

Chapter 2

VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

VISION STATEMENT

Introduction

Mason County residents, businesses, and visitors have diverse needs, desires, and dreams, and satisfying them is a big challenge for any community. This chapter describes those needs, desires, and dreams in a vision for the future of Mason County, and includes goals, objectives, and strategies to reach that vision.

The vision statement that follows describes Mason County as the County Planning Commission and residents at a town meeting and/or by survey (held in 2012) wanted it to be in the year 2030. The vision is organized into topic areas that separately focus on key elements of the County. The vision statement plus goals, objectives, and strategies from the Mason County 2006 Master Plan were the basis for goals, objectives, and strategies of this plan.

When reading this vision, it is necessary to mentally “*transport*” yourself into the future to the year 2030. Thus, there are references “*back*” to the early 2000’s.

21st Century Mason County

Mason County residents and businesses enjoy a rich quality of life and are reaping the benefits of commitments to future generations made years ago. Beginning in the early 2000s, proactive policies and initiatives, economic development plans, and resource preservation plans were undertaken which went well beyond common practice of the day. These initiatives improved the quality of life, and retained and attracted people and businesses to the county. The results of this hard work are obvious to visitors and residents alike.

Mason County has become a true reflection of sustainability (meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). Businesses, farms, neighborhoods, parks, schools, local government, and natural resources are healthy and self-sustaining in 2030. Mason County continues to have a strong agricultural identity and commitment to its farming heritage while cities, towns, and villages within the County preserve the mainstays of the past while promoting forward thinking and progressive initiatives for the future.

When asked about Mason County, residents use terms like “successful,” “beautiful,” “scenic,” “clean,” and “stimulating.” Residents are also quick to say that Mason County is an outdoor recreation paradise and a great place to raise families or retire.

Economic Development - A County of Opportunity

Mason County has a strong business base that is centered around technology, agriculture, health care, and education. A business friendly identity has drawn valuable economic opportunities into the area and established Mason County as a family friendly community that boasts economic stability. The cities, villages, townships and county continue to work together on an aggressive economic development program aimed at retention, expansion, and attraction of business and industry within the county. The primary objective is to create and maintain a healthy and growing economy in Mason County with high paying jobs. To appreciate the success of this initiative one needs only to visit the clean, unobtrusive, and compact industrial and business districts, successful farms, and productive forests in the county.

A high quality-of-life and strong community values have been part of the attraction of new jobs to the county. By continually reinvesting in compact and efficient sewer and water systems, utilities and transportation, communities within the county have demonstrated the capacity to satisfy basic industry requirements on par with any community in Michigan. A marketing program which proactively solicits business and industry has also been a significant factor in the economic success of the county.

Strong Neighborhoods and Diversified Housing

Revitalized older neighborhoods have provided an affordable housing market for families of various sizes and ages. This was in part due to significant reinvestment by owners, but also to strict enforcement of the local building, housing, and rental codes. Many of the county's least expensive neighborhoods have become some of the most popular for first time homebuyers. New affordable housing in subdivisions and condominium developments has been located within existing cities and villages and between Johnson Road and US-10/31. Through clustering and conservation principles, these new developments have protected sensitive environments. Residents of all ages and stages of life are able to find housing suitable to their needs. Older adults find that they can continue to reside in their cherished hometown in attractive and affordable retirement communities. Young adults and young families are able to find comfortable housing and communities are strengthened by broad homeownership opportunities.

Where the visual character, sounds, dust, smells, and level of activity of commercial and industrial development would not be compatible with residential neighborhoods and important scenic views, they are separated or buffered. Where commercial development can serve residential needs, it has been built adjacent to residential neighborhoods with an architectural design and layout that fits the character of the neighborhoods.

New housing developments emphasize the concept of connectivity and are constructed near existing homes with access to parks and trails, schools, retail and commercial outlets, health care facilities, and municipal services. Residents benefit from living in neighborhoods where

ease of travel by vehicle, bicycle, bus, or by walking increase connectivity and ensure a strong quality of life. Those choosing to live in rural areas are stewards of the land and continue the strong heritage of preserving and protecting the abundant open spaces and recreation amenities of the County.

