

# **Master Plan for Chikaming Township, Michigan 2014-2029**

**Approved by the Chikaming Township Board of Trustees, June 12, 2014  
Adopted by the Chikaming Township Planning Commission September 3, 2014**

# OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN AND THE PROCESS

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## INTRODUCTION

A Master Plan is intended to take a long range look ahead 15 to 20 years. The vision encompasses what we would like our community to look like, as seen from today's perspective, along with a set of tools that can help us achieve that vision. The plan will not emerge overnight, and probably not all of it will be achieved, but it does give us a roadmap to move forward. Chikaming Township has developed 2 previous versions of this Master Plan – the first was adopted in October, 1992, the second was adopted in August, 2005 and revised in August, 2008. This current revision represents an evolution of the previous plans rather than a radical break from the past. All versions of the Master Plan, including this one, emphasize maintaining the existing character of the Township that we love, and being pro-active in ensuring the preservation of that character.

### Purposes of Planning:

Planning for the future is one of the more important responsibilities of local government. The preparation of a Master Plan is the means by which the citizens of the community express their preferences regarding the future development of the community. The Master Plan document is the culmination of a planning process that involves taking stock of the community's physical, economic and social assets, establishing goals for the future development of the community, and setting forth action strategies for achieving those goals.

A community's Master Plan serves many purposes:

- A Master Plan is the statutory **basis upon which zoning and other land use decisions are made**. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008) requires that the Township's zoning ordinance be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the community. Therefore, the Master Plan and associated maps provide a basis for making land use decisions which are implemented through zoning and other legal devices, such as the Subdivision Control Act.
- The Master Plan provides a **comprehensive statement of the Township's goals and policies**. It helps direct growth into a desired development pattern, rather than leaving the future shape of the community to chance and circumstance. The Plan also helps educate and inform citizens, property owners, developers and adjacent communities about the Township's direction for the future.
- The Plan serves as an important **reference document and legal basis for Township zoning decisions**. Indeed, zoning decisions that are made with due consideration for and general consistency with the policy direction provided in the Master Plan are more likely to withstand legal challenge and judicial scrutiny.
- The Master Plan should also be used as guidance **in setting capital expenditure priorities** for the Township. The direction for the community set forth in the Master Plan should guide Township investments in new and improved facilities in such areas as parks and recreation, public safety, public water and sewer systems, local street improvements, public open space acquisition and other community facility expenditures.

- The Master Plan can help **protect natural features**, which are major community assets, and maintain the aesthetic appeal of the community, by identifying important natural features and ways they can be protected.
- The Plan also helps **coordinate the programs of other public agencies** with local planning goals. Planning efforts and projects of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Berrien County Road Commission, Galien River Sanitary District Authority and others are better able to conform with local needs if a current community Master Plan is available to guide and inform these other agencies.

### **Use of the Master Plan:**

The Master Plan should be an important reference for both the Planning Commission and Township Board in carrying out their important duties. The land use goals and objectives and the desired future land use pattern as mapped on the future land use map contained in the Master Plan should be given considerable weight in evaluating any applications for development or rezoning of land that are considered by the Township.

Only if it is found that the recommendations concerning future land use for the subject property set forth in the Master Plan are no longer appropriate should land be approved for development or rezoned in a manner that is contrary to the Master Plan. In the event such a situation occurs, the decision should be accompanied by specific findings that set forth the change in circumstances, unforeseen conditions or other factors leading to a decision contrary to the Master Plan. In addition, the decision should be accompanied by the initiation of an amendment to the Master Plan to re-establish consistency between the development decision and the Plan.

It should be noted that the approval of a Master Plan alone does not in itself cause a change. It may lead to a change in the Zoning Ordinance, but even that does not cause something to happen, only to guide its location and building envelope. There must be a catalyst who initiates, finances, and develops a project – whether from the private sector driven by the market, or from the public sector driven by identified public needs.

### **Process of Preparing the Master Plan:**

Efforts to update the 2004 Master Plan began in the fall of 2012 when the Chikaming Township Planning Commission determined that it would hire as its planning consultant for this purpose one of its own members who had a role in the development of the 2005 Master Plan, and that consultant would then work with the Planning Commission and the Township Board to develop an updated plan:

- The Planning Commission determined early in the process that the 2004 citizen opinion survey should be updated, to gauge any changes in public attitudes regarding growth management issues in the Township. The survey was conducted from July, 2013 through March, 2014 via an online survey site, with paper versions made available at the Township Hall and distributed at the annual “Taste of Chikaming” event. The survey availability was publicized with notices in the Harbor Country News and in the winter tax bills.
- Updated demographic and socio-economic data regarding the Township from the 2010 Census was compiled and reviewed.
- The inventory of man-made features of the Township, such as the community facilities, utilities, and transportation infrastructure, and market-provided facilities was updated through various means.
- Members of the Planning Commission also undertook a visual survey of land use in the Township by driving or walking all the roads in the Township and recording current land uses. This information was supplemented by staff review of the online GIS (Geographic Information System) maps.

This preliminary work was shared with the Township Board and Planning Commission in the fall and winter of 2013-14, and the present draft of the final document, incorporating the input from those two public bodies, was developed over the next few months.

The draft plan was completed in March and April, 2014, and was presented to the Planning Commission which approved the draft Master Plan and referred it to the Township Board on May 7, 2014. The Board in turn authorized its distribution for review to adjoining municipalities and other area governmental units on June 12, 2014..

A public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on the draft Plan on August 20, 2014. Following the public hearing comments, the Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Master Plan on September 3, 2014, and forwarded it to the Township Board, which adopted the Plan on September 11, 2014.

