

BASIS FOR THE EMPIRE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Regional Context

Leelanau County is located in the northwestern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan. This County is known as the little finger of Michigan,” because it points northward to the Manitou, the Fox and the Beaver Islands. It is believed to have been visited long ago by the Jesuits and French explorers as they searched the waterways to the West and South. Empire Township is located in the southwest corner of Leelanau County. It has approximately six (6) miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan, much of which is within the boundaries of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Empire Township is about 265 miles from Detroit, 300 miles from Chicago, 150 miles from Grand Rapids, 170 miles from the state capitol at Lansing, and 115 miles from the Mackinac Bridge.

Empire Township has witnessed a decrease in agriculture activity and an increase in tourism since the creation of the National Lakeshore by Congress. The economy is based primarily on the tourism, recreational and residential demands on the limited business activities in the Township.

The Village of Empire is the main hub of this economic activity, some of which is generated by the National Lakeshore Park Headquarters located within the Village.

The closest urban area of any size is Traverse City with a population of 14,532 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. M-72 is the main transportation artery connecting the Township to Traverse City.

Growth is not expected to become a major problem in the Township because of the limited year-round employment opportunities. Controlled growth as proposed by this Master Plan and the Leelanau County General Plan should insure there is no real adverse impact on the Township.

People

The organization of Empire Township officially began in 1865, although homesteaders, adventurers and settlers had been in the neighborhood since 1847. Before the settlers, Native Americans, the Chippewa, occupied the area. There are still traces of their settlements in the Dunes area and in the interior sections of the Township.

It appears that the earliest settlers came to this area through Glen Arbor, where there was a natural harbor and a refuge for sailing vessels. Others came across Lake Michigan to Glen Haven and filed claims on land at the southern end of Sleeping Bear Dunes, homesteaded their claims and settled their families here. Others came via the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes and then to the Glen Arbor area. John LaRue, John Fisher and John Dorsey came to the Glen Lake area after first traveling to the Manitou Islands. At that

time there were only Native Americans on the mainland of Leelanau County. In 1854, LaRue moved to Empire, becoming the first white settler. John Dorsey purchased land in Empire Township on the southern shore of Glen Lake. Native Americans remained in the Empire area until the early 1900s, making camp on South Bar Lake in summer and moving in the winter to the Pearl Lake area in Benzie County.

Timber and Farming

Empire Township was and is a land of beautiful hills and valleys and supports farms, orchards, timberlands, and people on its unspoiled acres.

The largest community in Empire Township is the Village of Empire. The Village of Empire once bustled with activity as loggers breathed life into the local stores, saloons and hotels. Life centered around the sawmills that operated on the Lake Michigan shore near South Bar Lake. The largest mill was operated by the Empire Lumber Company from 1885 until about 1915. Thousands of acres of virgin timber fell before the loggers' axes during Empire's logging heyday. Steam engines and horse teams hauled logs from the forests to the mill, where these logs were sawed into lumber. Sailing vessels carried the finished lumber to Chicago to supply the great building boom that helped tame the Midwest. Fires claimed all three mills that were built in Empire. The last one burned in 1917 and no attempts were made to reconstruct it. The big timber had vanished and the Village returned to a period of peaceful inactivity. Orchards were planted on the cutover land and farming became the main occupation.

Other lumber mills included D.H. Day Mill and the John Fisher Mill. Some of the logging camps were northeast of Empire on M-72 and Fredrickson Road, the Peter Stormer Camp on Pearl Lake, North Manitou Island which shipped to Empire and Burnham Camp on top of Burdickville hill.

Transportation and Communication

A railroad was built in 1892 by the Empire Lumber Camp. It was called the Empire and Southeastern "Picturesque Line". The railroad and the Empire Lumber Company were both owned and operated by the T. Wilce Company of Chicago. There were approximately twelve miles of main line track and an additional three-mile spur line that ran to a point near Pearl Lake in Benzie County. The main line started at the mill in Empire and terminated at Empire Junction, a point on the Manistee and Northeastern Railroad. The railroad was also used to carry passengers and mail. It was in use until about 1918 and then discontinued.

