

## CHAPTER 2: Existing Conditions

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Developing an accurate representation of existing conditions along the study corridor is a crucial step of the planning process. This chapter identifies existing conditions along the I-75 corridor study area from M-32 in Gaylord to the Mackinac Bridge. A series of maps are presented to graphically display existing land use, land ownership (whether publicly-owned or privately-owned land), outdoor advertising (billboards), demographics (using the year 2000 US Census Bureau data), environmental resources, visual (scenic) resources, and visual detractors. Accompanying text describes the maps and existing conditions. The status of planning and zoning activity which potentially impacts the I-75 corridor is provided in Chapter 3.

### Data Sets

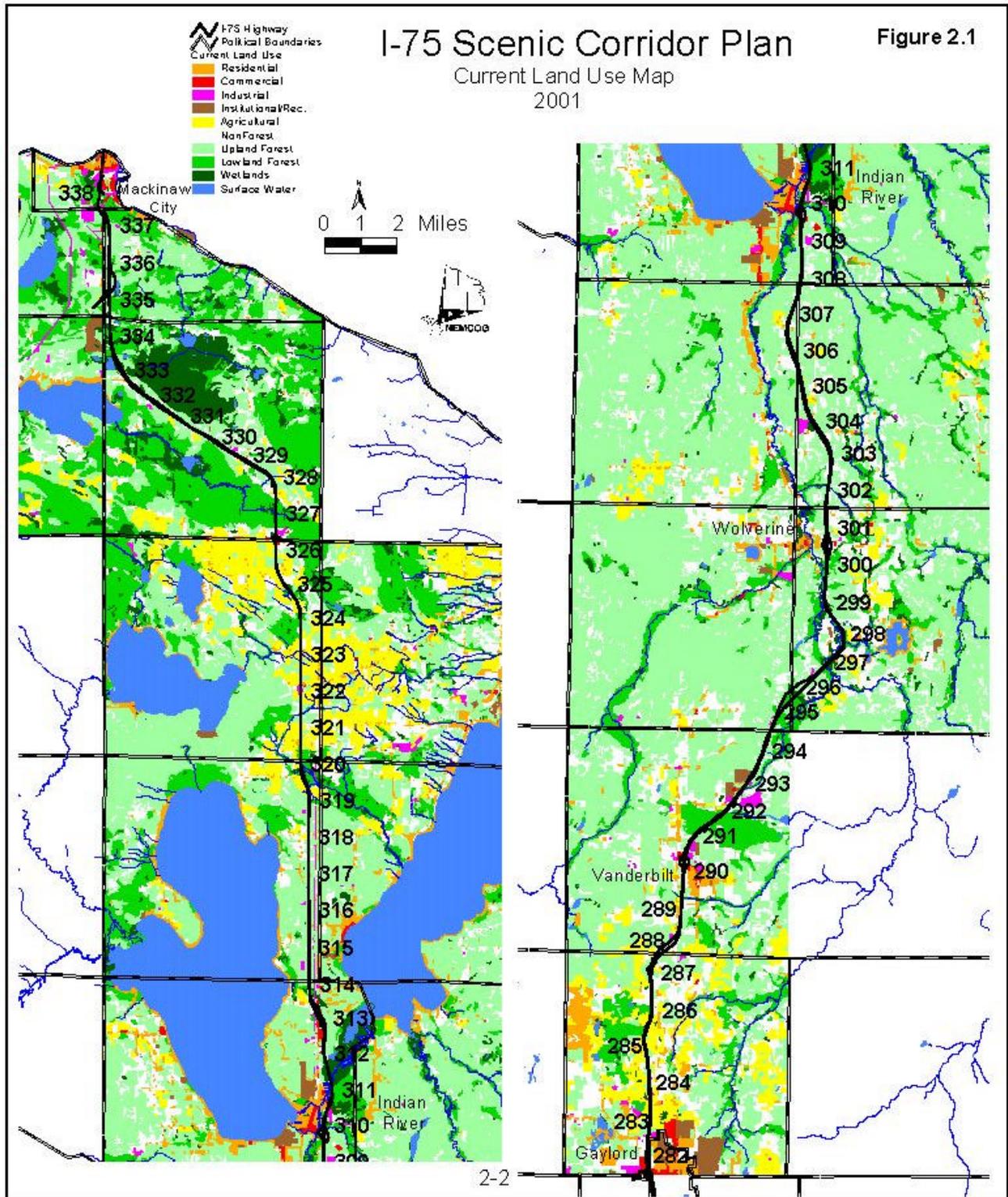
To construct various maps used in the analysis, a number of digital data layers were used. The Otsego County Planning & Zoning Department's zoning and future land use maps, the City of Gaylord's zoning and future land use maps, the Village of Vanderbilt's zoning information, the Village of Wolverine's zoning map, and the Village of Mackinaw City's zoning map were used to construct the general zoning map for the study. The Michigan DNR's field office 1998 black & white infrared aerial photos were used by Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) staff to update the Michigan DNR's "Michigan Resource Inventory System" (MIRIS) land use data. Limited field verification of this land use update was conducted by NEMCOG staff. The following information has been digitized by NEMCOG: Otsego County land ownership, Otsego County Land Use, Cheboygan County land ownership, Cheboygan County Land Use, Cheboygan County zoning, the I-75 Viewshed, billboard locations, mile markers, ecological corridors, and scenic view locations. The US Census Bureau data from the 2000 Census has been used to compose the "Demographics" section of this chapter. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has provided written documents from a separate statewide study, *MDOT Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory and Scenic Heritage Route Designation Inventory*, conducted for MDOT by Washtenaw Engineering, Inc., SmithGroup JJR, and Woolpert Design LLP. Locations described in this study will be discussed at the end of the section on Visual Resources and Visual Detractors.

### Existing Land Use

The NEMCOG Geographic Information System was used to produce the maps in this report. The previous MIRIS-based digital land use polygons were placed over scanned (digital) 1998 aerial photo images. The polygons were then modified to reflect the current land use at the time that the aerial photos were taken. The categories of land use are the first three digits of the MIRIS classifications. Those classifications were then merged into 10 categories for map display purposes: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Institution/Recreational, Agricultural, Nonforest, Upland Forest, Lowland Forest, Wetlands, and Surface Water. The following provides detailed descriptions of each category. **Figure 2.1** depicts the existing land use for the study area.

#### Residential

Residential land use includes residential dwelling structures such as: single family or duplexes, multi-family low rise residential, multi-family medium & high rise residential, and mobile home



parks. There are at least two important reasons to consider residential areas along the I-75 corridor in a scenic and aesthetics study: 1) Location: residential development replaces the existing environment, therefore the quality and total extent of a development will have a visual impact on motorists; and 2) Aesthetic & practical designs to reduce certain impacts: for example, residents of local communities close to the highway will be impacted by highway traffic noise, exhaust pollution, vehicle light glare, and vibration. Local community zoning can play an important role in both the location of residential areas and in the developmental design standards that include buffering. Zoning is examined in **Chapter 3** of this report.

### Commercial

The commercial land use category includes classifications related to the sale of products and services such as: central business districts, shopping centers/malls, strip commercial, and neighborhood compact groups of stores that are surrounded by noncommercial uses. This category includes parking areas related to the commercial businesses. Commercial areas can be important to a scenic and aesthetics study for several reasons: 1) New development can replace an existing scenic setting, the quality and physical extent of which can visually impact motorists; 2) Scenic views may be impaired by structures erected between the highway and a distant view; 3) Light glare from parking areas and other facilities close to the highway can be a visual problem for motorists and 4) Areas of commercial activity generally allow the construction of billboards which can have a significant visual impact for motorists. Visual issues of I-75 are addressed in the “Visual Resources and Visual Detractions” section of this chapter. Billboards and signage are addressed in the “Outdoor Advertising” section of this chapter, as well as in the model zoning ordinance language found in **Appendix A**.

### Industrial

Industrial land use includes manufacturing and industrial parks, light industries that fabricate or package products, oil & gas drilling and production facilities, lumber mills, chemical plants, brick-making plants, large power facilities, waste product disposal areas, areas of stockpiled raw materials, and transportation facilities that normally handle heavy materials. Many of the important reasons to include commercial areas in this study are also true for industrial sites, with an additional emphasis on extractive industrial sites, which can greatly impact visual quality along the corridor. Landscaping and visual screening are addressed throughout this Plan.

### Institution/Recreational

Institution/recreational land use includes a variety of classifications such as education, government, religious, health, correctional, and military facilities, all indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, and all cemeteries. The buildings, parking areas, and immediate grounds are included in this category, however all surface water, forest, barren land, and wetlands associated with these facilities are entered into their own respective categories. Depending on the type of facility in this category, there can be visual impact issues such as scenic views, lighting glare, and the establishment of vegetation and landscaping in an area where new development has occurred.

### Agricultural

The agricultural land use category generally includes land that is used for the production of food and fiber, but also includes land used for non-food livestock such as horses. These classes are: cropland, orchards (including vineyards and ornamental horticulture), confined feeding operations for livestock of any kind, permanent pasture lands, farmsteads, greenhouse operations, and horse training areas. Agricultural operations and large tracts of open land can have a significant impact on scenic view quality.

Nonforest

Nonforest land includes “open land” and rangeland classifications such as barren land, herbaceous open land, and shrubland. Herbaceous open land is usually subjected to continuous disturbance such as mowing, grazing, or burning, and typically it can have a variety of grasses, sedges, and clovers. Shrubland is land in transition from being open to becoming an eventual forest. There are native shrubs and woody plants like blackberry, dogwood, willow, sumac, and tag alder. Open land can provide an important habitat and food source to a variety of wildlife, even in the I-75 corridor. This Plan explores certain habitat conditions and “eco-corridors” along I-75.

Upland Forest

Forest land use areas are generally at least 10% stocked by trees of any size. The upland forest category includes upland hardwoods like maple & beech, other upland species like aspen & birch, species of pine like red, white or jack pine, and other upland conifers like white spruce, blue spruce, eastern hemlock, and balsam fir. Forested land is of particular significance to this scenic Plan due to the following: 1) Forests provide a positive visual experience to motorists; 2) Trees within the I-75 corridor can provide habitat and a food source for a variety of wildlife; 3) Forest management practices could be implemented to improve aesthetics and safety within the corridor; and 4) There are landscaping/planting techniques that may improve the overall aesthetic quality of the corridor.