### **Organization of the Master Plan Document.**

Volume One contains the Master Plan and policies:

- The Introduction and Chapters I and II provide a summary of the **background information** for the development of the Master Plan.
- Chapters III through VI focus on the major areas of interest through a detailed discussion of **goals, objectives and strategies.**
- Chapter VII summarizes the policies related to **Future Land Use.**
- There is a **Glossary** located on the last page of the document to provide explanations of new or unusual concepts.
- All **maps** are inserted at the end of Chapter VII. They provide a visual overview of much of what has been learned and is proposed here.

Volume Two is a reference document containing detailed findings and information used and developed by the Planning Commission during its deliberations.

### **WHAT'S NEW IN THE 2014 CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

As mentioned above, this revision represents an evolution of the previous Master Plans. Following the 2005 Plan adoption, several members of the committee continued to keep the vision alive and to promote recommended provisions. As a result, this version of the Master Plan, while maintaining the spirit, and much of the language of the 2005 plan, incorporates the subsequent progress made toward stated goals, and recommends continued movement in various realms.

In addition, there have been changes in the knowledge base about the environment and conditions in the Township, and a new decennial census which highlights a dramatic change in the demographics of the population. This update thus incorporates some significant changes from the previous Plan:

1) Instead of a call for changes to the Township Zoning Ordinance to include an Open Space Preservation Development ordinance, the plan notes the successful accomplishment of such a revision, and removes that section from the plan, instead turning it into a separate guide to the desired development model for developers.  
(see Chapter IV)

2) Instead of a recommendation for an engineering corridor study of the Red Arrow Highway, the plan notes that such a study was partially undertaken in 2011 but tabled after mixed public comments at two meetings where the engineer's proposals were presented. Rather than drop the idea of looking at ways to calm the traffic along the highway and to make it safer and more amenable to walkers, hikers,

and bicyclists, the Township should encourage more public involvement in the process of improving the roadway that serves as Main Street for several of our communities. The call for a Chikaming Green Corridor is also continued in this document.  
(see Chapter V and Chapter VII)

3) Rather than a recommendation for a task force to study bicycle and pedestrian paths, there is now a specific "Hike and Bike Plan" network proposal for all of Harbor Country, with a vocabulary of design alternatives. This plan was completed in 2009 by an ad hoc committee (Friends of Harbor Country Trails) advising a consultant funded by The Pokagon Fund. This Plan recommends continuing to proactively pursue the Hike and Bike Plan implementation, and where appropriate to blend it with the Red Arrow Corridor Study proposals. Some specific first actions are also recommended here.  
(see Chapter V)

4) After a flurry of residential development proposals following the plan adoption, it became clear to the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees that much of the available land for development in the prime areas of the Township was in fact available because it was more difficult to develop due to such issues as wetlands and drainage, steep slopes, and limited access. In response, the Township adopted amendments to the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance, including supplementary regulations regarding waterfront and wetlands buffering setbacks. This new plan consolidates and revises recommendations regarding environmentally sensitive lands and waters, and recommends further changes to the Zoning Ordinance. (Chapter IV)

5) The changing demographics of the Township include:  
a) a reduced year-round population from 3678 to 3100, a reduction of nearly 16%;  
b) an increase in the median age of the population from 46 to 54;  
c) an absolute increase of 181 persons in the number over age 55 (+14%), and  
d) a corresponding decrease in the number aged under 20 by 285 individuals (-37%).  
(see Appendix C) (Chapters II, III, IV)

While many neighboring communities are seeing similar demographic changes, and across the United States there is a general increase in the median age of the population, the trend in Chikaming Township is even more pronounced than most. There are therefore implications for what kind of facilities and programs we provide in the future and who is to provide them:

- recreation facilities and programs,
- medical services,
- housing options,
- fitness facilities and
- emergency services.

This plan attempts to address the changing needs of the changing population.  
(Chapters II, III, IV)

6) Many of the goals, objectives and strategies of the 2005 plan addressed what has evolved in popular culture into the encompassing term "sustainability" however they were not identified as such. Within this document there is a discussion of sustainability as well as a list of suggestions for how we in Chikaming Township can move toward a sustainable community, with reference to the proposals of this updated Master Plan. Particular areas that were not addressed in the 2005 plan that are addressed here include renewable energy and localism in food and industry.  
(Chapter III & IV, and Appendix \_\_\_)

7) Other Updates – The new plan includes updates to:  
existing land use map,  
sewer and water maps,  
community facilities map & descriptions,

the community survey,  
the parks and recreation plan developed by the Chikaming Parks Board.

8) This version of the Master Plan includes a TO DO LIST of action items for the Planning Commission and Township Board. These represent things which should be initiated as soon as possible in order to move forward on elements of the Plan.

## **TO DO LIST – PRIORITY ACTIONS**

Need for Action This Master Plan is intended to look forward 10 to 20 years in the future. However, if the residents and officials of Chikaming Township merely sit back to see what will happen over that time, there is a distinct possibility that none of the desired results will happen, and that some undesirable ones will instead occur. While there is a strong desire to maintain the Township as it is, in a relatively undisturbed state, without action the very desirable quality of the area will attract more and more visitors and increasing pressures to become something different may well become difficult to resist.

Following through with changes to the Zoning Ordinance is certainly a good first step that is within the responsibilities of the Township government, but it has become clear that simply creating particular zoning districts will not necessarily result in the desired land uses magically appearing. The Township has had more than adequate land in light industrial and commercial districts since the present Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1998, yet much of that land remains vacant or in residential use because the marketplace has not responded. Indeed, there is a constant flow of requests for special land use permits to allow residential uses in the commercial district, but few new building permits for either commercial or light industrial uses. Where the market is generating commercial growth, such as in downtown Sawyer, it is also generating difficult new problems of parking shortages, jaywalking, and conflicting land uses.

Likewise, past Master Plans have identified that there is a need for more nearby medical services to serve the population with limited mobility, yet there does not appear to be enough market demand to provide those services. Affordable housing for the people who work in the hospitality and service sectors, Township emergency services, and the healthcare sector is also not provided by a residential sector that responds to demand for high end second homes.

