



# Stewardship of a Special Place

2021 MASTER PLAN  
PENINSULA TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

WORKING DOCUMENT 4/29/2021





## Peninsula Township, Michigan

Peninsula Township (Old Mission Peninsula) has some of the most impressive scenery in all of Michigan with rolling hills, 42 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, stunning views of Lake Michigan bays, and farms, orchards, vineyards, and wineries. Thousands of tourists visit the area annually to enjoy the beauty of the Old Mission Peninsula, and about 6,000 people are fortunate enough to call this area home. Residents and community leaders have long recognized the spectacular beauty of the peninsula and have consistently taken innovative steps to be good stewards of this special place. One such step is to have a current master plan that defines an achievable yet inspirational vision for the future.

“Stewardship of a Special Place.”

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction





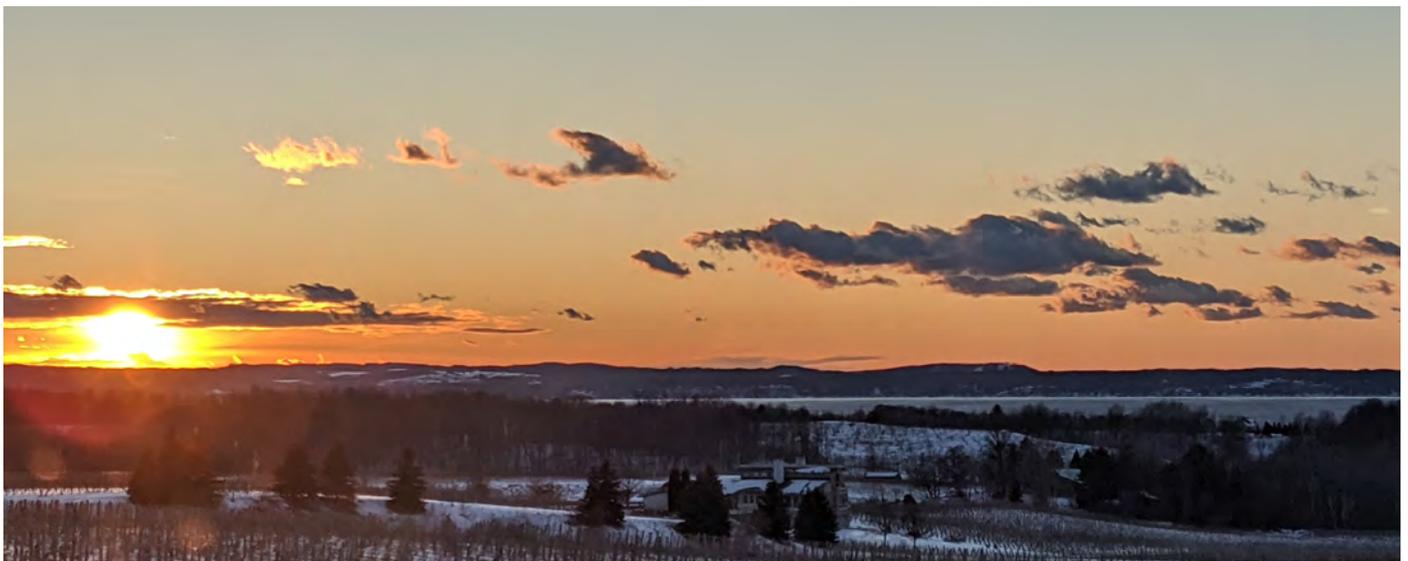
# WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

Simply put, a master plan is a document that describes a long-term and comprehensive perspective of the future of a community. It offers an educational element to frame community issues along with an aspirational and goal-oriented view of the future. Master plans often begin with a description of existing conditions, trends, and current attitudes, then look forward toward defining long-term community visions and goals.

The need for a master plan has been recognized perhaps as long as there have been townships and municipalities that grow and change. The places in which we live and work are constantly changing – they grow, shrink, age, develop, and redevelop over time. Sometimes, physical change is subtle and nearly imperceptible. Other times, physical change can be dramatic as large private developments or public infrastructure projects are completed. Beyond the pace of community change is the larger question of whether the direction of change is taking a community forward toward a more livable, economically stable, and attractive place.

The fuel that drives community change is decision-making. The community we see today is the product of large and small past decisions made by individuals and public or private organizations. Local leaders make decisions about how to regulate land use, what public buildings and infrastructure to build and maintain, and what services to provide. The private sector makes decisions about how to respond to commercial needs and market demands. Together, these decisions produce community change. Given this, the need for a sense of direction and overall vision is apparent. The purpose of a master plan is to provide such vision, articulating the way forward based on community attitudes and preferences. Driven by such vision, Master plans describe the necessary implementation steps toward goals.

One measure of valuable master plans is the degree to which they fully and completely reflect the desires of residents and stakeholders. Effective and respected master plans typically offer a high level of community engagement at the foundation of their recommendations. They speak authoritatively about what residents desire and clearly describe the kind of community they wish to call home in the future.





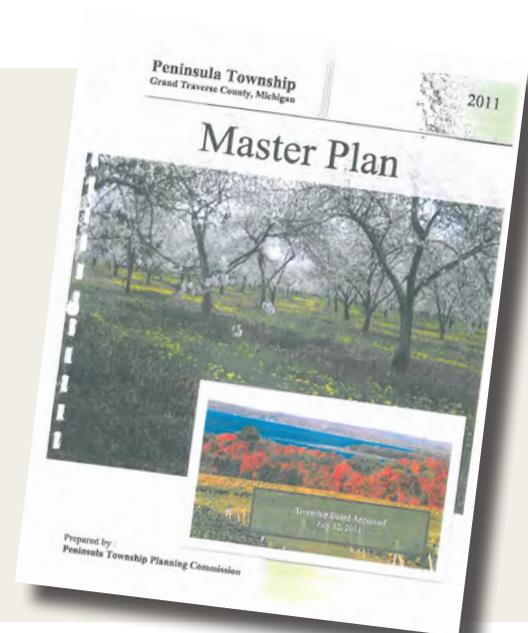
## LEGAL CONTEXT

Apart from helping to satisfy the basic desire to shape the future and provide a direction for community change, there is a legal dimension to master plans. More than a dozen states actually require a local master plan (also called a comprehensive plan) and others encourage it in various ways. In Michigan, the controlling statute is the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) of 2008. This act consolidated older related planning statutes and defines basic requirements and procedures for developing a master plan in Michigan communities. One significant legal aspect of the MPEA relates to the connection between the master plan and zoning. The MPEA requires steps to reconcile proposed land use categories in the master plan with existing zoning districts found in the zoning ordinance. Additionally, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act of 2006 (Section 125.3203) similarly connects to the master plan by specifically stating that a zoning ordinance shall be based on a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.



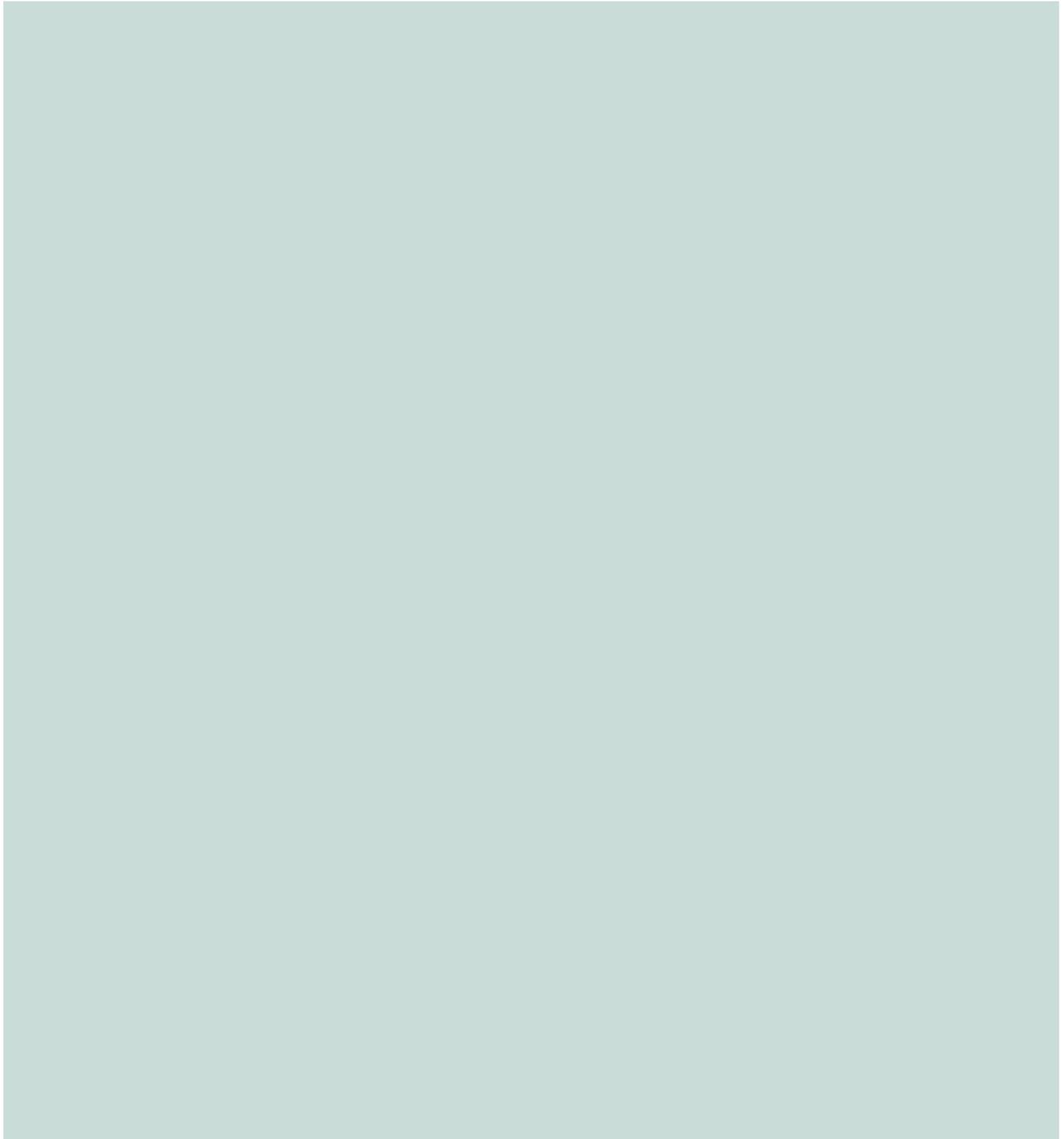
## PLANNING HISTORY

Master plans are not static documents. They are regularly updated to reflect changing conditions and public attitudes. Peninsula Township has a rich tradition of looking forward and planning for the future. The first master plan was approved in 1968 and has been amended and updated several times. The preceding and most recent master plan was adopted on July 12, 2011.



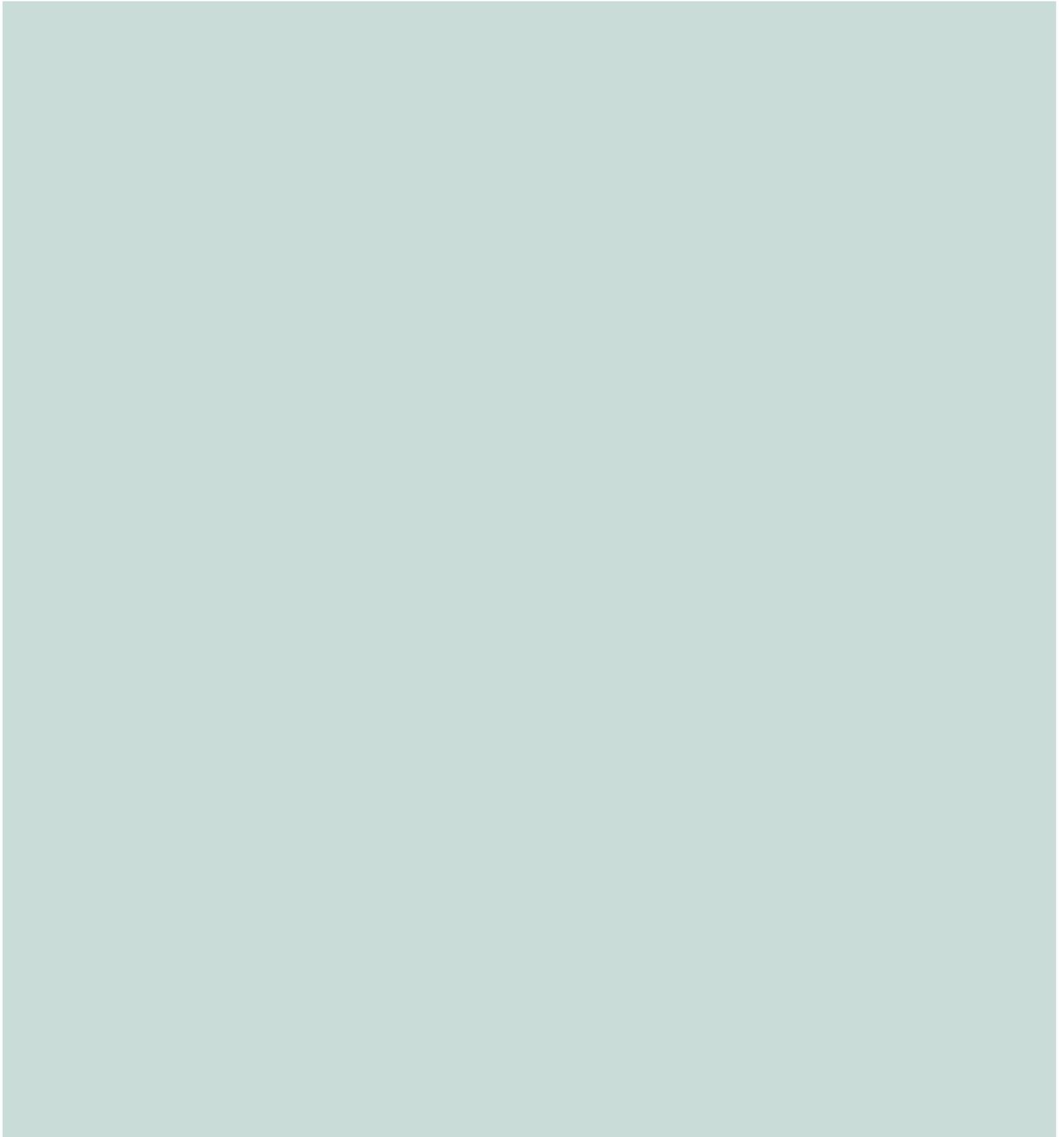


# Plan Summary





# Plan Summary





## A SPECIAL PLACE

Peninsula Township was established in 1853 as part of Grand Traverse County. Townships are a common form of local government in Michigan, but Peninsula Township is unlike other townships in Michigan for at least six important reasons. These include the following:

### Size and shape

Michigan has 1,240 townships, and most are rectangular in shape and about 36 square miles, or 23,040 acres, in size. Peninsula Township is smaller than most with only about 28 square miles, or 17,755 acres. However, despite its smaller size, it is uniquely shaped as a long and narrow peninsula extending about 16 miles into Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay. This long narrow shape creates nearly 42 miles of precious Great Lakes shoreline. At the same time, this unique shape creates transportation challenges. A single point of primary access to the Traverse City urban area occurs where Peninsula Drive and M-37 converge. This single point of traffic convergence creates a significant traffic choke point. Additionally, because the township is a peninsula, there is almost no potential for shared public safety services with adjacent jurisdictions. Peninsula Township has just built a third fire station so that all residents can count on reasonable and equal fire and EMS response times. Elsewhere, townships and municipalities often rely on multi-jurisdictional fire districts, mutual aid, and facilities that reach large areas.

### Property Values

The natural beauty of the area helps make Peninsula Township a highly desirable place to live. To that end, raw land prices are significantly higher than in surrounding areas. Highly desirable waterfront lots and interior parcels with spectacular views justify high land values and the construction of expensive homes. According to MLive (posted Feb. 04, 2020), Peninsula Township was 15th among all cities and townships in the state of Michigan in terms of median home values at just under \$400,000. The most recent tax assessment records point to the fact that the total assessed value of property in Peninsula Township recently passed the \$1 billion mark.

