

Chapter 6 - Goals and Policies

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the goals and policies that will guide future development within Mikado Township. In developing community goals and policies, it is important to analyze existing community characteristics such as: social and economic conditions, services and facilities, environmental conditions, and existing land use. Previous chapters of this master plan have documented the above background information.

An equally important step in developing goals is community input. The Township held a workshop on August 17, 2016 to gather input for establishing long and short term community goals and objectives. Ten people, including planning commission members, participated in the workshop. The group was asked to respond to three questions: 1) What makes our community a great place to live and work? 2) What can the Township do to make the community an even better place to live? 3) What should be the priority for the next five years? The following are lists of comments recorded at the workshop.

What makes our community a great place to live and work?

- Small town where everyone knows each other
- Rural community with lots of open space
- Lots of room, low population density
- Community fire department
- Natural resources, forests, wildlife, fisheries
- State and Federal lands
- Quiet
- Limited government control
- Self-sufficient community
- The people
- High speed internet within the community of Mikado and along F-41
- Road maintenance
- Churches
- Low crime rate, safe place to live
- Cemetery
- Recreational facilities such as ball diamonds, basketball court and tennis court
- Library
- Civic Center
- Mikado Days and parade
- Bruce Park
- Organizations like MAD and Mikado Good Fellows
- Volunteers and commissions

What can the Township do to make the community an even better place to live?

- Need to expand high speed internet
- Expand cable TV
- Expand natural gas
- Upgrades to Fire Hall
- Upgrades to Civic Center/Township Hall
- Make improvements to township parks
- Add exercise facilities to park
- Improvements to public transportation
- Need a gas station
- More businesses in town
- Lower speeds on Goddard Road
- Continued maintenance of roads
- More activities for youth
- Businesses to hire employees
- County agencies need to provide more services to residents
- Upgrades septic substandard septic systems
- Medical building for local services

What should be the priority for the next five years?

- Recreation Plan
- Address issues with foundation of Civic Center/Township Hall
- Continue Emergency services, upgrade building and equipment and provide training
- Remove blight
- Form a “community Pride” group
- Web site/Facebook

Community Goals and Policies

After reviewing the community input and considering the background information, the planning commission established goals and policies. These goals and policies will provide guidance to both Mikado Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

Planning and Community Development

Goal: Guide future development in a manner that will protect existing development; preserve rural community character; enhance the village center, and conserve natural resources and environment, yet meets the long-term needs of the community.

Policies:

1. Update the zoning ordinance to implement the master plan and to bring the ordinance language up-to-date with current laws and court rulings.
2. Control the location of new development by designating appropriate areas for new residential, commercial, industrial, and resort/recreational land uses.
3. Through the zoning ordinance, encourage new commercial development to have a consistent appearance, use landscaping and buffers, and share parking with adjacent businesses, and limit access points onto county roads.
4. Enforce all Township ordinances in a consistent and fair manner.
5. Enforce junk/blight ordinance to work towards improving the quality of housing and protecting property values.
6. Review zoning ordinance language that regulates the placement and size of cellular, communication and transmission towers.
7. Review zoning ordinance language that regulates size and location of signs and billboards to minimize clutter, confusion, aesthetic degradation, and limit traffic hazards.
8. Review the site plan review section to assure consistent application of the zoning ordinance.
9. Review landscape requirements for new development, such as appropriate setbacks, retention of green space, buffer zones between differing land uses, screened parking areas and roadside landscaping.

10. Improve regulations and standards to protect the community against high noise levels and exterior lighting glare.
11. Develop open space residential and commercial development design standards to preserve scenic views, rural character, farmland, meadows, woodlands, steep slopes and wetlands with a target of preserving 50 percent of the land within a development.
12. Implement access management standards for commercial development along the primary corridors within the Township which include F-30 and F-41.
13. Consider a waterfront overlay district in the zoning ordinance that will set forth special requirements and standards for development in these sensitive areas adjacent to streams.

Government

Goal: Provide services in an efficient, environmentally responsible and caring manner to meet the needs of the residents, property owners, business people and visitors.

Policies:

1. Ensure a responsible fiscal policy and budget process to finance the Township government.
2. Promote the involvement of volunteers in the government process.
3. Promote intergovernmental and regional cooperation on issues of mutual concern.
4. Work with the Township Board:
 - a. to deliver township services in a wise and efficient manner.
 - b. on planning for future issues impacting Mikado Township.
 - c. to ensure continued funding and support for the Mikado Township Planning Commission.
5. Investigate ways to generate economies of scale and cost savings through collaboration and coordination with other local units of government.
6. Explore joint meetings with other local planning commissions to discuss coordination or cooperation.
7. Work cooperatively with adjacent townships in providing guidance and input on zoning decisions that impact the Township.
8. Continue to work with adjacent communities to provide emergency services to Township residents
9. Maintain communication with the Department of Natural Resources and U. S. Forest Service to provide input into the usage and management of the public lands in the Township.
10. Utilize the proactive master planning process as a check and balance on decision-making.
11. Focus on cross-jurisdictional issues when reviewing community master plans and zoning ordinances.
12. Cooperate with county and regional efforts to promote a Community "Fire Wise" education program to protect existing and new development from wildfires

Goal: Communicate effectively with the public.

