

## **CHAPTER VI A VISION FOR ADA TOWNSHIP**

The Ada Township Master Plan sets forth the desires of the Township regarding its future character and development pattern. The Master Plan is intended to guide local government growth and development decisions as well as private sector decisions regarding land use and development. This statement of future vision for Ada Township identifies the key components of the community's desired future, based on consideration of public opinion as measured in the citizen opinion survey conducted in 2004, views expressed in public forums held during the planning process, and consideration of sound planning principles. The vision statement, its policy statements and suggested implementing strategies seek to carry out the following "smart growth tenets" that are set forth in "Michigan's Land, Michigan's Future," the final report (August 2003) of the gubernatorially-appointed Michigan Land Use Leadership Council:

- “1. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
2. Create walkable neighborhoods.
3. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
5. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
6. Mix land uses.
7. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
10. Take advantage of compact development design.”

### **I. COMMUNITY CHARACTER:**

- Ada Township will maintain and strengthen its identity as a distinctive community within the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area, known and valued for its attractive residential neighborhoods, opportunities for rural living in a natural setting, its compact traditional Village neighborhood and business district, its high quality recreational facilities, its accessible and high quality natural features, its scenic Grand River Valley, its limited but economically viable agricultural lands and its generous open spaces.
- Ada Township will grow in a compact form, with the majority of the Township's new development occurring in areas served by the Township's public water and sewer systems. There will be a distinct difference in character between areas of the Township that are more suburban in character (largely south of M-21 and west of the Grand River), and areas that are rural in character (largely north of M-21 and east of the Grand River).
- The Fulton Street corridor through the Township will retain its distinct natural, scenic and uncluttered appearance.
- Rural areas of the township will retain their character, comprised of many elements, including the following:
  - views along major public road corridors that are largely natural in appearance and free from development.
  - gravel roads, including many miles of gravel road that are designated as "Natural Beauty Roads" by the Kent County Road Commission.
  - less emphasis on use of manicured lawns, in favor of homes sites in a natural setting that are set back a considerable distance from the road.
  - scattered farmsteads with modest, historic homes and agricultural barns.

- large expanses of open land in the Grand River valley.
  - prominent wooded ridgelines along the edges of the Grand River valley.
  - scattered agricultural uses throughout the northern two-thirds of the township, with a concentration of agricultural lands in the northeastern quadrant of the township.
- Ada Township will retain a sense of its history. New development will be visually compatible and consistent with existing historically significant structures in the Township, which will be preserved and enhanced.

**Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Manage growth in the Township with regulations that ensure the preservation of the Township's outstanding natural features and character.
2. Support measures to encourage continued viability of agricultural land use in the Township, particularly in the northeast quadrant of the Township, where the majority of the Township's agricultural lands are located.
3. Acquire land or easements on high priority open space lands, in accordance with the priorities established in the Ada Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Protection Plan.
4. Maintain low development densities in the rural portions of the Township, which are not likely to be serviced by public water and sewer facilities, and where the road network and limited road crossings of the Grand River do not support high traffic volumes.
5. Ensure that new development design incorporates landscape features that screen objectionable site features from view, enhance the overall appearance of the development site, preserve existing natural features and contribute to the natural character of the Township.
6. Discourage creation of residential parcels in a linear, shallow-depth pattern along public roads, in order to retain a natural appearance along road frontages.
7. Discourage paving and/or widening of the gravel roads in the Township, in the absence of a demonstrated safety hazard.

**II. NATURAL FEATURES AND ENVIRONMENT:**

- Ada Township will continue to be a community noted for its outstanding natural surroundings, including its striking wooded hillsides, its expansive Grand River floodplain corridor, its clear-flowing creeks and its high quality wetlands.
- Long-term sustainability of the area's natural systems will be a primary consideration in all development proposals and public investment decisions.

