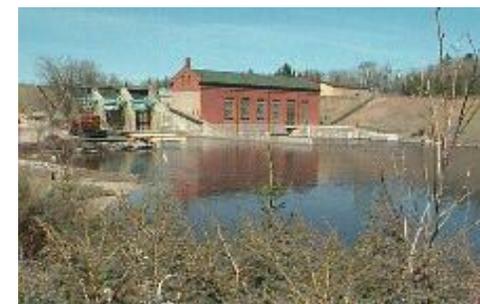


IOSCO COUNTY



MASTER PLAN 2013

INTRODUCTION

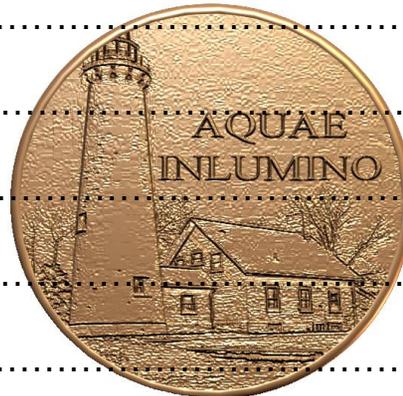
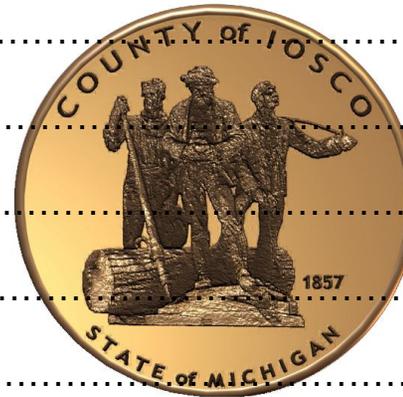
The comprehensive plan is a guide for the future that suggests how Iosco County should progress and develop in order to meet community goals. A plan helps ensure a logical pattern for growth and development that will result in a highly desirable area in which to live or work. A plan allows residents, business owners and developers to make investments with a reasonable expectation of what will happen in the future. This plan attempts to represent a balance between the competing interests of the overall community, and is intended to help direct the intensity and arrangement of various types of land uses.

The Planning Commission wishes to promote a design that complements the character of Iosco County. The comprehensive plan should assist County, City and Township leaders in substantive, thoughtful decisions that consider the long-term implications for the county-wide community. These implications may not be immediately apparent to the individual property owner or citizen, but the impacts of each decision are inter-related and become visible over time. Poor planning decisions are difficult to eliminate once ingrained. The comprehensive plan should be viewed as a community blueprint for the future; a mechanism to help ensure each decision fits as part of the whole. Iosco County's first comprehensive plan was completed in 1974, and then revised in 1988, 1996, 2006 and 2012. This most recent revision is not intended to signify the end of the planning process, but represents the dynamic associated with planning the future of Iosco County. This comprehensive plan represents the latest document that will help Iosco County to maintain its desired character.



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PURPOSE in overview



The existence and functionality of the township and city planning commissions of losco County shall be deemed critical. It should be the purpose of each of those bodies:

- *To protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public at all times.*
- *To develop logical and compatible land use planning and related zoning ordinances.*
- *To protect and preserve the environmental and natural resources within each governmental unit, while simultaneously providing for the orderly use thereof.*
- *To specifically address issues of growth and development within each governmental unit.*