Lowland Forest

Lowland forest areas are dominated by tree species that grow in very wet soils. Lowland hardwoods include ash, elm, soft maple, cottonwood and others. Lowland conifers include cedar, tamarack, black and white spruce, and balsam fir. Lowland forest land is also of great importance to this scenic and aesthetic study for many of the same reasons as are upland forest lands: 1) Forests provide a positive visual experience to motorists; 2) These lowland (wet) areas within the I-75 corridor can provide habitat and a food and water source for a variety of wildlife; 3) Forest management policies could be developed to improve aesthetics and safety within the corridor; and 4) There are landscaping/planting techniques that may improve the overall visual quality of the corridor by blending open areas and structures with the surrounding landscape.

Wetlands

Wetlands are those areas where the water table is at or near the land surface for a significant part of the year. Examples of wetlands are marshes, mudflats, wooded swamps, shallow areas along rivers or lakes or ponds. Wetlands areas include both non-vegetated mud flats and areas of hydrophytic vegetation. Wetlands are important to this scenic and aesthetic study for many of the same reasons as are the forest lands: 1) They provide a positive visual experience to motorists; 2) These lowland (wet) areas within the I-75 corridor can provide habitat and a food and water source for a variety of wildlife; and 3) Wetland management policies could be developed to preserve and enhance wetland habitats within the corridor.

Surface Water

The surface water category includes lakes, reservoirs, ponds, rivers, and streams. Surface water within view of the I-75 corridor can have a significant visual impact for motorists. It also has some of the same wildlife benefits as the other natural resource categories found above.

## Land Ownership

### Publicly Owned Land

The major tracts of publicly owned land along the I-75 corridor can be found in Mackinaw Township, Hebron Township - mile markers 327-336 (these lands being part of the Hardwood State Forest), and certain sections of I-75 north & south of the community of Indian River in Tuscarora Township, from mile marker 295 to mile marker 318. **Figure 2.2** on page 2-6, shows the locations of existing publicly owned versus privately owned land.

The amount of publicly-owned land bordering the I-75 corridor is approximately 8 linear miles, or 14% of the total corridor.

The significance of publicly owned land is twofold:

- 1) It is capable of being managed by a public agency (most of this land is State owned) in order to maximize the scenic qualities of the corridor, and
- 2) Its potential to be developed is minimal, reducing the costs and effort to maintain or preserve natural scenic qualities along that portion of the roadway.

### Privately Owned Land

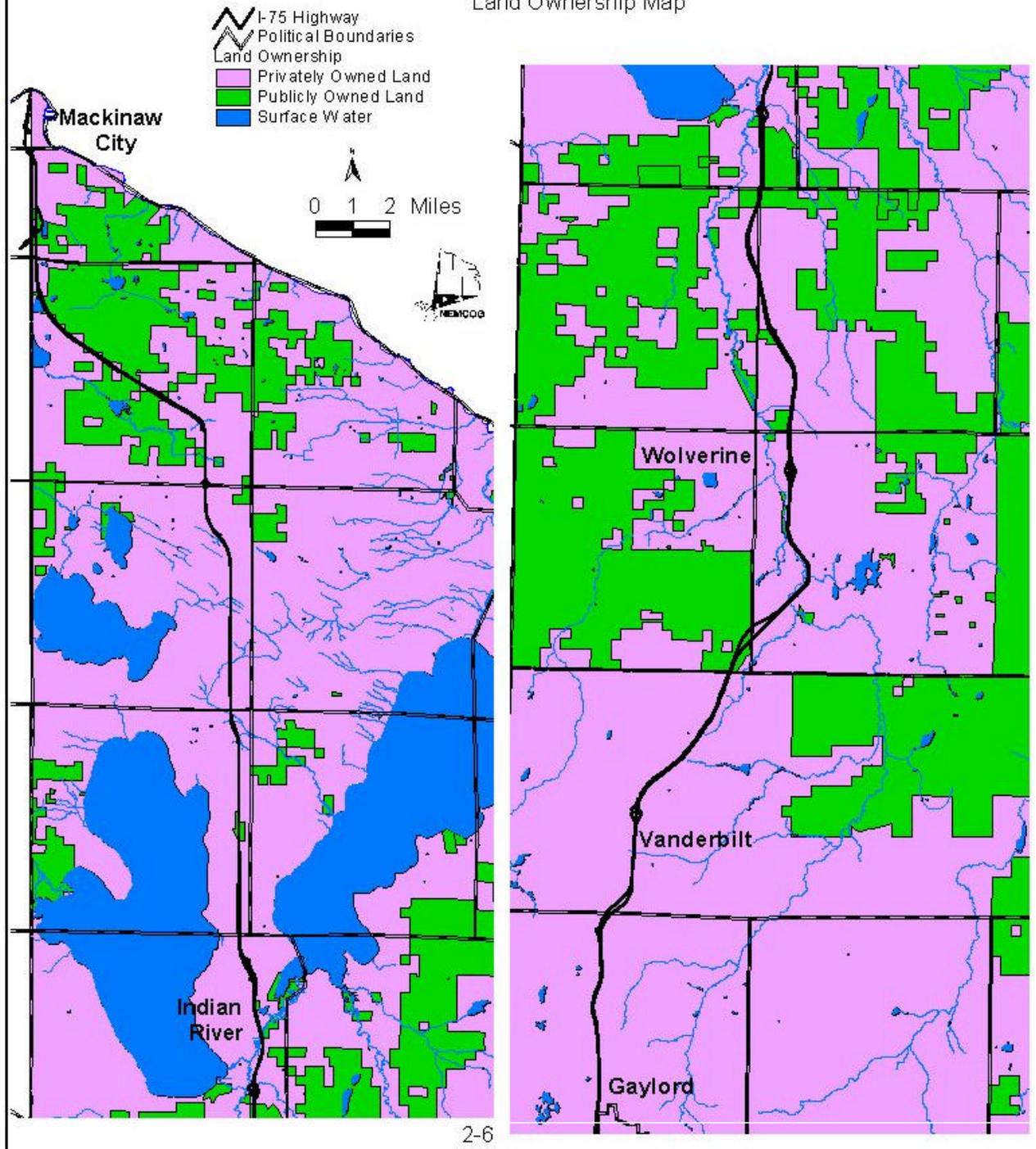
Privately-owned land, or 86% of the total length of the corridor, can be impacted by development pressures. Residential and commercial development replace the existing environment, causing changes in the quality of existing views. It is important to establish community guidelines that will minimize the visual impacts of new development, before that development occurs.

Local governments become the principle caretakers of the public viewshed on private land, since aesthetics and community character on privately owned land are guided by local regulations or the lack thereof. Some of the most important aesthetics issues that require such regulations are addressed in this Plan. Model zoning language to assist communities with drafting portions of their zoning ordinance are found in **Appendix A** of this document. The local communities can also work with MDOT to carry out some of the recommendations contained in this Plan, and coordinate aesthetic projects across local and State jurisdictions.

# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

Figure 2.2

## Land Ownership Map



## Demographics

### Percent Population Change

According to the 2000 Census figures, all of the communities in the study area have populations of 3,700 or less. Gaylord has the largest population at 3,681 persons. Most of the communities had populations of 1,800 or less. However, over the last decade there has been a steady growth in population within communities along the corridor study area. With the exception of Mackinaw Township, Village of Mackinaw City and Village of Vanderbilt, communities showed a positive growth of year round residents between 1990 and 2000. See **Figure 2.3** below, which depicts 2000 population levels and the percent change between 1990 and 2000.

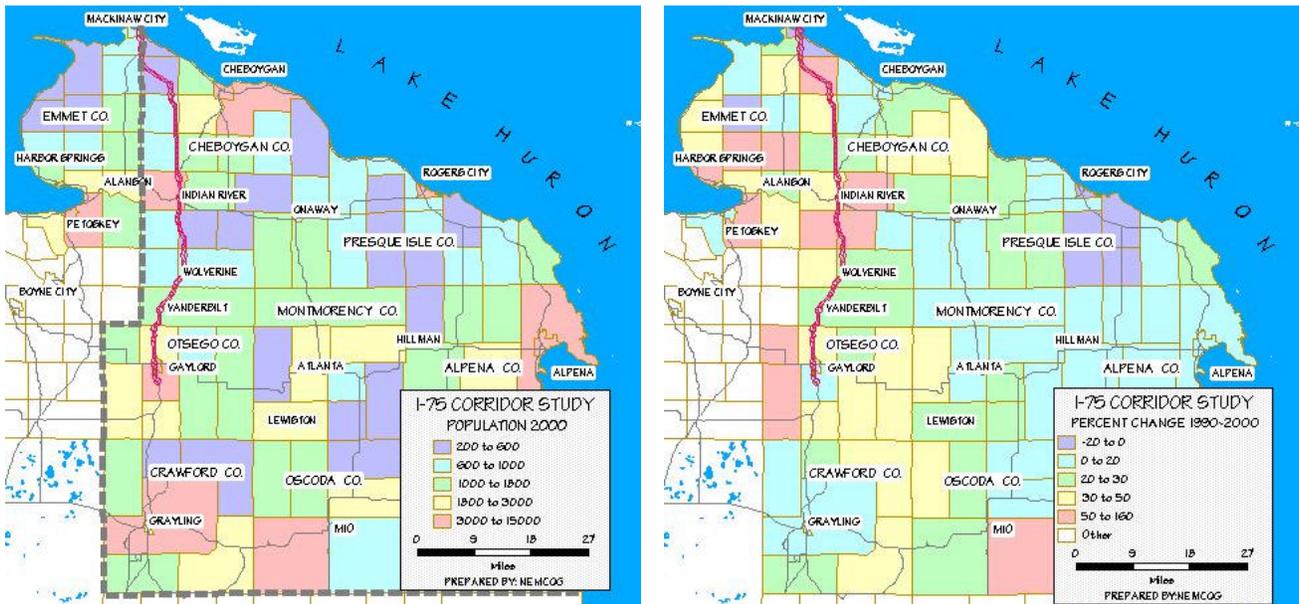


Figure 2.3

Communities with a percent growth of 50 percent or more are Ellis, Mentor and Hebron Townships in Cheboygan County. Communities with a population growth of between 30 and 50 percent are Gaylord, Livingston Township, Wilmot Township, Tuscarora Township, and Munro Township. It is important to note the percent growth can be deceptive. For example Hebron Township showed a 50 percent increase in population, but only increased by 101 residents, from 202 to 303 year round residents. Hebron Township also has the lowest population of any community in the study area.