The earliest roads were Native American trails. The bridge across the Narrows, the channel that connects Big and Little Glen Lakes, was first built in the 1870s. Before that time travelers either detoured ten miles around Little Glen or rowed a boat across the lake.

Messages from the “outside” reached Empire Township area often from the D.H. Day store in Glen Haven where messages came by Morse code. The Coast Guard Station also relayed messages in those days.

The first telephone system established in Empire was a special line from Traverse City to the Empire Lumber Company. It was known as the Citizen’s Telephone Company.

Empire Township had two newspapers in the early 1900s, the Meteor in Burdickville and the Leelanau Leader in Empire.

Agriculture

As mentioned previously, when the lumber mills ceased, farming took over. Orchards were planted for fruit production. The process of making maple sugar was and still is an important business activity and a tourist attraction.

Churches

St. Phillip Neri Church was built in 1894. The first Catholic service was held in 1855 at Tobin’s cabin on Glen Lake. The Methodist Episcopal Church was built in about 1895. The original building is now the Masonic Temple in the Village of Empire.

Schools

The first Empire school was on Voice Road between M-22 and North Bar Road. It operated from 1867–1891.

Park

Old Settlers Picnic Ground is located in Empire Township. The Annual Picnic was started in 1892. The Centennial was celebrated in 1992. This is a County owned park.

National Park/Tourism

On October 21, 1970, Congress established the 71,000-acre Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore along the northeastern shore of Lake Michigan. In the early 1970s, the National Park Service began acquiring property and now much of the area in Empire Township is part of this National Lakeshore. A total of 5,978 acres in Empire Township belongs to the Park. Because of this, tourism has become the main source of income for Empire Township.

The tourism business has been important to the Township since the demise of heavy agriculture, fruit farms, and the lumbering industry. Motels, lodges, bed and breakfast establishments, golf courses and resorts in the Township and immediate area have all been instrumental in fostering the growth of tourism in this area.

Source: 1994 Empire Township Master Land Use Plan, which referenced the following sources:

- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, A Complete Guide. Guy A. Wood, p. 42*
- *Some Other Day (Remembering Empire). Collected by the Empire Area Heritage Group*
- *Remembering Empire (Through Pictures). Empire Area Heritage Group*
- *Let's Fly Backward, Barnstorming the Grand Traverse Region. Al Barnes*
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes – General Management Plan, October 1979*

GROWTH TRENDS

Population

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Empire Township (exclusive of the Village) had a population of 1,085, an increase from 858 in 1990. Using the projection information from the Leelanau County Working Paper #5, it is estimated that the Township will have a constant growth rate of 28%. The population in 2010 would be 1,354.

It is projected that the population in the year 2020 will be 1,500. Empire Village population data for 2000 is 378, for 1990 is 355, and is projected to grow to 450 by 2020.

Although the overall County population experienced the largest gains in the last three decades, much of that increase has occurred in the eastern portions of the County. The most significant growth areas during the last decade occurred in Elmwood and Suttons Bay Township. Elmwood Township had a population increase of 38.9% and Suttons Bay Township had an increase of 38.7%. In the same time period, Empire Township had a population increase of 26.5% and the Village had an increase of 6.5%.

The age structure of the population will influence the nature of services needed throughout the community. Since 1960, the percentage of persons over age 65 has increased in the community while the number of school-age children has decreased. Overall, the County median age has been rising since 1980 with the influx of retirees. Within the County, the 2000 median age varies from a low of 37.3 years in Kasson Township to a high of 53.1 years in Glen Arbor Township. The Village of Empire median age is 49.1 years, compared to 47.4 years for the Township. Of this comparison, 23.5% in the Village are over 65 while 22.6% in the Township are over 65. It is expected that the age median will continue to increase as more retirees permanently relocate to the area to take advantage of the beauty and serenity of the Empire area. (See The Leelanau General Plan, Working Paper #11, Demographics, July 2003).

Economic Trends

The median income for households in Empire Township in 2000 was \$40,263 with a per capita income of \$24,975. Countywide the per capita income was \$24,686. There were 529 people listed in the Township's labor force, with twenty-seven listed as unemployed for the period. (See The Leelanau General Plan, Working Paper #11, Demographics, July 2003).