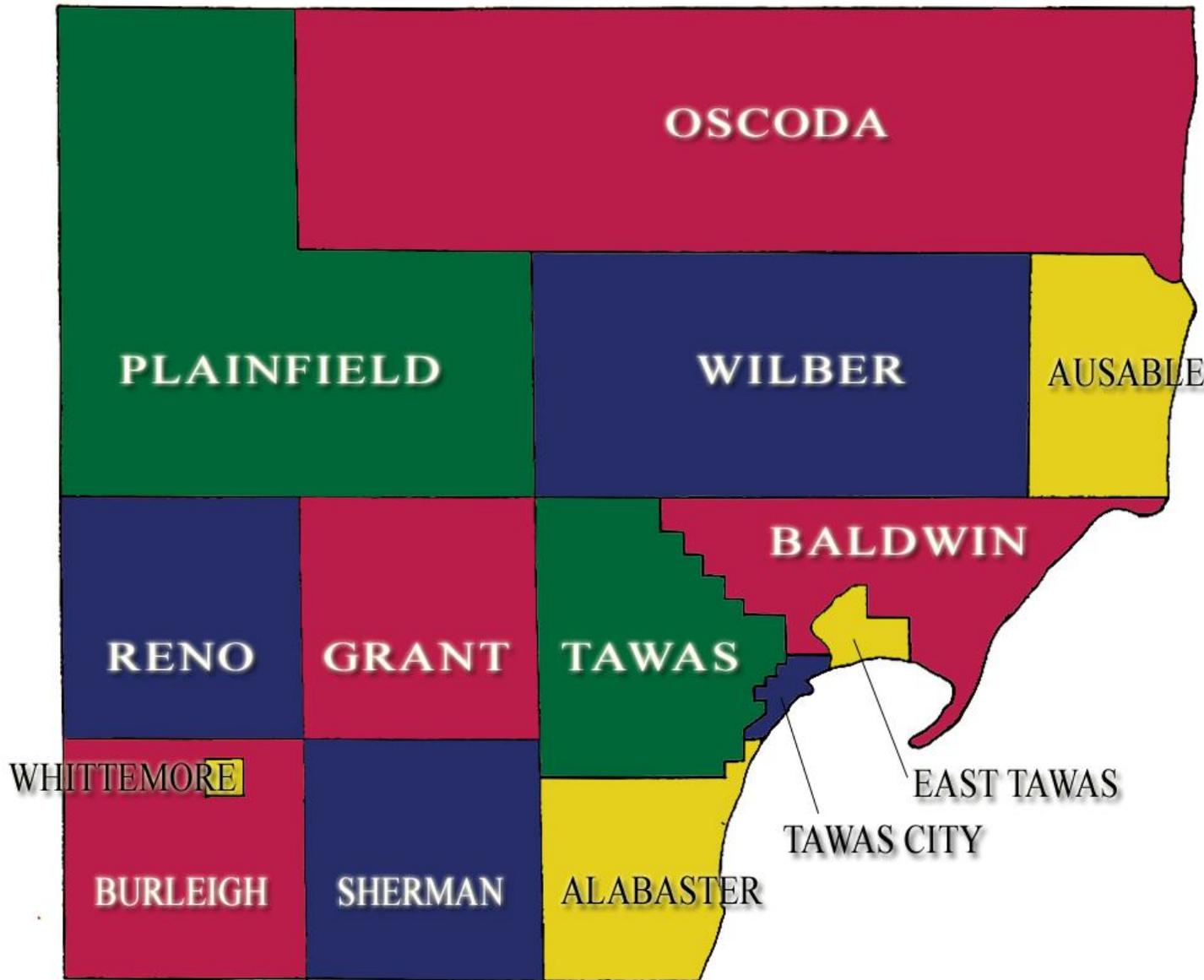


In addition to the above, it should be the losco County Planning Commission's additional purpose:

- *To provide a countywide overview of the exterior factors and influences that may impact growth and development.*
- *To coordinate the factors and influences that may affect growth and development across interior governmental boundaries.*
- *To evaluate and plan for infrastructure growth and development on a countywide basis.*
- *To coordinate the planning efforts of other counties that may affect or impact the growth and development of losco County.*
- *To coordinate with governmental officials, civic and educational organizations, and public and private utilities concerning issues that affect and impact the growth and development of losco County.*