### Natural Beauty

Peninsula Township is one of the most scenic in Michigan and the nation as a whole. In 2013, *USA Today* identified M-37 as among the 10 most beautiful coastal drives across North America. Old Mission Peninsula was also designated as one of six Scenic Byways in Michigan (along with M-22, the Tunnel of Trees, Tahquamenon, and US 2). Elements that contribute to this natural beauty include striking views of East and West Grand Traverse bays, rolling topography, and extensive fields of fruit trees and vineyards. Clear water, sandy beaches, and protected bays also contribute to an incredible natural environment that draws tourists from around the world.



## Microclimate

Because Peninsula Township is a narrow finger of land extending into Grand Traverse Bay, it has a special microclimate that helps support agriculture in the form of fruit trees and vineyards. The deep and cool waters of Lake Michigan and Grand Traverse Bay along with prevailing westerly winds and moderate temperatures to help increase frost-free days in both the spring and fall. For cherry trees, for example, cool spring temperatures slow fruit and bud development, which minimizes the danger of damage due to freezes. Similarly, this unique microclimate contributed to the approval of a petition to designate Peninsula Township as a viticultural area known as Old Mission Peninsula (see Federal Register Vol. 52, No 109, Monday, June 8, 1987). This designation was granted by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and was the fourth American viticultural area to be established in Michigan. An approved viticultural area is associated with an appellation of origin on wine labels and in wine advertisements.

## Tourism

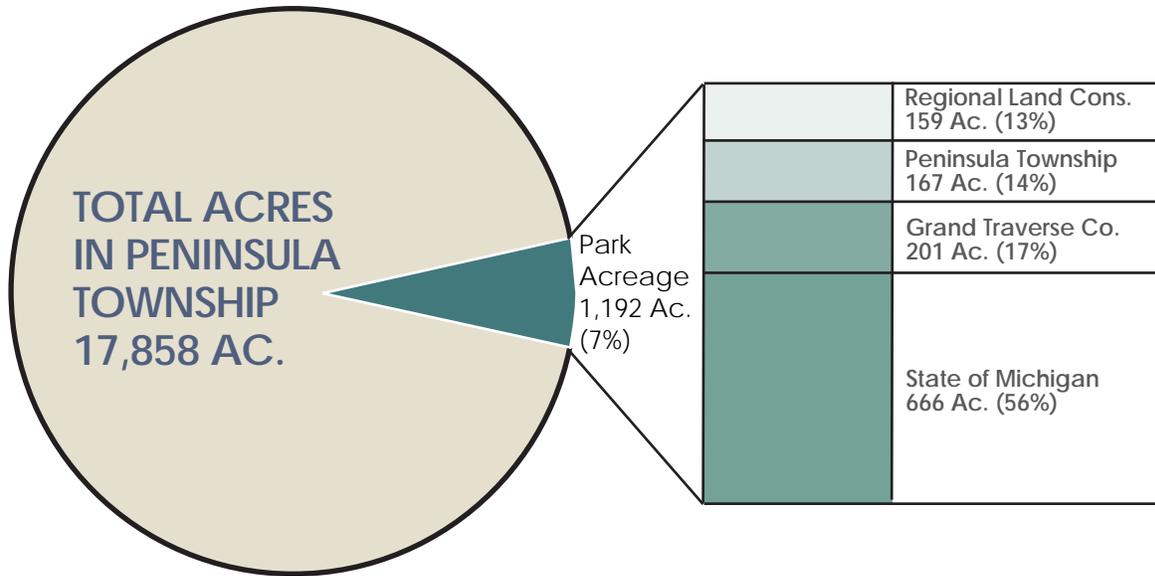
The natural beauty of the peninsula together with the wineries, Mission Point Lighthouse, and the overall popularity of the Traverse City region make Peninsula Township a popular tourist destination. The city of Traverse City reports that more than 3.3 million people visit the area each year (2012 statistics). That's about 35 times the total population of Grand Traverse County. Within this region, Peninsula Township is an often-visited place. More than 50,000 people a year make the trip to the far northern tip of the peninsula and sign the guest book at Mission Point Lighthouse. Many more visit who don't sign the guest book. They come from all 50 states and many other countries. Additionally, the link to local tourism is so strong that one television advertisement for the tremendously successful Pure Michigan ad campaign featured images of the Old Mission General Store.

## Parks

Old Mission Peninsula is a magnet for recreational activities due to a combination of parkland, scenic vistas, shoreline roads, and the Grand Traverse Bay. The township owns or manages 833 acres of publically accessible lands. The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy protects another 159 available acres at Pyatt Lake. Power Island's 200 acres are county managed and within township boundaries. The DNR manages two boat launches and the township will manage a third at Kelley Park. The shoreline roads attract countless cyclists, runners, and walkers. Nearby schools send athletes to train on our shoreline roads and in our parks. Cycling and track groups promote rides and runs on the roads. Nationally publicized races are hosted on the peninsula as well. Residents and visitors use the bays for power boating, water skiing, fishing, sailing, and exercise via kayaking, paddle boarding, and swimming. When the bay freezes, here come the ice fishermen, skiers, and ice sailing boats. Whether a resident or visitor, it's undeniable that recreation is a sacrosanct feature of this peninsula.



Compared to the size of Peninsula Township, there is an extraordinary number of acres of park land. Seven acres out of every one hundred are set aside in some way for park and open space uses and owned by a unit of government or the land conservancy.



Archie Park



Kelly Park



Haserot Beach



Bowers Harbor Park



## Chapter 2 – Community Overview



## OVERVIEW

The jurisdictional boundaries of Peninsula Township extend approximately 18 miles into Grand Traverse Bay, covering 17,755 acres and roughly 42 miles of shoreline. Adjacent to the township's southern boundary lie the city limits of Traverse City. Access to the township is limited given the single state highway, M-37, which leads from M-31 to the very tip of the peninsula.





# HISTORY

Old Mission Peninsula has a rich history. An extensive description of archaeological resources, native residents, early European settlements, and historic events can be found in several books and from extensive resources provided by the organizations such as the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society and the Peter Dougherty Society.

Peninsula Township was in fact the first community founded by Europeans in the Grand Traverse Bay region. It was founded in May, 1839, by Rev. Peter Dougherty and Rev. John Fleming. In 1852 Rev. Dougherty decided to move his mission across West Bay along the Leelanau Peninsula to an existing Native American village at the site of modern Omena, Michigan, thus establishing a “New Mission.” The previous community was already known as the “Old Mission” in the early 1850s. By the time of the Civil War, the Presbyterian organization which funded Dougherty had encountered financial difficulty, and missionary activities were discontinued.

One description of local historical resources is found on the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of our country’s historic buildings, districts, sites, structures, and objects worthy of preservation. It was established as part of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is overseen by the National Park Service. Two properties in Peninsula Township are included on the National Register:

- Hedden Hall (also known as the Old Mission Inn and the Porter Hotel)
- Mission Point Lighthouse

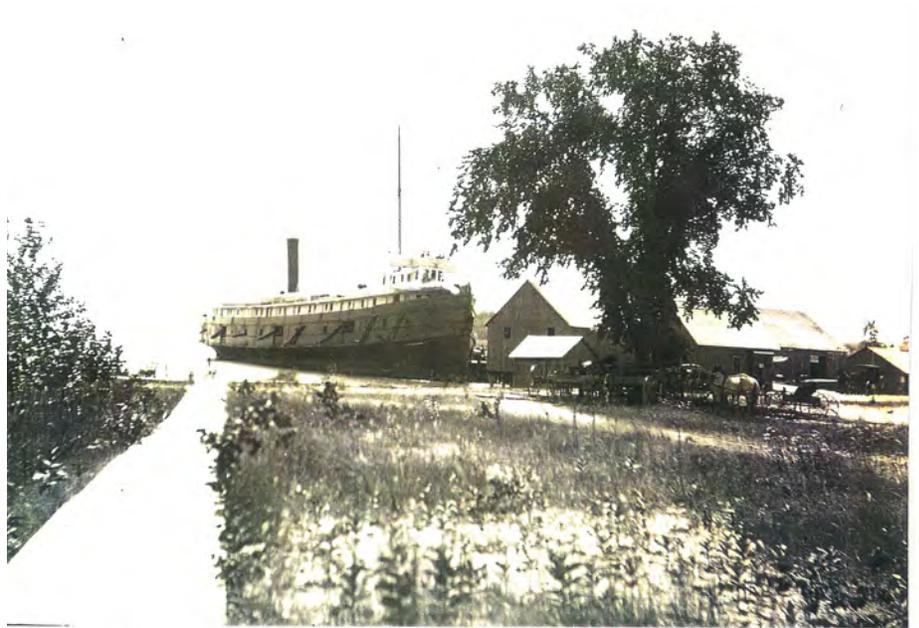
The state of Michigan, similarly, identifies historic sites (that may or may not also be on the national register). Current state of Michigan listings include:

- Dougherty Mission House
- Mission Point Lighthouse Park
- Mission Point Lighthouse
- Old Mission Congregational Church





Part of the early history of Peninsula Township includes the fact that sailing and steam ships carried passengers as well as agricultural products from docks at Bowers Harbor and Old Mission. Later, as autos and trucks became the dominant means of transportation, the ships faded into the past and the docks were subsequently removed.



*Steamer at Old Mission dock circa 1900*





The original inhabitants of Peninsula Township were the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes who took advantage of the moderate climate to cultivate corn, pumpkins, beans, and potatoes. They also tended apple orchards, which thrived. Early settlers supplemented their **families' diets with fish and other wildlife. Their dwellings were similar** in construction to other colder climates of North America, consisting mainly of windowless lodges, wigwams, and transportable tents.

ADD ADDITIONAL MATERIAL HERE ABOUT NATIVE SETTLEMENT....



## Soils

There are six general soil associations in Grand Traverse County (U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1966). These include the The Emmet Leelanau association occurs on the peninsula north of Traverse City and in the northeastern and north-central portion of the county. This soil association is described as well-drained, slightly acid to neutral sandy loams and loamy sands occurring on gently to steeply sloping areas.

insulating quality of the bays, results in a longer growing period, which protects vulnerable buds from early and late season frosts. The frost-free season on the peninsula ranges from 140 to more than 150 days compared to less than 100 days inland near Fife Lake. Annual snowfall averages 120 inches in the southwest portion of Grand Traverse County compared to fewer than 90 inches on the peninsula.

## Topography

Glacial topography on the peninsula consists of rolling hills, valleys, and wetlands. Some bluffs rise dramatically from the shores of the bay to more than 200 feet in elevation, affording spectacular views of East and West bays. The slope and aspect of the hillsides provide excellent locations for orchards and vineyards. An illustration of areas with steep slopes is shown on the following map. Most steep slopes are found toward the south.

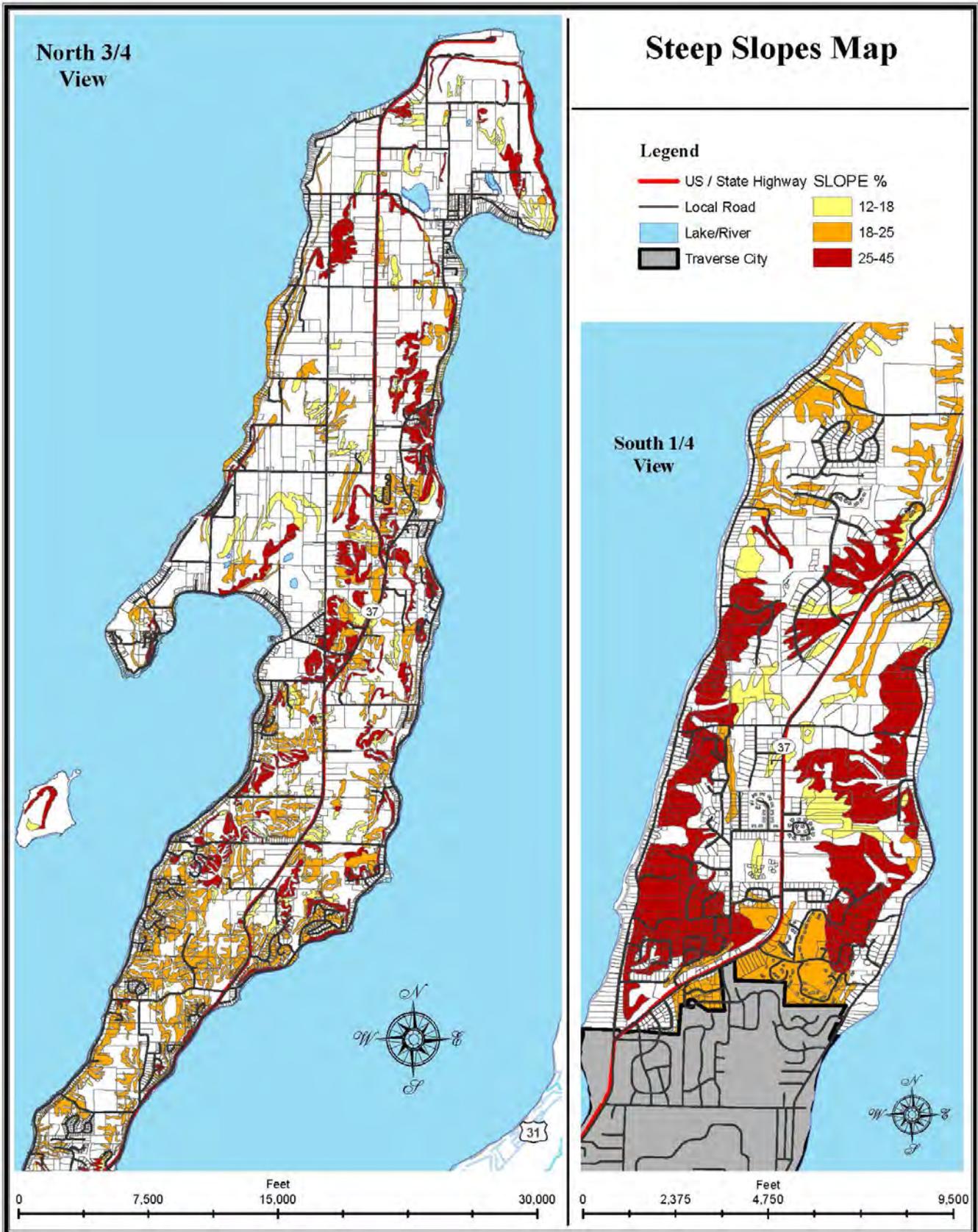
## Agriculture

Agriculture has played an important role in the lives of residents for many generations. In the 1800s, a group of settlers hired a state geologist to survey the area and prepare a report. The findings indicated that the climate and soils were favorably suited for fruit production. Shortly after publication of the report, George Parmalee planted cherry trees. Other pioneers followed Mr. Parmalee's example, concentrating on developing orchard agriculture on the peninsula. By 1904, the census indicated that 1,369 acres of apples and 202 acres of cherries were planted. In recent decades, a number of landowners have planted grapes for wine production, which now represents an important industry on the peninsula. Industries that support agriculture have also developed. While there has traditionally been little heavy industry on the peninsula, the township is currently home to many agriculturally-based businesses such as fruit processing plants.

## Climate

Climate combines with topography and soil types to make Peninsula Township a uniquely ideal area for agriculture, particularly for fruit crops. Classified as a humid continental maritime climate, peninsula weather is moderated by the presence of the two bays. The microclimate, tempered by the







## Historical Context of Agriculture and Agribusiness

The first township master plan was adopted in 1968, and farmland protection was among the goals identified. Subsequently, a zoning ordinance was adopted in 1972 that defined an agricultural A-1 zoning boundary that is essentially the same today as it was then. Chateau Grand Traverse was among the first commercial vineyard and winery operations that appeared in the 1970s at a time when cherries and other tree fruits were the major agricultural activities on the peninsula. The grape-winery industry continued to grow through the late 1970s and early '80s with most growers selling to processors in Peninsula Township and Leelanau County.

The combination of increases in land values and a growing trend of prime farmland being converted into subdivisions created a concern among farmers and homeowners about the future of Old Mission Peninsula. George McManus, county extension agent and later state senator, wrote an article for the Soil Conservation Service newsletter in 1973 raising the question, will there be cherries on Old Mission Peninsula? This article crystallized the concern about farming versus development in the minds of farmers and homeowners alike. The farmers were concerned about non-farm persons in close proximity to producing farmland and their complaints about the dust, noise, and odors of normal farming practices. Homeowners were concerned about the loss of character of the township and increased pressure on the roads and utility systems as well as increased taxes.

