

Goals & Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the goals, objectives and action steps that will guide future growth and development in a manner that will reflect the county's unique character. In developing community goals and objectives, it is important to analyze demographics, housing, economic conditions, services and facilities, cultural and natural resources and existing land use. Preceding chapters of this Master Plan have documented the above characteristics.

An equally important step in developing goals is community input. The County Planning Commission commissioned a county-wide survey that was available online to all County residents. The survey was coordinated with the City of Alpena Comprehensive Plan survey. Both surveys were available on the Alpena County website and the City of Alpena Website. In addition, hard copy surveys were also available at the Alpena County Government Center and the George N. Fletcher Public Library. Press releases were issued to inform the public about the availability of the surveys. 100 completed surveys were received.

Participants were asked a number of different questions, including the identification of assets in Alpena County; the identification of negative issues about Alpena County; and a number of different questions regarding government services, community facilities, natural resources, housing, economic development, transportation, and quality of life. Lastly, participants were asked to provide suggestions on improvements that could be undertaken by Alpena County in the future. Input was received from one hundred people and responses were carefully compiled and analyzed. With guidance from the community survey results, the Planning Commission established the goals, objectives, and action steps identified in this chapter.

Survey Summary

- *Respondents:*
 - 94 Full-Time Residents
 - 5 Non-Residents
 - *No Seasonal Residents Responded to the Survey*
 - 95% of Respondents own their own home
 - 86% of respondents are age 40 and above
 - 45% of respondents occupy the professional/managerial category
 - 58% of respondents are from Alpena Township; 19% are from the City of Alpena; 15% are from Wilson or Maple Ridge Townships or from areas outside of Alpena County

County Assets

The people living in Alpena County value the water resources and the “small town” nature of the community. The quality and abundance of the hunting, fishing and natural resources was also indicated as one of the premier assets of the County. The tranquility and peace of living in a rural environment is also high on their list of County assets; as is its recreational resources, the schools and general community facilities.

The following items were the most identified by survey respondents as being the most liked reasons for living in Alpena County:

Most Liked Aspects of Living in Alpena County – Most Common Responses

- Access to Lakes and Water Resources
- Small Town Environment
- Outdoors & the Environment (Natural Resources, Wildlife, Hunting/Fishing etc.)
- Recreation
- Schools & Facilities
- People
- Waterfront Community
- Beautiful
- Safe Community/Low Crime
- Arts, Culture & Entertainment Activities
- Airport & Air Base
- Marine Sanctuary
- Historic Assets
- Quality Local Government
- Family
- Local Businesses & Jobs
- Farms

The following illustrate a number of positive issues about living in Alpena County that were identified by survey participants.

SATISFACTION: 93% of respondents are very satisfied or satisfied living in Alpena County.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY: 59% believe that there is a sense of community in Alpena County. However, a number of comments were received that indicated that newcomers are not particularly well received within the community.

LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT: Over 60% of respondents say that the County has too little development, while 36% say that the level of development within the County is “just right.” However, 52% of respondents state that Alpena County has to begin to grow in order to thrive. Economic development to increase jobs, shopping options, provision of stable income, and a better quality of life were the most frequent reasons stated for this opinion. A need to see more young families moving to the area was also noted as one way to growing the community.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Near unanimous agreement (96%) among respondents supported the growth of commercial development within the County. Some comments were noted that cautioned a balance between commercial and agricultural development.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Over three-quarters (81%) of respondents desire additional industrial development within the County. In addition, 83% of respondents indicated support for the approval of tax abatements to support future industrial development. However, a number of comments were received that indicated opposition to additional industrial development along the waterfront.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT: 60% of respondents wish to see continued residential development within the County.

SENIOR HOUSING & SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY: Nearly two-thirds of respondents are supportive of exploring options for senior housing and believe that there are adequate services in the County for the elderly. However, over three-quarters (77%) of respondents stated that they never use the Senior Center and 22% of the remaining respondents indicated that their use of the facility was limited to 1-2 times/year. Given the demographic breakdown of the survey, this could have had an influence on the indicated level of use and could require additional follow-up.

EDUCATION: 77% of responses indicate satisfaction with educational opportunities within the County. However, some comments were noted regarding concern over the quality of management of the public school system.

FARMLAND: Nearly three-quarters of respondents desire to see agricultural growth within the County. A majority of respondents support protection of large tracts of farmland and a clear majority support the promotion of agricultural tourism.

TOURISM & AGRICULTUREAL DEVELOPMENT: A majority of respondents support tourism, agricultural tourism, and agricultural development.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the responses believe that public transportation services are adequate. Some comments regarding wait times, lack of standard routes, and lack of information about transportation services beyond the City of Alpena were noted. This could warrant additional investigation.

RECYCLING & SOLID WASTE: Three-quarters of respondents are satisfied with both solid waste disposal and recycling options within the County. The most noted comments regarding lack of use of the recycling program included hours of operation, location of drop-off facilities, and lack of information about the program.

WIND TURBINES: 72% are supportive of allowing residential wind turbines on private property. 56% are supportive of the idea of large-scale commercial wind turbines being built within the County.

PUBLIC SAFETY: An overwhelming majority of respondents support public safety services. The data, along with other responses, suggest very strong support for local fire and EMS services; likely because the majority of firefighters and EMS crews are local volunteers. Very solid support for 9-1-1 operations also exists; with many comments being made regarding the professionalism and responsiveness of the dispatchers. Interestingly, support for law enforcement was evenly split. This could warrant additional investigation.

ROADS: There is overall satisfaction with road conditions, especially with snow removal operations. Comments suggest that there are some strong opinions about certain road maintenance issues, especially related to road grading and to the seal coating of roads.