Agriculture in Empire Township

Statistics for agriculture in Empire Township are not readily available, but the important fruit and farm products of the past seem to be on the decline. Each year more and more cleared land lies dormant, orchards are slowly dying off without replacement, and large-scale dairy, livestock and poultry production have become non-existent. Economics have a great deal to do with the demise of these once profitable agricultural activities. Not

only is there some conflict with the use of pesticides in areas of residential build-up, but also the cost of fertilizer, increased labor costs, decrease of outside capital and intrinsic properties of the land have forced most farmers to abandon their former livelihood.

Much of the agricultural income in the Township is already switching over to tourism revenue, residential construction, and expanded recreational opportunities in the area. These new revenue sources should keep Empire Township ranked sixth or higher and Empire Village first in per capita income (dollars) with respect to the other Leelanau Townships and Villages of Northport and Suttons Bay. (See The Leelanau General Plan, Working Paper #11, Demographics, July 2003).

Land Prices

From all indications, agricultural land values in the Township will continue to rise at a moderate rate on individual properties. There will also be intense development pressure on rural lands. Typically these lands have similar sizes and features as agricultural lands, but are not farmed.

Conflicts in Agricultural Activity

The decrease of agricultural activity within the Township has minimized conflicts between the use of pesticides and resident uses. There is, however, a continuing concern about groundwater pollution from soil insecticides and underground storage tanks.

Increased enforcement measures on the use of pesticides and insecticides; continued awareness of their impact on soils and human health; expanded buffer zones between agricultural districts and residences; and farmers' greater attention in the selection and use of these materials are factors that will help maintain friendly relations between agricultural and new residential land uses within the Township.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Climate

Leelanau County, which includes Empire Township, is surrounded on three sides by the fresh water of Lake Michigan. The climate is “Midwest continental” influenced by the heat-exchanging properties of Lake Michigan and the inland lakes. The weather observations taken at Maple City show that weather in Leelanau County is a little milder in winter and cooler in summer compared to the weather in the Traverse City area. Variations in the frost hazard depend on the elevation above the lowlands and natural air drainage in a particular area. Generally, all factors considered, the length of the growing season is about 150 days with the shorter period in the south central part of the country. Average monthly precipitation for the area is from a low of 1.7 inches to a high of 3.0 inches between May and November for an annual average of 29 inches. Record snowfalls of five inches for October 1969, 36 inches for 1966, 86 inches for December 1989 and 205 ½ inches for the winter season of 1988-89 were recorded at Suttons Bay.

Hydrology

Lakes and Wetlands

Empire Township has several lakes and creeks that drain from the higher ground. Big and Little Glen Lake, with shoreline also in the Glen Arbor and Kasson Townships, are primarily spring-fed in addition to drainage from higher ground. The combined acreage of the two lakes is over 7,000 acres. The lake water level is controlled by a dam on the Crystal River and is maintained at 596.75 feet above sea level by a consent decree of the Leelanau Circuit Court in 1954. Other lakes in the area include North and South Bar Lake and Taylor Lake. Hatlem Creek flows into the southern shore of Big Glen Lake. Wetlands are predominantly on the northern and western shore of both Glen Lakes.

Groundwater Availability

Empire Township has experienced little trouble in locating suitable sites for wells and obtaining potable clear water. Drilled wells have varied from twenty-five to four hundred feet, depending upon the location. Although some residents have found a need for water softeners, most wells go untreated.

Flooding

Flooding has not been a major problem in Empire Township, except when Lake Michigan reached an all time high in 1986, which caused significant shore and bluff erosion, caused some wet basements and reduced the efficiency of some septic systems near the shoreline. No flooding of any consequence has taken place in other areas of the Township.

Pollution

Pollution of ground or surface water is not significant in Empire Township. Residents and business property owners are continually reminded of the pollution potential caused by in-ground fuel storage tanks. Generally, low-pressure sewage systems, lagoon systems or holding tanks do not present a problem if properly maintained to Health Department specifications.

Geology

Surface Geology

The surface of Empire Township is covered by ground-up rock material. This material ranges from clay or loams to sand and gravel and contains boulders, stones and limestone slabs. All of this earth mass was moved by ice from the north during several glaciation periods. The ice transported material ranges from 50 to 600 feet or more in thickness and is underlain by shale and limestone bedrock. Erosion by wind and water has modified the surface configuration, mainly by moving soil material from higher to lower elevations, sculpturing the hills and cutting drainage ways. Glaciation and subsequent erosion cycles formed a number of different landscapes in Empire Township. The most distinct is the hilly morionic landscape and drumlins in the southeastern part of the Township. Strong winds built up the dunes on Lake Michigan, which formed much of what is now known as the Alligator Sleeping Bear Dune, reaching an elevation of 1,044 feet and is the most pronounced of the open dune land.

The permeable unconsolidated glacial deposits permit percolation of absorbed water to great depth. This water moves laterally through the ground until it appears again as springs or as underwater discharge into streams and lakes, notably the Glen Lakes. Rapid runoff of water is slight and occurs mostly during periods of rapid snowmelt, particularly if the surface soil is frozen. Runoff from the ever-decreasing cultivated sloping fields is rapid if they are not protected by appropriate measures to conserve soil and water.

Soil Associations

Soil association is a landscape that has a distinctive proportional pattern of soils. Empire Township is gifted by this variation, especially as the community turns from agricultural to a tourism and residential atmosphere. The association is useful to people who want an idea of the soils in the Township as they compare with other areas or want to know the location of tracts that are suitable for a certain kind of land use. Soil information is also useful for a guide in managing a watershed, a wooded tract, a wildlife area or in planning recreational facilities and community developments. The soil information is extremely important in selecting exact road locations, construction sites or specialty structures because soils in one area ordinarily differ in slope, depth, stoniness, drainage and other characteristics that affect soil management.

Soil Associations Found In Empire Township

Five soil associations are found throughout Empire Township and are categorized as follows:

Deer Park – Dune Association

Deer Park – Dune: well drained, strongly sloping to very steep, sandy soils on dunes. The Deer Park Duneland Association is found along the Lake Michigan shoreline extending approximately a mile inland by Little Glen Lake and about one half-mile inland just north of Empire Village and also at the Empire-Benzie line. None of this association is suited for farms. The available water capacity, fertility and organic matter content of these soils are low. Nearly all of this association is in woodland or is used for recreation.

East Lake – Eastport Association

East Lake – Eastport: well drained and moderately well-drained, nearly level to gently sloping, sandy soils and very poorly-drained, nearly level, mucky soils; on lake terraces and beach ridges. The East Lake – Eastport Association is found around the Village of Empire extending approximately four miles north varying from a quarter to a mile wide. A second location surrounds both Little and Big Glen Lakes, being one mile wide on the southeast shore, its widest point. Although orchards are well suited for this association, homes and lakefront properties have taken precedence. Fertility is low in all these soils as well as the water capacity is low in the well drained soils. Plantations of pine, spruce and natural woodland prevail, except where the terraces and buildings have usurped the land area. A main concern is controlling erosion.

Kalkaska Series Association

Kalkaska – East Lake: well drained, moderately steep to very steep, sand soil on moraines.

Kalkaska – Mancelona: well drained, nearly level to strongly sloping, sandy soils on outwash plains.

Leelanau – Mancelona: well drained, strongly sloping to very steep, sandy soils on moraines.

The Kalkaska Series dominates the rest of Empire Township, extending east from the west side of Little Glen Lake to the Empire-Kasson Township line south to Benzie Township and north along the Deer Park – Dune and East Lake – Eastport Associations. Natural vegetation is composed of elm, beech, red maple, and a few hemlocks and white pines. Abandoned farmland is common on these soils.

Kalkaska sand slopes range from 0 to 45 percent slopes. Surface runoff is from slow to fast, depending upon the ground cover, all of which affects erosion hazards. Surface runoff in the higher slopes areas is slow in wooded areas and medium in open areas, but the erosion hazard is severe. The soil in the Kalkaska Series is not suited for common field crops, forage crops, or pasture. On the 0 to 6 percent slopes, orchards are moderately well suited in frost-protected areas, but intensive soil management is required. Generally, the soils falling in the Kalkaska 6 to 45 percent slopes series are moderately suitable for use for wildlife habitat and woods.

Soil Properties

Some soil properties are important because they affect construction and maintenance of roads, airports, pipelines, building foundations, water storage facilities, and sewage disposal systems. The soils map is useful for planning, and with detailed field investigation, potential problems could be uncovered. Where insufficient detail is available on the map, an on-site technical investigation is a must. Other source documents should also be researched for any characteristics of a site that could affect a proposed land use.

Soil Suitability Guides

The suitability of soils guides for specific uses are valuable tools for property owners, managers, and community planning officials. Specific reports applicable to Empire Township are available from the Soil Conservation District. The information has been classified according to potential productivity levels based on vegetation or soils. The information does not provide volumes, densities or value, but is a guide if proper management programs are undertaken. The information was also created to protect the rather limited areas from being despoiled by pressures for other land uses even though agricultural uses are on a decline in the Township. Community planners need to recognize the value of these relatively scarce sites and set their priorities on their use by giving protection as necessary to insure productive and environmentally sensitive sites are preserved.

SOURCE: 1994 Empire Township Master Land Use Plan, which referenced the Soil Survey of Leelanau County, Michigan 1973.

THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The Empire Township, including the Village of Empire, has a limited complement of services and facilities available to residents, visitors and small business activities needed in their everyday existence and activities. Included are such things as a post office, library, banks, shopping, fire and emergency medical services and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Highways

Empire Township, encompassing 23,040 acres, is located in the southwest corner of Leelanau County. It is approximately six (6) miles long and seven (7) miles wide at the widest point. Since transportation is a major concern, Empire Township is served by M-72 and M-22, which connects the Township to the north, south and east. Other secondary highways traverse the Township, connecting various scenic areas, parks, community centers and residential areas throughout the Township. These roadways include County Roads 616, 675, 677 and state highways M-109. Bicycle paths are being provided on many miles of roadways within the Township as major highway improvements are undertaken.

Road Design

Not all roads should be thought as the same, as they serve different uses. Design standards for roads serving the downtown village area differ from roads serving residential areas, which should differ from roads serving more rural areas. Generally roads should be designed to meet their locale and usage needs, and not their potential full capacity needs. Road designers should give priority to environment, historic preservation, and neighborhood protection concerns, instead of opting for standard road designs that give priority to vehicle capacity.

Roads should be designed to reflect the “context sensitive design” objectives whenever possible. Context sensitive design is a movement towards flexible road design instead of conforming to the “one size fits all” philosophy the current exists when roads are designed.

Road Standards

Leelanau County Road Commission has a published set of standards for public and private roads. Private roads have greater flexibility with respect to width and paving requirements.

Road Improvements

Leelanau County road improvements planned for 1993 through 1995 for the Township include improvement of County Road 616 from the intersection of County Road 669 to Burdickville. Several other roads will be upgraded to “four-season” standards so that heavy trucks can travel on them in the spring when thawing takes place. Normally bicycle paths, encouraged by the Township, are added where needed when major roadwork takes place.

Increased bicycle traffic on the Township roadways has increased the potential for accidents where bicycle paths have not been added. Protruding sidewalks, pavement surface changes and other devices that heavily mark pedestrian street crossings would help address this problem.

Access Management

Access management is a set of proven techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing capacity, and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design, and type of access to property. Access management focuses on the number, location, and design of driveways as they relate to the following elements within the road right-of-way: travel lanes, medians, by-pass lanes, dedicated turn lanes, and signal operations. Access management should be applied to all roads in the Township. The following points should be addressed in the zoning ordinance and during development reviews and rezonings:

- Limit the number of driveways to each lot.
- Restrict the number of lots fronting on highways and on busy roads.
- Regulate the location, spacing, and design of driveways.
- Encourage shared access to parcels and consolidate driveways where possible.
- Locate driveways away from other driveways.
- Restrict turning movements into and out of driveways.
- Encourage passing lanes over road widening.
- Restrict turns onto the roadway.
- Encourage front or rear access drives (frontage roads).
- Connect streets, roads, and access easements.
- Promote internal connections and alternative accesses.

Airport

Empire Township airport is located east of the Village of Empire and provides an air facility for small private aircraft. The field has parking, toilets and hanger rental available. Aircraft flights in and out of the airport average 1,500 flights per year. Major usage occurs during the warmer months.

Public Transportation

Public transportation is provided by the Bay Area Transit Authority. It serves all of Leelanau County and Traverse City. Residential and other location pick-up and discharge along designated routes are available by prior arrangement.

Marina

There are no public marinas in the Township for access to the inland lakes or Lake Michigan. A public Department of Natural Resources launch site is available on Little Glen and a launch site operated by Glen Arbor Township in Glen Arbor is available for access to Lake Michigan. Boat launch sites are at Lake Michigan and South Bar Lake in the Village of Empire. Empire Township supports current efforts to relocate the Glen Arbor Lake Michigan boat launch site to Glen Haven area in the National Lakeshore area.

Emergency Services

Police protection is provided by the Leelanau County Sheriff's Department and Michigan State Police. Empire Fire and Rescue Department, a volunteer department, provides fire protection and Glen Lake EMS provides ambulance services.

Health Services

Health Services include a comprehensive array of local practitioners and area hospitals.

Community Design

The design of buildings and signs in an area creates a sense of place. There are different design "places" in the township: Burdickville & area surrounding the Village; farms & large lots; recreation-oriented places, and open space areas. Designs should reflect these different locations by being compatible with the historic architectural character in terms of building height, construction materials, roofline slope, porches and windows, and pedestrian and vehicular access locations. Specific design guidelines may be needed to retain the character of these "places."

Home-Based Business

The Township encourages employment opportunities by allowing Home-Based Businesses as secondary uses in single-family residences. These businesses are based often, but not necessarily, on the recent advances in communications and electronics that have reduced the need for businesses to be located adjacent to production or population centers.

These businesses are largely in communications, professional consulting, insurance, design, engineering, e-retail, home services, and frequently only depend on electronic communications for their normal business operations. Other businesses are operated by

residents who supplement the needs of local residents by providing services that are common in neighborhood settings, such as a daycare or beauty salon.

A principal characteristic of a home-based business is one that can be operated with minimal impact on the nature and character of the residential community. These uses should be regulated by the Township in varying degrees and have the following restrictions:

- The permitted number of parking spaces for employees should be in character with the residential neighborhood;
- businesses that depend on employees constantly driving to and from the site (i.e. field workers) should not be permitted;
- noise should not exceed what typically is generated by residential use,
- the operations should occur within the primary structure (daycares are permitted to use the rear yard area if fenced);
- uses that require industrial or manufacturing uses such as repairing boats, automobiles, should not be permitted.
- limit the space devoted to the business so as not to detract from the residential character.

Utilities

Sewage Disposal

The primary sewage disposal method in Empire Township is the on-site sewage system. Where such systems are not suitable due to soil composition, holding tanks must be used.

Electrical And Gas Service

Consumers Power Company provides electric service to Empire Township and DTE provides natural gas in some areas.

Communications And Cable TV Service

CenturyTel provides franchised telephone service within the Township. Cable TV service is provided by Charter Communications in those areas where cable service is available. Expansion of cable service is continuing as economic conditions warrant. Various cellular telephone, internet and satellite services are available in some areas.

Solid Waste Disposal And Recycling

Commercial contractors provide solid waste disposal on demand. Individual solid waste disposal is available for a fee at the solid waste landfill located on M-72 in Kasson Township. Under the sponsorship of the Leelanau County program, continued emphasis

is being placed on recycling of paper, cardboard, glass, aluminum, tin cans and plastic containers. Trailers are provided in the Village for disposal of their recyclable material on scheduled hours.

Water Supply

The Village of Empire has its own water system. All other Township locations are served by individual on-site wells.

Schools

Glen Lake Community School is a K-12 school located in Kasson Township. Students who reside in the Village and Empire Township are bused to the school.

Parks And Recreation

Several parks and recreational facilities are located within the Township and Village of Empire. The Township maintains a campground with adequate support facilities located in the Empire Airport area.

Active and passive parks, natural areas, wetlands and other forms of open space are essential and unique features of the region and provide multiple public benefits for all the residents of the area. Public and private parks and other forms of open space are important factors for quality of life and must be provided as the Township grows.