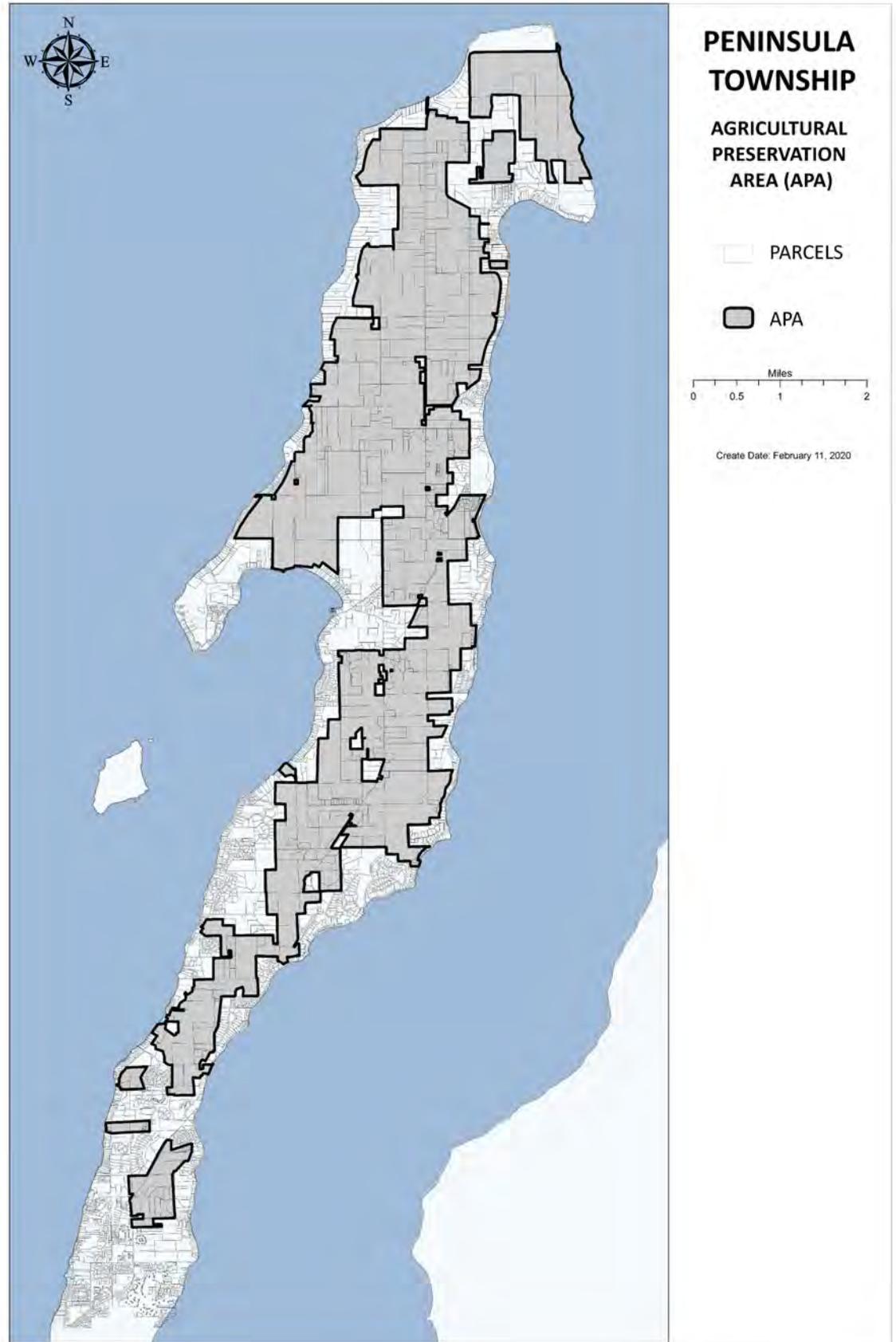
In the late 1980s, these trends prompted a review of the township's master plan and zoning ordinance. The resulting master plan and zoning was based on the carrying capacity of roads and utilities and recognizing the unique geography of the Old Mission Peninsula, and called for a reduction in the sewer and water municipal service area. At the same time, increased flexibility for home occupations and employees in residences was proposed as a way to add economic opportunity. It also increased value-added opportunities for farming operations while keeping non-farm persons from close proximity to production activities. Further, a study by township staff showed that residential development did not always pay for the full cost of public services it used while farmland and open space required fewer services while paying a comparatively high level of taxes.

With the prospect of growth pressure and expectation of the loss of unique agricultural land in sharper focus, a purchase of development rights (PDR) program was created and supported by residents. In 1994, the voters in Peninsula Township approved a tax increase of 1 ¼ mills to preserve in perpetuity the agricultural and open space character of the township. This program was among the first of its kind in the nation. In 2002, the voters again confirmed the plan by approving a second millage vote of 2 mills for 20 years. The second millage vote, while being for an increased amount and for a longer period, was approved by 60% of the vote cast. Today, the money generated from past millage votes has largely been spent and there has been interest in a new levy to continue the PDR program with a new round of funding.





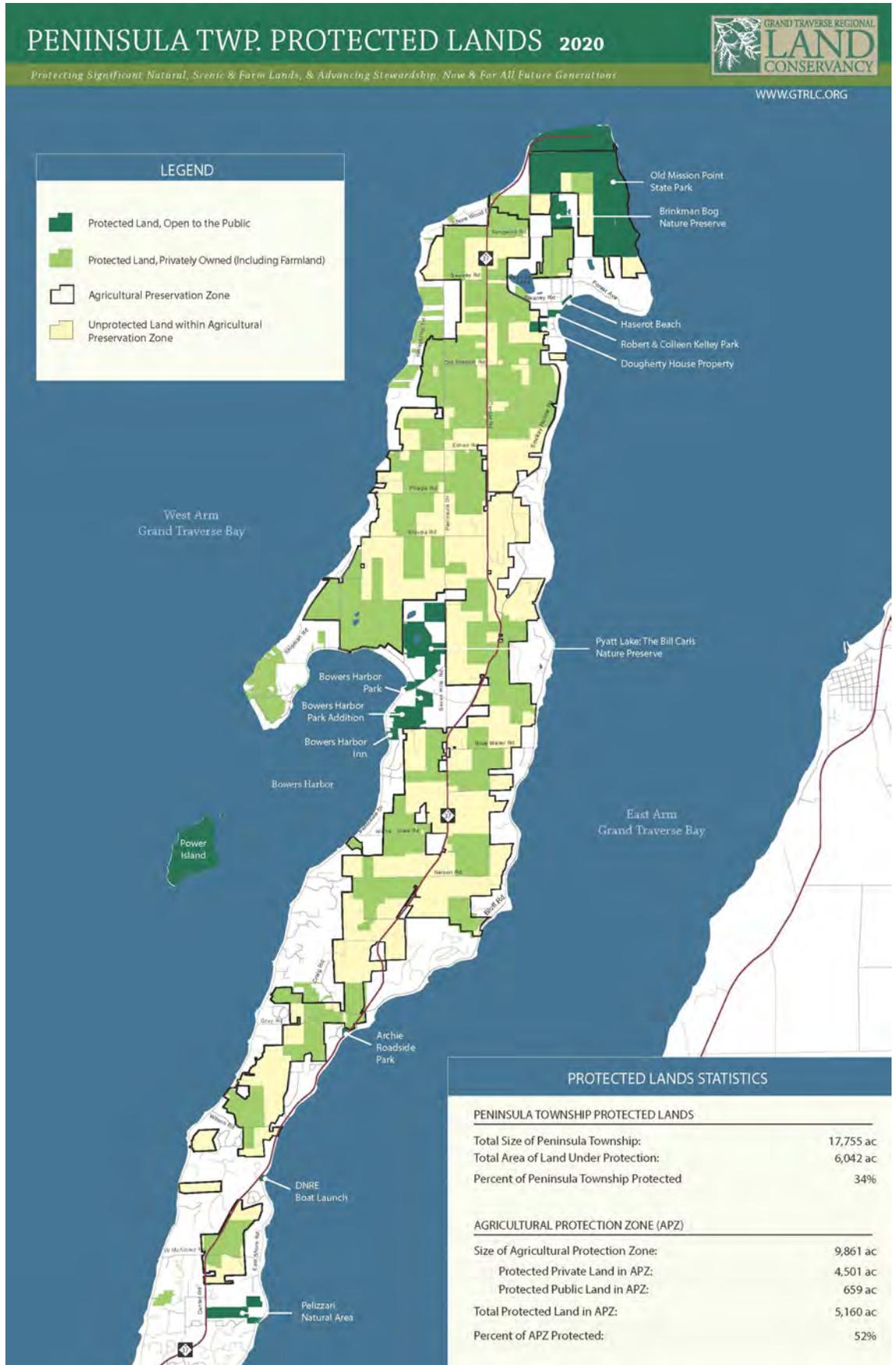
The ordinance that established the PDR program includes a map that defines an agricultural preservation area (APA). This map closely aligns with the A-1 agricultural zoning district and depicts all land that is technically eligible to participate in the PDR program if a voluntary application is completed by the property owner. As shown, the APA covers a significant portion of Peninsula Township.





After many years of planning and implementation, the total amount of land included in the township PDR program, together with other forms of land protection, now exceeds 6,000 acres, or 34% of the township.

Considering only the agricultural preservation area (APA - about 9,990 acres), the total amount of protected land covers about 60 percent of the total acres.



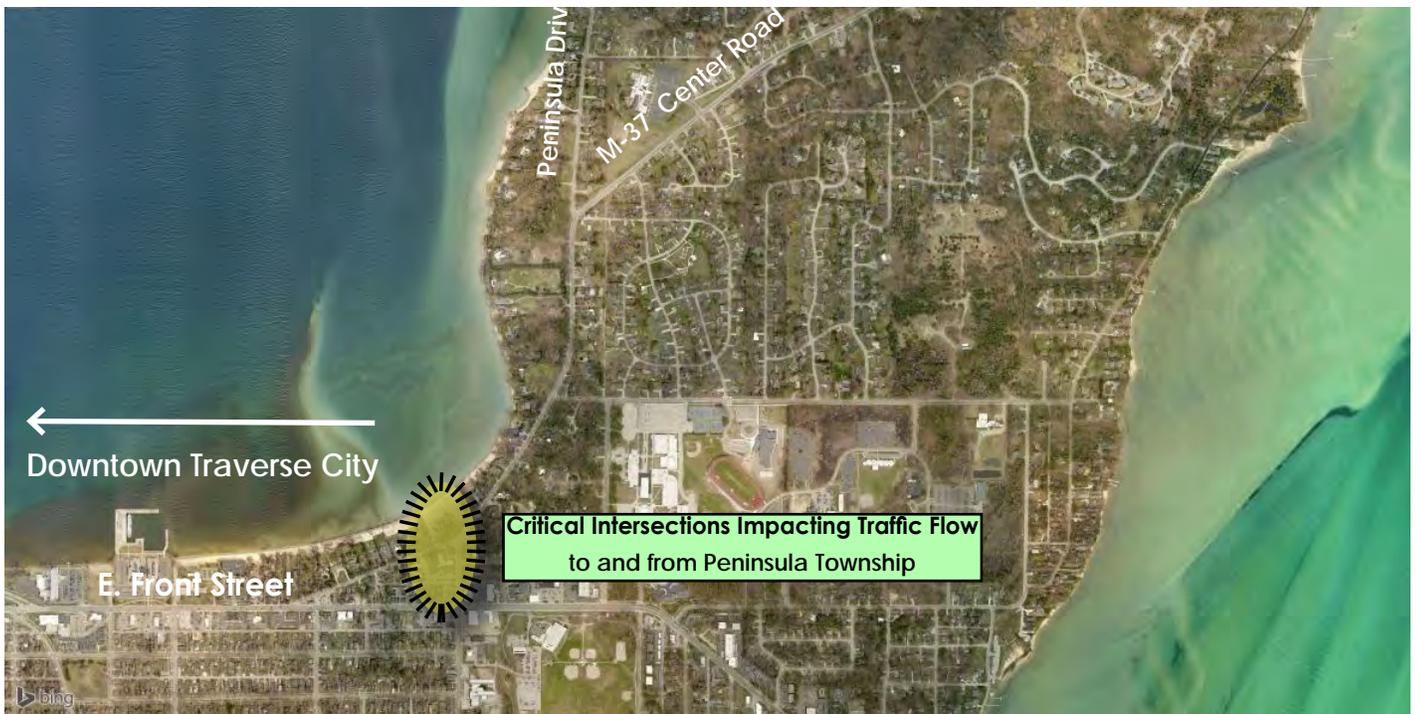


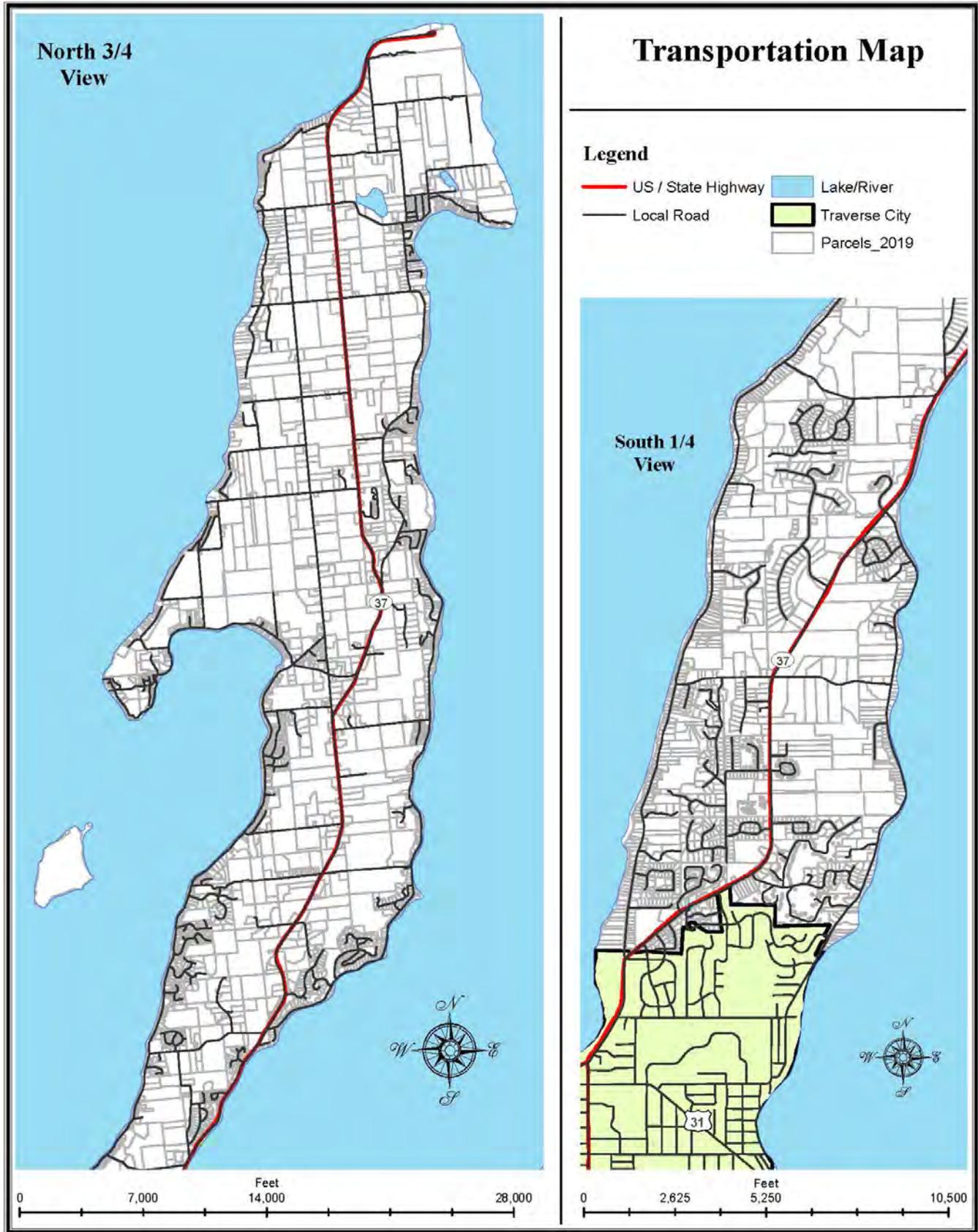
# Transportation

Elements of the transportation system we see today are deeply rooted in the past. As a result of the sinking of a large ship on a rocky shoal extending out into the bay in the 1800s, the lighthouse we see today at the tip of the peninsula was constructed in 1870 just south of the 45th parallel. The first public road in Grand Traverse County was built in 1853 by volunteers and stretched from Traverse City to Old Mission. Other local roadways followed Native American trails that later became familiar roads such as Peninsula Drive and East Shore Road.