The most identified road segments needing improvement include:

- Wayne Road
- Indian Reserve Road
- Herron Road
- All gravel roads
- Long Lake Road
- Weiss Road
- Maple Grove Road
- Grant Street
- North Point Shores
- Emerald Acres subdivision
- Misery Bay Road
- El Cajon Road
- Werth Road
- Hubert Road
- Hamilton Road
- Bare Point Road
- Bean Creek Road
- Boilore Road
- Wessel Road
- Pearl Road

- Dietz Road
- Lake Street
- Beaver Lake Road
- Woodward Avenue
- Grover Road
- Dawson Street
- Gutches Road
- Bloom Road.

NATURAL RESOURCES: The data shows overwhelming support for natural resource protection. There is very strong support for all categories of resource protection, including cultural and historic resources.

Natural Resources Importance (All Received Majority or Plurality of votes):

- River/Lake Water Quality
- Ground Water
- Air Quality
- Fish & Wildlife
- Woodlands & Timber Resources
- Lakefront Land Use
- Farmland
- Cultural & Historic Resources
- Scenic Vistas
- Wetlands & Floodplains
- Quarry/Limestone.

The data also suggests that there is overwhelming public support for the implementation and enforcement of natural resource protection regulations. This could warrant additional follow-up.

RECREATION & CULTURAL FACILITIES: Regarding the significant recreational and cultural facilities within the County: 91% of respondents indicated that they never or rarely use the Plaza Pool; 55% of the responses indicate an occasional use (1-2-times/year) of the Northern Lights Arena, and 40% of respondents indicated that they use the George N. Fletcher Public Library 1-2-times/month.

County Issues

A wide range of concerns were expressed by the respondents. Rising crime rates and the lack of law enforcement resources was, overwhelmingly, the most noted concern. Included within these responses were multiple comments about the role of local shelters in contributing to the local crime problem. The second most noted concern was the perceived continuous in-fighting and discord among the local units of government within the County. Included with these comments were responses noting the overlap and duplication of government services and the lack of “vision” and/or resistance to change and the lack of implementation of new ideas.

The lack of quality jobs and economic opportunities in the County also ranked as one of the top concerns of respondents. Respondents also rated the lack of shopping, entertainment, restaurants, and hotels equally with the lack of economic opportunities. Blight and lack of enforcement is also a major issue within Alpena County.

The following items were the most identified by survey respondents as being the most disliked reasons for living in Alpena County:

Most Disliked Aspects of Living in Alpena County – Most Common Responses

- Rising Crime and Lack of Law Enforcement Resources
- Government Discord and a Lack of Vision for the Future
- Lack of Jobs and Economic Opportunities
- Lack of Amenities/Stores
- Blight and Lack of Ordinance Enforcement
- Poor Road Maintenance
- Poor Waterfront Development and Permitting Industrial Development on the Waterfront
- Negative Attitudes about the Community; Lack of Community Pride

- Lack of High-Speed Internet, Cell Phone Coverage, and Utility Services
- Declining Property Values and Rising Tax Rates
- Lack of Consolidation of Services among Local Governments
- Gas Prices
- Pollution
- Lack of a Freeway
- Poor Quality Medical Facilities
- Many of the People
- Flooding and Drainage Issues
- Too Much Focus on Senior Activities
- Poorly Managed Schools
- Lack of Recreational Amenities
- Too Much Focus on the Airport
- Insufficient Tourism Promotion

The following illustrate a number of potential problem issues about living in Alpena County that were identified by survey participants.

QUALITY OF LIFE: Approximately 42% of respondents believe that the County’s overall quality of life has declined. More than one-third of respondents see no change in the County’s quality of life, while less than 25% of respondents believe that the County’s overall quality of life has improved.

JOBS: 92% of respondents believe that there are inadequate job opportunities within the County.

AGE: The majority of respondents were between the ages of 30-70. Only five responses (5%) were from individuals under the age of 30 and none were under the age of 20 and only seven respondents (7%) were age 70+, with no responses from anyone above the age of 79. The significance of this is unclear, but this demographic breakdown could influence views upon services to the elderly within the County.

GOVERNMENT: 51% of respondents are unsure of what County government does for them. However, two-thirds of response also indicated that collaboration with other units of government needs to become a priority. In addition, many comments were noted regarding the lack of vision or innovation, the lack of working with other units of government, and the lack of service consolidation. This could warrant additional investigation.

BLIGHT: 82% of respondents expressed support for the enforcement of regulations to address junk, blight, and nuisances. Blight in Alpena Township was noted most often.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they leave the county for shopping experiences 1-2-times/month (61%) or 1-2/week (13%). 62% of respondents also indicated that they leave the county for entertainment opportunities either monthly or weekly. The impacts upon the local economy are likely significant and should generate additional follow-up.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Clear majorities of respondents strongly believe that 74% believe that cell phone coverage is inadequate within the County. A majority of respondents also believes that the level of access to high-speed Internet within the County is inadequate.

AIRPORT: 89% of respondents indicated that they never or rarely use the County Airport. A number of comments were also received regarding the perceived level of law enforcement resources committed to the airport.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Respondents were equally split regarding satisfaction with Law Enforcement. An analysis of submitted comments indicate concerns over diminishing levels of law enforcement patrols, rising crime rates, increases in violent crimes, lack of night and weekend patrols and the perceived role of local shelters contributing to rising crime rates. There were also a number of comments regarding “excessive” law enforcement resources dedicated to local courts and to the airport. These issues might warrant further exploration.

LOW-INCOME HOUSING: A clear majority of respondents do not support the development of low-income housing units. An analysis of the submitted comments suggests that perceptions of this issue are influenced by attitudes regarding law enforcement. This could warrant further investigation.

