are:

- Plan adoption process.
- Establishment of priorities for strategic initiatives.
- Establishment of a process for updating the plan.

Plan Adoption Process

The plan proposes adoption by the County Planning Commission, with approval by the County Board of Commissioners. The County Planning Commission needs to conduct a public hearing(s). The plan will be submitted to each local governmental unit in the county and public notices will announce the review period. Any suggestions for revisions that are received during the public review period, will be forwarded to the County Planning Commission. Additional refinements may occur as a result of this process and prior to adoption. Following adoption of the **General Plan** by the County Planning Commission, it will be formally submitted to the County Board of Commissioners. With changes to the Planning Acts in 2001, the County Board has the option of final approval of the document, if they pass a resolution to that affect.

Communities that subsequently adopt plans compatible with the General Plan, would be eligible to have the County Planning Commission accept the local plan as a formal part of the Leelanau General Plan.

Establishment of Priorities for Strategic Initiatives

Following plan adoption, the next major process will be to establish the key strategic initiatives to be immediately undertaken, and others to be included in the next round of annual work programs and budgets. This process needs to extend beyond the County Planning and Community Development Department/County Planning Commission budget to include all county departments, being replicated wherever feasible, in the planning and budgeting processes of other governmental units (such as townships and villages) and of nonprofit organizations (such as area chambers of commerce, land trusts, etc.) which have key roles in plan implementation (see especially the action statements in Part Two).

Mechanism for Updating the General Plan

It is also very important that these annual priority and budget sessions be institutionalized and adhered to. An annual report on actions taken to implement the plan should be made to the County Board of Commissioners, along with adoption of any necessary amendments by the County Planning Commission. Periodically, and at least once each five years, the **General Plan** should be thoroughly reviewed and updated.

Key Priorities

The most important priorities identified should be included, wherever feasible, in work programs and budgets by the appropriate organization(s). This list should be annually updated and supplemented. A host of worthy project and program initiatives to help implement this plan are included in Part Two. Action statements in Part Two should be considered as priorities based on the following considerations:

- Those action statements having an assigned responsibility to a particular group are of the highest priority.
- A lower priority level exists when the responsibility is implied, as when the term "the economic development leadership shall..." is used, or when an indefinite assignment is made such as "the county will...".
- No immediate priority is implied when no

organization or individual is listed as responsible for the action. That leaves these action statements as targets until an organization steps forward to take responsibility for implementation, and/or adequate county resources become available.

Notwithstanding the important contribution that action statements in Part Two can play in the eventual implementation of the plan, the following actions are the top priorities which require immediate action. Some of these priorities are derived from action statements in Part Two; others are from Part One. As the following priorities are completed, new priorities can be added via the annual updating process. Most of the proposals for plan implementation are actions that can be taken now under existing state laws if local and county governments will agree and commit to action. However, the few actions which will require legislative authorization (such as for transfer of development rights) are so important, that significant energy will be needed to help achieve enactment of these new tools by working in concert with other local governments across the state.

The top priority actions that should be quickly initiated include (in no particular order):

- A county capital improvement programming process (CIP) that is tied to the budget process. Once in place among all county agencies and commissions, it should be extended peninsula-wide to include CIP's prepared independently by local units of government. Once the first, six-year CIP is complete, the Planning and Community Development Department should prepare an "official map" showing the location of all county and local capital improvements planned in the county.

- Continued development of the "county data center" within the County Planning and Community Development Department and the county-wide website. This center would serve information needs of county agencies as well as local governments, civic and citizen organizations. It should be supplemented with more advanced equipment and software to meet growing demands for information management and sophisticated communication opportunities.

- Expansion of technical assistance services of the Planning and Community Development Department to meet growing needs by county agencies, local governments, businesses, and citizens in the county. A special emphasis of expanded services should include priority service to communities acting in partnership with the county in implementation of the **General Plan**.

- To the extent necessary, the county should develop explicit incentive programs for local governments to fully participate in **General Plan** implementation. These programs, delivered by the Planning and Community Development Department, could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

  - provision of information and maps (especially a basic map set for planning to each township and village on the peninsula).

  - technical assistance in updating plans and regulations.

  - provision of training for planning commissioners, zoning board of appeals members, elected officials and zoning administrators (via LSPO, see below).

  - provision of model plans and ordinances compatible with the **General Plan**, especially.

  - a model structure for local comprehensive plans.
  - model ordinances to promote open space protection (rural clustering) and to reduce premature land fragmentation (land division and subdivision regulations).

  - impact assessment checklists.

- provision of financial assistance in local plan updates (as resources permit) subject to a suitable contract between the County Board of Commissioners and the local unit of government.

- Continued support for new legislation to provide new tools to better guide growth and manage change. This includes but is not limited to legislation to authorize transfer and purchase of development rights, development agreements, concurrency, official maps, urban and general services districts, new ways to levy special assessments, and new ways to deal with inter-jurisdictional impacts of large scale developments.

- Refinement of a peninsula-wide transfer of development rights (TDR) program. The significant equity issues associated with land use restrictions on large landowners without corresponding mechanisms permitting them to capture development value (without actually developing the land) require that the effort to generally get passage of TDR legislation be pursued vigorously.

- Organization and support for a county chapter of the Michigan Society of Planning (possibly to be called the Leelanau Society of Planning Officials - LSPO). Such an organization would work with the County Planning Commission and receive support from the County Planning and Community Development Department in development and implementation of periodic education programs for planning commissioners, elected officials and citizens on a wide variety of planning, economic development, and regulatory issues.

- Continuation of the website with information on projects and related efforts in planning.

- Assistance to villages and townships in local plan and regulatory changes to better accommodate affordable quality housing and related job needs.

Concluding Thought

This **General Plan** represents thousands of hours of input by hundreds of citizens in Leelanau County. The circumstances it is intended to address did not occur overnight and they will not be resolved overnight. Yet it sets forth an alternative option to the future that will be created if existing trends continue (see Working Paper #5). Existing trends are fueled to a very great extent by existing plans, regulations and institutional relationships. To create a future different from existing trends, current plans, policies, regulations and institutional relationships must also be changed. This **General Plan** proposes an alternative structure based on considerable input and thoughtful consideration by Leelanau County citizens. It offers an opportunity for citizens to choose a different future with a mechanism to put that choice into place.