A wide variety of lands can meet the park and open space needs of the Township, from shoreline areas to environmentally sensitive lands. Open space and rural areas also provide scenic and recreational values, although the primary reason for keeping these lands relatively undeveloped is for their productive resource value or to provide rural living opportunities.

Identifying lands for preservation as open space will be an ongoing process that requires public involvement in determining which areas to preserve and which methods to use. Methods of preserving each parcel designated as open space will be based on site characteristics and the reasons the parcel is to be preserved. Regulations to prevent environmental hazards will keep some lands as open space; others can be preserved through incentives, trades, development dedications, easements and purchase. Using a variety of protective measures will increase Township's ability to maintain a significant amount of parks and natural areas.

Cemeteries

Four cemeteries are located in the Township. Maple Grove is located on M-109, St. Philip Neri Church (Catholic) is in the Village of Empire, Tobin is located on County Road 677 and Bland is located on County Line Road.

Library

Glen Lake Community Library is located in the Village of Empire and supported by the Townships of Empire, Glen Arbor and Kasson. A library board consisting of two representatives from each township oversees its operation. The library was renovated in 1997 and an automated catalog system to track its collection (books, magazines and recordings) of 19,000 items was installed. While the library is primarily recreational, it offers weekly programs for children and high-speed internet access.

Other Facilities And Services

The Township and Village of Empire have municipal offices in the Village of Empire. Both are open to the public at regularly scheduled hours. A Township Hall in the Village is also available by reservation for public and private activities.

Old Settlers Picnic Grounds

Located on the east shore of Big Glen Lake on South Dunns Farm Road (County Road 675) is Old Settlers Picnic Ground. It celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1992. The picnic ground and swimming area, maintained by Leelanau County, has barbecue cooking stoves, tables, playground equipment and toilet facilities. Reservations can be made for special activities at the historic chapel.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Empire Township will implement the Master Land Use Plan through:

1. Township Policies
2. Zoning Ordinances
3. Involvement by Private Groups or Individuals
4. Capital Improvement Programs
5. Monitoring Program

Township Policy Decisions

Development policies are those policies that will be recommended by the Empire Township Planning and Zoning Board and adopted by the Empire Township Board in order to carry out the purpose of the plan. These two boards will work together as they will need to make many decisions that can directly impact Empire Township's citizens and environment. These decisions include future land and zoning ordinances, group or individual requests for action, and to annually review the Master Land Use Plan to ensure compliance.

Agriculture

Agriculture, although on the decline in the Township, should be encouraged in those land use areas that support a profitable operation. These profitable agriculture areas will continue to be protected from development or encroachment from residential or recreational expansion into open spaces or sensitive areas.

Residential

The entire concept of this Master Land Use Plan is to concentrate residential development in or near the Village of Empire or other designated areas, thereby retaining as much open space as possible and to take advantage of concentrated utilities and other residential support systems. Development and growth outside the designated areas will only take place when it is assured that these areas can no longer meet residential demand.

Commercial

Retail commercial profitability in the Township is very limited because of the close proximity of the more commercial benefits of the Traverse City area. The easy access of the supermarkets in the adjacent Traverse City area impacts any profitable venture in the Empire Township area. Appropriate signs should encourage use of the commercial services available in the Village of Empire and the Township commercial area.

Light Industrial

Consistent with the Leelanau General Plan, light industries that do not have an adverse impact on residents and the environment will be encouraged. Light industry falling into this category should provide a source of year-round employment in the Township.

Rural

The Rural Area incorporates, whenever possible, Environmentally Sensitive areas and the bulk of the open non-agricultural land in the Township. These areas are considered the major resource, the “unique and very precious nature” of Empire Township. Consistent with the stated community goals, more intensive use will only be allowed when there is a clear determination of the need of the community that cannot be met without the conversion of rural areas to more intensive use.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

These areas will be identified and regulations and standards developed to protect those areas that are sensitive to development due to soil types, drainage, topographical, vegetation, wildlife habitats or other factors that are subject to being seriously endangered, damaged or destroyed if allowed to be developed inconsistent with sound conservation and preservation practices. These regulations and standards should in no way preclude property owners using their property to meet their needs provided they comply with the federal, state and local statutes or regulations applicable to that particular land use district.