## **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Encourage provision of undisturbed natural vegetation adjacent to riparian features in the Township, including rivers, streams and wetlands.
2. Monitor the administration and effectiveness of recently-enacted riparian protection regulations, to evaluate whether the exemptions contained within the regulations should be more narrowly drawn.
3. Ensure that new development incorporates effective erosion and sediment control measures, both during construction and after development is complete. The Township will consider the adoption of a Township-based erosion and sediment control permitting program, in lieu of the current County-administered program.
4. Develop regulations to discourage development on steep slopes in proximity to riparian features.
5. Maintain low development densities in areas not served or expected to be served by public sewer and water, to discourage over-concentration of on-site disposal systems and resulting pollution of groundwater supplies, and depletion of groundwater.
6. Prohibit commercial and industrial uses which are likely to involve use or production of hazardous materials, in areas not served by public sewer service.
7. Develop site plan review standards to require groundwater protection measures in new development design, such as secondary containment of hazardous materials and prohibition on floor drains not connected to sanitary sewers.
8. Through landscaping standards for new development, enhance the natural surroundings in the Township. Through tree protection regulations applicable to all lands in the Township, ensure that the green infrastructure in the developed portions of the Township is maintained over the long term.
9. Encourage placement of sensitive environmental areas into common open space and appropriate clustering of home sites in new development, to provide long-term protection of these areas and greater accessibility of natural areas to residents.
10. Permanently protect high-priority sensitive environmental areas through acquisition of land or development rights by the Township or a non-profit land trust.
11. Discourage filling and development within the 100-year floodplain.

### **III. AGRICULTURAL LAND USE:**

- Agricultural land use, particularly in the northeastern quadrant of Ada Township and extending into the adjacent townships, will continue to be an economically viable use of land, and will be largely free of scattered residential land uses that potentially hinder agricultural operations.

### **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Support measures to encourage continued viability of agricultural land use in the Township, particularly in the northeast quadrant of the Township, where the majority of the Township's agricultural lands are located.
2. Consider the enactment of agricultural protection zoning standards, to limit the fragmentation of agricultural lands.
3. Use "park and land preservation" millage revenues as matching funds with other funding sources, to acquire development rights on agricultural land through the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

### **IV. RESIDENTIAL LAND USE:**

- Ada Township will have a variety of housing styles and levels of affordability, to accommodate the needs of varying incomes, stages in life and housing preferences, in neighborhoods that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, pedestrian-friendly and conducive to neighborliness and social interaction.
- The compact residential neighborhood along the Cascade Rd. corridor, within walking distance of potential transit service along the corridor, will be enhanced through new private investment in the area that reinforces efficient design, affordability and alternative mobility.
- Former mining and resource processing sites along the Pettis Ave. corridor will be redeveloped for other uses compatible with the rural character of the area.
- Rural portions of the Township located north and east of the Grand River will retain a very low density of residential development, consistent with the existing rural character of this area and compatible with the limited infrastructure capacity that is expected to be available to this area in the future. Infrastructure limitations that currently affect the area include the absence of public water and sewer services and only two road crossings over the Grand River.

### **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Encourage inclusion of elements of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) in new development, including a greater emphasis on compactness, orientation of homes toward the street, pedestrian accessibility and linkages, continuity of the local street network and less segregation of uses.
2. Consider development of a new residential zoning district classification which allows single-family residential lots smaller and narrower than current standards allow, for application in selected areas of the Township where public utilities and other supporting infrastructure are provided.
3. Encourage compact residential development along and near potential public transit corridors, such as Cascade Rd. and Fulton St.

4. Provide land in appropriate locations for high density residential uses, such as multiple-family apartments and attached condominiums, in locations which are adequately served by public utilities, roads and other infrastructure, and where such uses are compatible with the surrounding area.
5. Encourage compact residential development in and near the Ada Village neighborhood.
6. Adopt appropriate growth management regulations to ensure that residential neighborhoods are free of adverse influences from incompatible land uses and high traffic volumes.
7. Encourage redevelopment of lands along the Pettis Ave. corridor currently used for resource processing and manufacturing, for other uses compatible with a rural area.
8. Encourage inclusion of open space, mini-parks and natural areas within residential neighborhoods.
9. Provide non-motorized trail connections between residential neighborhoods and parks, schools, churches, shopping and other activity centers.