Other communities have taken steps to meet needs that are not provided by the private market, such as: offering stipends to doctors to locate in the area; creating economic development offices to attempt to attract industries that may overlook the area; establishing chambers of commerce to promote the businesses in the locality; publishing documents designed to extol the virtues of their municipality; establishing tax increment financing districts to capture and utilize the increased value brought by economic development to improve and manage the district; etc.

With this need for action generated by the goals of the Master Plan, the following are identified as the most important first steps needed to achieve a harmonious future for Chikaming Township. They should be completed within the next 1-5 years.

- 1) initiate an outside consultant study to thoroughly review and revise the zoning ordinance, including:
  - a. assuring that the Zoning Ordinance is consistent with the Master Plan policies
  - b. eliminating redundancies, contradictions, and language confusion
  - c. reconciling discrepancies between the zoning district overlays and the actual existing parcels and land uses

- 2) begin an internal Planning Commission discussion of the following potential zoning ordinance changes:
  - a. consider creating additional commercial zoning districts to account for different conditions in different locations of the Township, such as creation of a mixed use district or a highway commercial district
  - b. consider permitting some commercial activities in industrial districts where appropriate
  - c. address controls on renewable energy installations
  - d. address locations and controls on medical marijuana dispensaries
  - e. consider creating a residential district and/or incentives which supports modest housing sizes and acreages, or modifying the existing NC districts for this purpose
  - f. consider requiring the provision of walk/bike ways, underground utilities, and additional wetland buffers, by developers
  - g. address tree removal and replacement policies
  - h. add a low impact development ordinance which addresses stormwater management and permeable pavement requirements
  - i. add language which is designed to protect streams and floodplains
  - j. consider modifying buffer zone options between differing land uses
- 3) take immediate steps to slow traffic on the Red Arrow Highway through our town centers  
  
and
- 4) sponsor a “design charrette” for generating a productive community discussion about the future look of the Red Arrow Highway
- 5) implement critical segments of the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Trails plan
- 6) initiate a pro-active push for senior related facilities and services in response to changing demographics
  - a. senior housing,
  - b. medical providers,
  - c. transportation services,
  - d. recreation and fitness opportunities
  - e. emergency communication and networking services
- 7) launch a sustainability initiative to involve the whole community in identifying improvements for future generations - particular potential is noted for:
  - a. low impact development controls
  - b. dark skies measures
  - c. solar and wind readiness (see #2 above)
  - d. aging friendly community measures (see #6 above)
  - e. natural resource conservation measures
    1. green/wildlife corridors
    2. protections of critical natural lands (see #2)
  - f. support for local small business ventures such as:  
B&Bs, farm to table operations, artisan agriculture, boutique food processing, wine and beer making, and other businesses rooted in the uniqueness of our area
  - g. support for high speed/capacity commercial grade network infrastructure to encourage
    1. new business locations
    2. telecommuting
    3. community interconnectedness (particularly the senior community)
    4. timely information dispersal

- 8) initiate focused sub-plans for areas of the Township where a special need is evident
  - a. Sawyer - increased commercial activity and traffic/parking congestion
  - b. Union Pier - unique nature of the lot sizes, house sizes, rental activity and seasonal crowding, as well as the need to coordinate any changes with New Buffalo Township (see #1 and #2 above)
  - c. Harbert - presence of commercial traffic-generating activities on both sides of the highway, pedestrian and bicycle traffic along and crossing the highway, problem intersections and dangerous vehicle conflict situations (see #4 above)
  - d. Red Arrow corridor – safety concerns, excessive speeds, zoning discrepancies with land use, keeping the corridor green and a welcoming gateway (see #4 above).



## **CHAPTER I: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This chapter summarizes significant inventory information regarding population and housing characteristics and trends in the Township; its land resources; the community facilities in the Township; and the results of the citizen survey.

### **Population and Housing Characteristics and Trends:**

While the population of the Township more than doubled between 1940 and 1980, it has since declined by 30%, with most of this decline occurring in the decades of the 1980's and the 2000's. During those times a large number of housing units in the Township underwent a change from year-round occupancy by permanent residents to seasonal occupancy, particularly in areas on and near the Lake Michigan coast. Although there has been a decrease in year-round population, the total number of housing units has actually increased, another indicator of the increasing numbers of second homeowners in the area.

The decline in year-round population has also been exacerbated by a general aging of the population overall, and a decline in average household sizes. The median age of Chikaming Township residents increased by 19 years, from 34.9 to 53.9 between 1970 and 2010, while average household size declined from 2.7 in 1970 to 2.11 in 2010. The proportion of children in the Township has declined greatly, while the number, as well as the percentage, of elderly residents has increased. These trends suggest that the Township is not keeping or attracting young adult households, either single persons or young families, while at the same time it is becoming more popular to move here permanently to retire.

There are also few new housing units being provided in the Township for young adults and new entrants into the labor force. Although the cause-and-effect relationship between these population and housing trends is not entirely clear, they are certainly inter-related.

### **Land Use:**

Most of the Township's seasonal housing units and a high proportion of the year-round housing units as well are located between the Lake Michigan shore and I-94. Scattered homes and a few larger groupings of homes are found in the interior of the Township, including along Warren Woods Road and Three Oaks Road

Sawyer, Harbert, Lakeside, and Union Pier are the community centers located along the Red Arrow Highway. There is also a community center at the Warren Woods Road/Three Oaks Road intersection, an area commonly known as Riverside. Sawyer, although unincorporated, has a small, but economically growing, traditional town center along Sawyer Road, the large highway-service oriented truck/auto plaza businesses located near the I-94 interchange, and the commercial cluster on the Red Arrow Highway. Other commercial uses, most of which are visitor oriented, are somewhat scattered along the Red Arrow Highway corridor. Several light industrial uses are located along the Red Arrow Highway, in Sawyer, west of the highway interchange and on Three Oaks Road

Large areas of agricultural and open land are located in the interior of the Township.

