

## Chapter Two

# PLANNING ISSUES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### Introduction

A fundamental purpose of this Plan is to establish a basis for future land use and public services in the Township. Waterloo Township wants to be actively involved in guiding and shaping future growth and development in the community and not allow the community to evolve merely by chance. To effectively plan for the Township's wellbeing with regard to future land use and public services, it is necessary to identify important planning issues facing the Township and clarify the long-term goals and objectives of the Township. Following is a presentation of these planning issues and related goals and objectives.

### Planning Issues, Goals & Objectives

A number of key planning issues are apparent today. These issues vary in scope and are clearly inter-related. The future quality of life and character of the Township will be largely shaped by the Township's strategy in dealing with these future land use and public services issues. Each planning issue presented in this Chapter is followed by a set of goal and objective statements. Planning goals are statements that express the Township's long-range desires. Each goal has accompanying objectives which are general strategies that the Township can pursue to attain the specified goal. For example, a family's goal may be a vacation in the Upper Peninsula while two of the family's objectives may be to make additional savings deposits for the trip and visit a travel agent for suggestions and information.

The goals and objectives presented in this Chapter are important for several reasons:

- The goals and objectives provide current and future residents of Waterloo Township with an overview of the intended future character of the Township.
- The goals and objectives identify and outline the basic parameters which should be used in guiding land use and public services policies in the Township.
- The goals and objectives serve as references upon which future rezoning and land development decisions can be evaluated.





### **Objectives, Goals and Policies of the Plan**

The planning issues, and associated goals and objectives, are divided into the following major categories:

- Growth Management
- Community Character and Environment
- Waterloo State Recreation Area
- Farmland Resources
- Local Food Production, Processing and Distribution
- Residential Development
- Roadway Network
- Commercial & Industrial Development
- Limited Public Services and Tax Base

The planning issues presented in the following pages are not intended to be all inclusive. Rather, they are presented as the primary issues that the community must address as it establishes a future for itself. These issues can be expected to evolve over time and, accordingly, should be reexamined periodically and appropriate modifications be made.

### **Growth Management**

Waterloo Township's population had been increasing up to the 2010 US Census. But the rate of growth peaked in the 1960's and has been steadily declining since. In the 2010 US Census the total population actually dropped for the first time in its history to 2,856. (See graph 1, page A-17). It is unknown if the total population of the Township will decline further or increase. The future character and quality of life in the Township will be impacted by the way the Township chooses to manage future growth and development, particularly in contrast to adjacent township's policies. The Township has significant natural resources and farmland resources. It is important to acknowledge that the Township's policies have direct influence over only the portion that is privately owned. The land under State ownership and management within the Waterloo State Recreation Area by the Department of Natural Resources is almost completely influenced by the State's policies.

Waterloo Township wants to provide appropriate opportunities for growth and development. Policies in this Plan must address accommodating growth and development and provide a strategy for effectively shaping and guiding future growth and development in an appropriate manner, consistent with the feedback from the township survey and the opportunities and constraints presented by its natural and cultural characteristics. Individual properties and land uses exist within a network of adjoining and nearby properties and land uses. A township-wide land use pattern should strive to assure compatibility between land uses. This can be accomplished by recommendations regarding the location of new land uses, development densities, and buffering.

**GOAL:** *Manage future development in a manner which is consistent with the natural limitations of the land, the preservation of natural resources and rural character, the availability of necessary public facilities and services including road infrastructure and emergency services, and the cost-effective use of tax dollars.*

### **Objectives**

- 1) Preserve the Township's natural resources through a coordinated future land use strategy and related regulations which permit reasonable use of land while discouraging unnecessary destruction or loss of natural resources, including agricultural resources, wetlands, woodlands, lakes and streams.
- 2) The Township has no intention to introduce public sewer or water services.
- 3) Prohibit new growth and development that requires levels of public facilities and services unavailable in the Township, until the time such levels of services become available. Wherever legally permissible, local regulations should require new developments to pay for the direct and indirect public services costs to the Township associated with that development. These costs should not be imposed on existing residents. Exceptions should be made where public interests and benefits are substantial.
- 4) Discourage development in flood plain areas.
- 5) Provide regular opportunities for substantive public input on growth and development issues facing the Township and the future character of the Township.
- 6) Maintain effective land development review procedures to assure new land uses are designed to minimize negative impacts upon existing uses, protect important natural resources, and assure public health, safety, and welfare.