The main thoroughfare, Center Road, or M-37, provides the primary means of transportation north and south through the township. Center Road is managed by the state of Michigan's Department of Transportation (MDOT) and provides the connections to the state and federal highway system. As described later, M-37 is also a Scenic Heritage Route. A map showing the existing vehicular transportation system is provided on the following page.

Within a few miles of the base of the peninsula, residents of the township have access to three state highways serving as major east-west and north-south corridors as well as Cherry Capital Airport. However, accessing Peninsula Township is a key planning issue that universally impacts almost all others. With only one primary route on and off the peninsula (M-37), the capacity of that road and related intersections restricts traffic flow significantly. Significant growth in Peninsula Township would undoubtedly increase traffic congestion at these intersections.

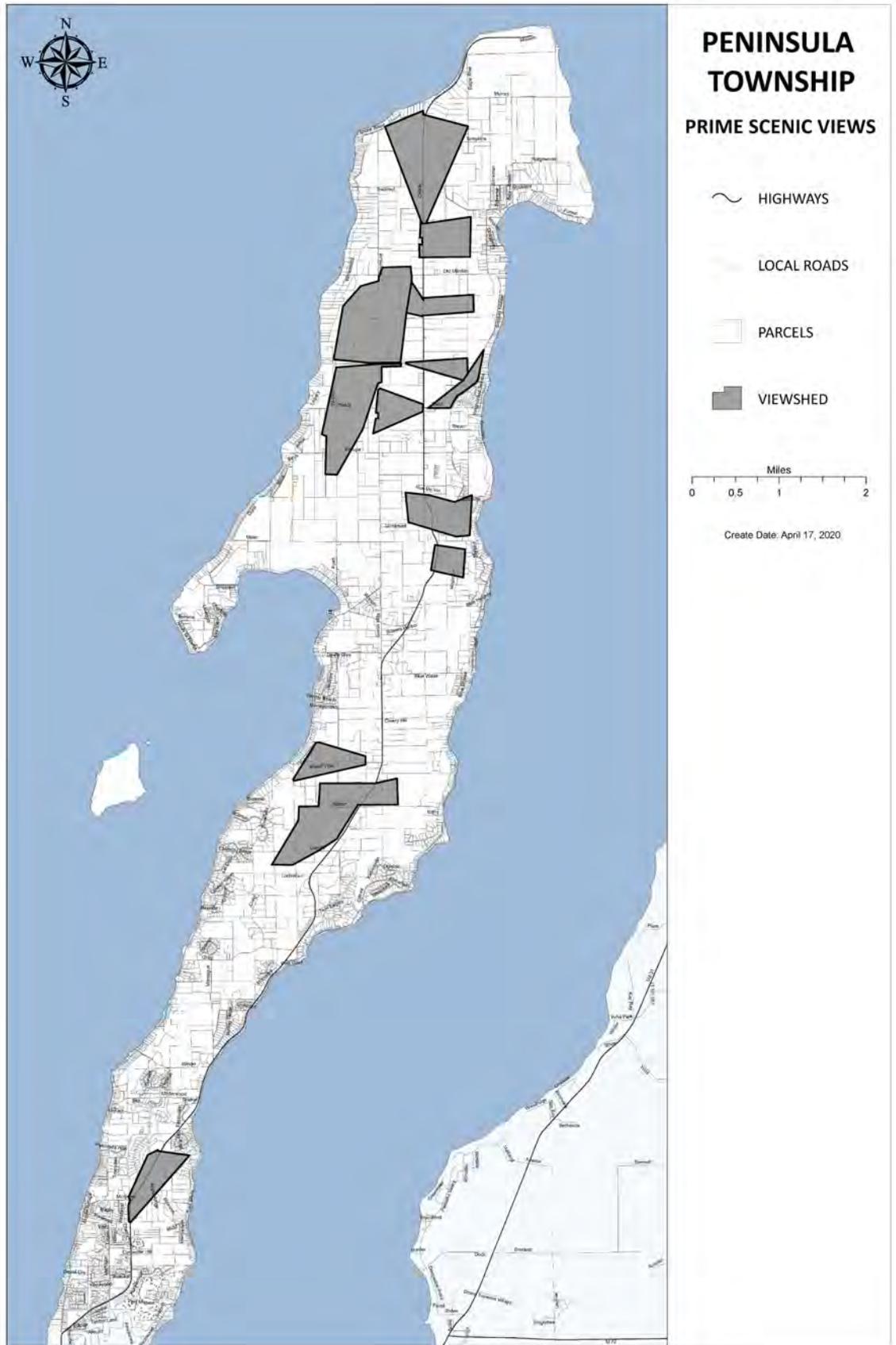






# Views

The amazing views provided by Peninsula Townships unique geography and proximity to Lake Michigan have been specifically identified for planning purposes. Recently, the map illustrating major viewsheds was updated and is provided on this page.





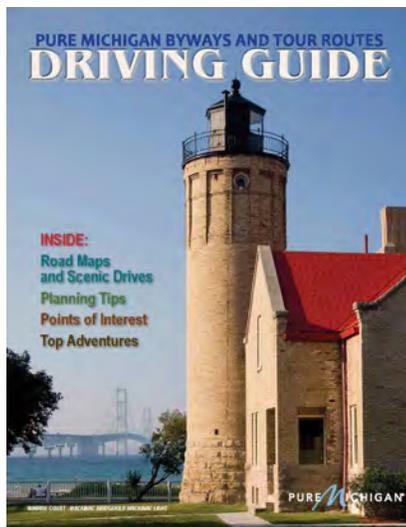
## PURE MICHIGAN BYWAYS

Pure Michigan Byways are specially designated and signed state trunkline routes with special significance. They are designated according to an eight-step procedure and fall into categories based upon intrinsic qualities such as scenery, history, and recreation.

The Old Mission Peninsula Scenic Heritage Route (M-37) was designated in 2008 and is included with a few other Scenic Byways and Heritage Routes in the area such as the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route, M-22, and M-119 (Tunnel of Trees).



Tourists Enjoying the View along M-37 Near Chateau Grand Traverse



### Old Mission Peninsula

Jutting out into Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay, M-37 is the peninsula's main route, running a northerly course between beautiful scenery from rising bluffs, vineyards, orchards, and farms.

The Old Mission Peninsula divides Grand Traverse Bay and has a long history, starting with the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes. In 1839, Rev. Peter Dougherty established a mission for those tribes. The first public road in Grand Traverse County was built in 1853 by volunteers, stretching from Traverse City to the village of Old Mission. Europeans discovered that this "finger of land" along the 45th parallel was ideal for growing fruit. In 1935, the road was designated "Queen's Highway" in honor of the annual cherry blossom celebration's elected queen.

The byway is entirely within Peninsula Township, where you'll find amazing views of Lake Michigan, orchards, vineyards, farm fields, rolling hills, parks, trails, and a lighthouse. There are many **value-added agricultural destinations**, such as wineries, bed and breakfasts,

u-pick farms, and farm stands, just off the byway to the east or west on county roads. Many wineries offer spectacular views of east and west Grand Traverse Bay/Lake Michigan and farm stands provide seasonal fruit, such as cherries, blueberries, peaches, apples, etc., and fruit products. Peninsula Township was the first local government in the state of Michigan implement a voter-approved "Purchase of Development Rights" program to preserve the orchards, farmlands and scenic view areas from development.

#### US-31 to Bowers Harbor Road

The southern section of the byway is more residential, with many year-round and seasonal homes and clustered residential developments. Two miles north of Traverse City's busy US-31 corridor is the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's 62-acre **Pelizzari Natural Area**, which was once the Pelizzari family farm. Its location amidst relatively dense development makes it a backyard park for many, as well as a destination worth traveling to. There are nearly 3 miles of trail that meanders through wide-open fields, former orchards, quiet upland forests, and cool lowlands with giant hemlocks, and are suitable for hikers, skiers, and snowshoers. Visitors are likely to encounter several bird species. The upland hardwood forest is dazzling in autumn.

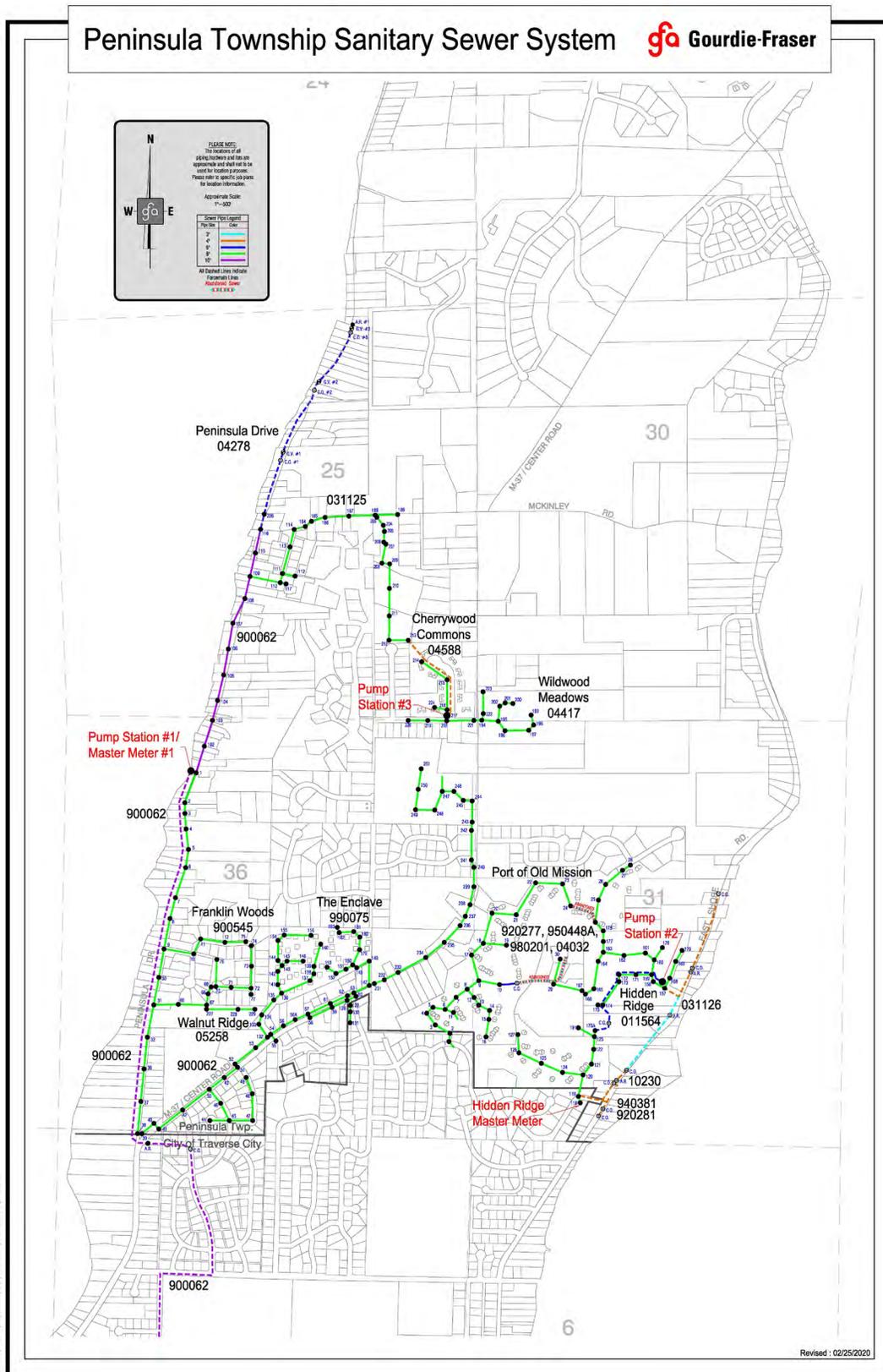


Further north, the **East Grand Traverse Bay Boat Access Site** provides launching of pleasure and fishing boats, canoes and kayaks into East Grand Traverse Bay. **Archie Roadside Township Park** provides bicyclists a parking lot and staging area for tours of the Old Mission Peninsula, with access to Grand Traverse Bay. Further north, visitors can pull off at the **Center Road Scenic Overlook** to take in the spectacular view of east and west Grand Traverse Bay and take pictures.

Just off the byway on Bowers Harbor Road is **Bowers Harbor Park**, a major township park with access to natural and recreational resources that includes tennis and volleyball courts, baseball, softball and soccer fields, playgrounds, picnicking amenities (such as pavilions, grills, and tables), a restroom, and nonmotorized trails. North of Bowers Harbor Park on Peninsula Drive is the conservancy's 159-acre **Pyatt Lake Nature Preserve**, one of the last remaining examples of a "wooded dune and swale complex" habitat in northern Michigan. The pristine landscape and unique habitat mosaic make it a haven for more than 250 plant species. In the spring, lady slipper orchids and trillium carpet the ground. Migrating waterfowl use the lake as a resting place, while warblers, winter wrens, woodpeckers, and owls all flourish in the maturing forest. With its geological and botanical features and abundant wildlife, Pyatt Lake is a must see.

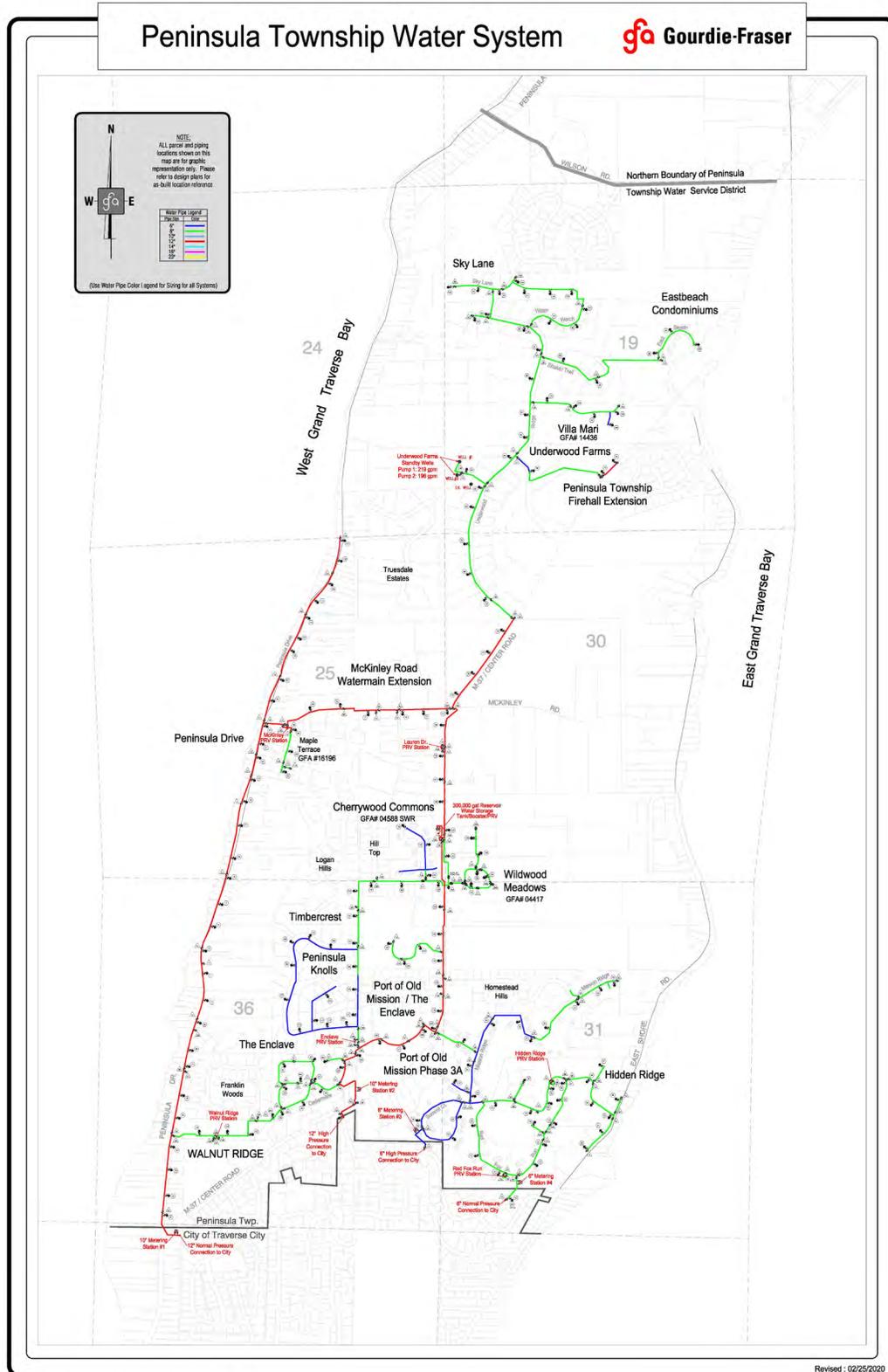


# Sanitary Sewer System





# Public Water System





## DEMOGRAPHICS

Peninsula Township’s population has grown steadily for many decades and continues to represent about six percent of Grand Traverse County. As developable land becomes scarcer, however, it is expected that Peninsula Township will likely represent less and less of the total population of Grand Traverse County in the coming decades.