Only a few changes to land use have occurred in the Township since 2004. Most of those involved vacant land becoming populated with single family homes, but distributed in the general broad pattern described above. The Township Hall was moved from Lakeside to a new purpose-built building in Harbert, and replaced by residential use in 2005.

## **Natural Features:**

The Township's character is largely defined by its attractive natural features. The most significant of these is the **Lake Michigan shoreline**, with its **wooded sand dunes** and **expansive beaches**. The most significant feature in the interior of the Township is the **Galien River** and its adjacent floodplain valley and wooded ravines at the valley border. The Galien River valley has significant areas of **mature maple-beech forest**. Beyond the **river valley bluffs** are large expanses of **open, fertile agricultural land**, which contribute greatly to the rural character of the Township. Scattered **wetland areas** are found in low-lying areas, particularly along **stream corridors**.

The Township is fortunate that over the years some of the best examples of our natural heritage have been saved from development pressures due to the foresight of private individuals, groups and local and state park authorities. Warren Dunes State Park, at the northern border of the Township, and Warren Woods just inside the southern border (E.K. Warren; State of Michigan); Harbert Road Preserve (Chikaming Open Lands; Chikaming Township) and Chikaming Park and Nature Preserve (Chikaming Township); Robinson Woods (The Nature Conservancy, recently transferred to Chikaming Open Lands) and Pepperidge Dunes (Michigan Nature Association), are all large tracts of sensitive ecosystems protected through the efforts of our citizens. Chikaming Open Lands, a private, non-profit, conservation organization located in the Township has been, and continues to be instrumental in helping the Township and neighboring jurisdictions preserve such lands. Future preservation projects are currently underway in the Harbert Road, Tower Hill Road, and Holloway Road neighborhoods.

The Township's natural features are important in several ways:

- Principally, they provide residents a clean, healthy living environment. Natural vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide from the air and replaces it with oxygen; it provides habitat for an abundance of wildlife; and it maintains a rich biodiversity that is a healthier environment for plant and animal species than monocultures such as found in suburban and urban locations. The wetlands cleanse surface water of pollutants in a natural filtering process, and provide natural holding areas for excess runoff thus protecting the streambeds from erosion, the lakes and ponds from silting, and the surrounding lands from flooding.
- The agricultural lands enable the area to be more sustainable and self sufficient than if all lands were developed, and also contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide and production of oxygen. Agriculture, of course, is also a major economic activity for the Township.
- Finally, the natural features of Chikaming Township are the stimulus for our primary economic activity – recreation and tourism. If the natural beauty and recreational value are diminished, so too will the attractiveness of the area for visitors and second homeowners be diminished.

## **Community Facilities and Services:**

Chikaming Township provides a number of essential services as well as community facilities such as parks and natural areas to Township residents.

- **Public water and sewer service** is provided in the more populated areas of the Township concentrated north and west of I-94. Water mains have been extended to some areas east and south of I-94, along major road corridors where water quantity and/or quality problems have been experienced with private wells.
- The Township also provides **emergency response services (police, fire, and ambulance)** to its residents and to the traveling public.
- The Township provides a variety of **park and recreation facilities** to residents, ranging from outstanding natural areas to Lake Michigan beaches, to ball fields and playgrounds.

- All of the above facilities are subject to the increased **seasonal demands** placed upon them by the influx of summer residents in the community.
- The River Valley Senior Center, an agency of Berrien County, is located in Chikaming Township and serves seniors in the adjacent townships as well. The Senior Center provides, meals, transportation and activities. The Senior Center represents a major asset to the area, and should be enlisted to help with establishing an Aging Friendly Community.

### **Summary Results of the Citizen Survey:**

An important element throughout the process of preparing the Township Master Plan was consideration of public opinion regarding growth and development issues. As a means of soliciting early input in the planning process, the Master Plan Committee conducted a written survey of citizen views. The results of the survey were taken into consideration in the formulation of community goals, objectives and implementation strategies presented in this Master Plan. This survey was repeated in 2013-2014 in order to determine if the population still held the same values. There was no significant difference in the result of the two surveys. Responses to the survey questions are summarized in graphical form on the charts in Appendix E. Several strong themes which are relevant to the Township Master Plan emerge from the survey results. These themes are discussed below:

- Residents of the Township place a high value on the natural and rural characteristics of the community, and on a slower pace than found in large urban centers. (Ranked immediately below nearby natural land in importance were “small-town character,” “rural character,” and “separation from commercial areas”).
- Residents express a preference for a low density residential living environment over any emphasis on higher density forms of housing.
- While concern is expressed for a lack of employment opportunities in the area, support for development that would provide employment in the Township is not expressed. (There is recognition among Township residents that there is a need for jobs in the area, but these jobs should not be located so close to home that the highly-ranked qualities of the area (natural, rural and small-town surroundings) are jeopardized.
- Residents express a desire to keep large-scale commercial development at arm’s length.
- Residents express support for regulations that address aesthetic aspects of new development, such as requirements regarding landscaping, signs and outdoor lighting.
- There is strong support expressed for publicly-funded programs to preserve open space land in the community, and to provide hiking and biking paths in the Township.
- Residents place a high value on having quality health care facilities nearby.

## CHAPTER II: MAJOR PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- **Importance of Township Character:**

Chikaming Township offers an environment for both year-round and seasonal residents that is close to nature and the land. It is quieter, calmer, and more intimate than the urbanized world. Reaching a shopping mall may take more minutes on the road, but one has immediate access to fields, vineyards, wooded river valleys and ravines, natural wetlands, canopied country lanes, old growth forest, magnificent sand dunes, and secluded fresh water beaches.

The residents of Chikaming Township value these qualities. The recent community survey indicates that Chikaming Township residents overwhelmingly think it is important to protect and preserve the open spaces, natural features, farms, and rural and small town atmosphere of the Township.