MEDICAL FACILITIES: There is a clear split regarding satisfaction with medical facilities in the County. While a narrow majority (52%) of respondents supports ARMC, 45% dislike the quality of medical facilities. The most noted issues regarding medical care within the community were the lack of specialists and the perceived poor quality of the ARMC Emergency Room.

Additional suggestions offered to the County:

- Expand law enforcement and address rising crime rates.
- Focus on Economic Development and creating job opportunities.
- Focus on supporting the local jurisdictions to implement better blight enforcement.
- Elected officials need to focus on moving the community forward and making improvements.
- Focus on tourism.
- Prioritize development along the US 23 corridor.
- Promote tourism along inland lakes and inland areas.
- Implement aquatic weed control along the lake and river shorelines.
- Consider constructing a new jail.
- Improve Senior Center operations
- Preserve assets such as NLA, the airport, the library, and the Plaza Pool.
- Develop a campground with Lake Huron access.
- Expand ARMC.
- Restore the Thunder Bay Fishery.

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Note: Goals within each category have been prioritized by the Alpena County Planning Commission.

Community Character & Quality of Life:

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. A community's "quality of life" are those factors, when taken in totality help define the viability of a community as a place to live, work, and play.

Goal 1:

Maintain and enhance the overall quality of life of Alpena County.

Objectives:

- A. Implement stated objectives that will improve the overall quality of life for county residents.
- B. Strive to balance future growth and development in the County while maintaining its rural character.
- C. Promote the quality of life in Alpena County in order to recruit new families to the County.
- D. Encourage public feedback regarding ongoing efforts to improve the County's quality of life.
- E. Build on a sense of place by implementing placemaking programs throughout the community.

Action Items:

1. Implement the goals and objectives of the County Master Plan.
2. Coordinate with the County Board of Commissioners and appropriate departments, agencies, and organizations.
3. Actively engage in strategic planning to ensure goals and objectives are being met.
4. Implement active communication with local units of government.
5. Encourage public feedback and input.
6. Investigate placemaking funding opportunities.

Goal 2:

Maintain and enhance the appearance and character of Alpena County.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage all communities to preserve the integrity of existing neighborhoods by protecting them from the intrusion of incompatible uses.
- B. Enhance community gateways through the implementation of land use controls, landscaping and screening.
- C. Strive to balance future growth and development in the county while maintaining its rural character.
- D. Investigate the implementation of conservation-based open space or cluster development options as a means to protect community character.

Action Items:

1. Actively engage in strategic planning to ensure goals and objectives are being met.
2. Implement the goals and objectives of the County Master Plan.
3. Explore the concept of forming beautification efforts to enhance the appearance of public facilities and gateways into the County.
4. Work with and encourage the County Board of Commissioners to expand community clean up days and recycling programs.
5. Encourage public feedback and input through online forums and public meetings.
6. Investigate the feasibility of burying utility lines where appropriate.
7. Provide support to local jurisdictions for blight enforcement.

Government Services

Governmental institutions owe their constituents an efficient and open organization by continually seeking ways in which to operate in the most cost-effective manner. Efficient and consistent delivery of services to the public is critical in achieving this goal. Cooperation and collaboration between local units of government is also an important part of achieving this goal. Open lines of communication with the public will help to assure constituents that this is being pursued.

Goal 1:

Cooperate and collaborate with other units of government.

Objectives:

- A. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to investigate ways to coordinate and collaborate with other units of government.
- B. Explore joint meetings and areas of coordination or cooperation with other county or local planning commissions.
- C. Investigate ways to generate economies of scale and cost savings through collaboration and coordination with other units of government.
- D. Encourage cooperation between local units of government within the County.

Action Items:

1. Support the uniform development and adoption of land use controls among other local units of government.
2. Implement active communication between all local planning commissions and recognize communities for outstanding planning and zoning efforts.
3. Develop procedures for consistent and timely exchange of information between the County Planning Commission, the townships and the City.
4. Participate with townships and the City of Alpena in annual joint meetings.
5. Investigate the feasibility of the creation of multi-jurisdictional planning commissions with other local units of government.
6. Explore the feasibility of the purchase of development rights or conservation easements as a land use tool. Disseminate this information to local planning and zoning entities.
7. Encourage the County Board of Commissioners to continue to participate in meetings of the Michigan Association of Counties.
8. Encourage continued County participation in the Alpena Intergovernmental Council.
9. Focus on cross-jurisdictional issues when reviewing community master plans and zoning ordinances.

Goal 2:

Encourage the implementation of effective blight and nuisance controls within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Promote effective zoning regulations to control blight and nuisances.
- B. Encourage the adoption of uniform blight ordinances between neighboring units of government.
- C. Support the enforcement of existing blight ordinance regulations.
- D. Investigate programs with the goal of assisting local jurisdictions in blight elimination.

Action Items:

1. Support local planning commissions in developing and implementing effective zoning regulations to control blight and nuisances.
2. Support collaboration between local planning commissions, local elected officials to enforce blight and nuisance regulations.

3. Investigate the feasibility of multiple local units of government adopting and enforcing uniform blight and nuisance control regulations.
4. Work with the County and local units of government to increase public awareness regarding the need for blight and nuisance regulations.
5. Seek out grant funds to assist local jurisdictions in blight elimination.

Goal 3:

Communicate effectively with the public.

Objectives:

- A. Support the County Board of Commissioners in informing the public about the scope and value of County services.
- B. Encourage public feedback on issues impacting Alpena County.
- C. Encourage public feedback from a wider array of County residents.
- D. Increase public awareness and the effectiveness of the County Planning Commission.