Scenic Natural and Agricultural Landscape Character Preserved

The most common landscape view in Mason County continues to be a mix of woods, meadows, wetlands, river and lakeshores, and farm fields. This agricultural landscape includes commercial wind generators taking advantage of winds off of Lake Michigan.

Rather than succumbing to sprawl and the attendant loss of scenic and natural visual character that is occurring throughout the rest of the State, the alluring characteristics that initially attracted residents and tourists to the county have been maintained, and in some cases enhanced. (The visual character of a community is set by the style, size and upkeep of its homes, businesses and civic places such as parks, stores, schools and government buildings. It is also set by the presence or absence of water and vegetation, hills and highways.)

The rural landscape does more than simply provide scenery. The benefits of nature to residents' mental well-being and the attraction for tourists are important. Farming continues as a viable economic sector. Woods and fields help with water infiltration, maintaining biological diversity, and providing habitat for wildlife. Property owners have coordinated the retention of green space connections to create ecological corridors, enhance recreation, and provide a more continuous natural scenic view. Rivers, streams and lakes have buffer plantings that help protect water quality.

Photo 2-1

Mason County Woods in the Winter



Photo by Ron Carter

New growth and development have occurred in compact form and in locations that retain ample open space throughout the county, reinforcing the scenic visual character rather than detracting from it. In Mason County, large-scale changes to the landscape (especially of vegetation, views, open spaces, and the water's edge), have been minimized by encouraging thoughtfully designed and buffered new development, and redevelopment, in select locations.

Locations that were unattractive or lacked scenic character in 2005 have been improved. This philosophy has been applied to both residential and non-residential development. Existing and new development, particularly along transportation and scenic corridors has been screened with buffer plantings in character with Northern Michigan. Parking lots, big buildings, and outside storage areas can hardly be seen through thick vegetation. The number of signs has been reduced and remaining signs are well designed to enhance commerce and way-finding without detracting from scenic views.

A public well-versed in land and water protection approaches has been deeply involved in making decisions about preservation. Working with conservancies and the State Purchase of Development Rights Program, key parcels have been preserved through development rights purchases, donations, and other approaches over the past two decades. As a result, wetlands, forests, farmland, and green spaces that comprise the scenic character and ecosystem of the county are being permanently protected.

City and Village Centers

Mason County citizens and officials long ago recognized that for a city or village to remain "alive," it must be a vital place for citizens and businesses. This emphasis on placemaking is evidenced by the structures and places of historical and architectural significance that have been protected and renewed and serve as reinforcing elements of visual character. City and village sidewalks are lined with shops and amenities and as a result are full of people. Community events make these centers the place to be on a regular basis. Parks and streets lined with stately trees welcome visitors and residents alike, while public art is evident in all public spaces. Strip commercial corridors have had visual improvements such as tree planting, to make them fit into the scenic Northern Michigan setting.

Transportation and Connectivity

Mason County is well known for its extensive non-motorized trails and access to public transportation. These amenities have attracted growth and visitors. New developments have been designed to complement existing transportation systems and serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and automobile drivers safely and efficiently. The cities of Ludington and Scottville, as well as the villages in the county are known as walkable communities, providing safe connections, separate from roads when practical, between residential areas and the many types of destinations within the community: shops, businesses, public buildings, churches, schools, parks and restaurants. As a result of its increased

walkability, more active residents are able to enjoy a greater level of health than in previous years.

Links continue to be established between residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial development to provide safe, attractive, and low cost pedestrian and bike routes as alternatives to automobile circulation. There are also links to undeveloped open land close to urban areas with trails that extend beyond Mason County into the region. These greenways serve both as recreational opportunities in themselves and to connect destinations such as the towns, parks, and shores of Lake Michigan, Hamlin Lake, and the Pere Marquette River.

Quality of Life - A County of Education and Stimulation

The county has long held education as an important aspect of quality of life. Mason County public and private school systems provide excellent, state recognized educational opportunities. Students are enthusiastic, respectful, computer literate, and have the opportunity to pursue varied endeavors. Occupational programs offered to students at West Shore Community College in Scottville focus on the development of employable skills in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and emphasize real world applications.