Year	Peninsula Township Population	Change from Prior Decade	Grand Traverse County Population	Change from Prior Decade	Peninsula Township as a % of Grand Traverse County
1930	1107		20,011		5.5
1940	1146	3.5	22,702	13.4	5
1950	1531	33.6	27,826	22.6	5.5
1960	2013	31.5	32,687	17.5	6.2
1970	2642	31.2	38,169	16.8	6.9
1980	3883	47	54,899	43.8	7.1
1990	4340	11.8	64,273	17.1	6.8
2000	5265	21.3	77,654	20.8	6.8
2010	5433	3.2	86,986	12	6.2
2018 (est)	5799		92,573		6.3

## RESIDENT PROFILES

One way communities are unique is in terms of the characteristics of residents. The characteristics of people who call a community home is important because the lens by which a livable community is defined align with attributes such as age, family size, income, educational levels, etc. For example, the quality of a local school district and employment opportunities are far more important to young families than to retired or elderly households.

According to Census Bureau QuickFacts data, a Peninsula Township resident is:

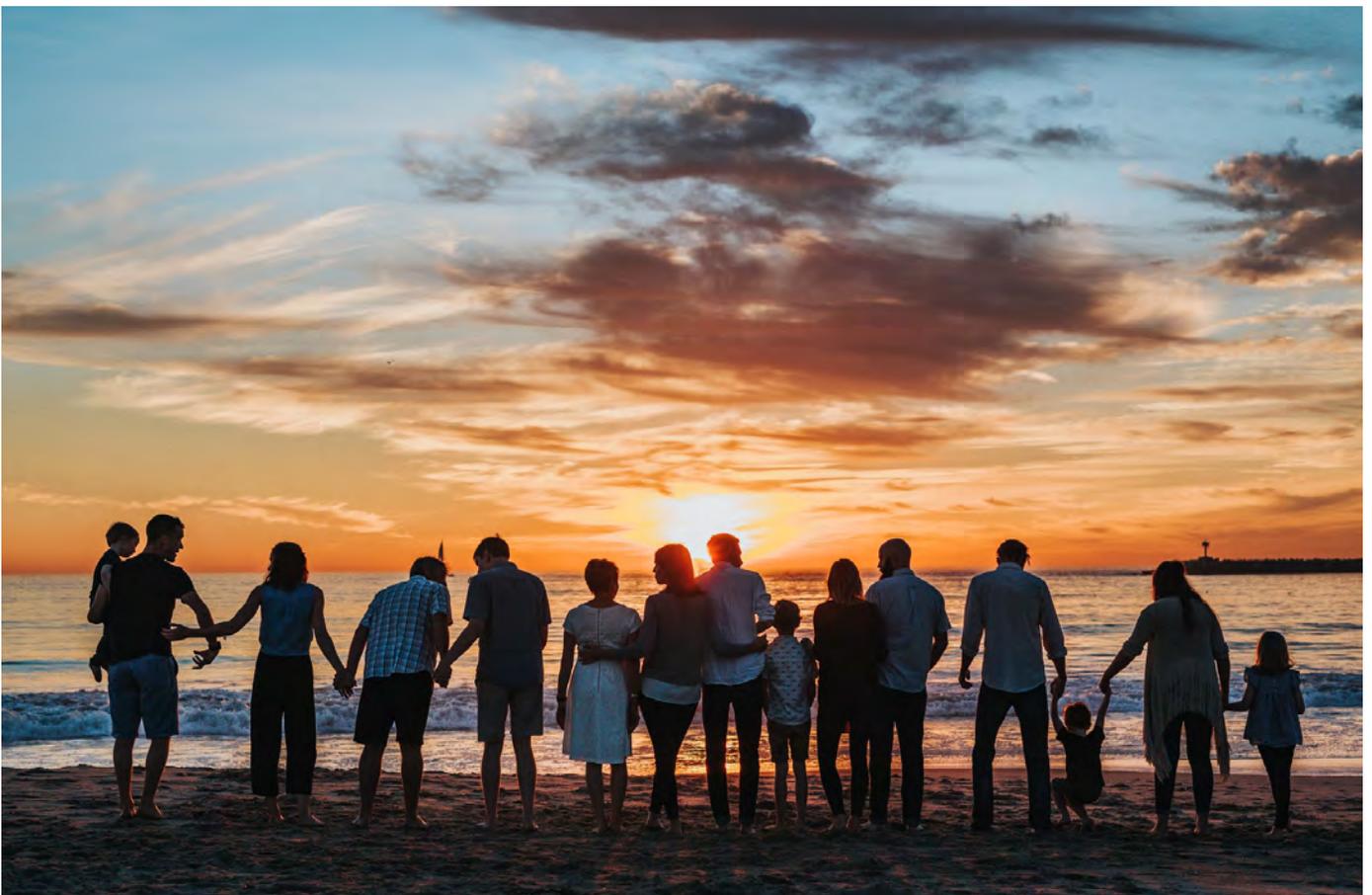
- **More likely to be of retirement age.** About a third of all Peninsula Township residents are 65 years old or older (compared with 17.2% statewide).
- **More likely to live in an owner-occupied home.** More than 9 out of 10 housing units in the township are owner-occupied (compared with 71% statewide).



- **More likely to have lived in the same home one year ago.** More than 91% of residents lived in the same home one year ago (compared with 85.8% statewide).
- **More likely to live in a household with fewer people.** The average household size in Peninsula Township is 2.21 (compared with 2.49 statewide).
- **More likely to be 18 years old or older.** Only 17.3% of Peninsula Township residents are under 18 years old (compared with 21.7% statewide).
- **More likely to have a computer at home with broadband internet.** More than 96% of Peninsula Township residents have a computer and nearly

92% have broadband internet (compared with 88% with a computer and 79% with broadband internet statewide).

- **More likely to live in a household with a substantially larger household income.** The median household income in Peninsula Township (2018 dollars) was \$100,949. (compared with nearly half (\$54,938) statewide).
- **Far less likely to live in poverty.** The census bureau reports only 3.3% of people living in poverty in Peninsula Township (compared with 14.1% statewide).





## The Current Moment in Time

Planning is naturally forward looking, but it also takes place through the lens that reflects on the past and current viewpoints. In 2021, Peninsula Township finds itself looking forward from a perspective of recent accomplishments and toward future challenges. Some recent accomplishments (in no order of importance) include:



### OLD MISSION PENINSULA SCHOOL

In October 2015, Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS) announced it would need to close three elementary schools, including Old Mission Elementary School, for financial reasons. Thanks to extraordinary community efforts over many months driven by the recognition of the importance of preserving a sense of community on Old Mission Peninsula, a foundation was formed, money was raised, and a new Old Mission Peninsula School opened in 2018.

### PENINSULA COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Given the changes occurring with Old Mission Peninsula School, in 2016, the leadership of Peninsula Community Library mounted a campaign to raise funds to build a new library and move the former library out of the elementary school. More than 2.5 million dollars were raised, and our beautiful new 5,600-square-foot facility opened in September of 2019.

### CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) PROGRAM

Peninsula Township is well known for creating one of the first publicly funded PDR programs in the United States and the first in the Midwest. In 1994, voters agreed to tax themselves and fund a voluntary program to purchase development rights from agricultural land owners. Outside funding from the state of Michigan, American Farmland Trust, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), and the



federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program subsequently added to this effort. In the years that followed (between 1996 and 2009), more than 2,800 acres were protected from development through the PDR program. Today, more than 110 agreements covering 3,347 acres are subject to PDR restrictions held by Peninsula Township. When combined with GTRLC-held conservation easements and other public land, roughly 6,500 acres have been permanently protected in Peninsula Township, or 36% of the total land area. The recent community survey suggests continued support for this program.

## **EXPANDING LOCAL WINE INDUSTRY**

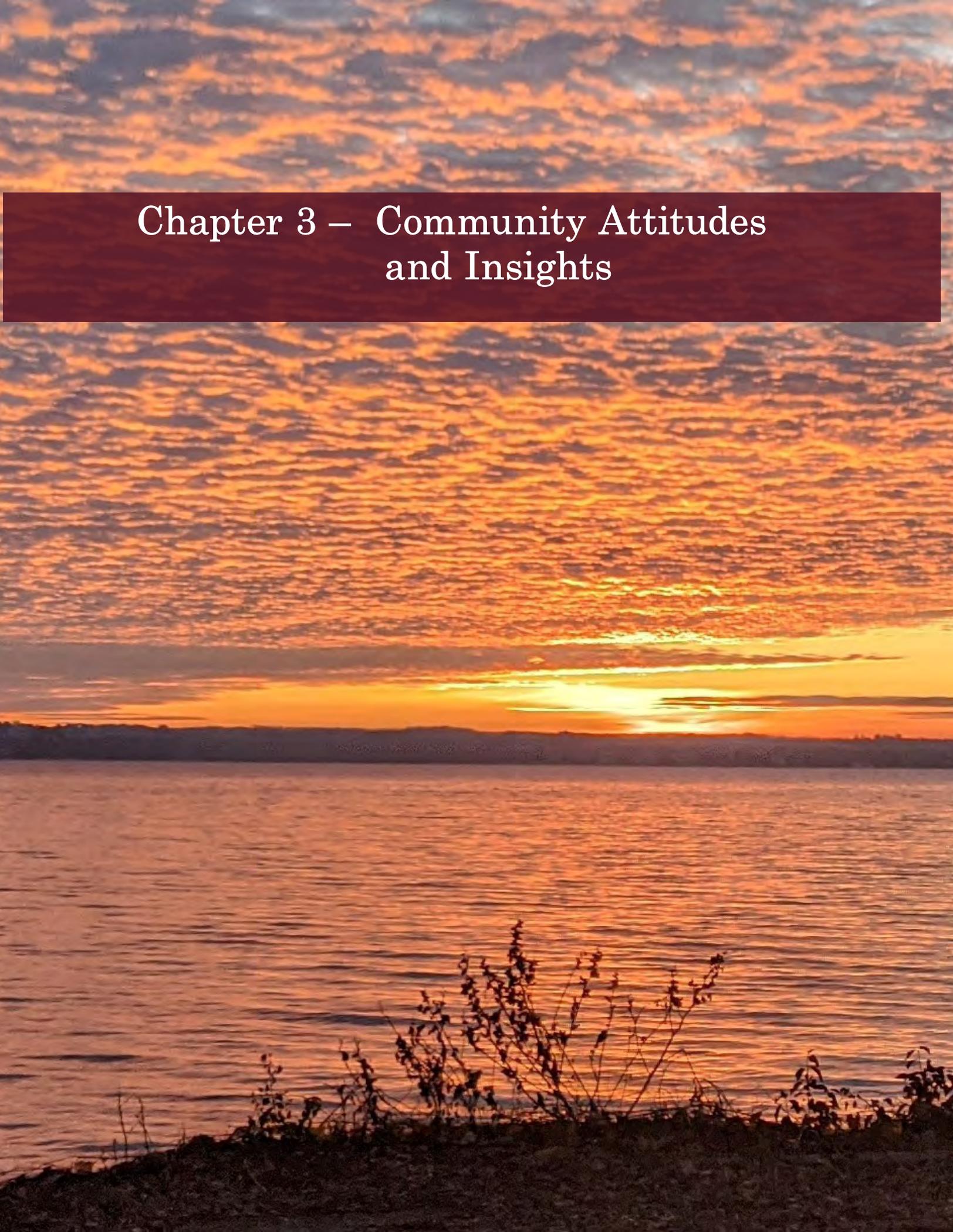
The beginnings of the local wine industry can be traced back to the early 1990s with the establishment of entities such as Chateau Grand Traverse and Chateau Chantel. Today, eleven wineries support local agricultural products and preserve farmland. The success of the wineries supports and promotes the popularity of Old Mission Peninsula viticulture.

## **PARK EXPANSIONS**

In late 2015, using funds from private donations, a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, nearly 60 acres of land were acquired to expand Bowers Harbor Park. A development plan was prepared for this area that includes an extensive walking trail system, parking, pavilions, and toilets. This major project supplements prior recent efforts to establish Mission Point Lighthouse Park at the tip of the peninsula, the 62-acre Pelizzari Natural Area at the base of the peninsula, and Kelley Park in Old Mission. Altogether, the total amount of parkland available to residents and guests now exceeds 1,000 acres.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

Fire Station No. 3, completed in early 2021, offers improved emergency response times for those living in the northern part of Peninsula Township. This significant milestone is accompanied by related steps to increase staff, place automatic external defibrillators (AED) in businesses, and get working smoke detectors in every home. All these steps add up to increased resident safety and lowered Insurance Service Offices (ISO) ratings, which can lower insurance costs.

A sunset over a large body of water, likely a lake or sea. The sky is filled with a dense layer of clouds, which are illuminated from below by the setting sun, creating a vibrant orange and yellow glow. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, partially obscured by a thin layer of clouds. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the distance, a dark silhouette of a coastline or mountains is visible. In the immediate foreground, there are some dark, silhouetted plants or bushes. A dark red banner is overlaid at the top of the image, containing the chapter title in white text.

## Chapter 3 – Community Attitudes and Insights



## General Community Attitudes and Insights

Master plans are fundamentally about choices regarding the future guided by resident preferences and wishes. Understanding resident preferences and wants often includes some form of community engagement, which can occur in different forms and at different times during a planning process. For this master plan, initial community engagement included steps to conduct a new community survey. Past community surveys were done in 1990 and again in 2006. Information from these surveys provided useful background data but offered little to support an understanding of current attitudes.

In the summer of 2019, Peninsula Township hired EPIC ▪ MRA to assist staff with a new resident survey. From September 26 through September 30, 2019, live operator telephone interviews with 200 adult residents of Peninsula Township were conducted. This phone survey was performed so that a set of results would be provided from a random sample of residents. Soon after the phone survey, the township offered an online version of the survey to residents and other stakeholders to provide an avenue for all to participate if they wished. However, while it was expected that the online version would likely generate more responses, the results could be less random for a variety of reasons. Therefore, having survey results from two methods would help paint a more accurate picture of local attitudes.

The online survey was based on unique residential addresses in the county appearing on the secretary of state's qualified voter file. This list was augmented with addresses supplied by the township assessor's office to include those not otherwise found on the secretary of state file. Once the augmented list was compiled, postcards via first class mail were sent to approximately 3,800 addresses. The postcard, bearing the Peninsula Township logo,

informed the recipient household of the reason for the communication and instructions regarding how to access the questionnaire online. The post card contained a four-digit code required to complete the survey. The online survey was open for participation from October 18, 2019, through November 6, 2019. A total of 980 usable responses were recorded for the postcard solicitation portion of the project.

