

Chapter 4

BALANCED GROWTH

POLICY GUIDELINE: BALANCED GROWTH

New residential, commercial, and industrial development in the County is encouraged provided it is: 1) in locations with public services adequate to meet its needs. 2) environmentally friendly. 3) consistent with the character of development in the area. 4) consistent with local plans and regulations. 5) compatible with the guidelines of this **General Plan**. In the implementation of this policy guideline, both the county and local governments will seek to ensure over time, that all the health, safety, and general welfare needs of its citizens that can be reasonably met are accommodated with a variety of land uses in the pattern proposed and in a manner which does not unnecessarily compromise options for future generations.

CONTEXT FOR BALANCED GROWTH

There is projected to be a continued demand for new dwellings in Leelanau County. These new dwellings will serve some existing residents, but largely will accommodate seasonal residents, new residents who will be working, or retirees. The county will grow as a bedroom, seasonal and tourist community. New businesses will continue to be established and some existing businesses will enlarge. Many new businesses will focus on the needs of seasonal residents and tourists, but increasingly, as the indigenous year round population increases, they will focus on the growing needs of existing residents. Limited opportunities for industrial development will continue and will be concentrated in agricultural and high technology enterprises.

There is no real question as to whether there will be new growth in the County, it is simply a matter of where, when, how much, and what type. The principal challenge is to devise an integrated and coordinated growth strategy which enjoys broad public support and that utilizes the best capabilities of county and local governments to guide growth into those locations best able to accommodate it, and/or most in need of it for the foreseeable future.



Omena

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Subdivision in
Leelanau County

These policies should focus highest attention on both residential and agricultural land uses, due to their interrelatedness if current trends should continue. The greatest land use changes projected to occur involve conversion of agricultural and open space lands to residential use. Current trends must stop soon, or sprawl will consume critical areas of the agricultural economic base of the county and the open space that it provides.

Commercial development should be directed into existing villages and resorts and not be permitted to expand beyond planned areas. While the amount of new development will be a function of demand, which is not easily regulated, the location of new development, its density, and the adequacy of public services in the area are principally a function of governmental decisions. Coordinating consistent land use decisions is necessary to accomplish balanced growth. It also requires local plans and regulations that are built on a common vision and which rely on common policies for their implementation.

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BALANCED GROWTH ETHIC

This General Plan accepts the principle that environmental protection and economic development are not incompatible objectives. Jobs are essential for the income they generate to support families. Jobs in Leelanau County are largely related to agriculture, tourism, or to serving the needs of the growing commuter population (people who live in the county but commute to work elsewhere). Two (if not all three) of these job categories exist because of the natural resources and environmental quality in the County. Without it, the jobs would be lost. Yet the job base in the County is not sufficient in size to provide many new opportunities for young persons raised in the county to find work after graduation, and average pay scales are not sufficient to support a family. Affordable housing opportunities are becoming fewer and fewer. As a result, the disparity between the higher and the lower in-come citizens is growing.

Balanced growth will require housing not only for the wealthy seasonal residents, retirees, or two income commuter families, but also for young families, the elderly, and other low in-come residents. It will require new businesses and entrepreneurial activity to support the needs of these new families. It will require new tourist jobs and probably some new light industrial jobs as well.

Where these new homes, businesses and industries are constructed will affect the future quality of life in the County. If the present pattern of sprawl continues for 10-20 more years, the rural character of the County will be irretrievably damaged as will most of the open space not in public ownership or protected through conservation easements.



Suttons Bay Yacht Club

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This will dramatically reduce, if not eliminate future tourism growth. Incremental sprawl of residences across the countryside will drive out agriculture and further narrow (rather than broaden) the tax base.

The solution is balanced growth that deeply respects the environment and the quality natural resources in the County. The balance must be founded on the principle of sustainability.