Policies:

1. Explore development of a Township Website to communicate and provide access to township government activities. This includes posting required forms and permits, publishing Planning Commission and Township Board meeting agendas, notices, and minutes electronically.
2. Set up a Township Facebook page to communicate with citizens.
3. Inform the public about the scope and value of Township services.
4. Encourage public feedback from all residents on issues impacting Mikado Township.
5. Continue to utilize web based surveys to solicit community input on issues facing the township.
6. Provide public education programs regarding existing programs and facilities.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

Goal: Improve the Township's transportation systems, community facilities, and public utilities to accommodate the needs of residents and visitors.

Policies:

1. Develop a capital improvements plan to address the long term needs for road improvements, fire hall, civic center, and community recreation.
2. Pursue funding sources to design and implement a streetscaping project in the village center that will create a continuity of appearance. Design should consider curbs, designated parking, street lights, landscaping, and sidewalks.
3. Seek grants through federal, state and other funding sources for infrastructure improvements, community recreation, community facility improvements, and economic development projects.
4. Maintain and upgrade the Mikado Township Fire Hall.
5. Support the expansion of the Mikado Library branch of the Alcona County Library.
6. Maintain and make improvements to the Mikado Civic Center, including establishment of a youth center.
7. Continue to maintain and, when necessary, expand the Mikado Cemetery.
8. Encourage the efficient use and maintenance of existing roadways and infrastructure.
9. Work with the Alcona County Road Commission to plan for upgrading of roads, maintenance of existing roads, and vehicular and pedestrian safety at intersections and on roadways.
10. Direct development to areas with existing infrastructure and where infrastructure is not adequate require developers to fund the upgrading of infrastructure to support proposed new development.
11. Develop standards for private roads and shared road access.
12. Support the expansion of public transit to better serve the needs of senior citizens and other transit dependent Township residents.

13. Encourage utility companies to provide electric and telephone service to township residents.
14. Promote, maintain, and expand bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, recreational trails and paved shoulders by working with County Road Commission, MDNR, MDOT, and user groups to connect community assets and connect with regional trail systems.
15. Orient public facilities to accommodate and serve retired residents.
16. Support the development of affordable telecommunications options and wireless internet.

Residential Land Uses

Goal: Allow for suitable housing opportunities for all income levels and age groups, including year-round residents and seasonal residents.

Policies:

1. Designate areas appropriate for all types of residential development including single family, multi-family, elderly housing, condominium, low to moderate income rental complexes, and extended care facilities.
2. To preserve open space and vital natural resources, encourage the development option of clustered single-family housing, in buildable portions of the Township.
3. Encourage new residential development to be sited in a manner that protects the rural character and scenic views by maintaining proper setbacks and providing landscaping screening as appropriate.
4. Discourage large scale residential development in the absence of documented demand for such development.
5. Encourage existing housing stock and neighborhoods to be kept in good repair, appearance, usefulness and safety.
6. Require adequate buffers and transition areas between residential and non residential uses to maintain property values and visual attractiveness.
7. Preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods by protecting them from intrusion of incompatible uses through the township zoning ordinance.

Commercial Areas and Activities

Goal: Promote a varied business environment, and encourage retention, expansion and enhancement of businesses to meet the needs of residents and tourists, while preserving the natural environment and rural character of the community.

Policies:

1. Support the existing commercial areas. Guide new commercial development into a designated hub, through the master plan and zoning ordinance; while discouraging linear strip development along primary county roads.
2. Develop and utilize innovative planning and zoning techniques, such as clustering, shared parking, access management, and landscaping to regulate commercial development along primary county roads.

3. Increase safety and reduce the visual impact of signs and billboards, by controlling their size, number, illumination, and configuration.
4. Make parking (public and private) needs a consideration for all expansions and new development.
5. Require landscape buffers where commercial uses are adjacent to residential uses.
6. Regulate home occupations and home based businesses to assure compatibility with existing residential areas.