### IMPORTANT SURVEY TAKEAWAYS

The new survey results validated common perceptions about what residents value. There were also some unexpected results. While a full reporting of survey data is available in the appendix, some key takeaways include the following:

- Among all attributes, residents say they **like living in Peninsula Township mostly because of the rural, quiet atmosphere, followed closely by scenic views and the quality of the environment.** Looked at from the opposite angle, growth-overdevelopment and traffic-congestion topped the list of open-ended responses offered by respondents who believe the quality of life in the township has "gotten worse" in the past few years.
- Looked at another way, when residents were asked to identify areas where the township could do more, strongest support went to the statement urging the township to **keep as much of the rural character and historic landscape as possible.**
- One area where there is **unequivocal support for a new initiative is in the development of a non-motorized transportation plan.** More than three-quarters of respondents from both methodologies support this initiative, and two-thirds of that total support is in the form of strongly supporting such action. Fleshing out the specifics of such a plan will, of course, be a comprehensive process but the survey data clearly indicates support for pedestrian safety features in the way of signals, pavement markings, and signage along with attention to walking trails and bike paths.



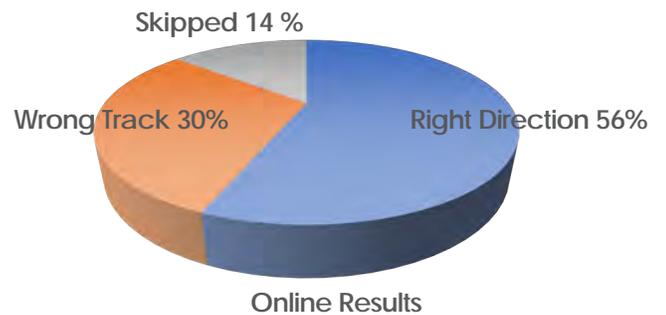
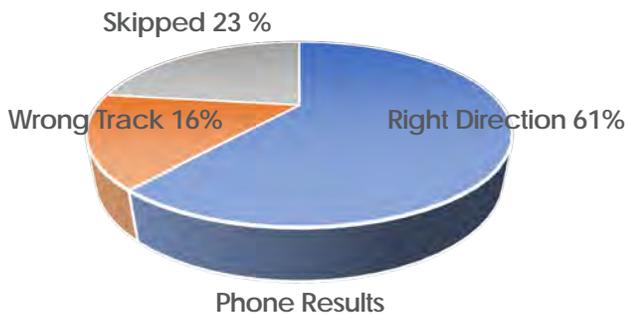
- A practical, albeit less direct, expression of residents' preference for a rural setting is manifested in the responses to the series of questions concerning the township's purchase of development rights (PDR) program. **Well over half of all respondents in both survey methods reported awareness that Peninsula Township currently has a taxpayer-funded PDR program, and well over half purport to have at least some familiarity with its provisions.**
- Finally, in keeping with residents' environmental awareness tempered with a desire for viewshed preservation, **there is receptivity to the idea of some form of wind and/or solar energy sourcing on the peninsula.** Again, the survey only briefly touched on

the issue, but the greatest receptivity is for small-scale systems serving a single property followed by systems capable of serving a limited collection of properties or a small neighborhood.

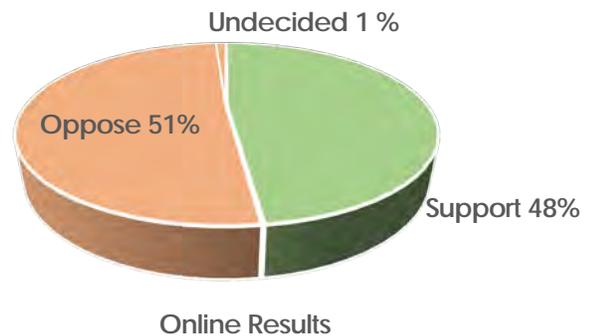
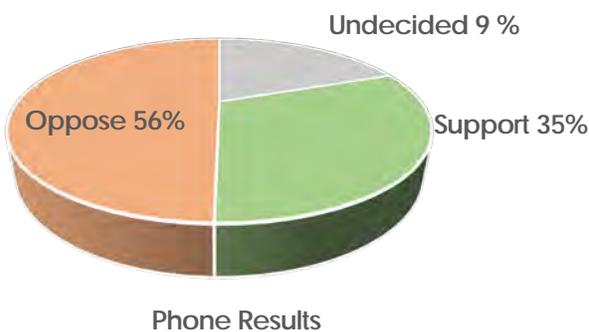
- **In sum, township residents are, by and large, content with the status quo.** To the extent there is an expression of openness to changes, it reveals itself in policies directed at addressing growth, traffic congestion, and preservation of viewsheds.

In addition to the above, the following charts illustrate some findings on key issues.

Respondents were asked if, overall, they believe Peninsula Township is headed in the right direction or is going down the wrong track.

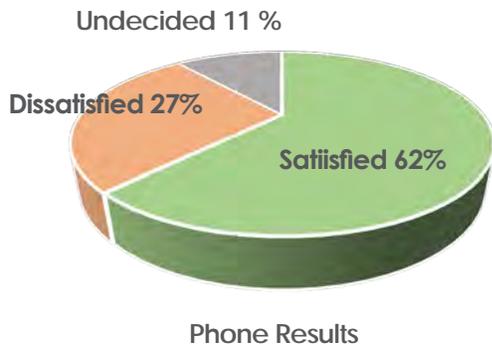


Respondents were informed of the growth in the number of wineries in the township over the past couple of decades and asked if they supported or opposed the continued development and growth of these types of establishments.

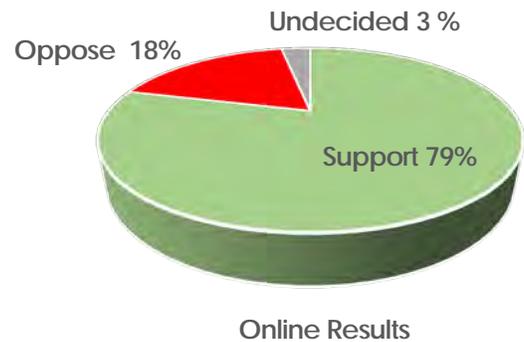
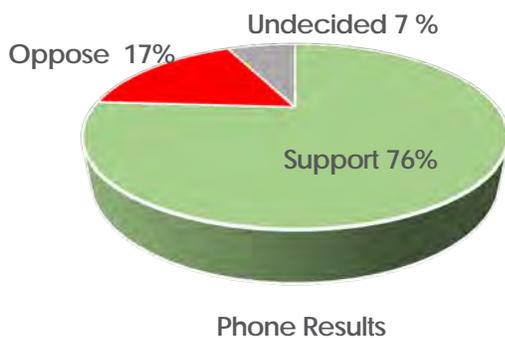




Respondents were apprised of the township's policy prohibiting short-term rentals (if not at a bed and breakfast establishment or winery-chateau) and were asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with that policy.



After being presented with a statement noting the regular presence of runners, bicyclists, and pedestrians on township thoroughfares, the comparatively narrow width of many area roads, and the adoption of non-motorized transportation policies in nearby jurisdictions, respondents were asked if they would support or oppose the township initiating the process of developing its own non-motorized transportation plan. It is also notable that according to early feedback from the Participate Old Mission platform, the early and preliminary results from a "quick poll" suggests that not only do people support non-motorized transportation, they may also be willing to pay for it. According to nearly fifty respondents, nearly 90% of respondents, say they are likely or very likely to pay for an improved bicycle and/or pedestrian system in Peninsula Township.



A scenic sunset over a body of water, with silhouetted grasses in the foreground. The sky transitions from a pale blue at the top to a vibrant orange and yellow near the horizon, where the sun has set. The water reflects the warm colors of the sky. In the foreground, several tall, thin stalks of grass with feathery seed heads are silhouetted against the bright background, creating a sense of depth and texture. A dark, silhouetted treeline is visible in the distance, just above the water's surface.

## Chapter 4 – Trends



## Trends impacting the township.

Trends can and often do change, but the following material provides a brief description of clear and relevant trends Peninsula Township should be mindful of as we look ahead.

### HOME VALUES HAVE DOUBLED

In 2010, the median value of homes that sold in Peninsula Township was about \$217,500. By 2020, the median value was \$446,300. In other words, median home values in Peninsula Township have doubled in the last 10 years. As recently noted, due in part to this steadily increasing trend in home values, the total assessed value of property in Peninsula Township recently crossed the \$1 billion mark. Comparable and final information is not yet available for the state or nation, but this rapid increase in local home values is believed to be significant.

### AGING POPULATION

As noted, Peninsula Township residents are generally likely to be 65 years old and older (see page 26). Perhaps just as important, the national trend likewise points to a growing elderly population. Longer life spans and other demographic factors support the U.S. Census Bureau's projection that by the year 2034, for the first time in history, the number of adults 65 and older in the U.S. will exceed the number of children under 18. Given this projection, it is reasonable to assume that older residents will represent an ever larger segment of the local population. The planning implications are important.





The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has been active in providing research into what older residents desire from the communities in which they live, including rural communities. Some key findings from a report titled 2018 Home and Community Preferences Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18 – Plus a Look at Rural Communities (June 2019) include these takeaways:

- **Nearly three-quarters of rural adults say they want to remain in their communities and homes as they age.**
- **Almost half of rural adults report that they will stay in their current homes and never move compared to only a third or fewer of urban and suburban adults who say they will never move from their current homes.**

- **About three-quarters of rural adults own their own homes; nearly two in five report that major modifications to their homes will be needed to accommodate their needs as they age.**
- **The presence of accessory dwelling units is low among rural adults, but eight in ten say they would consider building one for a loved one who needs care.**
- **The large majority of rural adults (89%) drive themselves to get around their communities.**
- **Other popular modes of transportation include walking and having someone else drive them.**
- **Well-maintained streets and easy-to-read traffic signs are very important to aging rural adults.**





## REMOTE WORKING

Thanks to COVID-19, more companies are offering hybrid or remote working arrangements, and increasing numbers of people feel less inclined to live close to where they work. It has been reported that about one in four Americans (26.7%) will work remotely in 2021 (Forbes, March 19, 2021). This means that more people will be less tied to a specific area and more able to choose where to live based on amenities and the quality of life. If this trend is sustained into the future, it will continue to represent an important factor in local growth pressure.



## TRANSPORTATION AND HEALTH

Decades ago, health experts began documenting the health benefits of physical activity. Obesity rates have increased dramatically over the last 30 years, and obesity is now considered to be an epidemic in the United States. Diabetes is also responsible for huge health-care costs, and the incidence of diabetes is expected to continue increasing. At the same time, there is a growing recognition that the transportation infrastructure built in recent decades typically accommodates only vehicular traffic. This realization has led all levels of government to shift toward an increased emphasis on developing safe places to walk, bike, and engage in physical activity. Myriad programs and design strategies support measures such as complete streets, traffic calming, context sensitive design, safe routes to schools, and others, all aimed at increasing transportation options beyond vehicle travel to encourage non-motorized travel and physical activity.



# Chapter 5 – Legacy, Challenges and Vision





## PLANNING LEGACY

For many decades, Peninsula Township's rolling hills, miles of Great Lakes shoreline, and stunning views of bays, farms, orchards, and vineyards have drawn people to live and visit here. Nearly 50 years ago, community leaders saw mounting development forces and recognized the threat to farmland, environmental values, and quality of life. This realization led the township to develop a zoning ordinance in 1972 that established a basic order to development patterns, notably a large interior agricultural district, coastal residential districts, and limited commercial districts as well as minimum lot sizes and setbacks in each district. Many of the zoning provisions enacted in 1972 continue to guide development patterns today.

In subsequent decades, as planning efforts in the township continued, recognition grew that strong growth pressures would continue to fuel construction activity and increases in population. Early projections suggested that Peninsula Township could reach 30,000 people or more if fully built out unless other measures were taken. Residents and township leadership viewed this level of development with alarm, as it would inevitably reduce the viability of agriculture, diminish scenic views, add huge additional infrastructure costs (i.e., water, sewer, and roads), and contribute to an overall decline in environmental quality. Such a large population would also create major traffic issues in Traverse City as previously discussed (see page 24).

Peninsula Township demonstrated bold and proactive leadership and a core commitment to land preservation by creating one of the first publicly funded township Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs in the United States and the first in the Midwest. On August 2, 1994, voters agreed to tax themselves to the tune of six million dollars to purchase the development rights from willing farmers who wanted to keep their land in farming forever. Outside funding from the State of Michigan, American Farmland Trust, Grand Traverse

Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), and the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program subsequently augmented this effort. This bold and proactive leadership came from not only elected and appointed officials, but concerned residents such as John Wunsch and many others.

Between 1995 and 2009, more than 2,800 acres in Peninsula Township were protected from development through the PDR program. The PDR program was so successful, with more farmers interested in selling their development rights than money to buy them, that voters approved a second PDR millage renewal and increase in 2001 for another 20 years, a period that is now ending.

Today, more than 110 parcels totaling 3,347 acres are subject to PDR restrictions held by Peninsula Township. When combined with GTRLC-held conservation easements and other public land, roughly 6,500 acres have been permanently protected in Peninsula Township, or 36% of the total land area. Considering only the agricultural preservation area (APA), the total amount of protected land covers about about 60 percent of the total acres in the APA.

This is a great start, but, once again, we have willing farmers who wish to sell their development rights and preserve their farms with insufficient funding available to accomplish their goals.

Given the program's success to date, the maximum population of the Peninsula if fully built out, will be approximately 12,000 people, a far cry from the original projection of 30,000 had action not been taken.





## CHALLENGES

As previously described on pages 30 and 31, Peninsula Township has a newly established K-8 charter school, a newly constructed library, and recent park expansions. The township also has 18 wine manufacturers (as licensed by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission), 11 wine tasting rooms, a market and gas station, three restaurants, four churches, many farm markets, nurseries, and farm stands, and governmental services, including township offices, three fire stations that provide fulltime fire and emergency medical services, and a full-time community police officer to supplement law enforcement services provided by the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department.

The Peninsula Township community has long recognized and valued the quiet, rural, and scenic character of the Old Mission Peninsula and the critical need to protect these defining values. Recent planning efforts such as the 2019 community survey and the launch of the online engagement tool called Participate Old Mission provide a more current understanding of resident preferences, values, and desires. As the population has grown and residential and winery development has increased, the desire to protect the township's scenic views and quiet rural character has amplified. Protection measures have been highlighted in township planning documents since the early 1980s, with each plan reiterating and building upon this concept from previous plans.

According to the 2019 survey, the majority of residents believe the township is "headed in the right direction" and that the quality of life "has remained the same." At the same time, there is growing evidence that the local story of stewarding of this special place may be at a pivotal juncture. As a case in point, we now see the following:

- The local wineries filed suit against the township in late 2020 over limits on allowed commercial activity;
- Record-high water levels eroding the shoreline, causing severe erosion, millions in property damage, and the closure of a section of Bluff Road;
- A potential renewal of the PDR program that will require continued support from residents at the ballot box;
- Growing recognition of the need for better traffic control and accommodation for non-motorized travel;
- The only recently-resolved matter of who controls M-37 (the Michigan Department of Transportation or the Grand Traverse County Road Commission);
- Growing questions about whether our township form of government is best for the long haul;
- Lingering questions over state and local responses to the demand for short-term rentals and other dimensions of the hospitality market;
- Development pressures that continue to remain strong along with property and home values that continue to dramatically rise at a fast pace; and
- The lingering effects of COVID-19 that hamper community engagement efforts.

*...although current challenges are substantial, the majority of residents believe the township is "headed in the right direction" and that the quality of life "has remained the same."*



## OVERARCHING VISION AND ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Peninsula Township’s leaders recognize that the Old Mission Peninsula is a special place for all the reasons described in Chapter 1. they also recognize that the current issues facing the township mean that careful and deliberate planning has never been more important if the township is to retain its current amenities and reach its full potential as the best possible gift to future generations. These challenges align to twelve overarching vision targets that can also be thought of as organizing planning principles for Peninsula Township. These vision targets surfaced from 2019 survey results, results from Participate Old Mission and deliberations during master plan committee meetings.

...responses to challenges align to twelve overarching vision targets that can also be thought of as organizing planning principles for Peninsula Township.