Involved and active citizenry allows parents, teachers, faculty, and school boards to develop a wide range of programs that prepare students for secondary education, higher education, and technical skills that are career focused. The community as a whole takes it upon itself to provide ample educational opportunities and this is demonstrated in the community events, civic infrastructure, and public engagement geared towards academic achievement for Mason County residents.

Citizens can continue higher education, obtain technical, job-related training, and can take adult enrichment courses in a wide variety of subjects. Music, art, and museum events in many civic and private facilities continue to provide entertainment for all generations of Mason County citizens. Youth and adult programs incorporate intergenerational learning opportunities that support a lifestyle of shared learning opportunities in Mason County,

Quality of Life- Arts, Culture, and Local History

A strong commitment to the arts keeps Mason County culturally engaged and provides residents with enriching experiences that are community oriented. Local organizations sponsor, support, and encourage participation in and appreciation for the arts. Community events engage citizens and nurture the development of the arts. People of all ages can expect to find resources, classes, and events that enrich and enliven creativity.

A regional center for the arts provides a venue for music, dance, theater, and traditional arts and ensures a high level of civic engagement. Annual fairs, festivals, and shows highlight Mason County's local history and strengthen regional Northwest Michigan identities in agriculture, maritime

history, and natural surroundings. Public art is a prominent feature of retail and commercial space, parks, town centers, schools, and municipal buildings. Streets and walkways benefit from a strong public art presence and enhance walkability and place making in cities, towns, and villages throughout Mason County.

Quality of Life - Recreation

The county has long held recreational opportunity as an important aspect of quality of life. Mason County is a destination for connected scenic recreational opportunities promoting health, safety, and economic benefits. Mason County residents enjoy increased access to Lake Michigan compared to two decades ago, as well as a variety of recreation opportunities at local and county parks, Ludington State Park, National Forest lands, public access sites, golf, and other facilities. Trails link many parts of the county, extend beyond the county and provide opportunities for fitness and enjoyment of the outdoors. Boating on the inland lakes as well as on Lake Michigan continues to be a popular pastime.

Mason County has established one of the most Master regional recreation programs found in the State. By 2030, a county wide recreation program would ensure that residents have ample opportunities to enrich their lives through physical activity and coordinates efforts among various recreation organizations. Various venues could include public schools, West Shore Community College, and public access sites that provide ample recreation opportunities for all seasons.

Photo 2-2
Youth Ice Hockey Game



Photo Courtesy of Ludington Daily News, Copyright 2004

Friendly, Cooperative Community

County business and government leaders long ago recognized that working together is critical to the long-term economic and cultural vitality of the county. Civic groups also play an important role, assisting in keeping Mason County clean, attractive, and healthy with a sustainable environment and positive community spirit. Participation in community events, music concerts, and festivals such as the Petunia Parade and Freedom Festival is high.

Mason County is a friendly and caring place to live and visitors feel the hospitality. The community is supportive of its citizens and helps provide constructive guidance. Members of all generations of the community share in its identity. Both cultural and natural resources are preserved through wide community support by citizens who understand the value and principles of preservation.

Leaders work to encourage a high level of citizen involvement from both residents and nonresident property owners. In return, leadership is responsive to the direction expressed by citizens. Leaders hold the public's trust when enforcing regulations that protect the environment, implement the Master Plan, and otherwise ensure protection of public health, safety, and welfare.

Sustainability and Community

Mason County is a leader in West Michigan of green energy and long-range sustainable energy production.

By the year 2030, Mason County will have developed an Energy Plan that will reflect County needs and scale of uses in our community. The plan will be developed by active, involved citizens and will emphasize energy conservation and renewable energy sources that are in keeping with the scale of our community. New energy solutions will be prioritized contingent upon being green, clean, and supported by thorough research. The development and addition of alternative energy sources within the community will be thoughtfully planned and collaboratively enacted with residents' needs, community values, and scenic preservation in mind.

Intergovernmental Cooperation/Coordination

A shared set of policies structured around a common vision of the future serves as a framework for decision making between all governmental entities in Mason County that enhance transparency of government and increase customer satisfaction.