GOVERNMENTAL UNITS



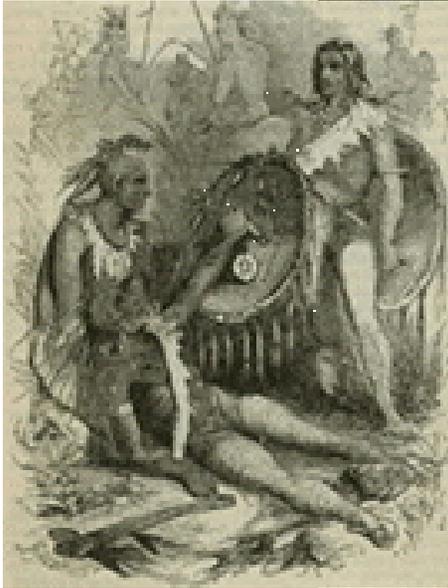
TOWNSHIPS

- Oscoda*
- Plainfield*
- Wilber*
- AuSable*
- Reno*
- Grant*
- Tawas*
- Baldwin*
- Burleigh*
- Sherman*
- Alabaster*

CITIES

- Whittemore*
- Tawas City*
- East Tawas*

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE & BACKGROUND



The original residents of the Iosco County area were the Sauk. These people were eventually driven out of the area by a combination of the Chippewa, Ottawa, Menominee and Algonquin, who remained present through the time that European settlers arrived. The very first European escaped the *Mackinac Massacre* and was brought to the area as a captive in 1764. Shortly thereafter, French fur traders made their way into what is now northeastern Michigan. One of these was Louis Chevalier, who landed at the mouth of the AuSable River sometime before 1800— he was to be the first European resident of the County.

By 1848 two families had settled near the mouth of the AuSable River. Fishermen were attracted to the abundant supply of trout and whitefish. Sawmills began to emerge near the mouth of the river and along the shoreline down to Tawas Bay. White pine, red pine and northern white cedar were amongst the first to be selected and cut, and they were floated down the river to the mills. Oak, ash, maple, beech and tamarack trees were to follow by the same process.



Through the *Treaty of Saginaw*, signed by General Lewis Cass in 1819, all but 8,000 acres of what is now Iosco County were purchased from the Saginaw Band of the Chippewa Indian Tribe. The 8,000 acres, located primarily near the mouth of the AuSable River, were kept by the tribe for hunting and fishing. Later this area was purchased for an annual stipend of \$1,000. The Indian settlement was then moved north near the county line on Section 2, where it still remains.



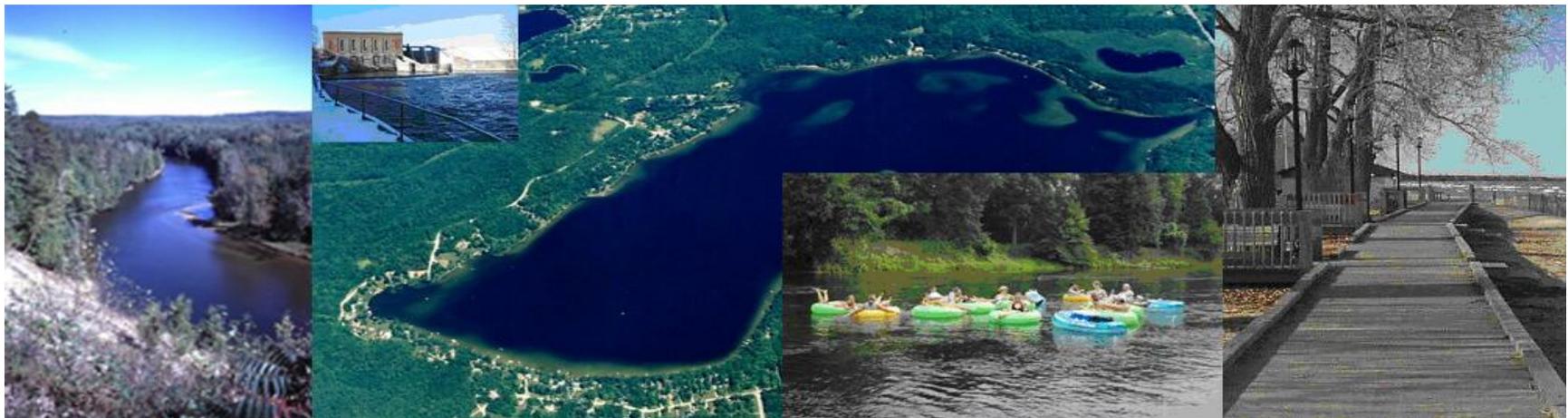
The State of Michigan formally established the county in 1857. The original name was "Kanotin County." Kanotin means, "in path of the big wind," and was chosen following a devastating storm that caused indigenous peoples to avoid the area. The county was later renamed "Iosco," which means "Water of Light". *Ottawas Bay* was shortened to "Tawas Bay," and the *City of Tawas City* was platted there in 1855. A second town was established in 1887 at a mill site that workers from Tawas City referred to as "Going East." This became the present *City of East Tawas*.