It follows, therefore, that this Master Plan should place a high emphasis on preserving these qualities. The protection of the character of Chikaming Township is reflected in the goals adopted in this Plan.

- **Community Land Use Concerns:**

It has become apparent in examination of trends in and around the Township that there are three critical areas of concern which threaten the heart of the valued community character outlined above:

- By some measures Chikaming Township's growth has slowed in the last two decades. The Township needs to take measures to encourage growth in both its year-round population and its economic base. Closely related to this are:
  - Improvement in the availability of housing within the economic reach of families and seniors.
  - Provision of a variety of steady employment within commuting distance.
  - Fostering an upswing in business, industrial, and institutional activity.
  - Updating the Township's telecommunications infrastructure to meet business and cultural needs.
- The potential for unmanaged commercial development along the Red Arrow Highway could degrade the Township's semi-rural character, increase traffic volumes and congestion, aggravate the incidence of accidents, and further jeopardize the safety of non-motorized transport.
- Since Chikaming Township is in the path of suburban development in Southwestern Michigan, there is a marked risk that ill-conceived, land-wasteful sprawl could consume the interior half of the Township in coming years, changing its essentially rural character, and causing permanent loss of woods, fields, and wetlands valuable to the future viability and health of the community.

- **State of Michigan Initiatives**

- **Economic Development through Placemaking**

In 2011, Governor Snyder issued a statement which focused on local governments and the importance of localities in revitalizing the Michigan economy. In part, his statement read:

*“Neighborhoods, cities and regions are awakening to the importance of place in economic development. They are planning for a future that recognizes the critical importance of quality of life to attracting talent, entrepreneurship and encouraging local businesses. Competing for success in a global marketplace means creating places where workers, entrepreneurs, and businesses want to locate, invest and expand. This work has been described as a sense of place or place-based economic development or simply placemaking. Economic development and community development are two sides of the same coin. A community without place amenities will have a difficult time attracting and retaining talented workers and entrepreneurs, or being attractive to business.”*

According to Mlplace, the online home of this initiative,

*“It’s a simple concept really, based on a single principle – people choose to settle in places that offer the amenities, social and professional networks, resources and opportunities to support thriving lifestyles. Michigan can attract and retain talent – especially young, knowledge-based talent – by focusing on how best to take advantage of the unique placemaking assets of our regional communities.”*

- **Key Relevant Findings of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council:**

In August, 2003 the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, a temporary, bi-partisan body formed by the Governor and leaders of the State Legislature, completed a thorough examination of land use issues in Michigan. The Council was charged with “studying and identifying trends, causes, and consequences of urban sprawl and providing recommendations...designed to minimize the negative effects of current and projected land use patterns on Michigan’s environment and economy,” and to “create sustainable and more livable communities – large and small.”

Some of the major findings of the Council’s final report are summarized here, because they bear upon the goals and objectives of the Chikaming Township Master Plan. Excerpts from the Council’s final report follow:

*“Land use trends in Michigan over the last half-century and those projected for the first half of the twenty-first century has raised serious concerns about the future of Michigan.” “Where the [land use] pattern reflects compact, economically viable communities with a unique character and surrounded by farms, forests, and other open spaces, we usually like it. No one is far from jobs, recreation, schools, or shopping, and there is a range of affordable housing choices.”*

*“In contrast, when the land use pattern converts farms and forestland to low-density development that spreads across the landscape with little identifiable form, we call it sprawl.” “Surveys tell us that Michigan’s citizens want compact, livable communities, yet they continue to express their living choices by moving out of urban communities and into rural areas; they abandon small lots in cities for large lots in the country. Some say the “pull” of open space, low taxes, and rising home values combined with the “push” of crime, poor schools, and concentrated poverty helps to drive this process. Others say it is how and where government spends its money on new roads, sewers, water lines, and schools that attracts new development. Research shows that all these factors are partly responsible and that if we want less sprawl, we need to create more livable communities, protect the lands our resource-based industries depend upon (and which provide society with valued open space), and stop spending public money in ways that support sprawl.”*

*“Government policies... [have] irreversibly converted valuable farmland, wildlife habitat, and open space to support development at a pace that far exceeds the needs created by population*

*growth. Sprawl has added to the cost of constructing and maintaining public infrastructure as it serves a less dense population.”*

Some excerpts from the report’s vision statement that are especially pertinent to Chikaming Township follow:

- *Townships that are conveniently accessible to jobs and cultural facilities in the core city while also being close to recreation and open spaces in the country.*
  - *Healthy, vibrant agricultural and forest products industries.*
  - *Stimulating economic prosperity so that there is enough new income and tax revenue to provide needed public services and to preserve, protect and improve environmental quality.*
  - *Communities that understand a healthy environment and a healthy economy go hand in hand.*
  - *Communities that are inclusive in their zoning practices and efficient in their use of existing infrastructure.*
  - *Communities where public and private renewable natural resources such as valuable agricultural and forested lands are managed to sustain long-term use while providing open space and wildlife habitat at the same time.*
  - *Communities that are energy efficient, support energy conservation, and promote the use of innovative technologies including the use of renewable energy resources.*
  - *Preserving ecologically significant natural habitats and unique scenic resources that enhance the quality of life for state residents, attract visitors, and maintain biodiversity.*
  - *Walkable communities where community design promotes healthy lifestyles.*
  - *Communities where green spaces are linked via trails and pathways for human and wildlife use.*
  - *Communities that provide a wide range of choices in types and cost of dwelling units, lot sizes, jobs and modes of transportation in relatively close proximity to where people live.*
  - *Communities that preserve relevant elements of their history, traditions, and culture.*
  - *Providing expanded housing choices for individuals and families that are affordable within a range of prices and in a variety of locations in close proximity to employment opportunities.*
- Based on the public input obtained by the Council during the course of its work, the Council established three fundamental land use goals for land use reform in the State:
    - *Manage our land resources to create sustainable economic prosperity.*
    - *Maintain the integrity of environmental and cultural assets to sustain a quality of life that Michigan residents can point to with pride and pass on as a legacy to future generations.*
    - *Make public land use decisions that result in a more socially equitable distribution of benefits to all Michigan residents.*

The Council’s report stresses the importance of “striking the appropriate balance of economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social equity” as being the key to a sustainable future for the State.