### Increase in year-round residents

Another way to examine growth is to calculate the actual change in population between 1990 and 2000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Tuscarora Township/Indian River added the greatest number of year-round residents with an increase of 794 people. Other communities that grew by 400 or more people were Gaylord and Livingston Township in Otsego County. Communities that added 200 or more to their population were Corwith Township in Otsego County, and Nunda, Wilmot, Mentor and Mullett Townships in Cheboygan County. See **Figure 2.4** below, which shows the actual change in population between 1990 and 2000. The population increased by over 3,700 year-round residents in the corridor communities.

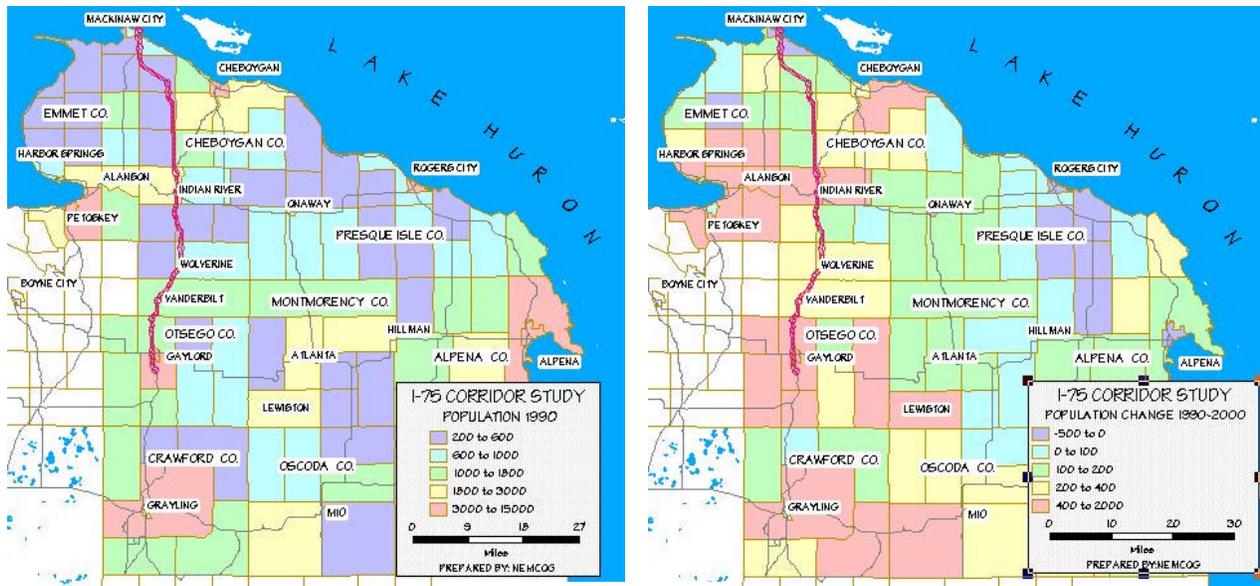


Figure 2.4

It is important to note the U. S. Census population figures do not include the seasonal population of each community. Since the census is taken in April, persons who's primary home is elsewhere are not counted. Demographic data from the 2000 Census shows vacant housing units for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Over, 27 percent of the housing units in Emmet County fall into this category, whereas, Cheboygan County had 28.8 percent and Otsego County had 28.4 percent. Given these figures, one would expect the seasonal population to increase substantially during the summer months, particularly in communities with lakes and rivers. Besides seasonal residents, tourism also plays an important role in bringing significant numbers of visitors to the area during the summer.

## Outdoor Advertising

The placement of any sign or billboard, other than an on-premise sign, on private property adjacent to and visible from a primary or interstate highway in Michigan is governed by the Highway Advertising Act of 1972 (Act 106 PA 1972), as amended by Act 265 PA 1976, Act 36 PA 1980, Act 153 PA 1990, Act 464 PA 1998, and Act 553 PA 1998. State of Michigan zoning enabling laws also provide the means for townships, charter townships, cities, and villages to regulate the spacing, size and location of both on-site and off-site signage adjacent to all roadways, including state primary and interstate highways (counties may draft model language

and request that the townships adopt the language to regulate signage). Local governments can adopt signage regulations, to include billboards, that are more stringent than state requirements in Act 106 PA 1972 as amended, but may not adopt regulations that are less strict. The locations of existing billboards along I-75 are shown in **Figure 2.6**, on page 2-10. There are 160 billboards along the combined northbound and southbound I-75 corridor from M-32 to the Mackinac Bridge. Of these 160 billboards, 109 had a MDOT permit number posted in accordance with Public Act 106 of 1972 as amended, and as of July 2001, 51 did not have a visible MDOT permit number posted (12 of those had a private company number posted, and 39 did not have any number visible from the shoulder of the highway). Of the 160 billboards counted, 19 were vacant of advertising. **Figure 2.5**, below, shows differences between billboard styles and placement options.



**Figure 2.5** Billboards can be attractive and informative (l), or a visual distraction (r) if constructed without regard to the surrounding landscape, or so numerous as to obstruct scenic views.

#### Sign Permit Process (provided by MDOT)

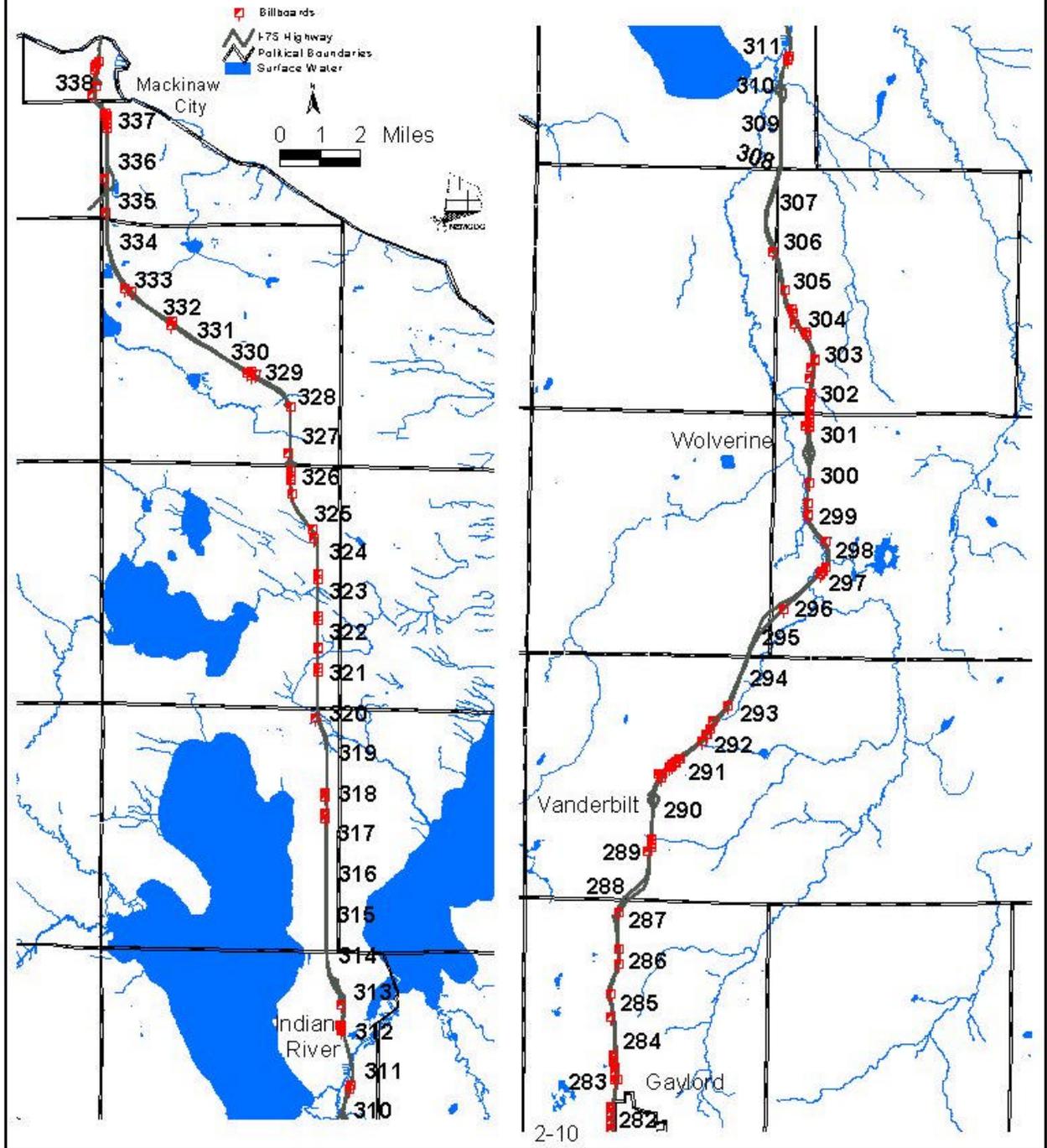
The Michigan Department of Transportation does not approve the placement of any sign, other than an official directional or informational sign, within the right of way (ROW). In addition to securing authorization from the land owner and complying with all applicable local regulations, a person who desires to erect a sign adjacent to a primary or interstate highway must first secure a permit from the Michigan Department of Transportation. Application forms can be obtained from any of MDOT's nine region or transportation service center (TSC) offices. Completed applications should be submitted to the office that has jurisdiction for the location where the sign is to be located. All applications must meet the following requirements before they are accepted for processing:

- 1) Each application shall be complete, accurate, and legible.
- 2) All four copies of each application shall be submitted.
- 3) A separate application is required for each sign face.
- 4) Each application must be accompanied by:
  - A) a \$100 permit fee
  - B) a copy of the current zoning map or a statement from the zoning authority giving the zoning at the proposed sign location
  - C) a copy of the lease or other document indicating the consent of the land owner
  - D) an acknowledgement, signed by the land owner on a form provided by MDOT, that trees or shrubs may not be destroyed within the ROW to make the sign more visible

# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

## Billboard Location Map

Figure 2.6



A short summary of the requirements of Act 106 PA 1972 as amended, (provided by MDOT's TSC office in Grayling) is as follows:

### Zoning

In no case is a sign allowed if the location is zoned residential, agricultural, forestry, or the like.

Within a municipality (an incorporated city, an incorporated village, or a charter township) and up to one mile beyond a municipality, the zoning requirement is met if the zoning is business, industrial, manufacturing, commercial, service, or the like.

Beyond one mile of any municipality there is the additional requirement that there must be an industrial or commercial structure within 800 feet of the sign location on the same side of the road.

Any unzoned location will meet the zoning requirement if there is an industrial or commercial structure within 800 feet on the same side of the road.

### Lighting

A sign may be illuminated but bright light must not shine on the roadway. Changing illumination, including flashing or blinking light, is not allowed except inside cities and villages with more than 35,000 population.