### **Community Character and the Environment**

Protection of the Township's rural character is extremely important to the residents of Waterloo Township. "Rural character" is a subjective quality but is typically associated with an overall perception of limited urban development, and open spaces comprised of farmland and/or other open landscapes including woodlands, wetlands, lakes, and fields. Not only are these elements important in shaping the character of the Township, but also provide vital environmental roles including wildlife habitats, flood control, water purification, groundwater recharge, and air quality. The Township has abundant natural resources and sensitive environmental features. Preservation of these resources can be difficult because the process of encroachment can occur slowly. Substantial damage to an entire ecosystem characteristically occurs over a long period of time.

Effective protection of rural character and natural resources does not require the prohibition of growth and development. Managed growth and development encourages the continuation of the Township's overall rural character. The preservation of rural character and natural resources in the face of growth and development, such as platted subdivisions, condominium subdivisions and non-residential development, is dependent upon site development practices which purposely incorporate the protection of open spaces, natural resources and environmental ecosystems into the development plan.

Increased environmental knowledge, awareness, and education, when incorporated into a comprehensive planning strategy, can minimize the potential for environmental degradation and ecosystem disruption. Establishment and protection of interconnected systems of natural/environmental areas, including wetlands, lakes, woodlands, stream corridors, and open fields will provide a diverse and viable habitat for native wildlife and plants. Zoning regulations should encourage protection of the Township's natural resources and rural character.

**GOAL:** *Preserve the dominant rural character of Waterloo Township and its environmental resources and integrity.*

### **Objectives**

- 1) Assure that future land development be designed in scale with existing developed areas and respect the existing surroundings, through reasonable standards addressing density, building size, height, and other development features.

- 2) Encourage land development which actively strives to preserve open spaces as part of a development project (such as on-site woodlands, wetlands, lakes, and fields), including the use of such tools as conservation easements, and land trusts.
- 3) Encourage the maintenance of historically significant structures and lands, and a structurally sound housing stock, and the rehabilitation or removal of blighted structures and yard areas.
- 4) Separate incompatible land uses by distance, natural features, or man-made landscape buffers which adequately screen or mitigate adverse impacts.
- 5) Assure that the quantity and quality of new development does not unreasonably create increases in air, noise, land, and water pollution, or the degradation of land and water resource environments including groundwater.
- 6) Development densities and intensities in environmentally sensitive areas should be limited and all development should be in compliance with applicable local, county, state, and federal regulations.
- 7) Review proposed development in light of its potential impact upon wetlands, woodlands, lakes, and other natural resource areas.
- 8) Educate the public about waste management and the Township's fundamental reliance upon groundwater resources for potable water supplies and the potential detrimental effects of irresponsible land use and development practices.

### **Waterloo State Recreation Area**

A portion of the Waterloo State Recreation is included within Waterloo Township. In 2004 the Department of Natural Resources approved an expanded "Dedicated Boundary" for the Area; see the blue outline on Map 2. More than 53% of the township lies within the Dedicated Boundary including the currently owned properties of the Department of Natural Resources. Over 35% of the Township is currently owned by the State. There are also several hundred privately owned parcels within the Dedicated Boundary. The Dedicated Boundary was established to manage future land purchases and is based on the Department of Natural Resources commitment to: "Conservation, protection, use and enjoyment of the State's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations." Land within the Dedicated Boundary would be a priority purchase for the Department of Natural Resources.

Department of Natural Resources' managed properties include: the Portage Lake State Park (with access to Big Portage Lake on its west shore), an equestrian facility, a commercial aggregate extraction operation, parcels leased for agricultural use, and several managed hiking and equestrian trails. (Map 1, page A-2). The Waterloo Farm Museum and the Dewey School are historic sites owned by the Waterloo Area Historic Society are located within the Dedicated Boundary. There are six privately owned recreational/camping facilities, eight Natural Beauty Roads and several small commercial operations within these boundaries. The amount of State owned/managed land expands as new properties are acquired. In the years 2011-2015 10 parcels were acquired by the Department of Natural Resources amounting to 1,024 acres transferred from private to State ownership.



Waterloo Township is not responsible for providing any public services to the properties actually owned/managed by the Department of Natural Resources. The State does not pay property taxes on their owned land, but is required by law to pay "payments in lieu of taxes" based on total acreage administered by the Department of Natural Resources. In 2015, this amounts to more than 2.5% of the Township's tax revenues.