“The council used the following **smart growth tenets** for many of the recommendations contained in this report.”

- *Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.*
- *Create walkable neighborhoods.*
- *Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.*
- *Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.*
- *Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.*
- *Mix land uses.*
- *Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.*
- *Provide a variety of transportation choices.*
- *Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.*

- *Take advantage of compact development design*

- **Sustainability:**

The Michigan report cited above coincides with the concept of sustainability which has been evolving since the 1980s, implying the integration of economic, social and environmental spheres to:

*“meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

*-The Brundtland Commission*

The following objectives, adopted from The American Planning Association, help to understand and develop the vision more clearly:

1. *Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, extracted underground metals and minerals;*
2. *Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature;*
3. *Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems;*
4. *Meet the hierarchy of human needs fairly and efficiently.*

American Planning Association, “General Policy Objectives,” Planning for Sustainability Policy Guide, p. 6.

One approach to sustainable living, exemplified by small-scale urban transition towns and rural ecovillages, seeks to create self-reliant communities based on principles of simple living, which maximize self-sufficiency particularly in food production.

In effect, Chikaming Township already resembles this type of community in its configuration, though perhaps not fully in its practices.

#### Some Sustainable Practices And Concepts To Consider for Chikaming Township

- Low-impact development (LID) is a term used in to describe a land planning and engineering design approach to managing stormwater runoff. LID emphasizes conservation and use of on-site natural features to protect water quality. This approach implements engineered small-scale hydrologic controls to replicate the pre-development hydrologic regime of watersheds through infiltrating, filtering, storing, evaporating, and detaining runoff close to its source.

Pervious, permeable, and porous paving are technologies that can allow the provision of hard surfaced parking and vehicle use areas while still permitting water infiltration. Other techniques include water gardens and bio-swales as alternatives to traditional detention ponds and drainage ditches.

- An Aging Friendly Community is a term used by the Michigan Office of Senior Services in its Community for a Lifetime program to assess the degree to which a community is supportive of older adults. It uses the categories of 1) walkability/bikeability; 2) supportive community systems; 3) access to healthcare; 4) safety and security; 5) housing availability and affordability; 6) housing modification and maintenance; 7) transportation; 8) commerce; 9) enrichment; and 10) inclusion

Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) is a community for older adults which has a range of living situations incorporated and coordinated under one roof: independent living, assisted living; skilled nursing care; memory care; fitness and dining facilities; medical offices; and even limited services are included in various combinations. Different fee structures are also used, ranging from rent plus service fees to up front buy-in plus maintenance fees. Sizes of these facilities range from 50 to hundreds of units. The concept also provides for economic development and job creation (as many as 7 permanent jobs for every 10 residents), thus becoming a sustainable enterprise.

- Natural Resource Conservation is a fundamental component of a community's long-term environmental and economic health. Natural resource areas perform important natural functions such as water filtration, and they provide recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat that enhance the overall quality of life of a community. These resources are what give our township its economic structure as well, encouraging second homeowners and vacationers to visit, and supporting small scale lumbering and farming operations.
- Many other sustainable practices and resources can be found in Appendix \_\_\_, and others have been devised by people in other communities and within other organizations with their own unique characteristics. Our community and its stakeholders should be involved in defining what a sustainable Chikaming Township will be like.

In light of all the above considerations, three areas of concern emerge that warrant the particular attention, resources, and energy of Township leaders and interested citizens. These three high priority goals address the most pressing growth and development issues facing the community:

- 1 - Broadening the Township's economic base,
- 2 - Stabilizing the Township's year-round population, and
- 3 - Preserving the predominantly open and agricultural nature of the rural interior of the Township.

To enhance the likelihood of the success of the Master Plan, the strategies contained need to be "actionable." The ability to achieve results served as a main criterion in the work of the Planning Commission in preparing plan implementation strategies. These goals mesh well and are realistic and within the powers and resources of Chikaming Township.



# The 2014-2029 Plan for Chikaming Township

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## **SUSTAINABILITY: MAINTAINING A BALANCED COMMUNITY**

Neither of the previous plans utilized the term “sustainability”, although the thrust of the concept runs as a theme throughout. The 1987 Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”, is often stated in terms of a “triple bottom line”, encompassing the environment and social equity as well as economics.

The 2003 report of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council stressed the importance of “striking the appropriate balance of economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social equity” as being the key to a sustainable future for the State. The 2011 Governor’s initiative on Placemaking similarly intertwines the environmental amenities of a place with its ability to attract businesses and be appealing to workers. Because Chikaming Township is very reliant on second homeowners and visitors for its economy, and is becoming increasingly a place where people look to retire, again the triple bottom line is relevant and useful for our planning theme.

Perhaps the easiest way for us to comprehend sustainability is through the analogy of a spaceship: a small space capsule is only able to sustain life with prepackaged supplies from outside such as oxygen, water, food, and energy. Only when the space vehicle is large enough to contain ways to replenish these systems such as by utilizing plants to grow food and to exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen, or by deploying solar panels to provide necessary energy, can it be considered sustainable.

The Earth itself is large enough and has natural ecosystems which can replenish and keep it sustainable if allowed to function naturally. Living as we do near an ecosystem such as the Great Lakes Basin, however, we are aware how seemingly small changes such as the introduction of lamprey eels with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, or zebra mussels from the ballast discharge of ocean-going vessels, can and has changed and disrupted the economy, environment, and infrastructure, or how the addition of air pollution from steel mills has changed the downwind climate and air quality.