### Spacing

Minimum distance required from one sign to the next on the same side of the road, regardless of which way the signs face; All freeways, primary or interstate: 1000 feet; Other primary highways: 500 feet.

Along freeways outside municipalities, a sign shall not be erected in the area which is adjacent to an interchange or rest area and which extends 500 feet beyond the point of pavement widening for that interchange or rest area.

### Placing Permit Number on Sign (Act 106 PA 1972, as amended; 252.312, Sec. 12)

All persons holding permits under this act, at their own expense, shall place the permit number on each sign facing erected or maintained by them within 4 months after receiving a permit for signs existing on the effective date of this act and within 3 business days for all other signs. The numbers shall be in Egyptian block type lettering and located on the lower corner thereof nearest the adjacent highway.

## **Environmental Resources**

### Recreation Opportunities

The woodlands, open spaces, wildlife, water, and rolling hills are several key resource values that draw people to both recreate and reside in communities along I-75. Abundant public lands offer access to thousands of acres of recreational lands for hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing and snowmobiling. Several large lakes, many small lakes, and rivers provide opportunities for fishing, boating and water sports.

### Scenic Views (See **Figure 2.7**, on page 2-12)

The variety of rolling hills, forests, and wetlands provide area residents with a scenic screen that can absorb traffic noise, light glare, and exhaust pollution. Those same landscapes along with lakes and rivers provide motorists with a welcome refreshing view. Focus can be given to the

# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

Environmental Resource Views

Figure 2.7



2-12

maintenance and preservation of these resources as a natural buffer area between the highway and built-up areas. More on visual resources is found in the section “Visual Resources and Visual Detractions”, starting on page 2-15.

The rural landscape abounds with views of forestlands and old farms, and typifies the northern Michigan stretch of I-75. Forestlands are important to the local economy from recreational use, and production of forest goods bring dollars into the area. Many long-time visitors enjoy the natural surrounds so much that they decide to move to the area upon retirement. These renewable yet priceless resources warrant special considerations when communities plan for future growth.

### Sustainable Communities

The protection and wise use of these natural resources is central to maintaining what are known as “sustainable communities”. Sustainable communities are defined by the United Nation’s World Commission on Environment and Development as: “Development which allows people to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Along with planning for built-up development which will take place, a community needs to plan for the green infrastructure; the forests, wetlands, farmland and water. Unrestricted development, without consideration of the carrying capacity of the land, can have long term negative impacts on the resources.

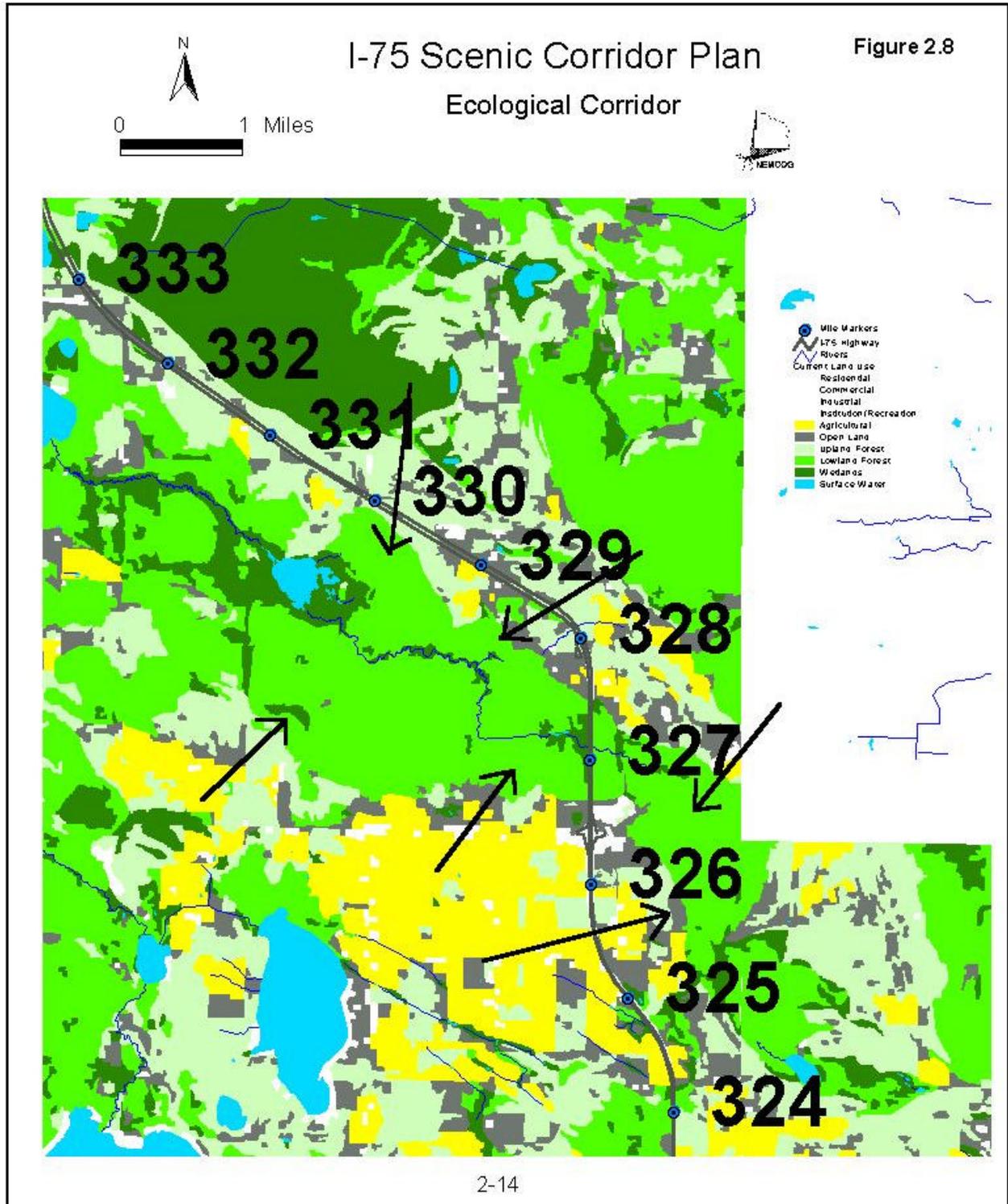
Environmental resources include those resources typically used to sustain life, but can also include natural features that are found in the built environment which enhance the experience of both residents along the I-75 corridor and the motorists who make use of the highway.

### Ecological Corridors

Natural environmental resources as listed in the above Existing Land Use section include: open to shrub areas, upland forests, lowland forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers. Wildlife movement is a concern where “ecological corridors” of these resource areas are found to cross the I-75 corridor. Ecological corridors exist when the natural landscape is such that it forms a continuous band of habitat for certain wildlife (see **Figure 2.8**, on page 2-14).

Ecological corridors or "green infrastructure," can be likened to a highway system. All segments of the highway must be connected and in working order for the highway system to properly function. If segments are degraded or missing than the highway will not function to its fullest potential. The same holds true for ecological corridors, when segments are degraded or fragmented, the system will not function properly. In other words, activities on any given segment of the I-75 corridor can have implications that reach far beyond the right-of-way boundaries. Wildlife will tend to seek out the necessities of life by roaming within that band of habitat. However, when a physical barrier such as I-75 separates the ecological corridor, the wildlife must either find the resources that it needs to survive where it is or it must attempt to cross I-75 to seek more resources in the next section of that habitat. The movement, then, of wildlife other than birds can present a hazard on the highway. In some cases, I-75 bridges over roads and rivers may help to facilitate the movement of these animals by providing a path for them under the roadway.

Where the ecological corridors are broken, there may be ways to encourage wildlife to cross, where possible, under I-75. GIS could be used to identify possible strategies to enable the movement of wildlife through the corridors, from one side of I-75 to the other, such as: 1) plantings may help to guide wildlife to areas where there are opportunities to cross, or 2) I-75 bridges over water courses should be of a sufficient distance to allow a land connection for animal travel under the bridge. Or, a small ‘land corridor’ could be constructed under one side of the bridge, with stout fencing provided so as to keep animals from crossing over the top of I-75.



## Visual Resources and Visual Detractions

The I-75 Corridor from Gaylord to the Straits of Mackinaw is considered one of the most scenic stretches of freeway in Michigan. Scenic vistas abound, rewarding travelers with views of distant forest covered glacial moraines, the rich marshes of the Indian River Spreads, mature hardwood and conifer forests, gambrel roofed barns surrounded by rolling farmlands and glimpses of the approaching Mackinaw Bridge.

The varying terrain of hills, broad river valleys, sand plains, and nearly level old lake plains was created during the retreat of the last continental glacier some 12,000 years ago. Traveling from Gaylord to Mackinaw City, the highway climbs up and down large hills called glacial moraines. These hills provide vantage points with broad views of the landscape and are themselves visible from great distances while driving along the freeway. The alternating pattern of glacial hills, separated by plains and broad river valleys is the basis for the varied views and maintains the travelers visual attention. Several of the knob like hills near Indian River were once islands surrounded by fresh glacial meltwater during the high stages of the post glacial great lakes. Glacial geologists refer to these prominent land features as Griswald Island, Burt Island, Riggsville Island and Hebron Island.

### Methods (Making a “Visual Quality” Map)

The viewshed analysis was completed using a combination of computer mapping and field analysis. The I-75 corridor was plotted on USGS topographic maps. The corridor was driven in both directions, with staff mapping both close and distant views on the field maps. The types of views, landscape units and visual detractions were identified during the field work. The combined information, using the extent of a motorist’s view together with the type of landscape and type of view, was incorporated in the NEMCOG’s GIS and used to analyze views and prepare maps showing “Visual Quality” ratings.