Action Items:

1. Implement annual strategic planning sessions and encourage public participation.
2. Revisit annual goals and objectives quarterly and encourage public participation.
3. Solicit public feedback from all demographic sections of the County.
4. Publish planning-related information and resources on the County web page.

Goal 4:

Ensure effective and efficient County responses to public needs.

Objectives:

- A. Work with the County Board of Commissioners on ways to deliver county services in a wise and efficient manner.
- B. Collaborate with the County Board of Commissioners on planning for future issues impacting Alpena County.
- C. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to ensure continued funding and support for the Alpena County Planning Commission.

Action Items:

1. Implement annual strategic planning sessions to organize effective service delivery.
2. Revisit annual goals and objectives quarterly to ensure effective implementation.
3. Increase public awareness of and the effectiveness of the County Planning Commission.
4. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to implement the Goals and Objectives of the County Master Plan.
5. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to ensure funding for adequate ongoing training for Planning Commission members and staff.
6. Explore the feasibility of annual joint meetings with the County Board of Commissioners.

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

Transportation Services

Maintaining and improving a community's transportation system is another essential part of ensuring a vital and healthy community. Transportation systems are complex and expensive to maintain and expand. Changes in transportation infrastructure can have a profound impact on a community's environmental conditions and land use patterns. It is therefore necessary to continually and carefully plan for ongoing improvements.

Goal 1:

Develop, maintain and fund a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system.

Objectives:

- A. Plan and prepare for the future transportation needs of the entire county.
- B. Support the County Road Commission to plan and implement road improvements across the County.
- C. Support and promote implementation and funding of the Road Inventory Asset Management System, the Alpena Area-Wide Transportation Plan and the US-23 Heritage Route Management Plan.
- D. Promote new commercial development at designated hubs and corridors through the County Master Plan.
- E. Encourage the continued development of public transportation options for the benefit of county residents.
- F. Support the enhancement and improvement of the deep water port in the City of Alpena to better facilitate commercial shipping and tourism.
- G. Support the continued development of the Alpena County Regional Airport as a regional commercial hub.
- H. Maintain and improve rail service in Alpena County.
- I. Advocate uniform transportation access control across the county.
- J. Promote the use of planning and zoning techniques to maintain the rural appearance of Alpena County.
- K. Investigate a county-wide wayfinding program designed to enhance tourism opportunities and promotion.
- L. Promote and support implementation of the County Recreation Plan; specifically the maintenance and expansion of recreational trails. Investigate the development of a county trails plan to establish a network of connected non-motorized and motorized trails across Alpena County. Identify existing trails and propose connectors that would link existing systems.

Action Items:

1. Support the implementation of land use controls that discourage linear strip development along state highways and primary county roads.

2. Support the implementation of land use techniques, such as clustering, shared parking, access management, and landscaping, to regulate commercial development along state highways and primary county roads.
3. Work with the County Board of Commissioners, the County Road Commission, local communities, property owners, developers, residents and other entities to ensure road maintenance priorities are established and implemented.
4. Work with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Road Commission to implement more frequent maintenance activities such as dust control, road grading, and road striping.
5. Work with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Road Commission to ensure adequate and timely snow removal operations are maintained.
6. Include planned road system improvements in a County Capital Improvements Plan.
7. Explore the development of a wayfinding program with the County Board of Commissioners and the County Road Commission.
8. Conduct public education sessions regarding the merits of a wayfinding program.
9. Work with the Thunder Bay Transportation Authority to ensure sufficient public transportation option for County residents.
10. Work with the Thunder Bay Transportation Authority to educate the public regarding public transportation services.
11. Work with the City of Alpena and private facility owners to enhance and improve the deep water port to better facilitate commercial shipping and tourism.
12. Support participation in the Small Harbors Coalition and the Port Cities Collaborative.
13. Explore ways to expand and develop the Alpena County Regional Airport.
14. ~~Maintain~~ and Improve rail service in Alpena County.
15. Encourage and support the adoption of uniform transportation access control by local units of government.
16. Explore with the County Board of Commissioners, County Road Commission, MDNR, user groups, and the public ways to expand and improve recreational trails within the county.

Natural & Cultural Resources

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

Goal 1:

Preserve the natural environment by protecting groundwater, surface water, air quality, fisheries and wildlife, forests, farmland, waterfront lands, wetlands, and scenic vistas.

Objectives:

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

- B. Support studies that identify ways in which to protect critical resources, wildlife habitat, water resources, ecological corridors, scenic areas and vistas, and other important ecological resources.
- C. Encourage the adoption of model zoning language that protects greenbelts, farmlands, forestlands, groundwater, and surface water.
- D. Encourage the preservation of open spaces at strategic locations within the County.
- E. Encourage county departments to effectively administer and enforce regulations such as soil erosion and sedimentation control and adopt needed ordinances such as storm water control.
- F. Support natural resource education and technical programs that assist landowners, businesses and communities.
- G. Explore ways to work with other local units of government for the protection of natural resources.

Action Items:

1. Explore with the County Board of Commissioners the development of local ordinances and policies to protect natural resources within Alpena County.
2. Develop model zoning ordinance language to protect greenbelts, farmlands, forestlands, groundwater, and surface water. Encourage local units of government to adopt them and to cooperate with adjacent local units for the protection of these resources.
3. Encourage the development and enforcement of appropriate stormwater protection regulations.
4. Encourage county and local officials to meet to ensure proper enforcement of existing regulations.
5. Explore the implementation of wellhead protection zones in appropriate areas.
6. Explore ways to preserve open spaces and scenic vistas within the County.
7. Explore the feasibility of the purchase of development rights or conservation easements as a land use tool. Disseminate this information to local residents.
8. Work with the County Board of Commissioners on informing the public about natural resource protections and regulations.
9. Work with the County Conservation District, MSU Extension, the County Drain Commissioner, and the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments to develop natural resource education and technical programs that assist landowners, businesses and communities.