For Chikaming Township to consider that it might at some time be self-sustainable is unrealistic – we are embedded in a much larger environment, and there are too many elements that are controlled by and provided from the outside world to achieve that state. But for us to have a goal of doing things in an increasingly sustainable way in the context of a larger region, nation, or world is a valuable guideline.

Sustainability is more of a frame of mind than a set of specific proposals. *Can it continue long into the future in the present state?* If all decisions were to address that question explicitly, then we would find ourselves moving toward sustainability. The concept is not confined to any one part in this plan, but provides us a way of thinking about all of our areas of focus, and in some cases merges two or more areas together.

This Master Plan utilizes the sustainable concept of Maintaining a Balanced Community as its unifying theme. A balanced community is manifested in a number of ways:

- An economy which has diverse industries and year-round vitality
- An environment that is not exploited, and is not degraded by wasteful practices
- A diverse, stable, and mutually respectful population

A sustainable Chikaming Township would:

1. Have governmental units which lead and model sustainable behavior and the efficient and effective utilization of resources;
2. Respect and protect the environmental legacy of the township
  - a. Be proactive in placing large tracts of preservation quality land under protection
  - b. Ensure that new development preserves open space and valuable natural features
  - c. Preserve and enhance green infrastructure for wildlife habitat and to enhance the environmental experience for our tourism economy;
3. Include all the non-residential land uses necessary for a the conduct of normal daily life,
  - a. Contained in town centers where commerce, employment, and services are easily accessible to and supported by a concentrated population without resort to motorized transportation,
  - b. Include medical and dental services, and non-profit and government agencies used by the residents, and
  - c. Preserve natural resources, natural habitats, and natural beauty, are non-polluting, recycling, energy and resource efficient, and leave most of the land and water undisturbed;
4. Have employment opportunities for all residents within short traveling distances,
  - a. With an infrastructure and attitude which can attract and incubate new business ideas, opportunities, and telecommuting options,
  - b. Some of which have identifiable exportable goods or services,
  - c. Which are viable year-round, and
  - d. Which are environmentally sound, non-polluting, recycling, and utilize local resources in a sustainable way;
5. Have sufficient housing stock so that all who work within the township may also live here,
  - a. With a full spectrum of types and prices, and
  - b. Located conveniently to goods, services, and employment, and
  - c. Are energy efficient, green-built and operated, preserve open space and are supplemented with renewable energy;
6. Have a diversified agriculture capable of producing the food needed by residents without resorting to manufactured chemicals or excessive fossil fuel depletion;
  - a. Supported by a food preserving industry which can prolong the supply of foods year-round
  - b. Is vibrant enough to produce exportable surpluses, and
  - c. Utilizes its waste products for useful purposes within the community, utilizes available local resources and workers in its operation, minimizes the use of toxic substances and minimizes erosion and pollution from runoff;
7. Have transportation options which minimize fossil fuel usage.
  - a. Are closely and compatibly integrated with land uses to reduce unnecessary travel, and
  - b. Emphasize and reward non-motorized travel, shared use vehicles, and alternative fuels.

### CHAPTER III: FOCUS: POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND THE ECONOMY

The busy summers along the Lake Michigan shoreline and a high level of construction activity in near shore areas give the impression of a booming community. However, for a number of reasons, the year-round population of Chikaming Township has actually declined significantly in the three decades following 1980.

During that time, the percentage of the year-round population under 18 has declined markedly, while the percentage of residents 65 and older has dramatically increased. Our schools have fewer students and the growing number of senior citizens may require other services not presently available.

It is also estimated that on peak summer weekends the population of Chikaming Township increases by almost 3 1/2 times, to more than 10,000 persons. Local businesses run flat out to accommodate this peak demand, but must contract or close down during the rest of the year. This high degree of seasonality in population and economic activity, common to many resort communities, imposes significant strains on the economic viability of local businesses and on the service capacities of local governments as well.

One of the most important community goals is therefore to develop a more stable, year-round population and economic base in the community. Key action strategies called for to accomplish this goal include:

- Evaluating the possible formation of a local economic development corporation and/or downtown development authority, to undertake economic diversification and improvement projects in the community.
- Amending zoning regulations to encourage, through incentives, provision of housing that is affordable for young adults/first-time homebuyers, as well as the elderly.

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➤ **GOAL NO. 1: Increase opportunities for year-round economic activity, employment, and tax base growth in Chikaming Township through commercial, industrial, and institutional expansion and diversification that is consistent with the character of the community.**

#### **Citizen Survey Findings Concerning Economic Development:**

Chikaming residents feel that a deficiency of employment opportunities within the Township is one of its most negative features, and that steps should be taken to correct this situation. 67.5% of respondents in the 2013-14 survey felt that the Township should take steps to attract employers. Although against bringing in large retailers or heavy industry to bolster employment, they did favor more specialty shops for everyday needs and the provision of more healthcare facilities, and in the latest survey were supportive of supporting local businesses in their expansion efforts, developing commercial grade internet, seeking a continuing care retirement center, expanding traveler oriented businesses, and even to encouraging light industrial warehousing, office and commercial activities.

## **Economic Development**

The economic development of any community is vital to its existence and continued health. Economic development concerns not only labor, energy, natural resources, location, infrastructure, and amenities but also less tangible factors such as culture, social geniality, and access to nature. Chikaming has all of these in varying degrees of abundance, but it suffers from unbalanced economic development nevertheless.

Data from the 2000 and 2010 Census indicate that Chikaming Township is a relatively affluent community as compared to Berrien County as a whole. Median household income in 1999 for Chikaming Township was \$47,778 versus \$38,567 for Berrien County, although it decreased over the next decade due to a struggling economy. And in 1999 the percentage of families with income below the poverty level was only 2.2% versus Berrien County's 9.3%. The relative affluence of Chikaming Township's population is perhaps partly explained by the fact that its workforce is heavily weighted toward management and professional occupations.