“Visual Quality” of scenic vistas is a somewhat subjective characteristic and will vary from the opinions of one person to the next. However, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has developed a more objective approach to evaluating visual quality by quantifying certain criteria relating to each view. Six of these criteria have been adopted and modified by NEMCOG for rating the Visual Quality of each view within the I-75 viewshed, and these criteria are as follows:

- Scarcity:** Good view -The view is one of a kind, unusually memorable, or very rare within the region. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -While the view is distinctive, it may be similar to others in the region. Rating (+3)  
Least scenic view -The view is interesting, but is fairly common within the region. Rating (+1)
- Water:** Good view -Surface water is clear and clean, cascading, or dominates the scene. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -Flowing or still water is part of the view, but does not dominate the landscape. Rating (+3)  
Least scenic -Clean or colorful water features are absent, or are not noticeable. Rating (0)
- Vegetation:** Good view -A variety of vegetative types create interesting forms, textures, and patterns. The state of ‘naturalness’ is a factor. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -Some variety, but limited or not completely in balance with the surrounding landscape. Rating (+3)

- Least scenic -Little or no variety, or vegetative contrast is absent from the view. Rating (+1)
- Landform:* Good view -High cliffs, rock outcroppings, sand dunes or other features that are dominant and striking. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -Rolling hills, isolated knob hills and interesting topographic relief. Detail features are not dominant or exceptional. Rating (+3)
- Color:* Least scenic -Flat landscape with few detailed topographic features. Rating (+1)  
Good view -Rich color combinations, variety of vivid color or pleasing contrasts in the soil, rock, vegetation, water, or snow features. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -Some intensity or variety in colors and contrast of the soil, rock, and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element. Rating (+3)  
Least scenic -Subtle color variations, generally muted tones. Rating (+1)
- Cultural*  
*Factors:* Good view -Free from aesthetically undesirable or discordant man-made sights such as mining operations, clear-cut forest areas, road cuts, dilapidated structures, strip development, excessive signage or dilapidated sign structures, or other development which is discordant and lacks landscaping buffers. Rating (+5)  
Fair view -Scene is somewhat depreciated by inharmonious structural intrusions or by the removal of natural features or by excessive signage, but not so extensively that changes in development practices could not restore the visual qualities of this area. Rating (+1)  
Least scenic -Modifications of the landscape are so extensive and inharmonious with the surrounding landscape that the opportunity to restore the area to a scenic view is nearly impossible or substantially reduced. (-4)

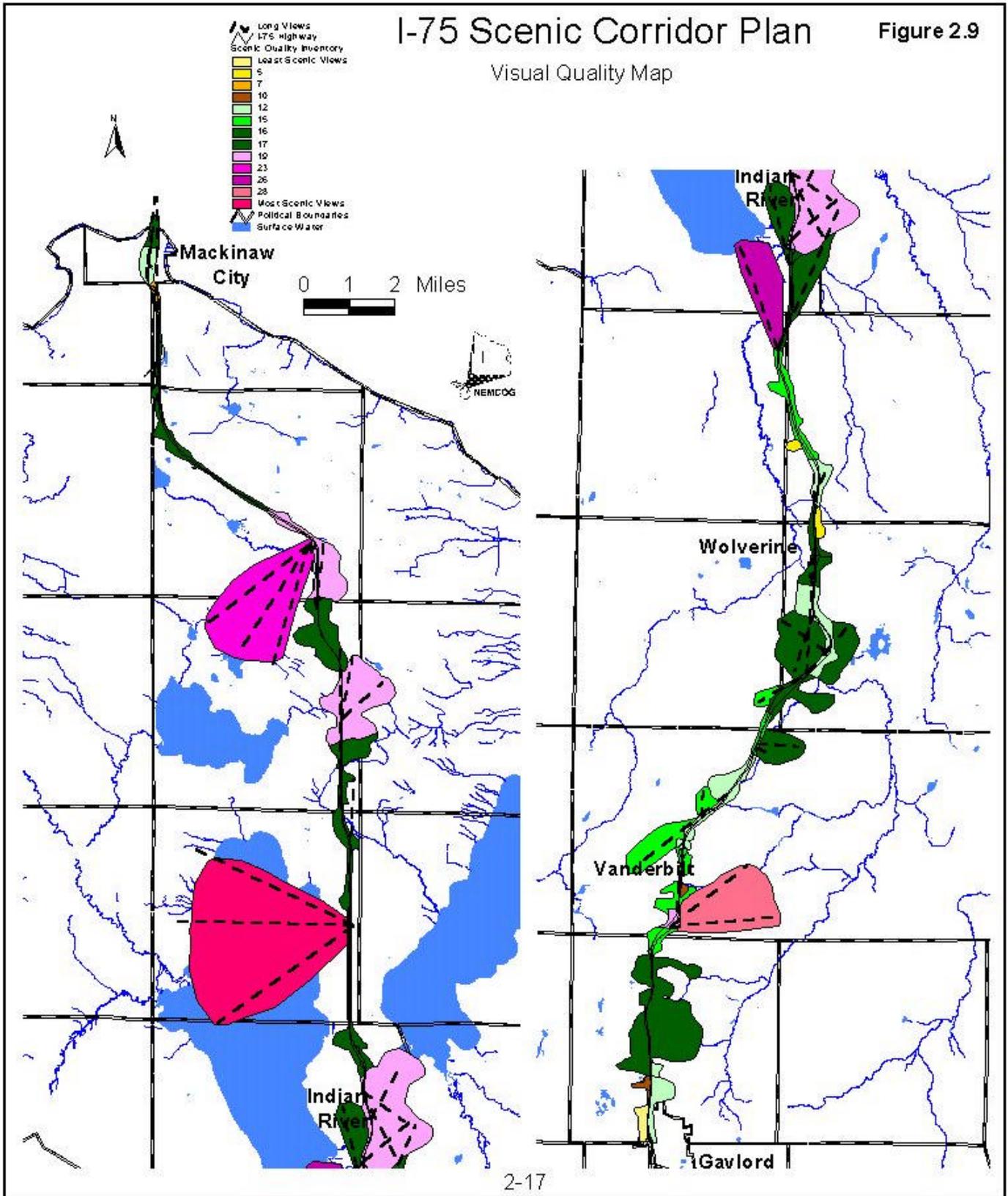
Each view area visible by a motorist on I-75 was rated in each category above, using the three criteria of each category. The numbers gained from each category were then added together, and a “View Quality” number was assigned to the view area. For example, if a view has a rare feature in the ‘Scarcity’ category, it receives a rating number of 5; in the ‘Water’ category there is a visible stream so it receives the number 3; the ‘Vegetation’ is a variety of interesting types so it receives a 5; it has rolling hills so it receives a 3 in the ‘Landform’ category; for ‘Color’ it receives a 3; and the surrounding development is somewhat intrusive so for ‘Cultural Factors’ it receives a 1. If all of these numbers are then added up, the total numeric value, or “Visual Quality” for this particular view equals 20. The minimum Visual Quality score possible is zero for the least scenic view, and the maximum possible is a score of 30 for the most scenic view.

The results of numeric ratings of visual quality are seen in **Figure 2.9**, the Visual Quality Map, on page 2-17.

# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

Figure 2.9

## Visual Quality Map



2-17

In order to better understand an analysis of the 'Vegetation' category of Visual Quality, it is helpful to describe some of the types of vegetation found in views. Seven landscape units associated with vegetation were identified in this study, and include Farms and Woodlots; Northern Hardwood Forests; Aspen and Birch Forests; Oak and Pine Forests; Lowland Forests; Wetlands and Water; and Urban built-up.

*Farms and Woodlots* are areas dominated by open farmland used for hay, row crops and pastures. Several old farmsteads with gambrel roofed red barns, many smaller out buildings and a white farm house are visible from the highway. Forests are limited to smaller woodlots dominated by northern hardwoods such as sugar maple, red maple, basswood and beech trees. The northern hardwoods provide a wide pallet of fall colors as the trees prepare for the long snowy months ahead.

*Northern Hardwood Forests* includes areas where the predominate land cover is maple, beech and basswood forests. Pockets of aspen and birch forests, wetlands and red pine plantations can also be found in this unit. Smaller openings both old farm fields or active farmland dot the landscape. This unit along with the above Farms and Woodlots provide some of the best views during the fall color tours.

The *Pine and Oak Forests* landscape unit borders a thirteen mile stretch north and south of Indian River. Tree species include northern pin oak, red oak, white oak, aspen, jack pine, white pine and red pine. Openings are limited since the sandy, infertile soils discouraged early settlers from clearing land for farming. Forest edges tend to be close to the freeway and when combined with forested medians, motorists are presented with a feel of driving through a deep forest.

*Aspen and Birch Forests* are found in abundance at the northern terminus of the Gateway to the Straits Corridor. Species include trembling aspen, paper birch, red maple, white pine, balsam fir, and white spruce. This is a relatively level old glacial lake plain, with poorly to very poorly drained soils. In this relatively level landscape subtle changes in elevation create conditions for lowland forests and non-forested wetlands.

*Lowland Forests* are located adjacent to rivers and streams and in wide drainageways. In some areas northern white cedar, tamarack and black spruce are the dominate forest species. In other areas, the forests are more diverse with species such as northern white cedar, black and white spruce, balsam fir, white pine, black ash, aspen, white birch, and red maple found.

*Wetlands and Water* category includes lowland brush, sedge meadows, bogs, marshes lakes and ponds. Non-forested wetland types are associated with rivers and lakes. I-75 crosses over the Indian River Spreads which is located at the outlet of the Indian River into Mullett Lake. This expansive freshwater marsh is an ecological treasure of regional importance. The open marsh gives travelers a visual break from the forested landscapes to the north and south and along with opportunities for a glimpse of wildlife and occasional recreational boaters.

*Urban Built-up* landscape units include residential, commercial, industrial and extractive uses. The landscape vegetation has been altered by these urban uses. The most intensively developed areas are located at the north and south end of the study area and adjacent to the community of Indian River.

## Visual Survey

A NEMCOG field survey was conducted to catalog the visual resources in the study area. They will be described from south to north, or from Gaylord to Mackinaw City. When reading this section, it may be helpful to refer to the Existing Land Use Map, **Figure 2.1** on page 2-2, to identify the types of landscape units. Refer also to **Figure 2.10** on the following page, that illustrates the topography along the I-75 Corridor, and to **Figure 2.11** on page 2-21 which has photos that were taken along the Corridor.



Gaylord to Vanderbilt – Along the first mile north of M-32, urban built-up views prevail. The west side is commercial and light industrial, the east side is residential. Plantings and natural regeneration of scotch pine on the east side of I-75 screen portions of the built-up areas. A severe windstorm several years ago eliminated older pine trees, exposing buildings to the freeway and reducing view quality. MDOT is planting trees to buffer residences from the freeway. Large single post industrial-looking billboards have been erected on the west side of the freeway near the M-32 exit.

Views quickly change from urban built-up landscape to the farms and woodlots landscape. The Farms and Woodlots landscape unit covers four miles, north to mile marker 287. The topography is very rolling, and the area tends to be more open than forested. Farming practices include row cropping, hay, and pasture. Farmsteads are very picturesque, with classic red barns with many out buildings. The forested areas are small woodlots of northern hardwoods. This stretch is prime area for fall color touring when the grass and crop areas turn light golden brown and the woodlots are painted with yellows, reds and oranges. Most views are less than one mile. The first long views of distant forested moraines can be seen to the east. A small antrim gas processing facility is located on the west side of the highway. The green colored buildings soften the visual impacts of the development. Additional plantings would further soften the view of the processing facility. There are occasional billboards along this segment.