The recreation area contributes to the strong rural character of the Township and provides the Township with increased economic stability without any added responsibility for providing public services. The privately owned properties both within and adjacent to the Waterloo State Recreation Area are impacted in complex and variable ways by their proximity to the Area.

In recognition of:

- the substantial role the Waterloo State Recreation Area plays within the Township

- the benefits it provides to other communities and residents outside of Waterloo Township
- the Department of Natural Resources' intentions to consolidate their holdings by continuing to accept gifts and grants of land and to continue to buy land on behalf of the people of Michigan within the Dedicated Boundary.

The future land use policies of the Township should include actions to maintain the long-term viability and the benefits of the Waterloo State Recreation Area.

***GOAL:*** Encourage the long-term viability of the Waterloo State Recreation Area through management of land uses and site development practices of the Township.

### **Objectives**

- 1) Consider setback requirements to minimize the impact of development within and adjacent to the Waterloo State Recreation Area.
- 2) Encourage open space uses and development of limited density within the boundaries of, and abutting, the Waterloo State Recreation Area.
- 3) Discourage the establishment of commercial or similar uses within the Waterloo State Recreation Dedicated Boundary that would encourage traffic and other disturbances within the Waterloo State Recreation Area.
- 4) Consider special review procedures for all projects in proximity to the Waterloo State Recreation Area to assure such development minimizes impacts upon the Waterloo State Recreation Area.

### **Farmland Resources**

Agricultural activities within the Township have been revitalized by changes in the agricultural commodity market. Considerable land that has been fallow is currently in production.

The Township's farmland resources provide important food and fiber to both local and regional populations, are an important source of income, and contribute to the stability of the local economy. Still, it is important that the Plan's recommendations recognize the challenges facing the local farming community. The Plan should actively encourage the continuation of farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources while similarly providing landowners the option to convert farm acreage into alternative uses when compatible with the overall future land use strategy of the Township.

Advances in technology, changes in infrastructure, and governmental incentives have altered the potential land use impact of solar electrical energy systems. There is an increase in interest in these clean energy systems for commercial and personal use. Generally private/onsite systems have minimal impact on the neighborhood and adjacent land use patterns. In contrast commercial solar energy systems can have significant impacts. Large parcels that have access to roads and the electrical network may be suitable for commercial energy system developments. Distance from residential use could minimize potential quality of life issues with these commercial projects. The Township's Community Residential Areas are not suitable sites for these commercial solar systems. These commercial projects are not suitable for high density areas such as commercial or industrial areas. There may be some agricultural parcels in the Township that would be attractive to commercial solar energy development.

***GOAL:*** Encourage the continuation of local farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources.

### **Objectives**

- 1) Designate areas which support long term farming and encourage the continuation of agricultural operations through complimentary zoning provisions.
- 2) To the extent that residential development occurs in agricultural areas, encourage such development to be placed on less productive farmland.
- 3) The Township should participate in the Jackson County Farmland Preservation Ordinance. Residents should be made aware of opportunities for farmland preservation and encourage participation in the various State and local farmland preservation programs.

- 4) Explore the establishment of a purchase of development rights program as a means of allowing a farmer to continue farming operations while receiving a reasonable financial return on the development potential of the farmland property and consider the adoption of local regulations to facilitate these programs.
- 5) The Township encourages entrepreneurial agriculture by enabling direct marketing of locally produced farm products, specialty crops and agri-tourism.
- 6) Define areas distributed throughout the Township that are best suited for agricultural opportunities.
- 7) The potential use of Waterloo farmland space for commercial alternative energy production such as solar electrical energy production continues to grow. Since the lease income from such developments may provide Waterloo agricultural landowners with better financial returns than more conventional agricultural production on the same land, and particularly since the township does wish to encourage the continuation of farming, some alternative electrical energy agricultural land uses could be accommodated given proper local oversight.

## **Local Food Production, Processing and Distribution**

In recent years there has been an increase in the public's interest in food that is produced locally. In response there have been new types of land uses that build on this interest. Examples include: the sale of produce grown on residential property, sale of fresh eggs, sale of firewood, farm stands, farmer's markets, Community Supported Agriculture, Food Hubs, and other emerging enterprises. These are typically small operations and may not easily be considered commercial or light industrial. These operations are often located in residential areas, and with success may expand and generate increased traffic, need for onsite parking, signage and other impacts on surrounding land uses.