The common vision and related policies recognizes the autonomy of each unit of local government, but also establishes a mechanism for dealing with issues extending beyond local concern. Communities apply the dual principles of respect and cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Narrow interests and points of view no longer prevent achievement of area-wide interests and the uniqueness of each local government is celebrated.

Coordination of costs, timetables, responsibilities, and resources to continue upgrading the quality of life of the area are all included as an integral part of these cooperative policies. All county and local public services and facilities are coordinated, as are state, federal and private services and facilities when appropriate to do so.

While local land use decisions are guided by both county and local zoning standards, issues extending beyond local concern are subject to input from surrounding local governments both within and outside the county before a final decision is made. Special ad hoc committees aid communication among county and local governments in this process and help ensure adequate public participation.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The vision statement plus goals, objectives, and strategies from the Mason County 2006 Master Plan were the basis for goals, objectives, and strategies of this Plan. These statements are also consistent with the Ten Smart Growth Tenets of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council and the Smart Growth Principles of the Michigan Association of Planning.

Goal: Goals are broad-based statements of intent and establish the direction for the Mason County Master Plan. Goals could generally be thought of as the desired "ends" of successful implementation of the County Plan.

Objective: Objectives are the stated "means" of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be carried out in the process of realizing goals.

Strategies: Strategies are action statements in order to accomplish the goal and objective.

I. GOAL – PRESERVE MASON COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE BEAUTY OF ITS LANDSCAPE.

A. Objective – Provide for planning mechanisms and regulatory techniques that will preserve forests, wetlands, sand dunes, and other natural resources as well as farms and other vegetated landscapes.

1. Strategy – Local governments support applications of agricultural land owners to enroll in agricultural land preservation programs.
2. Strategy – The County and local planning commissions adopt design guidelines for small parcels and large parcel development that promote voluntary approaches to the protection of natural resources and scenic quality.
3. Strategy – The County and local governments encourage the creation of conservancies and land trusts to acquire or obtain development rights to important natural resource and scenic parcels.
4. Strategy – The County and local governments support the voluntary donation of conservation easements for important natural resources and scenic areas, especially roadside areas along scenic corridors.
5. Strategy – Encourage careful land use management on the part of County officials and landowners alike.
6. Strategy – Encourage cluster zoning, farm and open space preservation techniques in rural areas and compact settlement patterns in villages, cities, and in urbanized parts of Pere Marquette and Amber Townships where the proper infrastructure is available.
7. Strategy – Further develop and refine greenbelt zoning techniques via maps and other tools to consistently protect and preserve sensitive areas.
8. Strategy – Work with individual jurisdictions to establish uniform floodplain protection ordinances.

Photo 2-3
**Water is an Important Part of the
Scenic Beauty of Mason County**



Photo by Ron Carter

9. Strategy – Review existing High Risk Erosion Area and Critical Dune permit procedures and experiences and recommend modifications as appropriate.
10. Strategy – Work with the County Road Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation, and local jurisdictions to refine private road standards to limit construction on steep slopes and to restrict private roads that contribute to erosion.
11. Strategy – Adopt ordinances that limit construction clearing on steep slopes and set performance standards for any construction on steeper slopes.
12. Strategy – Develop design guidelines that illustrate the least damaging building approaches for slopes.

B. Objective – A greenspace system of interconnected, undeveloped land, buffers, ecological corridors, forests, floodplains, wetlands, and other open space in private and public ownership is identified and protected in Mason County.

1. Strategy – Develop guidelines for property owners, developers, and business owners on how to preserve or sensitively develop near wildlife corridors.
2. Strategy – Adopt conservation subdivision (a subdivision that uses a maximum lot size that is smaller than the density requirements of the zoning district in return for permanent preservation of large blocks of open space) and cluster ordinances, and promote the use of these techniques for new development of both residential and commercial development.

Consider creating a transfer of development rights program to make clustering more likely.

3. Strategy – Develop educational materials and programs for residential and commercial property owners on how to foster wildlife while protecting properties from wildlife damage.

C. Objective – The public is well informed about the value and importance of threatened and endangered species and plans for their protection are formulated by interested groups.