**V. ADA VILLAGE AREA:**

- The Ada Village area will be recognized as the hub of the community, with attractive residences providing housing for a diverse range of residents, a vibrant business community providing goods and services for residents as well as visitors, and a variety of civic uses providing cultural amenities to residents.
- The Ada Village area will provide an inviting and pleasant environment for pedestrians, by means of outdoor spaces, both public and private, for relaxation, and a sidewalk network to separate pedestrians from vehicles.
- The Ada Village area will be accessible to all residents of the community by a network of non-motorized trails.
- “Streetscape” improvements including sidewalks, landscaped parkway, street trees and period lighting, as provided for in the Ada Village Restoration Plan, will extend to those portions of the Ada Village area where they have not already been completed (e.g. Bronson St. and Headley St.).
- The Ada Village area will retain a sense of history in its mix of the old and new, with new buildings that complement the old through use of traditional architectural design elements and avoidance of nondescript “franchise” architectural designs.
- Existing buildings of historic significance in the Village will be preserved and enhanced.
- Development of major remaining vacant commercially-zoned lands in the Village will incorporate a mix of commercial and residential use, to provide opportunities for new housing within the Village area, to encourage a compact development pattern within the community, and to encourage the maintenance of a Village residential population that supports and sustains Village businesses and services.
- Development and redevelopment in the Village commercial area will capitalize on the adjacent Thornapple River, through the creation of a riverfront pedestrian plaza.

## **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Implement the “Catalyst Initiatives” and other high-priority projects identified in the “Ada Village Design Charrette Final Report.”
2. Enact “form-based” zoning regulations for the Ada Village area.
3. Encourage the majority of the Township’s retail and personal service businesses to be located within or adjacent to the existing Ada Village area.
4. Ensure that new development within the Village area is of size, scale, form and placement on the site that conforms with the planning and design principles expressed in the Ada Village Design Charrette Final Report.

## **VI. COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE/SERVICE LAND USE:**

- Ada Township’s commercial land use base will provide local residents with a variety of “convenience-type” goods and services, in convenient locations which minimize driving distances, and which are accessible via the Township’s non-motorized trail system. Ada Township will not be home to large-scale regional shopping facilities.
- The Ada Village area will provide convenience goods and services serving local residents as well as specialty goods and services tailored to “destination visitors.”
- Retail businesses, restaurants and other high traffic generating commercial uses will not be located along Fulton St. (M-21) beyond those areas which are already located in the C-1 or C-2 commercial zoning districts.

## **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Discourage retail uses, restaurant uses and other high traffic-generating uses along the Cascade Rd. and Spaulding Ave. corridors, in order to preserve the important traffic-movement function of these arterial roads, and to concentrate these uses in the Forest Hills business district near the intersection of Cascade Rd. and Forest Hills Ave.
2. Encourage professional office, business service, and personal service uses in the Spaulding Ave. corridor south of Ada Drive, and along Cascade Rd.
3. Ensure that development along the Cascade Rd. corridor is carefully designed to be compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods located to the north and south of the properties fronting Cascade Rd.
4. Discourage expansion of commercial land use east of the Grand River beyond the limits of existing commercial uses.
5. Discourage development of commercial uses in the M-21 corridor in a "strip" pattern. Commercial development will be encouraged to occur in planned centers, characterized by unified architectural character, coordinated driveways, circulation and parking, signage and landscaping.

## **VII. INDUSTRIAL LAND USE:**

- Ada Township will retain its existing base of both large and small manufacturing, distribution and construction businesses.
- New industrial development that is non-polluting and consistent with the long-term sustainability of the community will be located in areas which are free of potential conflicts with adjoining residential land uses, and which are easily accessible from Fulton Street (M-21).
- The existing industrially-zoned corridor on the south side of Fulton Street from Kulross Ave. west to Alta Dale Ave. will be free of uses that are likely to generate objectionable noise, odors, vibration or other negative impacts on adjoining residential neighborhoods. The corridor will evolve to favor a variety of non-retail, low-traffic generating service uses, office uses, and low impact industrial uses.

### **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Through strict performance standards for industrial uses and through appropriate review procedures for new uses, prohibit land uses which are likely to generate adverse noise, odor, dust and other objectionable impacts on the adjoining residential neighborhood from locating within the Fulton St. corridor from Kulross Ave. west to Alta Dale Ave.