### **Objectives:**

Waterloo Township encourages the local production of food, and associated operations to enable public access to locally produced foods and encourage local economic growth associated with these uses. These uses may, however, have adverse impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods and there should be opportunities for evaluation of their benefits and impacts.

## **Residential Development**

Residential development has declined significantly over the past several years due to the general economic downturn. Waterloo Township is a very attractive place to live for many prospective residents. The Township has abundant natural resources and open spaces, an overall rural character, close proximity to desirable urban services and retail centers, and excellent regional access to near and distant employment centers. Principal limitations to any new residential development will be largely related to environmentally sensitive areas, the ability of area soils to accommodate septic drain fields, limited public services and the ability of the Township to assure adequate public services to meet the demands of the increased residential development, and balancing residential growth with farmland resources protection.

The primary concern in regard to future housing is that it be accommodated in a manner that will support the Township's desire to preserve the community's rural character, and that development densities respect local natural and cultural conditions. The population of Waterloo Township declined from 3,079 in 2000 to 2,856 in 2010. It is anticipated that the population will remain relatively flat over the next 5 years.

***GOAL:*** Accommodate new residential development in a manner which recognizes the opportunities and constraints of the Township's public services, infrastructure, and natural features; preserves the overall rural character of the Township and its farmland resources and accommodates a range of densities and lifestyles.

### **Objectives:**

- 1) Encourage the continued dominance of low-density housing as the principal housing option in the Township and identify land areas, through planning and zoning, most appropriate for such housing.
- 2) Land capacity should be an important consideration when determining the appropriate density of development, and development densities should not undermine important environmental features.

- 3) Discourage strip residential development along the frontage of existing state and county roads, to minimize traffic safety hazards and the “land-locking” of interior acreage.
- 4) Residential development should incorporate the preservation of natural resource systems and open spaces, and the preservation of the Township’s rural character.
- 5) Prohibit residential development densities in areas where existing public services and/or natural conditions are inadequate to support the proposed density.

## Roadway Network

If new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced into the Township, demands upon the roadway network will increase. Even low-density residential development can significantly increase local traffic levels. This increased traffic may lessen the level of service along some of the Township’s roads. This is particularly true of the Township’s unpaved roads. Additionally, it must be recognized that road improvements may well attract new development which, in turn, will place further demands on the roadway network. This Plan must seek to assure that the Township’s roads are adequately maintained, and improvements are coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.

There are also several roadways within the Township that are used extensively by non-residents commuting to and from workplaces outside of the Township. This use of Township roads by non-residents also adds to the maintenance requirements and congestion of our roadway network.

The Plan must recognize the opportunities presented by the Township’s improved thoroughfares and strive to maximize their potential through appropriate land use management. The extent to which higher density and intensity of land uses, including commercial and industrial land uses, are in comparatively close proximity to these key thoroughfares will minimize future maintenance costs and traffic levels along the Township’s other roads.

The future pattern of parcel divisions and subdivisions within Waterloo Township will have an important impact upon the future quality of life within the Township. Much of the residential development in the Township today is located along the existing county road frontages. This pattern of parcel divisions can be debilitating to Waterloo Township because: 1) the increased number of driveways directly accessing the county roads increases the level of congestion and safety hazards along these corridors; 2) travel times are increased; and 3) the Township’s previously rich rural panoramic views of woodlands, fields, and other open spaces, as experienced from the roadway, are reduced to images of never-ending driveways, cars, garages, and front yards. Zoning regulations should be designed to support the effectiveness and character of the Township’s roadway network.

Accordingly, the Plan should encourage future residential development which maintains the integrity of the Township’s roadway network and rural character.

***GOAL:*** *Maintain a transportation network throughout the Township which moves vehicular traffic in an efficient and safe fashion, utilizes road segments specifically designed to accommodate higher traffic flows where higher traffic levels are being generated, and is coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.*

### Objectives

- 1) Discourage high traffic generating land uses and development patterns along the Township’s secondary roads.
- 2) Adopt land use and/or other regulations which minimize the potential for traffic congestion and safety hazards along adjacent roadways, including limitations on the number, size, and shape of new land divisions along county roads and the discouragement of "strip" development.
- 3) Road improvements, including the paving of gravel roads, which will heighten growth and development pressures in areas of the Township not specified for such growth, should be strongly discouraged.
- 4) Encourage additional designation of appropriate roadways as Natural Beauty Roads.
- 5) Discourage through trucking except on M-52 and M-106.