Goal 2:

Recognize the importance of agricultural lands as an economic base, the heritage of, and way of life in Alpena County.

Objectives:

- A. Promote agricultural growth and recognize the importance of small family farms in Alpena County.
- B. Encourage and support the preservation of farmland and woodlands where feasible.
- C. Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses. Recognize farmland as contributing to the scenic and rural character of the County.
- D. Discourage residential and farming land use conflicts.
- E. Encourage the use of “Purchase of Development Rights”, “Transfer of Development Rights”, Clustering, and Conservation Easements to help farmers retain their agricultural acreage.
- F. Recognize farmland as part of the County’s active economic base and potential source of jobs for county residents.
- G. Support the maximization of the most beneficial agricultural use of agricultural lands in Alpena County, while encouraging environmentally sensitive farming practices to protect local surface and ground water quality without unnecessarily limiting the economic rights of agricultural landowners.

- H. Encourage agricultural landowners to work cooperatively with supportive public agencies, such as the local Michigan State University Extension, Alpena Conservation District, USDA, and National Resource Conservation District offices.
- I. Encourage farmers to produce, process, and market at wholesale and retail the products grown on their property.
- J. Educate residents and local officials on Michigan’s Right to Farm Act.
- K. Encourage the use of Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs).
- L. Establish Alpena County as a regional “local food hub”.

Action Items:

- 1. Preserve the economic viability of farming by working with local, regional and state organizations to attract “value-added” industries for agricultural products.
- 2. Encourage the adoption of zoning ordinances to include regulations that encourage and promote agricultural tourism activities.
- 3. Encourage the use of “Purchase of Development Rights”, “Transfer of Development Rights”, Clustering, and Conservation Easements to help farmers retain their agricultural acreage. Disseminate this information to local residents.
- 4. Support the development of zoning ordinance language that preserves large tracts of farmland.
- 5. Encourage the implementation of zoning ordinance language that creates rural residential transition zones to minimize residential and farmland land use conflicts.
- 6. Support the development of web-based and print marketing to promote local foods.

Goal 3:

Preserve historic resources within the county.

Objectives:

- A. Work cooperatively with communities, agencies and organizations to develop studies and institute programs that protect historic resources.
- B. Support the creation of historic districts within the County.
- C. Encourage private efforts to protect valuable historic resources.
- D. Support historic resource education that assists landowners, businesses and communities.

Action Items:

- 1. Collaborate with the County Board of Commissioners to promote the development of local ordinances and policies to protect historic resources within Alpena County.
- 2. Encourage county and local officials to meet to ensure proper enforcement of existing regulations.
- 3. Investigate and promote the adoption of zoning ordinance language to protect historic resources.
- 4. Work with agencies and officials to inform the public about the benefits of historic preservation.
- 5. Investigate the creation of historic districts within the County.
- 6. Encourage the inclusion of properties on the National Historic Register.
- 7. Support the expansion of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Community Services & Facilities

In addition to the transportation infrastructure, other types of facilities, infrastructure and services (i.e. water, sewer, fire, police, schools, etc.) constitute the backbone of a community. Having well designed and managed infrastructure and services greatly adds to the “livability” of a 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 inadvertently add to environmental degradation and undesirable sprawl.

Goal 1:

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

Objectives:

- A. Include planned improvements to community facilities and public infrastructures in an adopted County Capital Improvements Plan.
- B. Work to position Alpena County to secure state and federal funding for infrastructure improvements.
- C. Identify services that need attention during annual goal setting sessions.
- D. Solicit public input regarding upgrades to community facilities.
- E. Support the investigation of a water and sewer authority to oversee public water and sewer services within the populated areas of the county and adjacent communities.

Action Items:

- 1. Develop and implement an annual Capital Improvements Plan.
- 2. Participate in the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments’ annual Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process.
- 3. Coordinate with the County Board of Commissioners regarding the need for maintenance and improvements to community facilities and infrastructure.
- 4. Conduct annual goal-setting sessions that include discussions of community facilities and infrastructure.
- 5. Work with local units of government to investigate joint utility authorities.
- 6. Encourage public feedback regarding ongoing efforts to improve the County’s community infrastructure and facilities.

Goal 2:

Ensure efficient delivery of emergency services within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage efficient deployment of law enforcement services within the County.
- B. Encourage expanded levels of Fire Department and Emergency Medical Service volunteers.

- C. Plan for upgrades to existing public safety equipment to ensure provision of efficient services.
- D. Plan for decreased response times to public safety incidents.
- E. Plan for future telecommunication needs for public safety services.
- F. Support the ongoing improvement of 9-1-1 operations.
- G. Support Emergency Management operations.
- H. Support coordination of public safety services between communities with the goal of the efficient use of tax dollars.
- I. Investigate collaboration or consolidation of public safety services between local units of government.
- J. Plan for the effective present use and future needs of the county jail.