Zoning Ordinance

Revisions

The Empire Township Zoning Ordinance will be revised to conform to the land use areas and guidelines of the Master Land Use Plan and the Leelanau County General Plan.

Special Use Permits

A process for reviewing certain land uses and issuing of special use permits will be used for those land use activities that are allowable only if certain conditions or restrictions are met to ensure that the land use or activity authorized shall be compatible with adjacent uses of land, the natural environment, and the capacities of public services and facilities affected by the land use. In addition, these standards shall ensure that the land use or activity is consistent with the public health, safety and welfare of the Township and the standards enumerated are intended to promote the intent and purpose of the ordinance.

Land Use Permits

All land use permit requests shall note other construction or other land uses contemplated within the next two-year period, such as accessory buildings or other land uses different from the primary use.

Site Plan Review

The zoning ordinance will designate what land uses and structures will be subject to the review of a site plan by the Empire Township Planning and Zoning Board. The site plan review will insure that the provisions regarding erosion control, sewage disposal, removal of vegetation, building construction and location blend with the character and esthetics of the district and are in conformance with the intent and goals of this Master Land Use Plan, county, state and federal regulatory requirements. During the review process, the planning and Zoning Board may request such additional data and analysis in the form of an environmental assessment or impact statement to insure that the proposed development meets the goals and intent of the Master Land Use Plan.

Non-Conforming Provisions

To correct land uses in effect prior to adoption of a Township Land Use Ordinance and still give the property owner continued use of the property to meet reasonable needs, two classes of non-conforming use should be implemented during the subsequent ordinance update: Class A and Class B. The intent is a Class A non-conforming use would be applied to any continuing use compatible with the current use. A Class B non-conforming use would be one incompatible with the current use or cannot meet the intent of the zoning ordinance and Master Land Use Plan.

Lot Splitting and Width-To-Depth Provisions

Newly created lots must conform to the Township zoning not only for width, but also, whenever possible, with respect to width-to-depth ratio to insure the newly created lots remain as buildable lots, do not impact on erosion control measures, and do not compromise public safety by impeding ingress and egress. Adequate regulations at Township and county levels must be implemented for mandatory review of pending lot splitting prior to recording the newly created lots with the County Register of Deeds.

Standards

The standards for development that are adopted as part of the Master Land Use Plan should be included in the Zoning Ordinance. A site plan review process to review site plans for conformance to the standards has to be part of the Special Use Permit process and can also be used for specific allowed uses to insure compliance with the standards of the Zoning Ordinance and other Township, county, state and federal requirements. Site plan review shall be applicable to any land use identified as environmentally sensitive and all other land use districts where site plans are required.

Rezoning

Rezoning should be considered only after reviewing the appropriate sections of the Master Land Use Plan to determine if the proposed rezoning is consistent with the intent of this Plan and the Leelanau County General Plan.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals should adopt rules or procedures to consider appeals, variances and requests for interpretation.

Involvement by Private Groups or Individuals

There are planning goals that cannot be accomplished by Zoning Ordinance alone such as preserving open space, scenic areas, etc., but decisions by landowners can accomplish this by private contracts, scenic easements, and so forth. Private groups or individuals can also impact or be part of the decision process by attending regularly scheduled meetings of the Township Board and the Planning and Zoning Board. These meetings are always open to the general public and participation is encouraged.

Capital Improvements Program and Budget

A Capital Improvement Budget, necessary to implement this plan, should be part of the annual Township budget adopted by the Township Board. Every capital improvement recommended should meet the test of a real need and one the Township can afford. Especially important is the capital improvement consistent with the Leelanau County General Plan as well as this Master Land Use Plan. Each capital improvement budget should contain:

- a. A description of the different capital improvement projects arranged according to priority.
- b. A statement of the basic reasons for each project and its priority.
- c. A statement of the amount each project will cost and how it will be financed.

Township Planning and Zoning Board

One meeting a year should be designated by the Planning and Zoning Board to review the Master Land Use Plan for compliance. This meeting should also determine if any revisions are needed. The Township Board members, Zoning Administrator, Zoning Board of Appeals members and the public are encouraged to attend.