One of Iosco County's unique natural resources was discovered when in 1840 gypsum was located in outcroppings on the Lake Huron shoreline. Quarries were opened in 1862 in Alabaster Township, south of Tawas Bay. In 1891, the Western Plaster Works was founded, and by 1902 that company had become the present United States Gypsum Co. In 1926, National Gypsum opened farther inland.

Though Iosco County's tremendous farming potential was initially overlooked in view of the lumbering industry, it has quickly paced itself relative to the farming counties of southern Michigan since that time. In 1879, the estimated agricultural income for Iosco County was only \$32,548.00. The reported annual agricultural income adjusted in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was \$12 million. Agricultural incomes in 2007 were \$15,000,000.00.

Recreation and tourism became important factors shortly after the end of timbering in the area. As early as 1903, land was developed in the mid-County regions near Sand, Round, and Indian Lakes for game hunting purposes. Today, the Lake Huron shoreline and countless inland lakes are enjoyed by users of year-round homes, seasonal cottages, and tourist accommodations. Recreation and tourism are now major industries in Iosco County. The amenities produced by well-planned tourism services over time eventually built the foundation for diverse retirement living and helped to create Iosco County's fine reputation as a quality residential and retirement environment.

In 1925, a runway was built for what was to become Camp Skeel, a Federal wilderness facility. In 1942 Camp Skeel was renamed, "Oscoda Army Air Field," and served our nation during World War II. The facility was made a part of the Strategic Air Command in 1948 and named "Wurtsmith Air Force Base." It served as an important strategic point during the Cold War, and impacted the social and economic profile of Iosco County for several decades. The base was closed in 1992 and the property is now an advanced development feature including a college, a county airport capable of landing international traffic, a manufacturing center, and a residential environment. Managed by the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport Authority, organized under Michigan Act 206 of 1957, for the purpose of operating a public airport.



REGIONAL SETTING

Iosco County is in the northeast quarter of the lower peninsula of Michigan in the heart of Lake Huron's "Sunrise Side." The County is bordered on the north by Alcona County, on the west by Ogemaw County, on the south by Arenac County and on the east by Lake Huron. Iosco County covers an area of 361,837 acres, or about 565 square miles.

Iosco County is located on the northern end of Saginaw Bay in one of the state's most popular areas for tourism and recreation. The major motor vehicle highway access is US-23, making the county easily accessible from I-75 and the urban centers of southern Michigan. State highway M-55 provides a major east-west route and connects the county with areas such as Houghton Lake, Cadillac and Manistee. The combination of good highway access and an attractive natural environment have helped to promote tourism as a major economic facet for the local community.