Action Items:

- 1. Encourage the County Board of Commissioners, the Alpena County Sheriff's Department, the MI State Police, the City of Alpena Police Department, and the MDNR to collaborate to ensure that adequate levels of law enforcement coverage exist within the County.
- 2. Encourage collaboration to ensure adequate staffing of fire departments and emergency medical services.
- 3. Encourage public feedback regarding ongoing efforts to improve the County's level of public safety services.
- 4. Investigate the development of a county Capital Improvements Plan to plan for future upgrades to County public safety equipment.
- 5. Support continued funding and training for County 9-1-1 operations.
- 6. Plan for the continued maintenance and improvement of 9-1-1 telecommunications facilities.
- 7. Support continued funding and training Emergency Management operations.
- 8. Participate in and collaborate with Emergency Management planning and exercise operations.
- 9. Work with the County Board of Commissioners and the Alpena County Road Commission to ensure that the county road network is of adequate quality to ensure quick and efficient travel of public safety vehicles.
- 10. Encourage the implementation of land use controls that require sufficient private road access for emergency vehicles.
- 11. Encourage the County Board of Commissioners to consider collaboration or consolidation of public safety services with other local units of government.

Goal 3:

Ensure efficient and accessible solid waste disposal methods within Alpena County.

Objectives:

- A. Support and encourage solid waste and recycling efforts by the Montmorency-Oscoda-Alpena Landfill Authority.
- B. Support and promote the Alpena County Resource Recovery Facility and encourage local recycling efforts.
- C. Inform the public about solid waste and recycling options available in the County.
- D. Encourage gasification efforts at the landfill.

Action Items:

1. Investigate the placement of recycling drop-off sites within the County.
2. Work with the Montmorency-Oscoda-Alpena Landfill Authority and the Alpena County Resource Recovery Facility to educate the public about solid waste and recycling options available to County residents.

Goal 4:

Support the construction of efficient communication networks within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Investigate ways to improve cell phone service coverage within the County.
- B. Explore ways to upgrade available Internet services to high-speed capability.

Action Items:

1. Work with Target Economic Development Corporation, Alpena County Emergency Management and private vendors to find ways to upgrade cell phone coverage within the County.
2. Work with Target Economic Development Corporation and private vendors to find ways to provide high speed Internet to the County.
3. Investigate the development and deployment of countywide fiber optics or Wireless Internet networks.
4. Support and collaborate with the Alpena County Fiber Optics Consortium.

Goal 5:

Support the growth of the educational sector within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Support the expansion of college-level educational opportunities.
- B. Maintain the high quality of primary and secondary education in the community.

Action Items:

1. Encourage increased funding from the State of Michigan for public schools.
2. Support the expansion of four-year degree programs at Alpena Community College.

Goal 6:

Encourage the expansion of the community as the quality medical services hub of Northeast Michigan.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage the establishment of medical specialists in the community.

Recreation

Alpena County is blessed with many natural resources and recreational opportunities. This helps to add to the quality of life and makes the community 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 residents and businesses. Maintaining and improving these recreational facilities and opportunities is vital for present and future generations.

Goal 1:

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

Objectives:

- A. Encourage the pursuit of outside funding sources, such as State and federal grants, for recreational development and improvements.
- B. Provide ample and quality recreational sites for residents and visitors.
- C. Ensure recreational amenities are designed for a variety of demographics.
- D. Work with private landowners and State government to preserve and expand access to high quality recreation and hunting lands.
- E. Support and encourage the continued development and expansion of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve and other water related recreational opportunities.
- F. 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.

Action Items:

1. Maintain an updated County Recreation Plan that identifies and prioritizes needed community recreational facilities.
2. Study existing and anticipated demographics to ensure that planned recreation improvements are targeted to the correct age brackets and ensure efficient use of County resources.
3. Implement the elements of the County Recreation Plan.
4. Support cooperative recreational planning and development with adjacent governmental units.
5. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to preserve and maintain public recreation areas and access sites.
6. Update and maintain playground equipment.
7. Pursue outside funding sources, such as grants, for land acquisition and recreational development.
8. Provide a sufficient number of public amenities (restrooms, picnic tables) in key recreation locations around the County.
9. Encourage public input on planned and future recreational improvements.
10. Support the development and implementation of zoning language to minimize land use conflicts between high quality recreation lands and other non-compatible uses.
11. Actively investigate any opportunities to expand hunting and recreational areas.
12. Support and encourage continued County involvement on the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.
13. Work with local units to implement provisions of locally adopted recreation plans.

Goal 2:

Market Alpena County as a recreation destination.

Objectives:

- A. Promote recreational amenities within the County.

Action Items:

1. Support the marketing of recreational amenities in and around the County to residents and visitors.
2. Develop a signage/wayfinding program for recreational facilities.
3. Work to develop promotional recreation and trail tour maps of the County.
4. Investigate other promotional/marketing efforts to promote county recreational amenities.
5. Participate in the Pure Michigan campaign – Alpena County and Sunrise Coast.
6. Participate in the US 23 Heritage Route program.
7. Participate in the Up North Trails Initiative.

Goal 3:

Support the expansion and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage improvements to non-motorized recreation trails such as cross-country ski trails, hiking trails, bike trails, and horseback riding trails.
- B. Encourage expansion and improvement of motorized snowmobile and ORV trails within the county.
- C. Facilitate trail routes which allow trail users to access local businesses.

Action Items:

1. Support the designation of snowmobile routes that connect communities to regional snowmobile networks by working with the appropriate local units of government, snowmobile groups, the County Road Commission, County Sheriff Department and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
2. Work with local snowmobile groups and neighboring communities to ensure the maintenance of designated snowmobile routes to enhance the winter recreational base throughout Alpena County.
3. Investigate the continued expansion of recreational trails throughout the County.
4. Work with local units of government, the MDNR, the County Road Commission and user groups to explore the development of new types of recreational trails.
5. Encourage public feedback on recreational trail development within the County.
6. Work with local jurisdictions to ensure there are trail routes into town.

Goal 4:

Utilize recreational amenities within the County to enhance the overall quality of life.

Objectives:

- A. Support the development of recreational events and programs that enhance the quality of life.