1. Strategy – Request volunteer groups to provide educational programs for the public regarding the value of preserving wildlife habitat and alternative preservation methods.

2. Strategy – Request volunteer groups to develop and implement preservation plans for areas of threatened and endangered species in cooperation with appropriate state and federal authorities.

II. GOAL – INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION WILL GUIDE AND APPROPRIATELY REGULATE THE TYPE AND AMOUNT OF GROWTH.

A. Objective – Ensure county and local regulations are properly directed to growth management and intergovernmental coordination.

1. Strategy – Periodically review local zoning ordinances and update as necessary to ensure their consistency with the Master Plan.
2. Strategy - Zone all areas of the county to prevent over-crowding of land and overuse of natural resources while maximizing efficiency of public utilities as the Plan indicates.
3. Strategy – Through existing federal, state and local laws and procedures, ensure that if property has any of the following characteristics, those portions of the property with those characteristics shall not be built upon:
 - a) Flooding, as determined by National Flood Hazard maps (encourage FEMA to complete floodplain mapping in the county)
 - b) Inadequate drainage as determined by County Drain Commissioner
 - c) Soil formations with contra-indications for development as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service)
 - d) Severe erosion potential, especially in the designated, high risk erosion area along Lake Michigan as determined by the MDEQ
 - e) Topography with steep slopes as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - f) Designated critical sand dunes as determined by the MDEQ
 - g) Inadequate water supply and sewage disposal capabilities as determined by the District Health Department and/or the MDEQ, and/or the responsible local public agency
 - h) Wetlands as determined by the MDEQ.
4. Strategy – Maintain formal site plan review procedures and standards for environmental protection of each of the environmental features listed above, and for groundwater protection in rural areas of the County.

B. Objective – Develop and maintain county and citizen involvement in the growth management process.

1. Strategy – The County Planning Commission and local jurisdictions meet annually to discuss growth and land use issues.
2. Strategy – Review the Master Plan every five years and update as necessary.

3. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities and leadership on planning and zoning techniques to manage growth. This could be done as part of an annual educational workshop on topics of contemporary interest that incorporates the first strategy above.

III. GOAL – ESTABLISH A SET OF REGULATIONS AND A PROGRAM OF ENFORCEMENT THAT PROTECTS QUALITY OF LIFE AND IS FAIR AND CONSISTENT FOR PROPERTY OWNERS.

A. Objective – Keep the county and local zoning ordinances consistent with this Plan, up-to-date, and ensure zoning enforcement is professional, fair and consistent.

1. Strategy – Encourage local officials to stay abreast of changing laws and regulations regarding planning and zoning and implement changes when necessary.
2. Strategy – Enforce the zoning ordinance in a consistent and fair manner.
3. Strategy – Modernize and utilize clearly defined procedures for granting or denying variances and rezoning efforts in an objective, measurable manner consistent with the Master Plan.
4. Strategy – As appropriate, make zoning variances the exception rather than the rule.
5. Strategy – Implement the recommendations in Chapter Four of this Plan.
6. Strategy – Educate the public regarding the role of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and the procedures outlined above.
7. Strategy – Continue to provide the office of the County Zoning Director with adequate funds and legal support to properly enforce the County Zoning Ordinance.

IV. GOAL – UPDATE AGRICULTURAL ZONING TO BRING IN LINE WITH MODERN DAY FARMING METHODS AND EXPAND AGRICULTURAL TOURISM AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES.

A. Objective – Minimize the incompatibility of non-farm rural residential areas and large farm production facilities.

1. Strategy – Engage in a review of the Michigan Right to Farm Act to determine the extent that local control and/or input is allowed and educate the public about the findings.
2. Strategy – Encourage those farm practices that minimize odor, noise, and environmental risk.
3. Strategy – Encourage the Health Department to develop a program to maintain the quality of water wells by establishing protection zones around each well.

B. Objective – Harness the potential of agricultural uses and practices as tourism opportunities.

1. Strategy – Develop zoning provisions to allow for agri-tourism and agri-business activities to co-exist with active farms.