At mile marker 287, the median widens and trees screen north-south lanes as the highway breaks down the north slope of the glacial moraine. Motorists can see long views of distant forested hills when traveling north or south. Several traditional looking farmsteads are within view, both close and distant. The landscape starts transitioning from farmland to northern hardwood forests with smaller open areas. At the base of the slope, the terrain is level. There are views of lowland forest and wetland drainageways as the highway crosses two creeks. In both directions, there are views of forested hillsides less than one mile away. Near Sturgeon Valley Road, views change to that of low density residential development. East of the freeway newer modular homes with very neat appearance can be seen in the newer parts of Vanderbilt. On the west side the forests screen residential development.

Vanderbilt to Wolverine – The views vary from Northern Hardwood Forests to Lowland Forests as the highway traverses low hills and river valleys. North of the Vanderbilt interchange, there is an old barrow pit related to original highway construction. Forest growth has softened the appearance to where most motorists would not recognize it as an old barrow pit. As the road veers toward the east, there are distant views of northern hardwood covered hills. The highway drops into a low flat area covered with lowland conifers and lowland hardwoods. Billboards are scattered along this area and diminish the natural views.



# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

## Visual Survey - Scenic Resources

Figure 2.11



2-21

As the highway climbs out of the lowland area, the views change to Northern Hardwood Forests with scattered openings. The Black Bear Golf Course is located on the west side. Fairways and greens cover low hills. A condominium development, with high roofed buildings blend into the golf course landscape. At mile marker 295 the highway now splits apart, and adjacent forests are lowland hardwoods and aspen.

After traversing an upland area covered with Northern hardwoods the highway drops into the Sturgeon River Valley. This is a broad valley, covered with forested and shrub scrub wetland types. Distant forested hills can be seen to the west and east. Paralleling the highway is the Sturgeon River, an important ecological corridor, and part of the extensive Cheboygan River Watershed. The river is screened from the highway by vegetation. As the road nears the Wolverine interchange, it starts an ascent onto a large glacial moraine.

Wolverine to Indian River - There is minimal commercial development at the interchange. It is not possible to view the Village of Wolverine from the highway, since the community is located in the river valley and the highway now runs along higher hills. Along the east side of highway, north of Wolverine interchange there is a proliferation of billboards. Some are poorly maintained, some are vacant, while several are covered with a hodgepodge of different colored plywood sheets covering them. The highway travels through a landscape of northern hardwood forests with scattered old farm fields. Michigan Wildlife Foundation Memorial Forest is located on the east side of the highway. The forests are growing close to the highway, so most of the views are close. The elevation continues to increase as the highway climbs higher up the glacial hills.

At mile marker 307, approximately three miles south of Indian River, the highway begins to descend into Indian River valley. The forest type rapidly changes to oak and pine forests during the descent into Indian River Valley. Forest edges tend to be close to the freeway and when combined with forested medians, motorists are presented with a feel of driving through a deep forest.

Indian River - There are a variety of views between the south and north interchanges of Indian River. There are areas of commercial and waterside residential development, particularly along the west side of I-75. Several opportunities for screening exist in this stretch. There are close views of lowland hardwoods and conifers with distant views of oak covered hillsides. Probably one of the most striking views along the entire study area is located east of the community. After passing over the Indian River motorists are rewarded with views of the Indian River Spreads. This open marsh gives travelers a visual break from the forested landscapes to the north and south.

At mile marker 312 the highway starts to climb out of Indian River Valley. An opening in the adjacent forest provides an elevated view of a marina and the Indian River Spreads.

Indian River to Riggsville Interchange – North of Indian River the highway follows a due north-south route, passing through oak and pine forests. Forests are growing close to the highway and along the lower section the median is forested giving travelers an enclosed feel. A rest area for north bound traffic is located between mile marker 317 and 318. The rest area is a popular stopping place. Landscaped picnic areas offer weary travelers a break from driving. It is also possible to drive up to scenic overlook platforms with long distant views of Burt Lake and glacial moraines in Emmet County. These distant high hills were islands during post glacial great lakes periods of high water.

Approximately six miles north of Indian River, the landscape transitions to farms and woodlots after passing through areas of lowland forests. The terrain is relatively flat so views are generally less than one mile. Woodlands change to northern hardwoods. Commercial development is minimal at the Riggsville interchange. Views are dominated by open farmland.

Riggsville Interchange to Levering Interchange – This section passes through farms and woodlots. The farmlands give travelers the feel of wide open spaces. Just north of the Riggsville interchange north bound travelers can see distant forest covered hills. A well known highway icon, Sea Shell City, is located at the Levering exit.

Levering Interchange to Mackinaw Bridge – North of the interchange, I-75 crosses a wide drainageway covered with a lowland conifer forest. This drainage system is part of an ecological corridor that connect to Paradise Lake and eventually Cecil Bay in the Straits of Mackinaw. A thick conifer forest is visible to the west. The forest on the east side died many years ago, leaving scattered dead standing trees.

After leaving the lowland area, the highway climbs up a northwest-southeast trending ridge and follows the ridge in a northwesterly direction. A rest stop/scenic overlook for south bound traffic is located at mile marker 328. Perched on a hill, this south facing scenic overlook provides long views of forests and farmlands. For the next five miles, I-75 passes through northern hardwood forests. The terrain is level and views are close-up of forests and small openings. The traveler has a feel of going in and out of the forest, as stretches alternate between forested medians and forests close to the highway edge to traversing small openings. The low ridge that the highway follows, separates extensive wetland areas. Dingman's Marsh is located to the north of the highway and filtered glimpses of the expansive open marsh can be seen by motorists.

At mile marker 333, the highway turns to the north and heads straight to the Mackinaw Bridge. The terrain is relatively level and views from the highway tend to be close (less than 500 feet). The landscape varies from lowland forests, wetlands and water to aspen and birch forests. The first sighting of the Mighty Mac can be seen near mile marker 334, just south of Potter Road. For people who's destination is the many attractions at the Straits of Mackinaw, these distant views of the bridge towers add to the excitement and anticipation of what's to come. Nearing the south exit to Mackinaw City, urban built views dominate the landscape. With the exception of a wetland area on the west side of the freeway, views along the last mile are residential and commercial. The number of billboards increase as one nears Mackinaw City, many of which are advertising ferry rides to Mackinac Island. Several billboards have been erected in wetlands on the west side of the freeway. Planting of shrubs and trees would filter views of the commercial areas and reduce visual distractions to motorists.

## **Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory (APOI), January 2001**

In coordination with the “Beautify Michigan Program” which will make Michigan more attractive to visitors, the Michigan Department of Transportation hired three consulting firms to conduct an inventory program that listed opportunities to develop aesthetic projects on Interstate highways and State trunklines. The inventory not only listed opportunities for aesthetic projects, but also looked at possibilities for Scenic Heritage Route Designations (according to the APOI report, the process for approving routes in the Heritage Route system is stipulated in Public Act 69 of 1993). The inventories were prepared by Landscape Architects registered in the State of Michigan.

The inventory and final APOI report was completed in January 2001, by the consulting firms of Washtenaw Engineering Inc., SmithGroup JJR, and Woolpert Design LLP.

The following partial list of recommended aesthetic projects are from that APOI report, and are listed in this I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan because they are considered very important to the purpose of this Plan. They include only those projects that were in the study area (Gaylord to the Straits of Mackinaw).

Refer to **Figure 2.12**, on the following page, which shows a map of the project locations by record number. The descriptions are for points, then, along I-75 from Gaylord northward to the Straits of Mackinaw.