Action Items:

- 1. Promote community events using existing recreational facilities.
- 2. Support community groups that develop new or expanded community events.
- 3. Investigate the development or promotion of eco-tourism-oriented events.

Goal 5:

Protect and ensure public access to waterways.

Objectives:

- A. Support the retention and improvement of public water access sites for residents, seasonal residents and visitors.
- B. Support the promotion and marketing of public boating facilities.
- C. Support the continued development and expansion of public boating facilities.

Action Items:

- 1. Ensure that private property owners are not encroaching upon public water access sites.
- 2. Work with the County Board of Commissioners and local units to maintain and improve public water access sites.
- 3. Work with appropriate agencies and departments to ensure the enforcement of access to public water access sites.
- 4. Explore the development of a wayfinding signage plan to public water access sites.
- 5. Explore the possibility of wayfinding signage along water routes.
- 6. Initiate opportunities to educate the public concerning keyhole development.
- 7. Explore options to address dockage and boating issues on inland lakes.
- 8. Support participation in marketing and collaborative efforts such as the Small Harbors Coalition and/or the Port Cities Collaborative.

Residential Development

A diverse and well-maintained selection of housing choices is another vital component of a community. The strength of a local economy is based, in part, on the affordability and selection of the housing stock. As a strong economy is an essential element of a healthy community, adequate housing choices must be available for residents to feel economically secure. In order to have productive community members and attract new citizens to an area, a local community needs a broad mix of demographics to develop a well-rounded economy. This helps to add to the quality of life and makes the community a more enjoyable place in which to live and work. Housing choices impact more than just what type of structure an individual buys. Access to and the affordability of housing choices impacts overall community development by influencing such factors as access to quality education, church attendance, community organizations, and convenient shopping opportunities. Therefore, a local community must actively seek ways in which to encourage desirable residential development.

Goal 1:

Provide for suitable housing opportunities for all income levels and age groups and preserve and enhance existing small-town and rural character.

Objectives:

- A. Ensure adequate and suitable housing is available to all residents. Investigate the use of State and federal funding programs to meet these objectives.
- B. Support the construction of new or renovation of existing housing to meet the needs of all residents regardless of income.
- C. Encourage a mix of housing development within the County.
- D. Balance new residential growth with the existing rural character of the County.
- E. Maintain the tranquil quality of existing residential areas.
- F. Encourage the maintenance of the existing housing stock to keep residential areas in good repair, appearance, usefulness and safety.
- G. Explore the development of residential wind turbines within the County.
- H. Encourage the development and installation of fiber optic/WiFi to residential areas.

Action Items:

- 1. Support the implementation of zoning language in local jurisdictions to protect residential areas from intrusion by incompatible uses.
- 2. Encourage quality infill development that is compatible with existing housing stock and rural character and will strengthen residential areas.
- 3. Explore ways to assist homeowners in preserving and maintaining older homes as owner-occupied, single family dwellings.
- 4. Support and collaborate with the County housing program.
- 5. Work with the County housing program and local building departments to affect the elimination of structures in disrepair by use of incentive programs and legal approaches.
- 6. Support the implementation of zoning language in local jurisdictions to direct higher density housing to lands with the capacity to support such development and are adequately served by public services.
- 7. Work with the County Board of Commissioners to pursue grant funding to encourage restoration and rehabilitation of older homes.
- 8. Promote neighborhood enhancement programs such as street tree plantings, clean-up days, neighborhood gardens, etc., including community pride programs.
- 9. Work with local units to explore the possibility of secondary dwelling units within the County.
- 10. Encourage public feedback regarding the development of different mixes of dwelling units.
- 11. Plan for medium- and high-density residential development only in those areas that are suitable for such use.
- 12. Work with the County housing program and appropriate agencies to explore and pursue affordable housing funding programs.
- 13. Plan for the mixing of residential uses with commercial and offices uses where possible.
- 14. Work with the County housing program, the County senior program and local units to identify appropriate locations for senior and assisted living housing.
- 15. Support the development and implementation of zoning language in local jurisdictions to implement minimum size standards for single- and multi-family housing.
- 16. Support the implementation of rental housing programs that ensure that high standards are maintained in single- and multi-family rental housing.

17. Explore housing preservation options through the implementation of historic preservation techniques.
18. Work with local units to develop standards to regulate the construction and use of residential wind turbines.

Economic Development

A strong economy is an essential element of a healthy community. Residents must have the opportunity to earn family-sustaining wages in order to be productive community members. A strong economy does not usually just “happen” without the local community actively seeking ways in which encourage desirable development. The U.S. and world economies are changing rapidly, which is profoundly affecting local economies, as well. Alpena County has seen first-hand how quickly communities can lose high-paying employment, due to new technological advances and competition from abroad. It is imperative, therefore, to plan ahead in order to insure a vital economic future.

Goal 1:

Provide for economic growth that creates a diversified economic base and improves 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:

- A. Encourage local units and community organizations to continue strategies that build on Alpena’s status as a regional market place for Northeast Michigan.
- B. Support and cooperate with regional economic development organizations to explore ways that help promote and develop all of Northeast Michigan.
- C. Support reasonable land use and development regulations and the development of infrastructure and facilities necessary to support economic development in a planned and managed way.
- D. Encourage economic expansion through the promotion and attraction of new businesses to the State designated Renaissance Zones.
- E. Support the attraction of health related businesses and services to the Alpena area, which will build on the location of a regional hospital and other medical services already available in the area.
- F. Strengthen the partnership between the county and the Alpena Combat Readiness Center to seek ways to expand the center’s training activities.
- G. Strive to balance economic development with the rural character of the County.
- H. Encourage a diverse mix of new businesses.
- I. Promote the concept of compact development design to maximize potential land uses.
- J. Encourage that parking needs, either private or public, are a consideration for all expansions and new developments.