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable agriculture respects the land and water and involves management practices that do not diminish the potential of current and future operators to gainfully produce crops. A sustainable economy is one which meets the needs of the present without compromising social, financial, and environmental/natural resources for current and future generations.

In short, sustainable development means protecting the goose that lays the golden egg. In the County, that means protecting the natural environment and the renewable natural resources to a greater degree than would likely be the case elsewhere. This is because most of what is good about the County comes from the natural environment, and most of what sustains families in the County also comes from it.

BALANCED GROWTH STRATEGY

Just over half (55%) of respondents to the 2018 Planning Questionnaire strongly disagree or disagree that Leelanau County is losing its rural character, whereas 44% of respondents strongly agree or agree that Leelanau County is losing its rural character.

The basic strategy for balanced growth in Leelanau County as advocated by this **General Plan** follows. See Figure 4-1. More specific policies and action statements are found in Part Two.

- **Significantly curtail sprawl and encourage compact development.** The future land use pattern in the County will encourage new residential development in existing and adjoining villages (and perhaps new villages) and on non-prime soils or sensitive lands. Strip development will be strongly discouraged and all new commercial development will be in a village, resort or already established commercial area (such as Greilickville).
- **The existing economic base will be protected and enhanced.** Renewable resource lands will be protected for long term economically beneficial use. Activities supporting the tourist industry will be protected and enhanced but will not be expanded into new areas without careful planning. Business activity providing services to the year round population will be encouraged to concentrate in existing villages and strongly discouraged from moving to the edge of town.
- **New jobs.** New year round employment in services and light industry will be encouraged in several carefully planned industrial parks.
- **Health and human services.** An effort should be made to improve health services and access to them.
- **New development: where, when, how much, what type, and at what density.** Most new development will be residential but local regulations need to be changed to improve opportunities for jobs and affordable housing, especially in existing villages. New development should occur when, and only in locations which have or are guaranteed adequate public services to support the public service needs of new development. The density of new development will respect the character of the surrounding area, the capacities of necessary public services and not squander land resources. New development will occur in response to market demand and not speculatively, or ahead of necessary public facilities. In particular, new development will not result in the premature disinvestment in agriculture.
- **Phased growth.** New public facilities will be constructed to guide future growth based on annually updated capital improvements programs (CIP) prepared by each local government and the county. All CIPs will be coordinated and compatible with the **General Plan**.
- **Public service boundaries.** New public services should be provided on a planned basis within boundaries of village and rural services districts. These districts need to be designed to economically and efficiently meet the needs of land uses within them. Simultaneously, high intensity development should not be permitted outside established public service boundaries.
- **Jobs/housing/transportation balance.** As new development occurs, an effort should be made to coordinate the provision of jobs and transportation so that a jobs/housing/transportation balance is achieved that results in reduced transportation demands and a greater chance for cost effective transportation service.

- **Protect agricultural operations.** Agricultural operations need to be protected by local zoning measures that classify them as the principal and preferred use of prime orchard or other agricultural soils. Incompatible uses of adjacent land will be discouraged. Other local ordinances and programs should also be coordinated to protect sustainable agricultural operations.
- **Protect sand and gravel resources.** Lands with large amounts of marketable sand and gravel deposits should be identified and protected from conversion to other uses, or from being surrounded by residences to the degree that future extraction would be precluded. Existing sites of former extraction activities should be reclaimed.
- **Address equity concerns of large land-owners.** The value of prime agricultural, woodland, and gravel lands for residential development often exceeds that of the resource value of these lands. A major effort will be made to develop a County-wide program to permit large land-owners to capture the development value of those lands without having to fragment or convert those lands for development purposes. In particular, transfer and purchase of development rights will be explored (see next chapter).
- **Educational opportunities.** An effort should be made to improve opportunities for continuing education, and government officials will support the initiatives of public schools to produce graduates with job ready skills. The consolidation of operational and curricular activities should also be considered.

Figure 4-1
BALANCED GROWTH STRATEGY