No.	Vision	SUBJECT AREA	SUMMARY
1	Recognize and make the most of an “island-like geography.”	Land Use	The ability to maintain the quality of life in the township will be highly influenced by the reality that the peninsula is more or less an “island” with a single “bridge” that carries residents to and from Traverse City and beyond. This “bridge” is a two-lane street that has a finite carrying capacity and few options for expansion/widening. Vehicle traffic counts and studies must be completed annually to help monitor change over time and to help guide township development policies. Recognizing the need to limit growth and traffic is a major underpinning and foundation for nearly all other vision elements and planning policies.
2	Continue to implement any and all steps that reduce build-out potential.	Land Use	Looking ahead to this new decade and beyond, we see thousands of acres of agricultural land that could still be developed into homes. Demand for homes on the Old Mission Peninsula is strong and likely to get stronger given existing trends. At the same time, residents clearly want to preserve and maintain a rural atmosphere.  Renewing the PDR program that expires in 2021 is crucial to completing the task of land preservation that began in the early 1990s. Protecting the remaining 4,680 acres of agricultural land identified in the agricultural preservation zone (APZ) is critical to limiting the full buildout of the population to 12,000 people.



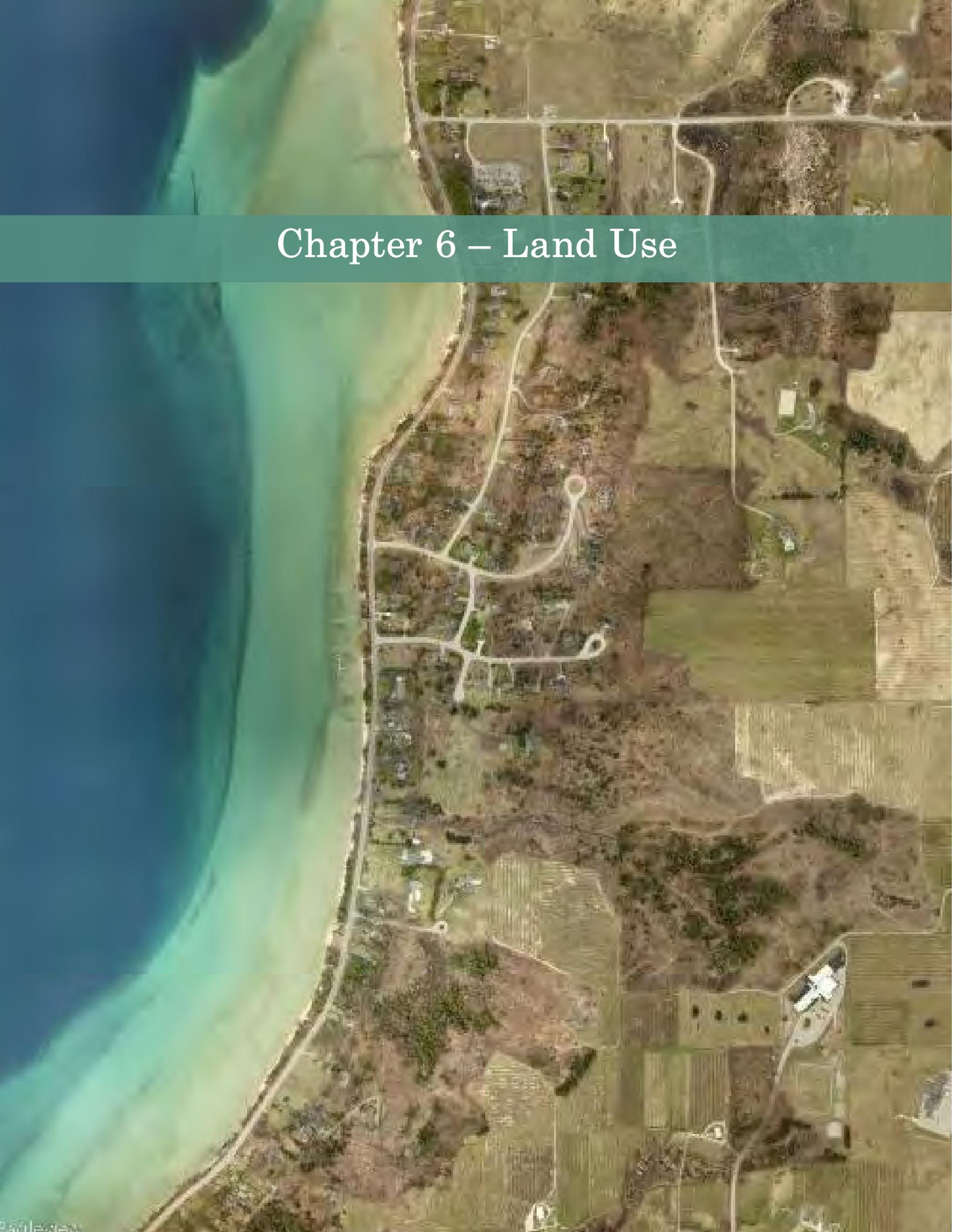
No.	Vision	SUBJECT AREA	SUMMARY
3	Ensure that future development is constructed in ways that thoughtfully balance all land use needs.	Land Use	<p>Regardless of even the most aggressive steps to reduce buildout potential, some degree of development is inevitable. People who own land that is not encumbered with a conservation easement are free to legally propose new construction within the limits of the zoning ordinance. However, what is not necessarily inevitable is where development occurs and how it is designed. In the past, the township explored the concept of a transfer of development rights as a mechanism to concentrate future development in a way that adds housing choices and opportunities to meet local needs. Going forward, a transfer of development rights (TDR) program will be studied and implemented if feasible and if there is adequate support. Such a program would enable the “transfer” of density from property that should be preserved or property where development is not feasible because of topography to property where development is preferred.</p> <p>The TDR program, coupled with mixed use development in the commercial zones to include first floor retail/ commercial with second floor residential, could help make local businesses that serve residents more attractive to developers. Properly designed and constructed commercial uses could also help reduce the need to travel to Traverse City for goods and services, thereby reducing some traffic.</p>
4	Constructively and collaboratively work toward the goal of adding commercial value to local agricultural products without creating large commercial centers that add noise and traffic congestion.	Land Use	<p>Agricultural operations of all types struggle to maintain viability in global markets. There is increasing interest in finding ways to support local agriculture in ways that retain rural character and that find the balance between adding value to locally produced products and not creating commercial centers of activity that detract from rural ambiance and character.</p>



No.	Vision	SUBJECT AREA	SUMMARY
5	Protect the shoreline and wetlands to the maximum extent possible through both regulation and education centered on vegetation protection and enhancement. Areas like Pyatt Lake and other beach and coastal wetlands are an important buffer against pollution and flooding	Land Use	The last several years of high water levels on the Great Lakes have had a profound impact on coastal communities throughout Michigan. Coastal erosion and flooding has impacted residents with substantial costs and damages. Predicting lake levels in the future is all but impossible, but it is prudent to improve regulations and education efforts regarding vegetation removal so that future high water levels are less damaging and water quality is protected from erosion. Similarly, it is important to continue to educate residents on the value of all wetlands as a means to reduce both flooding and pollution.
6	Make pedestrian and bike travel safer and more convenient.	Mobility	Residents and visitors alike deeply appreciate all that Peninsula Township has to offer pedestrians and bicyclists. However, planning for and implementing even modest local projects to support non-motorized travel have been nonexistent. Evidence of support for steps in this direction are abundantly clear from survey results. A list of both long and short-term plans with specific projects is needed along with a feasibility study.
7	Make vehicular travel safer and more convenient	Mobility	Associated with the desire to make pedestrian and bike travel safer and more convenient is the need to control vehicular speeds and improve safety
8	Operate under the best possible form of government, with suitable and essential public facilities.	Places, Character and Governance	As unique and special as Peninsula Township is, it shares one key attribute with most other townships in Michigan: its form of government. Increasingly, people are asking if a township is the optimal form of government for the residents of the Old Mission Peninsula. State laws provide options for changing the structure of local government, which could improve service delivery and local control.
9	Continue to view alternative energy (solar/wind) as having a potential role for Peninsula Township.	Land Use	Peninsula Township's geography presents challenges for delivering public utilities to property owners. An electric grid, common in other areas to ensure uninterrupted energy, is not practical for the peninsula. Alternative energy sources will be required. The township will continue to implement policies to allow solar energy generation while protecting viewsheds.



No.	Vision	SUBJECT AREA	SUMMARY
10	Balance demand for a local hospitality industry against the need to control growth and manage traffic	Land Use	The growth of tourism and the wine industry with hospitality functions present challenges to the township, primarily in terms of traffic volumes and speeds on township roads. A balance between additional wineries with hospitality functions and the negative impact of traffic on quality of life has necessitated that the township control the number of wineries and the magnitude of added functions (restaurants, events, etc.). The role of B&Bs that are independent of wineries is also a factor.
11	Continue developing an outstanding park system throughout Peninsula Township with “hubs” at Mission Point Lighthouse Park, Bowers Harbor Park, and Pelizzari Natural Area.	Land Use	The township maintains three large parks strategically located at the north, middle, and south latitudes of the township along with several additional smaller parks, including the increasingly popular Haserot Beach. The township will continue to improve these parks through upgrades that include restroom facilities and recreation equipment. Additionally, after some delays, the township is now also poised to move forward with a new boat launch at Kelley Park.
12	Continue preserving, enhancing, and celebrating local history and culture.	Places, Character and Governance	People enjoy living in an area with a sense of place, and an important attribute of our identity is local history and culture. There are four primary historical sites in the township: the replica Log Church and the Peter Dougherty Home in Old Mission and the Hessler Log Cabin and Mission Point Lighthouse at the tip of the peninsula. Two businesses also survive, the Old Mission Inn and the Old Mission General Store. Moreover, there are three remaining historic private resort associations on the peninsula, Illini, Leffingwell, and Neahtawanta. Much of the story of nineteenth- and twentieth-century local history arcs through and across historic businesses these places. More can and should be done to strengthen and support these offerings.



## Chapter 6 – Land Use



Provide an existing land use map. Consider data from assessor's office

Prepare computations showing how many acres are in each land use category so that we can monitor land use changes going forward.

Briefly describe landscape qualities (shorelines, soil conditions, topography), in the context of suitability for various land uses.

Describe the recognition that access to the township is limited to one major intersection in TC. This factor has profound impacts on growth.

Discuss the past build-out scenarios

Discuss the struggle with balancing the desire for value-added agri-business with commercialization of property.

Discuss the huge impact that the PDR program has made in terms of land use. Note potential for a future levy renewal to continue.

Introduce the notion of TDR (transfer of Development Rights) as a potential tool in the future

Describe major land use issues facing Peninsula Township (by land use category).

- o Agricultural
- o Residential
- o Commercial
- o Public land

Describe major land use issues facing Peninsula Township (by issues).

- o Agri-tourism, rural character, and lodging
- o Shoreline and water quality
- o Alternative energy
- o Village center
- o Others?

Update Future Land Use Map.

Recommended updates to Land Use Policy (new zoning districts, updates to existing districts, etc.)

# Chapter 7 – Mobility





According to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, a master plan addresses land use and infrastructure issues and shows the planning commission's recommendations for physical development. It also includes all components of a transportation system and interconnectivity between streets, bridges, public transit, bicycle facilities, pedestrian ways, freight facilities, port facilities, railroad facilities, and airports with the aim of providing safe and efficient movement of people and goods for the community now and in the future.

In Peninsula Township, mobility issues fall into several groups in terms of both vehicular and non-motorized travel.

## Vehicular Mobility

### M-37 – CENTER ROAD

M-37 is Peninsula Township's primary throughfare. It provides the most efficient route from north to south and sees by far the heaviest traffic volumes. To the south, just past the intersection with Peninsula Drive, the annual average daily traffic (AADT) is 16,299 (2019). Toward the north a few miles, near Wilson Road, AADT drops to 7,818 (2019). Even further north, near Mapleton, AADT drops to 1,353. Clearly, M-37 acts as a funnel, moving greater and greater numbers of vehicles closer to Traverse City and M-72/Front Street. As described previously, the intersection of M-37 with the road network in Traverse City is a major choke point with busy intersections and a finite capacity to move traffic.

One attribute of M-37 is its slopes and curves, particularly toward the southern end the township. Horizontal and vertical curves add considerable visual interest, revealing spectacular views of both East Bay and West Bay and breathtaking agricultural landscapes. This same attribute, however, impacts vehicular travel, as it limits opportunities for passing zones and sight distances associated with driveways and intersecting streets.

As noted on page 28, M-37 was designated as a Pure Michigan Byway in 2008. A corresponding Old Mission Peninsula Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan was developed to provide an understanding of the designated route, what makes it special, and why it should be preserved. This plan includes:

- A map and a photographic inventory displaying the location of intrinsic qualities;
- Maps displaying land use along the corridor;
- Maps of road use and crash data;
- Inventory of the natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources;
- A list of potential threats or challenges affecting the character of the corridor;
- Goals and objectives that offer insight into the issues with recommendations for attaining the goals; and
- Recommendations and strategies for making future management decisions with a prioritized project list.

The current master plan calls for maintaining M-37 as a free-flowing major road unrestricted by stop signs or signals. This objective relates not only to the convenience of residents and visitors but also reflects the belief that the agricultural nature of the area depends on supporting the movement of agricultural trucks and equipment on and off the peninsula.



## GOAL

Continue taking deliberate steps toward managing traffic flow all along M-37.

## STRATEGY

Peninsula Township has identified the need for a corridor study of M-37 for several years. Most recently, this issue stalled during discussions about whether or not the Grand Traverse County Road Commission would take over control of this road. Now that we know MDOT will retain control of M-37, some of the answers/results sought from such a study include the following (some issues overlap with recommendations in the Old Mission Peninsula Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan):

1. What can be done to improve safety at the scenic turnout near Chateau Grand Traverse? Increasing numbers of vehicles park here, taking in the views and watching sunsets, particularly during peak tourist seasons.
2. What should be done to improve intersecting roads with M-37 that are not 90-degree intersections? This circumstance inhibits safe sight distances and creates safety issues. Some examples include Seven Hills, Smoky Hollow, and Bluff.
3. What opportunities exist to construct turn lanes, passing lanes, or similar improvements to help support traffic flow? These can be identified to aid in future planning and development review activities.
4. How can we address issues related to the parking needs associated with the DNR boat launch near the East Shore Rd. intersection? Seasonal demand for boat launch access regularly results in spillover on-street parking on M-37, leading to safety issues as turning movements (often involving vehicles towing boats) are restricted and congested roadway conditions inhibit sight distances.
5. How can we clearly identify where sight distances are optimum for future driveways and new private roads?
6. Can we consider the need for an overlay zoning district along M-37? An overlay zoning district can define uniform setbacks from the right of way. A-1 is a common zoning district along M-37, and it requires only a 35-foot front setback. An overlay zoning district could require a larger setback along the corridor regardless of the requirements of the various underlying zoning districts. Other augmented development standards might also make sense.

## Non-motorized Mobility

In the 2019 community survey, residents spoke convincingly about the need to plan for more non-motorized transportation opportunities in Peninsula Township. In fact, the 2019 survey results suggest that nearly eight in ten respondents support the concept of more planning for bike and pedestrian travel. Related to this level of support is the fact that the larger Traverse City region continues to offer an expanding non-motorized transportation system in response to an increasing interest in biking, walking, fitness, and generally healthy living. Simultaneously, we see complaints surfacing from visitors to the peninsula who experience dangerous circumstances they attribute to a lack of accommodation for non-motorized travel. Recently, an experience was so significant that a visitor took the time to write a letter stating he had been run off the road several times while biking; he made it clear he will not return to the peninsula unless improvements are made to protect cyclists.

Non-motorized travel is not just about casual recreational cyclists or walkers. The base of the township is training grounds for local sports teams (football, basketball, hockey, and of course track and cross country). The Bayshore Marathon has been identified as one of the nation's most scenic races and is considered an ideal qualifying race for the Boston Marathon. Other races are similarly



popular, and the local road system draws visitors from all over the nation, especially the Midwest. People visit with the intention of enjoying the roads and scenery but find conditions that raise important safety issues.

These long-standing circumstances present an opportunity to update the master plan and provide a compelling and exciting opportunity to begin a significant dialogue about the future of non-motorized mobility. Recent conversations during the planning process about non-motorized travel include a wide range of projects ranging from minor pavement markings to dedicated trails extending throughout the peninsula with connections to parks and community facilities such as the library and school.

These early conversations have been supported with input from local organizations such as TART, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, and Norte. In April 2021, Peninsula Township specifically reached out to these three organizations for assistance and input. All three attended a Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting in early May, 2021. Conversations were fruitful but led to the acknowledgement that there are significant questions to be addressed if we are to move forward. These include the subjects of:

- Creating an overall vision for non-motorized travel on Old Mission Peninsula.
- Identifying additional information to support informed conversations about viable options and alternatives, some of which is engineering related.
- Determining if non-motorized trails are permitted on agricultural land included in an existing PDR easement.
- Identifying issues that are related and ancillary to non-motorized travel. These include existing speed limits, existing passing zones, general roadway safety, and related matters.
- Identifying potential construction and non-construction projects that support the vision of non-motorized travel (non-construction projects



Bicyclists on Blue Water Rd. traveling west toward Center Rd.

might include printed materials, information campaigns, signage, web sites, organizational partnerships, etc.). Potential projects include those related to the Safe Routes to School program.

- Prioritizing projects and possible timetables and comparing short-term/low-cost projects with longer-term/high-cost projects.
- Funding (federal, state, local, and private).

## GOAL

Develop a specific and achievable non-motorized transportation plan for Peninsula Township, and implement recommended projects with available funding and other resources.



## STRATEGY

The complexity of the above issues suggests it is not possible to instantly develop a complete plan and aggressive timetable for constructing projects that immediately result in better bike and pedestrian mobility for Peninsula Township. Rather, what lies ahead is the need for a working group of planning commission members, master plan committee members, and park committee members to collaborate with TART, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, and Norte toward the goal of responding to the seven issues mentioned above. Ultimately, this work should include more community engagement so that the identified vision, projects, and implementation steps enjoy as much support as possible as well as the insights residents have about how to make Peninsula Township more healthy, livable, and sustainable. Once complete, a non-motorized transportation plan should appear as an amendment to the master plan for two primary reasons:

- If private development is proposed adjacent to a planned non-motorized improvement, potential connections should be considered.
- If funding is sought for a major project, the fact that the project is part of the master plan helps to identify its validity and importance.

As starting points for further study and planning for non-motorized travel in Peninsula Township, the following ideas should be explored:

- Paving roadway shoulders in the high-use Bowers Harbor area that connect the boat launch, Bowers Harbor Park, the Mapleton Area, and the Seven Hills and Devils Dive area.
- Segments of paved shoulders in areas where there are steep hills and/or poor sight distances or low visibility.
- One-way roads where low vehicular speeds and low traffic volumes exist. This change would potentially allow for one vehicular travel lane and one lane for non-motorized travel.

- Better bike/pedestrian crossings at Gray Rd. and Center, Seven Hills and Center, and Smokey Hollow and Center.
- Collaborating with Old Mission Peninsula School and Norte to explore options for safe routes to school projects and associated funding. Norte administers Safe Routes to School programs in the Traverse City area as well as in Northport and Elk Rapids.
- Developing a specific recommendation for updating the township zoning ordinance to require bicycle parking improvements (racks and/or bike parking areas) in much the same way that off-street automobile parking spaces are required now for non-residential developments and requiring pavement markings to designate pedestrian/bike areas in new parking lots.

## Additional Study of Local Roads

The general discussion about mobility in Peninsula Township has highlighted the need for a township-wide traffic study. This study could occur with, or apart from, the M-37 corridor plan mentioned above. There are unique issues with the shoreline roads and the east/west connectors that relate to both vehicular and non-motorized mobility. This work should be aimed at determining how best to handle vehicular traffic while identifying which right-of-ways could support non-motorized traffic with designated travel areas. Identified right-of-way widths throughout the township would make it possible to determine which roads might support non-motorized transportation outside the motorized lane (i.e., separate walks and/or cycle tracks).

Another aspect of this study should consider the desirability of one-way vehicular traffic on roads such as East Shore. A single one-way travel lane would allow space for non-motorized travel within the existing paved surface, eliminating the need for widening the road and taking down trees along the shoreline to accommodate non-motorized travel.



## GOAL

Ensure that all shoreline roads and east-west connector roads perform with an optimum level of service in terms of both motorized and non-motorized travel.

## STRATEGY

As part of the corridor planning related to M-37, additional attention should be placed on local roads as described above. If local roads are studied as part of the M-37 Corridor plan, overall costs will likely be reduced. For this reason, local roads should be included in the M-37 Corridor Plan.

## Chapter 8 – Places, Facilities, Governance





# Places, Facilities and Governance

Apart from land use and mobility, various locations, public facilities, and governance in Peninsula Township all help support the attachment people feel to this special place. Historic landmarks and old farm buildings that dot the landscape remind people of what came before. Architectural themes related to coastal homes, beach houses, and farmsteads are common. Finally, public facilities such as the school, library, town hall, and fire stations help anchor residents to a sense of community. Along with this, governance has much to do how people relate to their community.

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

There are four primary historical sites on Old Mission Peninsula. These include the replica Log Church and Peter Dougherty House in Old Mission and the Hessler Log Cabin and Mission Point Lighthouse at the tip of the peninsula. In addition, historic businesses include the Old Mission Inn and the General Store. Moreover, three remaining historic private resort associations exist on the peninsula, Illini, Leffingwell, and Neahtawanta. Much of the story of nineteenth- and twentieth-century America arcs through and across these places.

To present the peninsula's diverse history at easily accessible sites that best consolidate private and public funds, strategic planning should be aimed toward centralizing the history of the Old Mission Peninsula at the Dougherty House/Log Church site and Mission Point Lighthouse.

### Dougherty House/Log Church

The Dougherty property is the appropriate place with the necessary acreage to eventually house the longitudinal story of Old Mission Peninsula. This story ought to include the lives of the Native Americans, the story of the advent and progress of agriculture, and the story of tourism. We should also

highlight the conservation movement on the peninsula by creating a facility on the Dougherty grounds that shares the innovative PDR and land conservancy efforts undertaken by our leaders and tells the story of the resilience of Lake Michigan, including the changes in water levels, changes in the ecosystem, the effect of invasive species, and the ongoing efforts to protect the lake from manmade crises.

The Dougherty site could tell the story of the first inhabitants as well the story of white emigration. Visitors could take a walking tour past the relocated settler cabin and a mini orchard, tour an example of an early cottage, gain an appreciation for the work of Mexican Americans in gathering the harvest abundance, travel through the various stages of agricultural mechanization, learn about innovative conservation programs, and develop a deeper appreciation for the immense majesty of the Great Lakes, all at one site.

### Mission Point Lighthouse

The lighthouse restoration is completed and provides an example of the light service, lifesaving, and maritime history. Regular cultural events, a popular keeper program, successful fundraisers, and a planned Michigan lighthouse program should continue. The lighthouse grounds also currently include the Hessler log cabin. However, some feel this cabin should be moved to the Dougherty property and the lighthouse used to focus mainly on maritime history.

The tour of the lighthouse grounds presents the opportunity to showcase our unique maritime history.

**Goal: preserve, enhance, and celebrate local history and culture (Supports Vision Element #12)**

### Strategy



Although there has been historically strong grassroots support and funding for local historic pursuits, there is reason to think that consolidation of organizational efforts may be beneficial in terms of concerted strategic planning and pursuit of grant funding. Several stakeholders believe the separate groups should merge. Consolidating disparate historical, educational, and cultural aspects greatly broadens the donor pool and grant-making terrain that could be sought. It has been suggested that the Peter Dougherty Society and the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society should combine and be renamed as the Old Mission Historical Trust. Branding is important, and this combination of a new name and fresh start could enhance fundraising and image building. This approach could also create a historical, educational, and cultural focal point better able to compete with other regional and sub regional sites for foundation and family grants that could be used to fund much of what is described in these pages.

## Initiatives and Action Steps

- Centralize the history of the Old Mission Peninsula at the Dougherty House/log church and the lighthouse.
- Create a single website to act as a portal to all things historical and cultural on Old Mission Peninsula.
- Create and maintain seasonal displays at the library to encourage an interest in the preservation movement among younger residents.
- Identify and implement sustainable ways to maintain, operate, and improve the township's most valuable historic sites and parks.
- Review the zoning ordinance and consider new ways to support historic preservation. Examples include potentially requirements to inform a historic group before demolition permits are issued so that opportunities to salvage, move, or even photograph structures are not forever lost.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public facilities support the needs of residents and visitors in various ways and generally include the public library, town hall/office building, and fire stations. The public library is new and is expected to serve community needs for many years to come. However, looking forward into the coming decades, decisions are likely to be needed with respect to the town hall/office building and fire stations. Specifically, the town hall/office building may need to be expanded to accommodate new government functions and to reach higher levels of accessibility for those with mobility impairments. In terms of the fire stations, there are now three facilities that serve the township. The recent addition of the third station in the spring of 2021 dramatically improved emergency response times for those at the northern end of the peninsula. However, the two fire stations located to the south are older facilities that will soon need to be upgraded. Additionally, apart from the town hall (with ADA compliance issues), the township lacks a public space that could be used for training purposes and larger events/meetings.

**Goal: develop and maintain suitable and necessary public facilities (Supports Vision Element #8)**

### Strategy

There is an expectation that upgrades/changes to the two southernmost fire stations will be needed in the future. There are many scenarios that could play out in terms of options. Similarly, the expectation that more office space will be needed is not unrealistic. Both issues would be tremendously impacted by any future steps taken toward pursuing another form of government to better meet the needs of residents. Although it would always be possible to contract out services, local space and facility needs would still likely increase.



Along with providing procedural and content-related requirements for master plans, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MEPA) defines requirements for Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs). Capital improvements typically refer to major expenditures on things such as land, buildings, public infrastructure, and equipment. CIPs provide a description of proposed capital improvement projects that are prioritized and scheduled with a cost estimate and identified funding source. CIPs consist of a working document that looks forward six years and is updated annually to reflect changing priorities and funding opportunities.

Peninsula Township (like many townships) does not now have a CIP. However, steps in this direction should be taken. The MPEA indicates that the planning commission is responsible for creating a CIP, but such an undertaking requires close coordination with the township board and staff. The process to develop a CIP generally includes project identification, ranking/prioritization, public input, plan development, and adoption.

## Initiatives and Action Steps

- Launch an effort to formally develop and adopt a CIP for Peninsula Township.

## PARKS

Peninsula Township has an amazing park system that has developed and expanded over many years. In Michigan, park and recreation planning is typically done within the context of the five-year Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway plans required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). MDNR offers grant programs that represent major funding sources for both parkland acquisition and parkland development. Projects proposed by a local government must be consistent with the planning and priorities established in these plans. Peninsula Township's park and recreation plan was adopted in 2018 and is now undergoing an update to refresh and realign goals and priorities with proposed projects.

So as not to duplicate efforts, specific park development projects will be updated and defined in Peninsula Township's Park and Recreation Plan. However, as parks are such an important factor in terms of the quality of life, it is important to draw attention to overarching planning considerations and strategies aimed at the four major hubs of park and recreation activity in Peninsula Township.

## Strategy

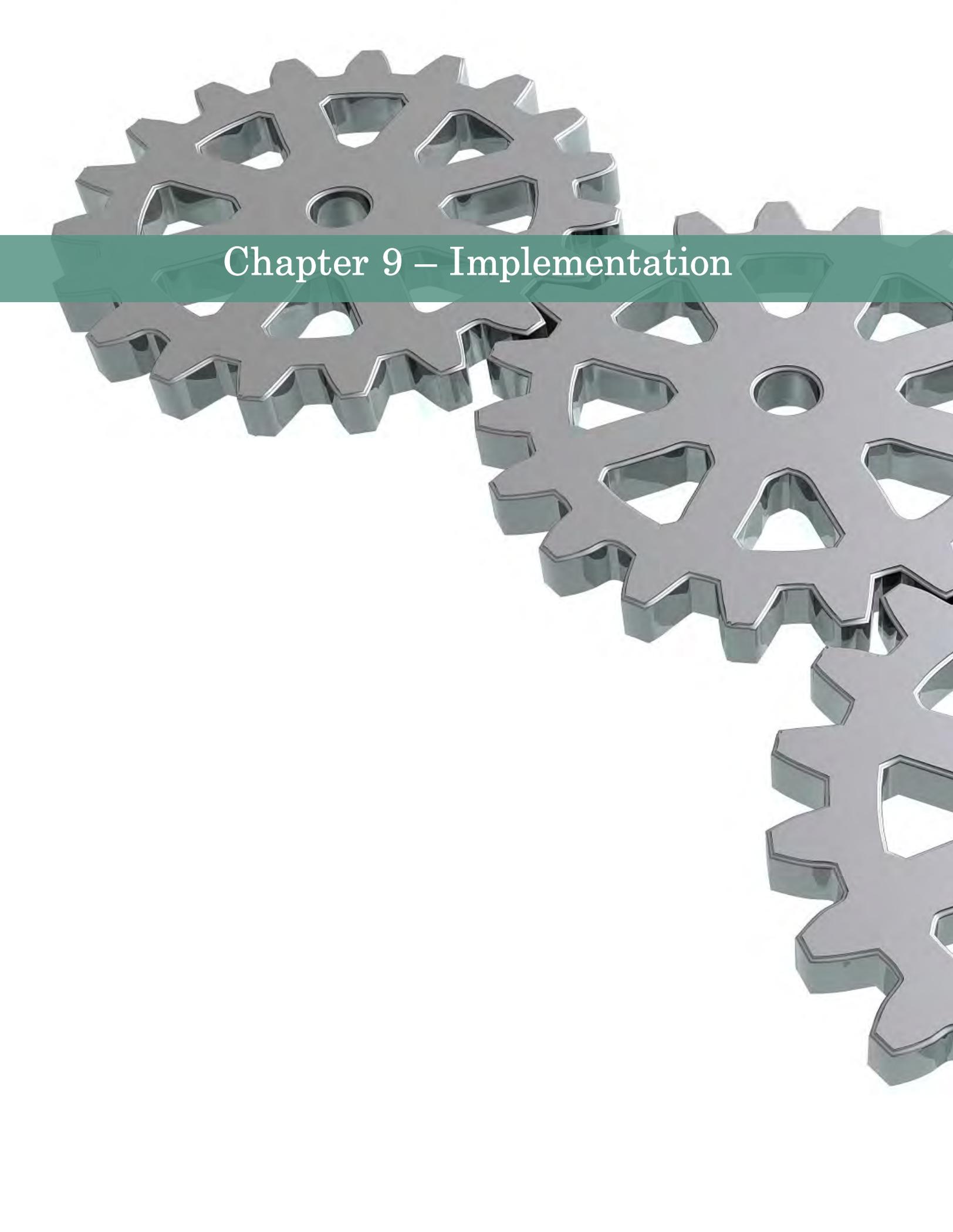
- Pelizzari Natural Area (PNA): located in the most heavily populated areas of Peninsula Township, PNA offers a place to walk and hike in a natural and peaceful setting. With expected residential growth in the general area, future opportunities that may present themselves to expand Pelizzari should be pursued and encouraged.
- Bowers Harbor Park: Bowers Harbor Park is centrally located, and a new master plan for the recent park addition sets the stage for many improvements to increase functionality for both active and passive recreational activities.
- Haserot Beach and Kelley Park: Haserot Beach is the only public beach on the Old Mission Peninsula, and a new boat launch is being planned at nearby Kelley Park and should be in place in the next few years. This area is obviously focused on water-related recreational activities and should continue to have this focus.
- Mission Point Lighthouse Park: Mission Point Lighthouse, and the surrounding area, is a major tourist destination. The park includes 145 acres with trails, picnic facilities, and beach access. The lighthouse itself attracts visitors from all 50 states and abroad. When residents were asked how the township should continue to manage the lighthouse, most were in favor of maintaining the current practice of coupling maintenance and tourist promotion.

## Initiatives and Action Steps

- Continue steps toward developing an updated park and recreation plan.
- In conjunction with non-motorized transportation



planning, identify opportunities to connect the four major park hubs in Peninsula Township – PNA, Bowers Harbor Park, Haserot Beach, and Mission Point Lighthouse Park – and other township facilities such as Archie Park, also owned by the township, and Pyatt Lake Natural Area, owned by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.



## Chapter 9 – Implementation



**ARTICULATE LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION  
AND RELATED STRATEGIES**

**DEVELOP A SPECIFIC LIST OF IMPLEMENTATION STEPS  
(INCLUDE A MATRIX THAT CATEGORIZES MEASURES,  
IDENTIFIES A RESPONSIBLE ENTITY AND ESTABLISHES  
TIME FRAMES AND BUDGETS AS APPLICABLE).**

**PROVIDE AN EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED ZONING  
AMENDMENTS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS PLAN.**