Photo 2-4

Farming is a Major Business in Mason County



Photo by Robert Garrett

V. GOAL – INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS AND COMPETITION IN THE COUNTY.

A. Objective – Ensure land suitable for commercial and industrial development is adequately served with public sewer, water, and other essential public services and facilities.

B. Objective – Increase awareness of available land and strengths of area businesses.

C. Objective – Promote involvement of county and local governmental units in economic development decisions.

D. Objective – Encourage the establishment of businesses that provide year-round employment and offer quality jobs.

E. Objective – Recognize the changing dynamics of business resulting from technological advances.

1. Strategy – Encourage the preparation and periodic update of a countywide economic development plan.
2. Strategy – Encourage cooperation and regular coordination between economic development activities and the County Planning Commission.
3. Strategy – Work toward ensuring that further processing of agricultural and natural resource products harvested from the county would, where feasible, be undertaken within the county.
4. Strategy – Work toward wi-fi availability within the County’s primary employment centers, neighborhoods and rural areas by allowing future communications infrastructure as well as co-location on existing towers by amending the zoning ordinance to lessen requirements.
5. Strategy – Modify the zoning ordinance to allow small-scale home based businesses in Townships as permitted (in some districts) with approval by the Zoning Administrator, instead of by Special Land Use.

VI. GOAL – VILLAGE AND CITY CENTERS HAVE AN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY.

A. Objective – Create vibrant and bustling villages and cities that are functional, people-oriented, and the center of cultural activity within the county.

1. Strategy – Existing civic and cultural facilities are retained in village and city centers and new or expanded civic and cultural facilities are placed in or very close to village and city centers.
2. Strategy – Maximize existing public infrastructure by utilizing brownfield redevelopment strategies to revitalize areas of the county.
3. Strategy – Encourage the preservation of historic structures through maintenance and renovation that retains historic character.
4. Strategy – Encourage pedestrian activity in cities and villages through the design and construction of sidewalks and small public spaces that are safe and filled with trees, art and other amenities.
5. Strategy – Promote voluntary participation in community and cultural activities.
6. Strategy – Encourage businesses and institutions to install public art, flowers, trees, benches and fountains.
7. Strategy – Expand the number and type of festivals and fairs especially in the lower activity months.
8. Strategy – Encourage residential densities, through infill and redevelopment, that are within a ¼ mile of existing development.

Photo 2-5
City of Scottville



VII. GOAL – PROVIDE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CITIZENS OF THE COUNTY.

- A. Objective – Ensure a wide range of housing choices.**
- B. Objective – Allow for reasonable and fair low to moderate-income housing where compatible with other housing types.**
- C. Objective – Meet the most urgent unmet housing needs of the physically and developmentally disabled, those with low and moderate incomes, the elderly, and those who are on public assistance.**
- D. Objective – Continue to provide for compatibility among and between housing types for neighborhood stability.**

- 1. Strategy – Continue to allow for Mobile Home Parks and manufactured homes in designated zoning districts.
- 2. Strategy – New housing developments/subdivisions should occur only in areas where public sewer and water are available or economically feasible.
- 3. Strategy – New housing developments should be compatible with existing and planned, neighboring land uses and their circulation network should connect to the existing grid system of roadways.
- 4. Strategy – The area east of Dennis Road, west of Stiles Road, north of US-10 and south of Johnson Road, should be targeted for a housing density that permits persons of low and moderate income to affordably live there.

VIII. GOAL – PROVIDE AN ATMOSPHERE WHEREBY AREA YOUTH HAVE A STAKE IN THE COMMUNITY.

A. Objective – Promote area education, recreational and cultural opportunities to citizens of all ages.

B. Objective – Encourage continuation/expansion and better awareness of the local education, recreational and cultural opportunities.

C. Objective – Encourage involvement of youth in their community.

1. Strategy – Provide direction and policy assistance so that entities like West Shore Community College can attract the best students, faculty, and facilities in conjunction with the statewide network of 4-year institutions.
2. Strategy – Outreach to students, whenever and wherever possible, in local governing, planning and collateral activities such as through representation on various County committees.
3. Strategy – Utilize existing recreational centers at area schools and the community college.
4. Strategy – Utilize existing cultural centers such as West Shore Community College and the Ludington Area Center for the Arts, to expand and enhance the diversity of cultural information available.
5. Strategy – Support Community College/Public School System collaboration on educational initiatives such as the West Shore Education District.

Photo 2-6
**West Shore Community College Provides
Key Cultural and Recreational Opportunities**



Photo Courtesy of West Shore Community College

IX. GOAL – MAINTAIN THE VIABILITY OF THE INLAND LAKE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTY.

A. Objective – Provide for planning and zoning mechanisms to maintain current levels of attractiveness and viability of the inland lakes in the county.

B. Objective – Execute steps necessary to achieve improvement and enhancement of overall water quality for these lakes and connecting waterways.

1. Strategy – Strictly enforce current or revised lakefront zoning.
2. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and other forums to educate lake residents regarding fertilizer practices and other actions that could affect water quality.
3. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and property associations to implement best management practices as recommended in lake studies including grant acquisition.
4. Strategy – Encourage the development of appropriately sited public access sites/boat launches for all citizens.

X. GOAL – PROVIDE UPGRADED TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND BETTER MANAGED ACCESS WHERE THEY WILL PROVIDE THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO THE PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, AND TOURISTS IN THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE.

A. Objective – Safe and efficient movement of people and goods with a variety of transportation modes.

1. Strategy – Encourage the expansion of public transportation to a countywide system.
2. Strategy – Continue to support air, rail, and harbor transportation.
3. Strategy – Develop a non-motorized transportation plan of blueways, greenways and marked pathway system that connect employment and population centers to local and regional destinations and trail networks.

B. Objective – Provide reasonable access by all segments of the population to jobs, services, recreation, and other opportunities.

1. Strategy – Encourage transportation infrastructure development that complements anticipated future land use patterns. In particular, implement the proposed connecting roads described in Chapter Five.
2. Strategy – Work with local units of government, the Michigan Department of Transportation and others to cooperatively implement plans for the commercial and industrial development of the US-10/US-31 corridor between Ludington and Scottville.
3. Strategy – Pave or improve only those roads where soils and other natural features will adequately support traffic from increased development.
4. Strategy – Facilitate a coordinated approach to transportation planning among responsible government units.

C. Objective – Provide complete streets along major and minor county corridors through proactive planning and design with the County Road Commission.

1. Strategy – Encourage the development of design standards and targeted locations for complete streets such that any County road improvement or repaving activity accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists, where feasible.
2. Strategy – Actively support the reduction of lanes and/or lane widths in support of complete streets designs that accommodate ample, protected, and well marked bike lanes and sidewalks, where feasible. Areas in particular include Lakeshore Drive between Iris Road and

Pentwater and Jebavy with a minimum 18" or wider paved shoulder for bicyclists.

3. Strategy – Develop tools and techniques to enhance pedestrian safety along and crossing US-10, especially near Meijer and Home Depot.

XI. GOAL – PROVIDE A RANGE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY, WHICH MEETS PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORTS THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

- A. Objective – Public sewer and water is provided to businesses and residents efficiently and in locations in which development does not negatively affect natural resources and community character or promote sprawl.**
- B. Objective – Public facilities, services, and programs provide for the health and safety needs of Mason County citizens, workers, and visitors.**
- C. Objective – Helping to ensure the health care and housing needs of our aging population are adequately addressed.**
- D. Objective – Police, fire and emergency services are consistent with public need and the ability to finance improvements in the most cost-effective manner.**
- E. Objective – Solid waste, recyclable and hazardous materials are disposed of safely, effectively, and efficiently according to the adopted Solid Waste Management Plan.**
- F. Objective – An intergovernmental plan, prepared by the county in conjunction with cities, townships and villages details when, and under what circumstances sewer service will be extended to new areas of the county consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan. The county will continue to cooperate with cities, villages and townships in the provision or expansion of other public utilities, as appropriate.**
- G. Objective – Police, fire, and emergency services respond as rapidly and effectively as possible in a largely rural county.**
- H. Objective – Residential development without public sewer service is limited to locations within the county where construction of on-site septic systems is not prohibited by soils.**