## **VIII. MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION:**

- Ada Township will be served by some form of mass transit, most likely along the Fulton St. (M-21) and/or Cascade Road corridors, or light rail service on the existing rail corridor.
- A Township-wide system of non-motorized trails will provide safe, convenient and pleasant facilities for non-motorized travel and recreation in the Township. Trails will link neighborhoods to major activity centers in the Township, including the Ada Village, schools, churches, parks and other major recreation facilities.
- The Township's road network will provide for safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic, while protecting residential neighborhoods from the negative impacts of high traffic volumes and speeds.

### **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Encourage a development pattern that will be conducive to the feasibility and usage of public transit between population centers in the Township and employment, shopping and entertainment centers in other parts of the Metropolitan Area.
2. Encourage compact residential development to occur along likely future public transit corridors.
3. Consider permitting higher residential densities than currently are permitted in the residential areas west of Spaulding Ave. and south of Ada Drive, to provide for possible

re-development of large blocks of land in this area for attached condominiums or town homes.

4. Complete the planned expansion of the Township's non-motorized trail system.
5. Encourage provision of publicly-accessible non-motorized trails as part of new development, when development is proposed adjacent to planned routes on the Township's non-motorized trail network.
6. Maintain low development densities in the portion of the Township north and east of the Grand River, in acknowledgement of the capacity limitations of the existing transportation infrastructure serving this area, particularly the limited number (2) of road crossings of the Grand River in the Township.
7. Encourage use of "context sensitive design" principles in the design of new and improved roads in the Township. Context sensitive design takes into consideration the neighborhood context of the street, including such factors as the building types along the street, their spacing, their proximity and orientation to the street, and the extent of pedestrian and bicyclist use of the street corridor, in addition to considering the intended function of the street in the overall street network. The use of such an approach in many cases calls for a narrower pavement width than required by typical traffic engineering standards, and a design that better meets the goals of all parties concerned, including the neighborhood that would be served by the street.
8. Develop access management standards for application to major roads in the Township, to control the number, spacing, design and location of driveway accesses, in order to maintain the traffic-carrying capacity and safety of major roads in the Township.
9. Implement measures to limit and control the proliferation of parcel splits and individual driveway accesses along major rural roads in the Township, through land division and access control regulations.
10. In cooperation with the Kent County Road Commission, encourage the design and layout of the street network in the Township to be based on the following principles:
  - a. Excessive through traffic on local streets should be discouraged by appropriate design measures, to maximize pedestrian safety and protect the residential living environment.
  - b. The layout of local streets should contribute to and enhance the quality of the residential living environment.
  - c. The design of streets in the Township should take into consideration the context of the adjoining properties that the street passes by.
  - d. Local street systems should provide for a degree of interconnectedness in the street network that distributes traffic over multiple routes, avoids concentration of traffic on only one or a few routes, and provides drivers with multiple route choices.
  - e. The layout of local streets should not result in excessive travel distances and times. To provide for efficient service by school buses, delivery and maintenance/service vehicles, excessively long dead-end local street systems should be avoided.



- f. Street system design should provide for adequate emergency access. To the extent practicable, areas of concentrated development should be accessible by more than one route, due to the possibility of blockage of a single access point.

## **IX. PUBLIC UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES:**

- Ada Township will provide high quality, efficient public water and sewer services to areas that are planned for land uses of an urban intensity.

### **Supporting Policies:**

Ada Township will:

1. Coordinate provision of public utility services with land use policies, so that utility service availability supports and reinforces the desired land use pattern in the Township.
2. Encourage infill development of areas already serviceable by existing utility infrastructure, prior to extension of utility infrastructure to new areas.
3. Ensure that if public utility service is extended beyond current service area boundaries, the costs of extending services are borne by the properties receiving the new services, and not by existing utility users or Township residents at-large, unless there are overriding benefits to the general public.
4. Study the feasibility of extending public sewer service to the east side of the Grand River at Fulton St., to provide service to the existing concentration of business uses on Pettis Ave. and Fulton St.
5. Coordinate its planning and community development activities with facility planning activities of the school districts serving the community.