Industrial Land Uses

Industrial parks are located in the adjacent communities of Lincoln and Oscoda. The facilities provide necessary utilities and services, and have sites available for industrial type operations. Furthermore, analysis of soil conditions on the natural resource section found soils to be poorly suited for septic fields. Given existing industrial parks in adjacent communities and the lack of public water and sewer service in Mikado Township, the community does not support large scale industrial development.

Goal: Encourage and establishment of new light industries to diversify the local economy and to create more stability and self-sufficiency for the community.

Policies:

1. Ensure that industrial uses are developed in an environmentally sensitive manner, are harmonious with the existing community and are located in areas identified in the future land use plan.
2. Encourage light industries and high tech industries that do not pollute the air, soil, or water nor offend because of noise, odor, or visual impact to locate in zoned industrial areas within the Township. Due to the lack of public water and sewer, these industries should not require high water usage or generate large amounts of septage.
3. Require landscape buffers where industrial uses are adjacent to other land uses.
4. Ensure that extractive development takes place in an environmentally sensitive manner. Require landscape buffers around extractive operations to screen adjacent properties and public roadways. Establish criteria for reclaiming extractive areas after the operation is complete.

Recreation and Public Lands

Goal: Preserve and improve access to public lands and water, recreational trails and public parks for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations.

Policies:

1. Develop a Township Recreation Plan that identifies and prioritizes needed community recreational facilities.
2. Secure funding to make improvements to recreation facilities adjacent to the Community Center.
3. Facilitate the designation of a snowmobile route connecting the community to the regional snowmobile network by working with the Alcona County Road Commission, Alcona County Sheriff Department, US Forest Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
4. Support the expansion and creation of non-motorized recreation trails such as x-country ski trails, bike trails and horse riding trails on both public and private lands.
5. Through zoning and review procedures, proposed subdivisions, site condominiums, planned unit developments, commercial and industrial developments should be encouraged to provide or participate in the development of neighborhood parks.

Natural Environment

Goal: Protect and preserve the natural environment by protecting groundwater, surface water, environmentally sensitive areas, highly erosive areas, woodlands, wetlands, open space, fish and wildlife.

Policies:

1. Encourage a land use pattern that is oriented to the natural features and water resources of the area. Evaluate type and density of proposed developments based on soil suitability; slope of land; potential for ground water and surface water degradation and contamination; compatibility with adjacent land uses; and impacts to sensitive natural areas like wetlands, greenways and wildlife corridors.
2. Limit and control the density and type of residential and commercial development adjacent to lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands.
3. Maintain greenbelt areas adjacent to lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands through development of a greenbelt section in the zoning ordinance.
4. Implement groundwater protection and stormwater management regulations in the zoning ordinance, while encouraging the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge, stormwater filtering and stormwater holding areas.
5. Limit development on steeply sloped areas. Require erosion control measures where construction is permitted. Require slope stabilization and revegetation on disturbed slopes or in extraction areas.
6. Limit development on poorly drained soils, and soils with severe limitations for septic systems.
7. Consider the adoption of a septic system maintenance ordinance to protect and improve water quality.
8. Preserve topography such as slopes, valleys and hills by limiting the amount of cut and fill during site development.

9. Encourage the integration of wetlands, woodlands and meadows into site development as aesthetic and functional features.
10. Encourage the retention of agricultural lands, forest lands and ecological corridors through available mechanisms such as open space and farmland agreements, forest stewardship programs, and conservation easements, as well as zoning incentives.
11. Encourage the use of native plant species and naturalized landscape designs, where appropriate, to enhance the communities' existing character.
12. In recognizing the importance of trees in the suburban environment, encourage the retention of existing native trees and the establishment of street and shade trees in residential neighborhoods and commercial developments.

Farm and Forest Lands

Goal: Support the retention of the forestry and agricultural land base as a viable resource and to insure they are a component of the economic diversity of the Township.

Policies:

1. Support and provide for the conservation of public and private forests through the master plan and zoning.
2. Encourage use of best management practices and science based forest and wildlife management activities on public and private lands in the township.
3. Participate in the US Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources Forestry Planning activities for lands within the Township.
4. Support the retention of agricultural lands, forest lands and ecological corridors through available mechanisms such as open space/cluster development and farmland agreements, forest stewardship programs, and conservation easements, as well as zoning.

Goal: Recognize the importance of agricultural lands as an economic base, heritage, and way of life in Mikado Township.

Policies:

1. Recognize the importance of small family farms in Mikado Township.
2. Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses. Recognize farmland as contributing to the scenic and rural character of the Township.
3. Encourage agricultural landowners to work cooperatively with supportive public agencies, such as the local Michigan State University Extension, Presque County Conservation District, USDA, and National Resource Conservation District offices.
4. Educate residents and local officials on Michigan's Right to Farm Act.
5. Consider the use of Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs).