

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose and Planning Process

The purpose of the Mikado Township Master Plan is to provide guidelines for future development within the community, while protecting the natural resources and rural township character. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, states a Township may adopt, amend, and implement a master plan. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act states: *The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:*

- A. *Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.*
- B. *Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.*
- C. *Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.*
- D. *Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision the following:*
 - 1. *A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.*
 - 2. *Safety from fire and other dangers.*
 - 3. *Light and air.*
 - 4. *Healthful and convenient distribution of population.*
 - 5. *Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.*
 - 6. *Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.*
 - 7. *Recreation.*
 - 8. *The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.*

This plan presents background information on social and economic data, natural resources, existing community services and facilities, and existing land uses. The background information is used to identify important characteristics, changes and trends in Mikado Township. A special community workshop was held to gather input from residents and landowners. Based on information gathered at this workshop and the background data, the Township Planning Commission developed goals and objectives. These goals and objectives, along with a series of maps including soils, ownership, existing land use, and zoning, provide the basis for the Future Land Use Map. The future land use map recommends locations for various types of future development within the Township.

The Land Use Master Plan was developed by the Mikado Township Planning Commission with the assistance from the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG). The plan looks at a twenty year planning horizon, with suggested revisits every five years or sooner if needed. A series of planning workshops were held over the two year period. Workshops were advertised in the local newspaper as well as the Mikado Township Newsletter. All workshops were open meetings with public welcomed and encouraged to comment on the plan.

Location and Regional Setting

Mikado Township is located in the southern part of Alcona County. The County is located in the northeastern lower peninsula of Michigan. **Figure 1.1** shows the location of the Township and County. Oscoda Township in Iosco County borders Mikado Township to the south, and Curtis Township to the west, Greenbush Township to the east and Gustin and Millen Townships to the north, which are all in Alcona County. The Township geographic area covers nearly 72 square miles (6 x 12 miles). **Figure 1.1** shows a base map of Mikado Township that depicts roads, ownership, state lands and water features.



Brief History

The history of Mikado Township shows a chronological progression from pre-settlement virgin pine and hardwood forests to fairly intense lumbering followed by limited farming; and today a quite rural community with a mix of year round and seasonal residences that provides an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities. People who live in the township typically work in Harrisville, Lincoln or Oscoda. The seasonal residents are either retirees who spend the summer months in the area or persons who own recreational properties "up north" and may spend weekends and vacations in the area.

Mikado celebrated its centennial in 1986; today the community is 131 years old. This brief account of Mikado history is taken from articles written by Georgia Wissmiller and W.S. Kahn. The article by Wissmiller is based on accounts of B. Daniel L. Bruce, son of Daniel D. Bruce who founded the Village of Mikado. Like in much of northeast Michigan, the virgin timber drew lumberjacks and businessmen to the region. Bruce purchased land west of Greenbush from the U.S. Government. The property, located adjacent to a railroad, was surveyed and mapped in 1884. A map of Bruce Plat and accompanying legal documents were registered that year. The following year, Daniel built the Bruce Hotel and Livery stable. With the influx of lumberjacks and families, the hotel and small community thrived. The young community was called West Greenbush. Mr. Bruce petitioned railroad officials to make the railroad crossing at West Greenbush an official stop. In 1886, with \$360 in hand, he met with railroad officials in Tawas and finally received their assurance the train would stop at the crossing.

That same year, Daniel Bruce wrote to the Postmaster General in Washington D.C. suggesting the name of "Bruce's Crossing" for the new village. There was already a town by that name in the Upper Peninsula, so a different name was chosen by the Assistant Postmaster General. The town was named Mikado after the Gilbert and Sullivan Operetta. Which is how a town in northeast came to have a Japanese name.

The area was inhabited long before the "landlookers" and lumberjacks arrived. An archeological treasure, called the Mikado Earthworks can be found in the western part of the Township. Loggers discovered the earthen remnant of an Indian village-fortification in the 1800's. According to an Article from the Harrisville Review, " Currently, all that is there to be seen is a mound of dirt, that runs in a horseshoe formation with a gully in the center. Post molds, dark stained dirt, where posts once stood, have been found along the top of this prehistoric "foundation." This indicates that the fort was palisaded, enclosed by wooden stakes. The

circumference around the top of the footings is 1000 feet. The earthwork has a total enclosed area of 96,000 square feet."

Soils have always played a significant role in the development of the Township. Today, the eastern and western parts of the Township vary greatly in landscape and land cover. The pre-settlement vegetation in the western part was dominated by jack, red and white pine. The sandy droughty soils offered little hope for farming. As a result, after logging in the late 1800's the land reverted to the federal government. Much of this area is now under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Forest Service. . The Pine River Kirtland's Warbler Management Area is located in Mikado Township. This is one of seven Kirtland's Warbler management units in the Huron National Forest.

As farmers followed the loggers into the eastern part of the Township, small family farms spread across the landscape. For many decades, Mikado Township remained a quiet farm community. However, like many small farm communities in northern Michigan, the family farm based economy has transitioned to residents commuting to other communities for employment. With increased mobility and the transition in local employment, many of the small service businesses have closed. Still residents consider Mikado as their village center.

The Status of Planning and Zoning in Mikado Township

Township has exercised its legal right to establish and administer local zoning as authorized by the Township Rural Zoning Act (PA 184 of 1943.) The first zoning ordinance was adopted by the Township Board on April 28, 1966. A major revision was completed and adopted on July 22, 1983. The current zoning ordinance regulating land use activities was enacted by the Mikado Township Board on August 1, 1994. The most recent amendment was adopted on February 9, 1998. For over 18 years, the ordinance has provided guidance in regulating the location, density and standards for local development.

Mikado Township has recognized the importance and need to develop its first Land Use Master Plan. Two key issues are to provide a legal foundation for the Township Zoning Ordinance and to manage for anticipated growth within the Township. By documenting existing conditions such as environment, socio-economic, community services, transportation, recreation, and land use within a master plan, the Township will be able to formulate appropriate land use goals and policies to guide development, and serve as the basis for enforceable zoning. The master plan will in turn be used as a basis for re-examining the Township's zoning districts and land use development controls.