POPULATION and SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

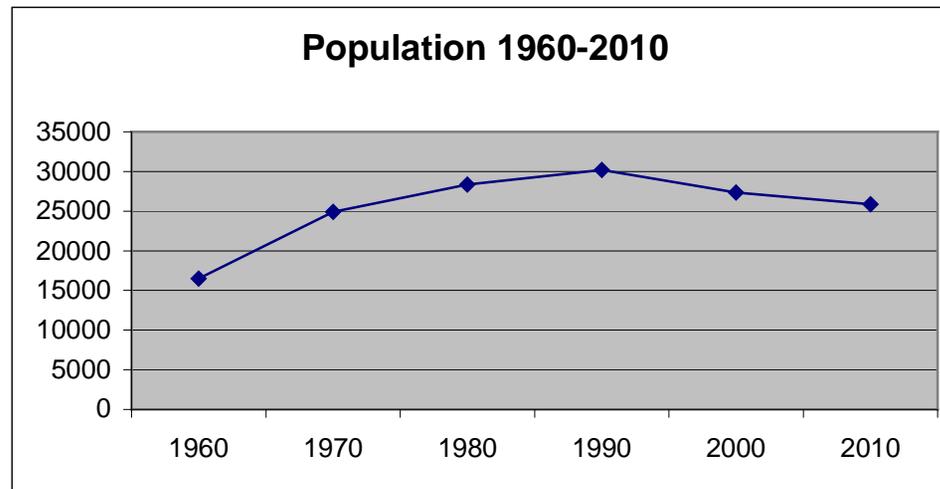
Losco County's total population as of the 2010 Census was 25,887: 49% male and 51% female. As of 2010, nearly 72% of the county population was under the age of 65, with 50-64 year olds comprising the largest group percentage (25.4). However, persons 65 and over make up a greater part of the population than the state average in all of the local government units. There has been a steady increase in the age of Losco County residents indicating it is becoming a retirement destination. In terms of median age, the Losco County average was 32.6 years in 1994, and has increased to 44.2 in 2000, and further increased to 50.9 in 2010.

Population by Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino – 403, Non Hispanic or Latino – 25,484

Population by Race:

White.....	24,965	Native Hawaiian.....	15
African American.....	122	Other.....	106
Asian.....	126	Identified by two or more.....	383
American Indian and Alaska native.....	170		

Through the 1990s, Losco County consistently grew at a rate greater than either the region or the state. Specifically, the county population increased in excess of three times the state and regional rates during 1960-70. In 1970-80, the county rate population expansion exceeded the regional average only slightly, but was still three times greater than the overall trend for the state. Closing of the U.S. Air Force Base in 1992 resulted in a decline in population in the early 1990s. This trend has continued in spite of the resurgence of private growth at the former airbase. The County continues to offer an attractive destination for vacation and recreational activity.



These population trends distinguish Losco County as possessing unique attributes that attract growth. The existing plan identifies these major growth attractants as follows:

1. The County's scenic natural environment; and
2. The presence of two urbanized centers along the shoreline

VACATIONAL *a n d* SEASONAL POPULATION



The County's scenic natural features and recreational facilities serve to attract many thousands of visitors each year in addition to the permanent population. Seasonal visitors utilize campground, motel and private cottage or seasonal home facilities located within Iosco County. Although the 2010 County population is approximately 25,887, it is possible for the population to increase dramatically during the parts of the year when seasonal units are occupied. More than half of the dwellings in the townships of Alabaster, Baldwin, Grant, Plainfield, and Wilber are seasonal units. In AuSable, Burleigh and Oscoda Townships, seasonal dwelling unit totals represent a very significant percentage of total dwellings as well. The bulk of seasonal dwellings in Iosco County are located within these communities.



Of course, seasonal dwelling unit figures only count for a portion of those who will take up temporary occupancy in Iosco County during the course of the year. Visitors can choose from a variety of motel and campground accommodations. As well, it is estimated that 40% of vacationers stay with friends or relatives who live in the area. Thus, a large number of seasonal and year-round homes accommodate a substantial number of visitors.

HOUSING

The total number of housing units in Iosco County as of the 2010 Census was 20,443, with a median value of \$102,300.00. Home ownership rate (2006-2010) was 85.4%. Median House value (2009) was 91,151. Median contract rent (2009) was \$444.