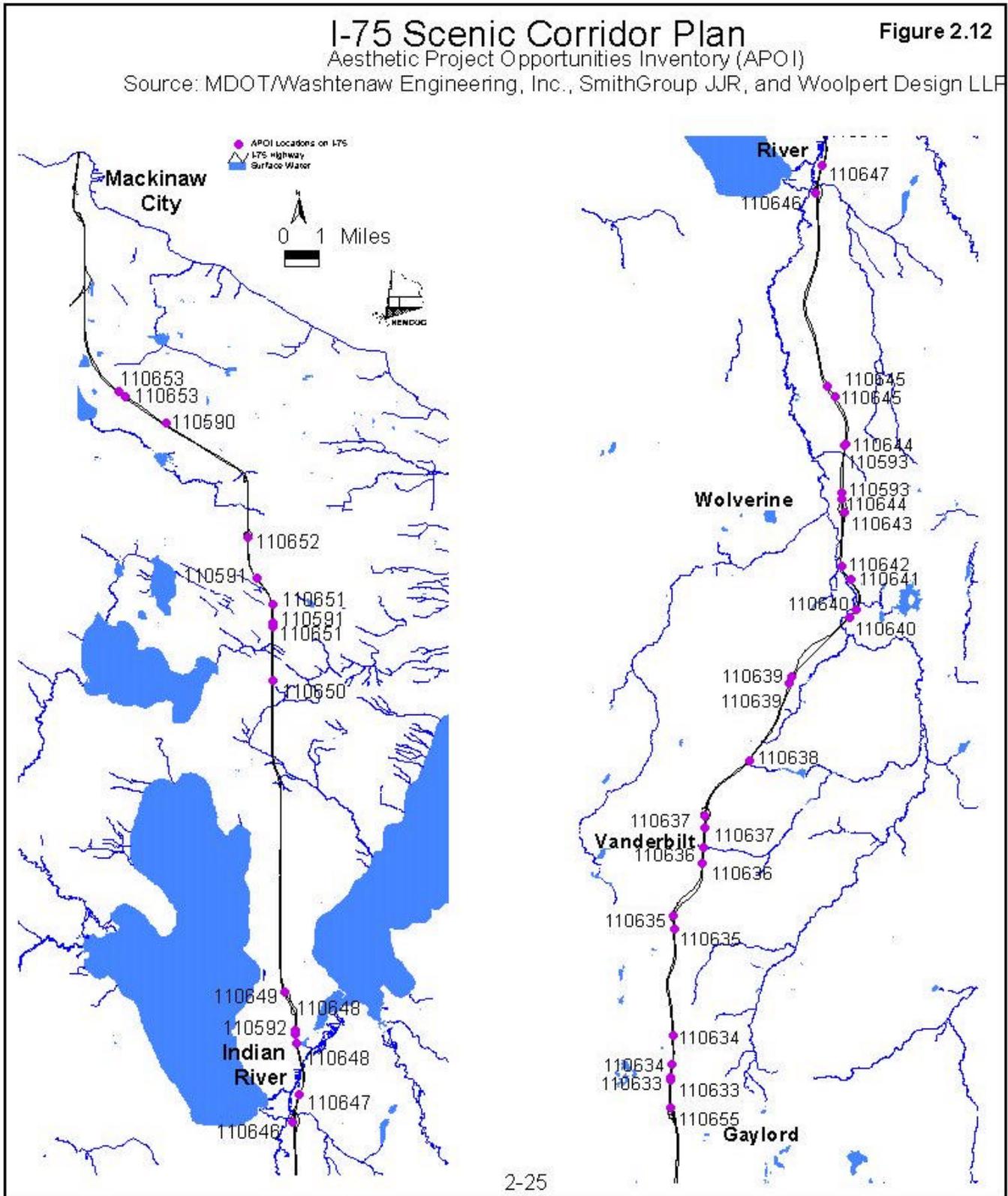
<u>Record Number</u>	<u>Strategy for Implementing Aesthetic Opportunity</u>
110632	Exit 282, Landscape treatment; Enrich existing interchange planting with accent plants and partial screening of structures viewed from highway on-off ramps.
110633/110655	½ Mile north of Gaylord, Landscape treatment; Extend existing vegetation along wood screen fence north to the end of the fence row.
110634	1 Mile north of Gaylord, Landscape treatment; Provide foreground enhancement of picturesque farmland and structures.
110635	ROW, Landscape treatment; Re-establish woodland landscape from east side through median to wooded rest area.
110636	From mile marker 289 to woodland beyond billboards; Reduce impact of billboard by lightly screening with clumps of large deciduous trees.
110637	From Sturgeon Valley Road to Exit 290, Landscape treatment; Screen off-ramp views of adjacent structure and use accent plants to provide a pleasant entry to Vanderbilt off-on ramp views, screen old borrow area.
110638	Alexander Road overpass, Landscape treatment; Blend structure into surrounding landscape using native landscape plantings.
110639	Between Vanderbilt and Wolverine, Landscape treatment; Blend open median with surrounding landscape by planting median with meadow/Savannah plantings.
110640	Trowbridge Road bridge to woods at mile marker 297.6, Landscape treatment; Enhance views of middle ground landscape by foreground planting of large trees.
110641	Between Vanderbilt and Wolverine, Landscape treatment; Provide ground cover and shrubs to provide erosion control and prevent future landscape deterioration.
110642	Between Vanderbilt and Wolverine, Landscape treatment; Provide ground cover plants and shrubs to stabilize steep side slopes.
110643	Entry to Wolverine at Exit 301, Landscape treatment; Improve sterile entrance appearance to Wolverine by adding plantings within the entire interchange area.

# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan

Figure 2.12

Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory (APOI)

Source: MDOT/Washtenaw Engineering, Inc., SmithGroup JJR, and Woolpert Design LLP



2-25

- 110644 Open field area centerway billboards and natural landscape feature, Landscape treatment; Reduce visual impact of billboards by providing plantings of trees in groups.
- 110645 Quarry north of Wolverine, Landscape treatment; Screen extraction site on west side of highway as seen by motorist from northbound lane.
- 110646 Entrance to Indian River at Exit 310, Landscape treatment; Enrich views and create a more visually pleasing entry to the town of Indian River by planting all segments of the interchange area.
- 110647 West Onaway Road bridge north of Indian River, Landscape treatment; Blend bridge to landscape by planting low and tall vegetation.
- 110648 North of Indian River, Landscape treatment; Provide plantings in median to further define circulation routes and screen headlight glare.
- 110592 Area just after Exit 313 at 313.5 mile marker, Landscape treatment; Screen storage area and structures.
- 110649 Exit 313 interchange to Topinabee, Landscape treatment; Plant the entire exit area in order to enrich the landscape entrance character and blend the area into the surrounding landscape.
- 110650 Exit 322 entrance interchange to Pellston and Cheboygan, Landscape treatment; Provide extensive plantings to enhance entrance image and blend the area into the surrounding landscape.
- 110591 Between mile marker 325 and 323.5, Landscape treatment; Provide clumps of deciduous plants in front of windbreak conifers to create visual interest.
- 110651 North of Riggsville, Landscape treatment; Blend median with surrounding landscape and re-establish landscape continuously from east to west to enhance and frame views.
- 110652 The 326 interchange, Landscape treatment; Create a pleasant setting and entrance to Cross Village and Cheboygan highway by extensive planting compatible to adjacent landscape.
- 110590 Overpass between mile markers 330 and 331, Landscape treatment; Provide accent plants to side slopes of overpass bridge earthworks.
- 110653 Entire ROW south of Mackinaw City, Landscape treatment; Blend cut area into existing wooded landscape to enhance and frame views by providing similar native plantings.

## Roadside Maintenance Activities

Roadside maintenance along the I-75 right-of-way (ROW) is the responsibility of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). While MDOT or its contract crews assume many of these maintenance activities, such as chemical spraying, planting landscaping vegetation at rest areas and planting trees along the ROW, the County Road Commissions of Cheboygan, Emmet, and Otsego are contracted by MDOT to perform certain other tasks in the I-75 corridor from M-32 to the Straits of Mackinac.

### The County Road Commissions of Cheboygan, Emmet and Otsego - Roadside Maintenance

Generally, each county road commission is offered a 2 or 3-year contract to perform the following tasks:

- Snowplowing
- Mowing operations
- Rest area day-to-day maintenance
- Trash removal
- Limited erosion control measures
- Fallen tree hazard removal
- Limited ROW fence repairs
- Guard rail repair

Each operation is performed as it is needed and as funding becomes available (as specified by MDOT), and the completed operations are reimbursed to the road commissions on an “at cost” basis.

#### Snowplowing

The winter policy for I-75 is to keep the road surface as free of snow and ice as possible. Snow plow vehicles are dispatched to clear the snow and to disburse road salt to enhance traction and melt snow and ice. Drifting of snow is problematic along several stretches of I-75, and mitigation options may include tree or shrub plantings as a windbreak at these sites. These locations include east of the Otsego County Airport, just south of M-32, an area just north of M-32 where trees were removed in front of billboards several years ago, the southbound lanes of I-75 near ‘Black Hill’ before reaching the Vanderbilt exit, and the area east of the Black Bear Golf Course near mile marker 293.

#### Mowing

Mowing operations begin June 1<sup>st</sup>, and the first mow is completed by July 4<sup>th</sup>. During the first mowing no more than a 12 foot strip of grass area is mowed along the outside roadway, and an 8 foot strip along the median, and the grass is left at a minimum height of 6 to 8 inches. This mowing practice causes a minimum of disruption for wildlife during the spring of the year, yet provides for a groomed aesthetic appearance. Tractors with mowing attachments are used for this purpose.

A second mowing generally takes place before the end of September and is allowed to be much wider (approximately 30 feet). The entire median may be mowed if its width is 70 feet or less. Brush mowing to clear encroaching woody-stemmed growth would normally take place after the

second grass mowing, however there has not been sufficient funding for extensive brush mowing in recent years. Removal of fallen trees and dead brush from the grass mowing area is, however, an allowed procedure.

#### Rest Area Maintenance

Rest area maintenance activities require varying amounts of attention depending on the task performed and the amount that the facility is used (per time of year). The activities are generally performed by one road commission employee, and can range from daily maintenance to weekly or bi-weekly maintenance. Activities involve such things as trash removal, leaf litter clean-up, planting grass, mowing, maintaining landscaping such as flowers and shrubs, and cleaning the building itself.

#### Trash Removal

Trash removal along the outside ROW is, in large part, accomplished with an “adopt-a-highway” program in each county. The county road commission crews remove trash that accumulates at the ramp areas as necessary. The road commission crews will pick trash from the median if there is a budget for this task.

#### Erosion Control, Fallen Tree Hazards, ROW Fence Repair, and Guard Rail Repair

Each of the above tasks are accomplished only as needed for safety reasons or other immediate necessity. Erosion control is generally not needed except in certain specific areas, since most of the I-75 corridor has well-established vegetation, and there are no “fill-borrow” areas currently being used along I-75. Fallen trees are removed if they pose a hazard to the roadway or if they are in the grass mowing area. ROW fence repair is generally not done except near the urban areas of the City of Gaylord or there is some other immediate need. Guard rail repair is done as the existing rail becomes unserviceable or is damaged. If repairs are deemed necessary, an estimate is provided to MDOT and MDOT will respond with a work order number (outside of the normal maintenance contract) for those particular repairs.

#### Future landscaping and maintenance needs for the I-75 roadside

Road commission suggestions for future needs include the following:

- An expanded program is needed to remove more dead brush and falling trees. Especially those on the ROW fence, and those that may fall into the roadway.
- A program is needed to seed certain stretches of the median with native wildflowers and shrubs, for scenic purposes.
- An expanded maintenance program to include repairing the ROW fence is needed.
- Erosion control runoff structures need to be reinstalled at the hill north of Winters Road crossing.
- Elk frequently cross I-75 during certain times of the year to feed on grass near the Black Bear Golf area. Elk crossing signs need to be placed at this location to alert motorists of this activity.
- Glare from lighting in Indian River can tend to confuse a northbound motorist at night. This should be researched to find a solution.
- Glare from parking lot lighting just south of M-32 can tend to distract a southbound motorist. This should be researched to find a solution.
- Snowdrifting is problematic. Tree plantings as snowdrift barriers need to take place at the locations specified in “Snowplowing” above. Local road

commissions should be consulted for opinions before tree removal activities occur in the ROW.

- There is a section of concrete pavement south of Mackinaw City which is in need of total reconstruction in order to allow motorists a comfortable enough ride to enjoy the views.
- There are cast iron reflector mounts installed between lanes in some sections of pavement. These are brittle and tend to crack and break in varying weather conditions, causing pieces to separate from the pavement surface. This could pose a safety hazard to vehicles and motorists (See **Figure 5.6**, in Chapter 5). The same type of mounts should not be reinstalled during resurfacing or reconstruction projects.

An expanded roadside landscape maintenance program might include: 1) plantings to reduce headlight glare from opposing traffic- particularly at interchanges where entrance ramps and exit ramps are close together, 2) salt-tolerant tree plantings for snowdrift barriers, where appropriate, 3) continued vegetative screening of visually detracting sites, 4) tree plantings to provide directional definition of the highway to motorists in low-light conditions, 4) plantings of vegetation to absorb storm water in erosion-prone areas, and 5) plantings of trees and shrubs in the ROW to reduce noise impacts on nearby residential developments.

### Michigan Department of Transportation Roadside Maintenance

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) policy “recognizes that the construction and maintenance of highways have short and long-term impacts on the environment. The roadside vegetation if carefully managed, can mitigate that impact.” The short-term goal of vegetative plantings is to “..stabilize the soil and prevent erosion”, while the long-term goal is “...to enhance aesthetics and blend the roadsides with the surrounding areas.” MDOT’s North Region Office in Gaylord supervises all roadside maintenance of this portion of I-75 through the Resource Specialist, Roadside Environmental Services Unit.

The I-75 roadside activities performed by MDOT or its contractors include:

- Chemical spraying
- Vegetation removal
- Landscaping; functional & aesthetic
- Erosion control
- Rest area maintenance
- Supervision of the above maintenance activities

#### Chemical Spraying

Every 2 to 3 years, as needed, MDOT crews spray the weeds with herbicide in the mowed area along the road. This is done to promote stronger and healthier turf along the shoulders, and reduce encroaching brush. Generally, there is an attempt to keep an area clear of brush and trees for 50 feet from the edge of the outside lane in each direction, so that motorists have an adequate clear vision zone.

### Vegetation Removal

Brush control: Areas of encroaching brush are mowed and a follow-up chemical application keeps the brush from re-sprouting. This is only done when the brush gets so close to the road that the motorist's vision of potential hazards, such as crossing animals, is in danger of being obscured.

Tree removal: The objective of MDOT is to remove all dead or dangerous trees that are too close to the road. Tree groves in the ROW that exhibit an appreciable infestation of insects or disease are also removed so that the infestation will not spread to surrounding forests. Otherwise, the forested areas are left in a natural state. There is also a policy to encourage desirable species of trees whenever possible.

### Landscaping: Functional & Aesthetic

Conifer trees are being planted at certain locations within the right-of-way (ROW) along the I-75 corridor:

Functional tree plantings, while very limited, are currently being used as barriers to control snow drift, and as vegetation to absorb some degree of traffic noise for urban residential areas along the highway. Some recent plantings have replaced trees that suffered storm damage in the Gaylord area. Tree plantings are sometimes used to reduce headlight glare from opposing traffic, and can be used where the median is particularly narrow.

Aesthetic plantings are currently being used as screening. A project includes two rows of trees within the existing ROW of I-75 to screen such areas as junk yards, gravel pits and other views outside of the ROW that do not aesthetically blend with the surrounding countryside. The 0.6 mile transportation enhancement project includes three separate locations within Indian River and Munro Township.

### Erosion Control

Erosion control is generally not needed except occasionally at certain specific sites, since most of the I-75 corridor has well-established vegetation, and there are no "fill-borrow" areas currently being used along I-75.

### Rest Area Maintenance

Landscaping plantings for aesthetics are regularly performed at rest areas. These plantings include trees, shrubs, flowers, and grass.

At some rest areas, views are enhanced by the construction and placement of walkway structures to position people at desirable view locations while at the rest area. One such rest area, near mile marker 317 northbound, allows the motoring public a particularly spectacular view of northern Michigan's countryside including the Burt Lake area (see photo in **Figure 2.7**, on page 2-12).

During the course of normal work activities, either county road commission personnel or North Region Office personnel will make a note of maintenance needs at rest areas. If landscaping is needed, the MDOT Roadside Development Office in Lansing is contacted. The Roadside Development Office has criteria, or design schemes for landscaping at rest areas and will provide the layouts for such maintenance. In all cases, consideration is given to "low maintenance" landscaping schemes. If minor building repairs are needed at the rest area, the contracting road commission will perform the repairs and seek reimbursement from MDOT. If major building repairs are required, than either: 1) a work order number will be required for the road commission to perform the work, or 2) an outside maintenance contractor will be hired to complete the work, or 3) an MDOT Lansing maintenance crew will perform the work when it can be programmed into their statewide schedule.

Supervision of Necessary Activities

MDOT's North Region Office in Gaylord supervises all roadside maintenance through the Resource Specialist, Roadside Environmental Services Unit. Roadside inspections are done in the course of normal work activities. MDOT publishes a booklet which contains guidelines for roadside mowing crews: *Roadside Mowing Guide, Maintenance Division, Revised 1989*. The booklet establishes uniform mowing maintenance guidelines across county boundaries, and includes a map supplement for each county showing mowing limits for routes within that jurisdiction.

## Festivals and Events

Festivals, community events, and other recreational activities which support Michigan's tourism economy demand a reliable and attractive transportation system. It is estimated, by Public Sector Consultants of Lansing, that Michigan's tourism industry "accounts for 350,000 jobs and \$12 billion" to the State's economy. Since I-75 is the major transportation and tourism corridor to and from the northern tip of Michigan's lower peninsula, its visual qualities are especially important. Some of the major community festivals and events along the I-75 corridor that are significant tourist attractions are as follows (listed in relation to each community area, south to north):

City of Gaylord Area

February-	Winterfest
March-	SNOCROSS Races
April-	Spring Home Show
June-	Otsego Lake Fly-In Gus Macker Basketball
July-	Fourth of July Parade Alpenfest
August-	Otsego County Fair Michaywe Arts & Crafts Fair Snowmobile Grass Drags
November-	Gaylord Area Council for the Arts (GACA) - Gaylord Area Arts Week GACA Juried Art Exhibition Community Arts Festival
December-	Santa Parade & Christmas Stroll Snowcross Snowmobile Racing

Village of Vanderbilt

July-	Fourth of July Parade Pigeon River Festival
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# I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan Community Festivals and Events

Figure 2.13



2-32

Village of Wolverine

June/July Lumberjack Festival

Indian River Area

February- Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner  
Pre-Season Boat Show (Indian River Marina)

April- Opening Day for walleye, pike, muskellunge and trout

May- Water Boat Show (Indian River Marina)  
Spring on the Water Boat Show (Burt Lake Marina)

June- Bass Tournament on the Inland Waterway  
Indian River Classic Canoe Races  
Inland Lakes Education Foundation Golf Classic

July- Fourth of July Parade, fireworks & chicken BBQ  
Summer Fest; craft show, cook-off, entertainment, & 10K road race

August- Top O' Michigan Boat Races (National Outboard Championships)

September- Annual Chamber Raffle  
Buffalo Bash - County Wide Business After Hours Reception  
Fall on the Water Boat Show (Burt Lake Marina)  
Antique & Classic Boat Society Waterway Cruise

November- Northern Michigan's Biggest Buck Pole  
Christmas Craft Show; crafts, lighting of the Christmas tree, caroling, & more  
Ken's Village Market Holiday Giving Tree

City of Cheboygan Area

February- Winter Carnival  
X-C Snow Racing  
Black Lake Shivarree

March- Youth Arts Festival

April- Home Show  
Craft Show

May- Rivertown Follies

June- Streetrods Car Show  
Tractor Pulls  
Washington Park Craft Show  
Antique Roadshow

July- Fourth of July fireworks  
Cheboygan Arts Festival  
Fly-In Air Show  
Great Lakes Car Show  
Washington Park Concert Series

August- Cheboygan County Fair  
Salmon Tournament  
Sail-In Sail Boat Race  
Antique Show  
Boat Races

September- Labor Day "State Street" Bridge Walk

October- Autumn Fest  
Craft Show

November- Northland Players Performance

December- November Concert Series  
 Old Fashioned Christmas Parade of Lights  
 Community Christmas Caroling  
 Festival of Trees

Village of Mackinaw City / Straits Area

January- Winterfest - Mackinaw City  
 Winter on the Frontier; Colonial Michilimackinac Open  
 Winterfest Ice Fishing Tournament - Carp Lake  
 Annual Snow Ball - Mackinaw City

February- Mackinaw Mush Sled Dog Race - Mackinaw City  
 Mackinaw Wilderness Run Sled Dog Race - Mackinaw City  
 Winter on the Frontier; Colonial Michilimackinac Open  
 Antique & Vintage Snowmobile Show - Mackinaw City  
 Mackinaw City Grand Prix on Ice Snowmobile Race

March- Miss Teen Michilimackinac Pageant - Mackinaw City

May- Mackinac State Historic Parks open for the season  
 Parade & Colonial Michilimackinac Pageant - Mackinaw City  
 Summer Long Fishing Tournament - Carp Lake  
 Fireworks - Mackinaw City

June- Nightly Laser Light Shows at dusk - Mackinaw Crossings  
 Lighthouse Tour & Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Spring Scenic Bike Ride & Ride Across Mackinac Bridge - Mackinaw City  
 Fudge Classic, Road Race, & Jog Across Mackinac Bridge - Mackinaw City  
 Bass Tournament - Carp Lake  
 Vesper Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Kite Festival - Mackinaw City  
 Fine Arts & Craft Show - Mackinaw City  
 Washington Park Concert Series

July- Nightly Laser Light Shows at dusk - Mackinaw Crossings  
 Vesper Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Lighthouse Tour & Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Weevil Festival - Carp Lake  
 Colonial Michilimackinac Encampment - Mackinaw City  
 Nightly Laser Light Shows at dusk - Mackinaw Crossings  
 "Music in Mackinaw" Conkling Heritage Park entertainment - Mackinaw City

August- Lighthouse Tour & Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Ironworkers Festival - Mackinaw City  
 Vesper Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Antique Show - Mackinaw City  
 North American Lighthouse Festival - Mackinaw City  
 Colonial Michilimackinac Encampment - Mackinaw City  
 Colonial Michilimackinac re-enactments - Mackinaw City  
 Mackinaw Fine Arts & Craft Show - Mackinaw City  
 Nightly Laser Light Shows at dusk - Mackinaw Crossings  
 "Music in Mackinaw" Conkling Heritage Park entertainment - Mackinaw City

September- Vesper Cruise - Mackinaw City  
 Labor Day Annual Bridge Walk  
 Lighthouse Tour & Cruise  
 Hopps of Fun Beer & Wine Festival - Mackinaw City  
 Scenic Bike Tour & Ride Across Mackinac Bridge - Mackinaw City

October- Colonial Michilimackinac Harvest Weekend - Mackinaw City  
Nightly Laser Light Shows at dusk - Mackinaw Crossings  
December- Mackinac State Historic Park closes for the season  
Christmas in Mackinaw - Mackinaw City  
Christmas Window & House Decorating Contest - Mackinaw City