## Commercial and Industrial Development

Waterloo Township has limited commercial development and industrial development. Constraints toward the establishment of such uses in the Township are significant, including the lack of public water and sewer, a comparatively small population base, and the competition from nearby urban centers such as Chelsea and Jackson. These and other nearby cities also address many of the day-to-day consumer needs of area residents as well as providing opportunities for comparative shopping and professional services. The principal opportunities for new commercial development are those presented by the improved road infrastructure of M-52 and M-106.

To the extent that Waterloo Township accommodates future commercial or industrial development, such development should: 1) not be permitted to locate randomly throughout the Township; 2) be compatible with available public services and facilities, including public safety and road infrastructure; and 3) minimize negative impacts upon the enjoyment and use of nearby lands. In light of the existing and planned character of the Township and its limited public services, large commercial facilities which draw from a regional market should be generally discouraged. The lack of extensive public services and infrastructure need not prohibit the introduction of future industrial operations which are geared more to the assembly of pre-manufactured materials rather than manufacturing operations relying upon raw materials. These “light” industrial uses, and commercial development, could improve the economic stability of the Township through increased tax revenues and employment opportunities.

***GOAL:*** Provide opportunities for limited expansion of commercial and industrial uses that minimize negative impacts upon adjacent land uses, respond to the predominant rural character of the community, and are compatible with available public services and infrastructure.

### Objectives

- 1) Identify locations in the Township, through planning and zoning, considered appropriate for commercial and industrial land uses, taking into account the constraints and opportunities presented by the Township's natural features, such as topography and soils, and the availability of public facilities and services, including road infrastructure.
- 2) Recognize the significance of M-106 and M-52 as potential opportunities for the location of new commercial and industrial uses.
- 3) Provide opportunities for new commercial and industrial land uses which assure such uses are in scale with surrounding land uses, including such features as building size and height, setbacks, and open space areas.
- 4) Future commercial and industrial land uses should not be permitted to indiscriminately encroach into residential and agricultural areas but rather be located in appropriately identified locations.
- 5) Encourage consolidated commercial centers rather than strip commercial development patterns.
- 6) Require landscaping and screening measures to assure commercial and industrial uses do not adversely impact the normal use and enjoyment of adjoining land uses.
- 7) Limit industrial uses to those which are predominately characterized by assembly activities and similar “light” operations that do not require heightened levels of public services or otherwise negatively impact surrounding land uses or the community as a whole.
- 8) Provide opportunities for home-based occupations within residential dwelling units under conditions which will not negatively impact the residential character, appearance, and quality of life experienced by surrounding residential properties and neighborhoods.

### Limited Public Services and Tax Base

Tax revenues dictate, in part, the extent and quality of public services. Residents do not readily support increases in taxes. Though new development can be expected to increase the Township's tax base, the new development will place additional demands upon public services. Contrary to traditional planning wisdom and thought, research has shown that new development does not necessarily “pay its way,” particularly as it applies



to single family residential development. Development patterns which minimize new public costs should be sought where practical.

To this end, it is advantageous to maintain a compact form of growth and development and, to the extent it is practical, locate higher density and intensity development near or adjacent to areas currently being served with higher levels of public services. Current police and fire protection services, and the roadway network, appear to be meeting the current needs of area residents. This is due, in large part, to the limited population of the Township.

***GOAL:*** *Maintain public facilities and services in support of the planned future land use pattern and as necessary to assure public health, safety, and welfare in a cost-effective manner.*

### **Objectives**

- 1) Discourage public services improvements that will have the effect of encouraging excessive growth and development, or encouraging growth and development at a rate that the Township cannot assure adequate public health, safety, and welfare.
- 2) Discourage public services improvements that will have the effect of encouraging growth and development in areas of the Township not designated for such growth.
- 3) Continually monitor local attitudes toward recreational facilities in the Township and take appropriate planning and capital improvement actions to acquire and develop local park land and/or recreational programs.
- 4) Maintain a regular meaningful communications program with adjoining municipalities and regional agencies to discuss and investigate public facilities and service's needs, opportunities for new or additional shared facilities and services, and alternative strategies for improving local public services, including contracted services, shared services, and Township-operated services.
- 5) Continue the policy of no public water and sewer.
- 6) Provide for a Waterloo Township Administrative Service Facility.
- 7) Encourage high speed internet services to locate in the Township.