Total SEV (State Equalized Value) relative to the Iosco County property tax base in 1991 was \$473,964,542.00. By 1994 the total SEV had grown to \$581,985,734.00. As of 2012 the total SEV stood at \$1,188,194,925.00 broken down by governmental unit as follows:

Property Tax Base By Community – 2012

Alabaster Township	\$56,672,500
AuSable Township	\$104,219,900
Baldwin Township	\$113,669,400
Burleigh Township	\$32,096,200
City of East Tawas	\$80,411,200
Grant Township	\$84,904,700
Oscoda Township	\$278,469,150
Plainfield Township	\$219,028,700
Reno Township	\$34,429,900
Sherman Township	\$27,713,000
City of Tawas City	\$56,956,175
Tawas Township	\$49,745,700
Whittemore city	\$5,485,800
Wilber Township	\$44,392,600



ECONOMIC and EMPLOYMENT



Iosco County has a very diverse economic base consisting of agriculture, manufacturing, retail, service industry, governmental, educational and tourism economics. The Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport Authority manages the former airbase and currently has 7 commercial tenants. Several additional groups, the Iosco County Economic Development Commission, Develop Iosco and the Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce offer support for business growth. The Oscoda Township Office for Economic Adjustment has also established an active marketing program to continue attracting industries and creating sector employment.

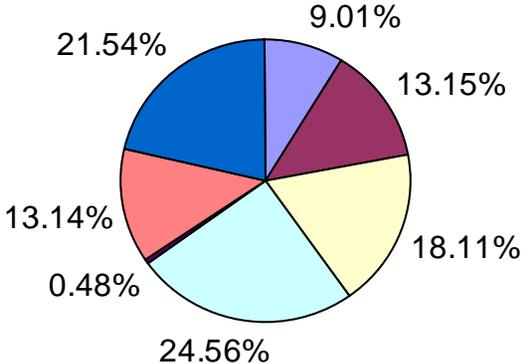
According to Iosco County Building Department records, new home construction for the periods 1990-1999 was 2009, the period 2000-2004 was 803 and 2005-current was 152.

Tourism provides a major source of area employment opportunity. The tourism season is most active from May (Memorial Day) to September (Labor Day). However, hunting, fishing and winter recreation activities have steadily increased in Iosco County, which is consistent with trends throughout the Northern Lower Peninsula.

As of the 2010 Census, Iosco County was home to 22,244 people aged 16 or higher. Due principally to the fact that so many of Iosco County's residents are retirees, 11,583 residents – including care giving parents – were not included in the county's labor force. The labor force consisted of 10,661, with 10,613 gainfully employed. As of April 2010, unemployment stood at 16.1%.



Iosco Employment Profile



- Management, Business, Financial
- Professional and Related
- Service
- Sales and Office
- Farming, Fishing, Forrestry
- Construction
- Production, Transportation



G O A L S and O B J E C T I V E S

Economic Development

A strong economy is at the core of a healthy community. The retirement community most often brings with it wealth in the form of savings and entitlements. However, the working population must possess the ability to support households in order to be contributing members. A strong economy requires input and commitment from community and business leaders, and responsible development must be encouraged. The larger national and global economies have changed significantly since the 2000 census and 2010 census, and it is reasonable to expect them to continue to change dynamically in coming years. Iosco County has seen how easily small communities in northeast Michigan can lose quality manufacturing positions. It is important, therefore, to plan ahead in order to insure a vital economic future.

Goal:

Provide for economic growth, promote a diversified economic base, and improve the competitiveness of the county's economy by enhancing employment opportunities for residents and the profitability of businesses and industries while maintaining the community character and environment.

Objectives:

Bring together the schools, hospital, municipalities, service and manufacturing business leadership to develop strategies for enhancing and expanding the area's potential for manufacturing, industrial and as a high-quality retirement and residential area.

Work with local communities, Parks Boards and chambers of commerce to increase the area's tourism profile, and to discover new and better ways to market the many natural attractions that Iosco County has to offer. Promoting cultural, historical, industrial, recreational, and environmental features will help to reach a broader market.