1. Strategy – Support expansion of sewer and water into an area only when consistent with the planned intensity of land use for that area and scheduled as to affordability.
2. Strategy – Encourage county participation in regional management of solid waste and recycling.
3. Strategy – The county and other local governments adopt site plan review regulations and support using septic system inspection programs to protect the quality of groundwater, inland lakes, and streams.
4. Strategy – Expansion of public facilities (especially sewer and water) should be timed to guide future development into particular areas consistent with the demand for additional service.
5. Strategy – The county will continue to ask the County Planning Commission to review and comment on proposed county facilities so as to ensure continued conformance with this Plan.
6. Strategy – Maintain a map for the whole county that indicates the appropriate location of public facilities, extensions of sewer and water service, and new development.
7. Strategy – Review the county’s ability to satisfy long-term solid waste disposal needs in a cost effective manner and expand recycling services through five-year reviews of the Solid Waste Plan.
8. Strategy – Coordinate infrastructure construction, repair, or maintenance with road construction, repair, and maintenance.
9. Strategy – Cooperate regionally in the provision of public safety and emergency services, community facilities, and programs.
10. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities to residents regarding emergency, social and health services, and self-help actions to reduce risk.
12. Strategy – Work with the City of Ludington to limit dead-end water lines in favor of looping lines to maintain water pressure.

XII. GOAL – ENCOURAGE COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

A. Objective – Provide for better living conditions and business opportunities for the largest contiguous area possible.

1. Strategy – Encourage the involvement and cooperation of local governments, citizens, and businesses in the development and construction of water and sanitary sewer systems as appropriate for future growth.
2. Strategy – Continue inter-governmental cooperation by forming advisory boards and (where possible) unified operational boards to more cost-effectively deliver services.

XIII. GOAL – PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES SERVE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO THE AREA ECONOMY.

- A. Objective – Continue to maintain and periodically update the County Recreation Plan.**
- B. Objective – Coordinate efforts with local jurisdictions and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to implement the recommendations of the County Recreation Plan.**
- C. Objective – Identify and explore new opportunities for recreational projects with local jurisdictions as a means of better serving residents and enhancing tourism.**
- D. Objective – Link new and existing recreation areas and facilities with non-motorized trails.**
- E. Objective – Improve youth recreational opportunities throughout the county including indoor and outdoor sports activities.**
- F. Objective – Expand recreation opportunities to include heritage, ecological, and agricultural experiences.**

1. Strategy – Support coordinated recreation planning at the state, county, and local level and involve private partners and the schools.
2. Strategy – Develop a funding program for the purchase of recreational lands in planned areas where a need has been determined or where a special opportunity exists.
3. Strategy – Develop a funding program for enhancing recreational programs and facilities throughout the county.
4. Strategy – Give priority to funding recreational projects that utilize existing facilities, underutilized facilities, and those locations that do not generate increased traffic in light traffic areas.
5. Strategy – Support development of a Mason County Heritage Trail which links cultural and historic attractions across the county and enhance wayfinding to all County park facilities.
6. Strategy – Promote opportunities for eco-tourism and agri-tourism.
7. Strategy – Support trail links throughout the county with a special focus on preservation of any abandoned railroad right-of-way.
8. Strategy – Support efforts of Ludington State Park to maintain and improve its facilities through coordination of public and private partners and the schools.
9. Strategy – Endorse and support four-season recreation, including the snow mobile trail facilities.

GOAL IX. MASON COUNTY BECOMES A LEADER AND A DESTINATION IN WEST MICHIGAN FOR GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION, MANUFACTURING, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

A. Objective - Achieve measurable reductions in energy use, water consumption, and waste generation.

B. Objective - Support small scale renewable energy generation when it is appropriately sized, in scale with the immediate surrounding context, and located in safe distance from surrounding uses.

C. Objective - Maintain and enhance educational and outreach regarding the importance of sustainability in business.

1. Strategy- Develop a Master Energy Plan that collects data, establishes benchmarks, and sets goals, strategies and objectives to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse emission levels, while exploring the potential of wind, geothermal, water, and other natural resources for sustainable development.

2. Strategy- Provide information on best practices for sustainable land use and land development practices and provide that information for public outreach and education programs.