Action Items:

1. Support the implementation of zoning language to protect commercial areas from intrusion by incompatible uses.

2. Support the implementation of zoning ordinance language to concentrate future development in desired areas.
3. Work with appropriate economic development agencies to promote business retention, expansion, and diversification.
4. Promote worker education and training programs.
5. Work with appropriate agencies to expand high-speed telecommunication coverage within the County.
6. Investigate the creation of Downtown Development authorities, Corridor Improvement authorities, or Tax Increment Finance authorities in appropriate areas to improve local economic conditions.
7. Support the implementation of streetscape projects to increase the attractiveness of commercial areas.
8. Work with Target Alpena Development Corporation to implement existing business retention programs.
9. Support the expansion of economic opportunities at the Alpena County Regional Airport.
10. Continue to investigate and implement methods to develop high speed telecommunication service in rural areas, while maintaining a rural character.
11. Work with Target Alpena Development Corporation to encourage economic expansion through the promotion and attraction of new businesses.
12. Encourage the expansion of the infrastructure required to make the County attractive to commercial, industrial, and home-based business.
13. Investigate the feasibility of a County Brownfield Authority.

Goal 2:

Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses and jobs.

Objectives:

- A. Strive to attract young people and young families to the County.
- B. Develop goods, services, recreation and employment opportunities needed to retain families.
- C. Support development that expands family sustaining job opportunities.
- D. Encourage partnerships between community organizations, Alpena Community College, and Michigan Works in order to insure that education and training programs continue to meet the needs of the area's present employers and possible new businesses.

Action Items:

1. Work to attract "daily shopping needs" types of businesses into locations that are walkable for residents and visitors.
2. Support the implementation of programs and policies that encourage a "family-friendly" environment.
3. Actively seek out the development of entertainment-based businesses.
4. Work cooperatively to ensure that activities exist for all age-groups.
5. Encourage entrepreneurial training programs to assist residents in starting and maintaining their own small businesses.

Goal 3:

Expand commercial development opportunities within the County.

Objectives:

- A. Diversify business opportunities by making Alpena County a vibrant community and a desirable place to live and work.
- B. Balance new commercial growth with the existing rural character of the County.
- C. Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Target Alpena Development Corporation and the business community to develop and maintain healthy and vibrant community centers.
- D. Investigate the development of a business incubator within the County.
- E. Support the development of the County's Renaissance Zones.
- F. Encourage the retention of basic services for County residents.
- G. Explore the development of commercial wind facilities within the County.

Action Items:

- 1. Form public-private partnerships to improve the local economy.
- 2. Seek out and encourage the establishment of businesses that serve to fill gaps in the year-round needs of the County.
- 3. Support the maintenance of identifiable central business districts.
- 4. Support the development of mixed land uses in appropriate areas.
- 5. Encourage the development of home-based businesses.
- 6. Develop innovative planning and zoning techniques, such as design standards, to maintain the rural character of the County.
- 7. Investigate tax incentive and abatement programs to encourage commercial development.
- 8. Support zoning regulations that establish and enforce standards to require businesses to maintain an aesthetically desirable appearance.
- 9. Investigate and support business façade improvement programs.
- 10. Encourage the return of small neighborhood businesses that serve residents and support a walkable community environment.
- 11. Support and encourage a coordinated effort for marketing and recruitment of small businesses.
- 12. Develop standards to regulate the construction and use of commercial wind turbines for local jurisdictions.
- 13. Encourage public feedback on commercial development efforts.

Goal 4:

Promote and encourage tourism and agricultural-based tourism activities.

Objectives:

- A. Promote cultural, historical, industrial and environmental attractions to a broad market.
- B. Work to establish Alpena County as a year-round tourism destination.
- C. Promote eco-tourism opportunities.
- D. Promote agricultural tourism opportunities.

Action Items:

- 1. Work with local communities, Chambers of Commerce, and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to develop additional strategies for marketing the area as a tourism destination.
- 2. Encourage community organizations to develop strategies that build the idea of Alpena County as a destination.

3. Support the promotion of Alpena area as the “Sanctuary of the Great Lakes”.
4. Promote year-round sustained tourism, i.e. spring, summer, fall and winter festivals and other activities that will draw people to the County.
5. Support the tourism promotion and marketing efforts of regional entities such as the US 23 Heritage Route, the Sunrise Coastal Coalition, and the Michigan Arts & Culture Northeast.
6. Support the continued development and expansion of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve.
7. Support the continued improvement of recreational facilities within the County.
8. Encourage sale of local produce within the County’s commercial areas and by home-based businesses.
9. Preserve the economic viability of farming by working with local, regional and state organizations to attract “value-added” industries for agricultural products.
10. Investigate the development of a tourism-oriented wayfinding program.

Goal 5:

Investigate and support opportunities for the expansion of the County’s industrial base.

Objectives:

- A. Provide the necessary services, facilities and programs to expand industrial development opportunities within Alpena County.
- B. Initiate public education regarding the nature and economic impact of industrial development.
- C. Balance new industrial growth with the existing rural character of the County.
- D. Investigate suitable locations for industrial development.

Action Items:

1. Support the implementation of zoning language to protect industrial areas from intrusion by incompatible uses.
2. Support the implementation of zoning language to direct industrial development toward land that has the capacity to support such development and is adequately served by public roads and utilities.
3. Investigate tax incentive and tax abatement programs to encourage industrial development.
4. Encourage the expansion of infrastructure required to make the County attractive to industrial development.