Support the attraction of health related businesses and services to Iosco County, to build on the location of the St. Joseph Health System and other medical service providers already available in the area.

Encourage partnerships between community organizations and the county's four school districts and Iosco intermediate school district to ensure that education and training programs continue to meet the needs of the area's present employers and future businesses.

Promote and encourage the implementation of high speed telecommunication service in rural areas.

Encourage economic expansion through the promotion and attraction of new businesses, ensure reasonable land use and development regulations, and promote the development of infrastructure and facilities necessary to support economic development in a planned and managed way.

Preserve the economic viability of farming and timbering by working with local, regional and state organizations to attract "value-added" industries for products.

Support and cooperate with regional economic development organizations to explore ways that help promote and develop all of Northeast Michigan.

Transportation

Maintaining and improving a community's transportation system is another essential part of building and maintaining a vibrant, healthy county-wide community. Transportation systems are both complex and expensive. Changes in transportation infrastructure can have a profound impact on a community's functional character, not to mention the environmental conditions and land use patterns. It is therefore important to continually and carefully plan for ongoing improvements.

Goal:

Develop, maintain and fund a safe and efficient transportation system that can be expanded as future needs may demand.

Objectives:

Continue to promote and improve the existing network of motorized and non-motorized recreational countywide trails, amongst the finest in the Great Lakes Region today. Propose connectors that would link existing systems.

Direct new commercial development into designated centers, through the implementation of municipal and community master plans and zoning ordinances.

Utilize planning and zoning techniques, such as clustering, shared parking, access management, and landscaping to regulate commercial development along highways and primary roads.

Support and fund the Iosco County Road Commission so that it may work closely with communities, property owners, developers, residents and other entities to plan and implement road improvements across the county.

Support and fund the Iosco Transportation Corporation so that it may work to provide increasingly better and efficient ground transport services for the benefit of residents and businesses alike.

Encourage the implementation and funding of the US-23 Sunrise Side Coastal Highway Management Plan.

Support the coastal communities in their maintenance and enhancement of existing and future ports, harbors, and watercraft facilities.

Encourage the continued use and development of the Iosco County Airport.

Maintain and improve rail service in Iosco County.

Government

Governmental institutions are for the people and by the people. Government workers owe the people an efficient, transparent organizational structure that continually seeking ways to operate at the most cost-effective level possible. Cooperation and collaboration between the local units is an important part of achieving the goals of good government. Open lines of communication with the public will help to assure constituents that this is being pursued and achieved.

Goal:

Encourage cooperation and collaboration between and among all levels of government, promote effective communication with the public, and expend tax dollars in a wise and efficient manner.

Objectives:

Generate economies of scale and promote cost savings through coordination between local units.

Encourage cooperation and harmony between local units of government. Old rivalries can be counterproductive and should be discouraged.

Promote effective zoning to control blight, and encourage fair and uniform blight ordinances among local units.

Investigate the feasibility of county-wide zoning and (or) uniform township zoning.

Increase public awareness and the effectiveness of the County Planning Commission.

Participate with the townships and the cities in annual joint meetings.

Promote communication between all of the local planning commissions and recognize communities for outstanding planning and zoning efforts.

Continue to publish and update the Iosco County Website, www.iosco.m33access.com. Publish County Planning Commission meeting agendas and minutes on the site.

Develop procedures for consistent and timely exchange of information between the County Planning Commission and townships and cities.

Focus on cross-jurisdictional issues when reviewing community master plans and zoning ordinances.

Explore the feasibility of the purchase of recreational lands for county management and development.

Continue to fund and support the Iosco County Planning Commission.

Facilities, Infrastructure, and Services

In addition to the transportation infrastructure, other types of facilities, infrastructure and services support the community. These include water, sewer, fire, police, and schools. Having a well designed and managed infrastructure greatly adds to the desirability of the community. The continued maintenance of these facilities is essential and requires constant oversight. The expansion of infrastructure and services is extremely expensive and places additional funding burdens on the public. Expansions which are not carefully planned can hinder a community's ability to expand and to expend, and can inadvertently add to environmental degradation and undesirable sprawl.

Goal:

Continue to maintain and expand, as needed, the community facilities, infrastructure and services which accommodate the needs of residents and businesses in Iosco County.

Objectives:

Investigate and possibly upgrade the status of authorities currently overseeing public water and sewer services within the populated areas of Iosco County and adjacent entities.

Support and promote county-wide recycling programs.

Investigate options regarding the coordination of police and fire services among departments with the goal of the efficient use of tax dollars. Eliminate redundancies where possible.

Plan for ways in which to effectively meet the present and future needs of the Losco County Jail, and seek ways in which to fund the best alternatives.

Environment

The protection of a community's natural environment is central to maintaining quality of life and ensuring that future generations live in healthy surroundings. A clean and attractive environment is a magnet for new businesses, residents and tourists. Economic development and environmental protection are both necessary for a healthy community.

Goal:

Preserve the natural environment by protecting groundwater, surface water, forests, wetlands, clean air, fisheries and wildlife.

Objectives:

Work cooperatively with communities, agencies and organizations to develop studies and to institute programs that address watershed, woodlands, wildlife and ecosystem management.

Encourage departments and agencies to effectively administer and enforce regulations and adopt needed ordinances when necessary.

Develop model zoning ordinance language to protect resources; and encourage local units to adopt them and to cooperate between adjacent local units for the protection of these resources.

Support natural resource education and technical programs that assist landowners, businesses and communities through such entities as Soil Conservation Districts, MSU Extension, and the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments.

Support studies that identify ways to protect critical resources, wildlife habitat, water resources, ecological corridors, scenic areas and vistas, and other important ecological resources.

Community Character

A community's "character" is an intangible item which identifies the attributes which make a community unique. While a community's character will continually change over time, attempting to preserve it can be a very important part of maintaining a community's cultural heritage and traditions.

Goal:

Maintain and enhance the appearance and character of Iosco County.

Objectives:

Encourage all communities to preserve the integrity of existing neighborhoods by protecting them from the intrusion of incompatible and short-sighted, impulsive uses.

Enhance community gateways through the implementation of reasonable and valid land use controls, landscaping and screening.

Support and expand community clean up days.

Assist in the implementation of conservation-based open space or cluster development options as a means to protect community character.

Recreation

Iosco County is blessed with plentiful natural resources and recreational opportunities of scenic and natural beauty. This not only adds to the quality of life, but essentially defines Iosco County. The natural surroundings definitely make Iosco a more enjoyable place in which to live and work. The area's many recreational facilities and opportunities are also very important in attracting tourists and new businesses— maintaining and improving these recreational facilities and opportunities is vital for the success of present and future generations.

Goal:

Preserve and improve indoor and outdoor recreational, historical, and cultural opportunities, programs and facilities for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations.

Objectives:

Encourage the pursuit of outside funding sources, such as State and Federal grants, for recreational development and improvements.

Support the retention and improvement of public water access sites for residents, seasonal residents and visitors.

Encourage improvements to motorized and non-motorized recreation trails.

Support and encourage improvements to area indoor and outdoor recreational, historical and cultural facilities and programs in accordance with locally adopted recreation plans or other officially adopted documents.

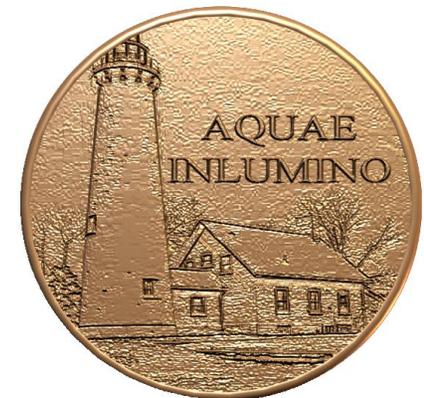
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