Chikaming Township has a relatively high percentage of persons employed in the recreation and food services sector and in the finance/insurance/real estate sector compared to Berrien County overall. In the decade of the nineties, significant growth in employment among Township residents occurred in service industries (finance, insurance, real estate, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, food service) and in the professional, scientific, management, and administrative industries. However, in that same decade there was a significant decline in employment in retail trade and also in manufacturing industries. Manufacturing jobs have traditionally been high-paying and with generous benefits, whereas the fast-growing accommodations and food service sectors are often characterized by low paying positions with few fringe benefits. By 2009, the sluggish economy had brought all employment sectors down, except a leveling off in wholesale, warehousing and public administration jobs.

Not one of Berrien County's ten largest employers is located within Chikaming Township. With 1623 Chikaming residents employed in the year 2009, but less than 1000 of these estimated to work in Chikaming, it is clear that a large share of those employed commute to their work outside the Township. To a degree, then, Chikaming is a bedroom community, generating considerable daily traffic out of and then back into the Township. The recent survey reveals that about ¼ of the residents are retired, and of those who are employed, 60% work in Chikaming Township either at a business (31%) or at home (29%), 18% travel elsewhere in Michigan, 9% to Indiana, and a surprising 13% commute to the Chicago area.

Businesses that do thrive in Chikaming Township include some scattered light industrial and warehouse/wholesale enterprises, the highway oriented businesses surrounding exit 12, a growing brewery (with pub), small stores that meet daily shopping needs, contractors who build and maintain dwellings, filling stations, banks, bakeries, and other traditional small retail operations. In addition, there are a number of galleries, antique shops, boutiques, bed and breakfast inns and restaurants that cater mainly to tourists.

In fact, the paramount characteristic of Chikaming's economy is its seasonality, driven essentially by summer tourism. This, of course, is a boon, bringing in needed revenue, but it is also a bane, because it distorts economic activity, employment, and the use of infrastructure, due to the wide seasonal swings

in business activity. There is urgent need, therefore, to counterbalance the summer spurt of the economy with a more robust off-season level of activity. Even a large proportion of the growing number of retirees in the Township are likely seasonal residents.

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Build a more diversified economy.
- Attract non-seasonal businesses, industries, and institutions that are complementary to the existing community.
- Provide suitably situated land for a variety of uses, with good transportation access, public facilities and services, and up-to-date telecommunication services.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- Provide support and assistance to local businesses that are starting out or expanding,
  - Assist with navigating local rules and regulations, and with referrals to other agencies.
  - Encourage existing and prospective businesses in the Township to utilize the services of the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center (Michigan SBTDC) located at Grand Valley State University.
  - Ensure Chikaming Township's telecommunications infrastructure is upgraded to provide broadband telecommunications capabilities.
  - Encourage local telephone and cable operators to include Chikaming Township in their plans to upgrade the telecommunications infrastructure.
  - Engage Berrien County, neighboring communities and telecommunications providers in cooperative/coordinated efforts to recruit employers to the region, and provide needed support facilities, including utility and transportation infrastructure, affordable housing and state-of-the-art telecommunications services, within a cohesive, planned framework.
- Support local initiatives to develop senior housing with associated services in order to provide suitable housing for seniors in their own area, as well as to add to the year-round employment opportunities for local residents.
- Encourage new businesses, both commercial and non-polluting light industrial, to establish themselves in Chikaming Township to counterbalance the existing highly seasonal economy. Also encourage retention and growth of established businesses.
- Initiate studies to determine whether a local economic development corporation (pursuant to Act 338 of 1974) and/or a downtown development authority (pursuant to Act 197 of 1975) should be established in Chikaming Township, in order to carry out projects to further the economic diversification and improvement of the community.
  - Examine whether Chikaming Township possesses the characteristics that are sought by major employers in locating new facilities, and undertake efforts to enhance the community's attractiveness to potential employers.
    - These factors include the availability, quality, and maintenance of the public and private infrastructure (e.g. transportation, sewers, water, communication, and energy); the efficiency and cost of government; the quantity and quality of the existing workforce and the ability to attract and retain highly skilled employees; the proximity and quality of research and training facilities; the timeliness, predictability, and cost of assembling needed land, and obtaining needed land use approvals and permits. Also important to prospective businesses are quality of life factors for employees, such as clean air, high water quality, abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, cultural activities and facilities, health care facilities and quality schools.
  - Identify potential business newcomers using Federal, State, and County resources.

- Guide new businesses to appropriately zoned locations.
- Encourage businesses to become more involved with the community through business fairs, publication of employment opportunities, etc.
- Take advantage of Chikaming Township’s atmosphere and promote it as a possible location for institutions that fit with the character of the community, will provide additional year-round economic activity and employment, and will enhance the tax base of the Township.
  - Possibilities would include a seminary, a boarding school, a corporate retreat center, an academic research center, a continuing education center, a retirement community, or a residential treatment center.
- Encourage clustering of commercial enterprises around the existing community centers of Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer.
  - Make these centers compact so they are “walkable” for shoppers by provision of sidewalks and adequate but not excessive off-street parking.
  - Consider more mixed (commercial/residential) and high-density residential zoning for appropriate near-downtown areas.
  - Develop zoning regulations that are tailored to the traditional central business district setting and characteristics found in Sawyer, including zero front and side setbacks, 2- to 3-story building heights and provision for parking in on-street locations or centralized parking facilities.

➤ **GOAL NO. 2: Increase the Township’s year-round population.**

**Citizen Survey Findings Concerning Population and Housing:**

For the most part, taxpayers who responded to the surveys preferred a low-density residential environment. However, older age groups expressed more support for housing affordability measures, as did residents who live inland of the Red Arrow Highway and long-term residents. Obviously, attitudes on the need for higher density – hence more affordable – housing are mixed. Much of the public unease with regard to higher density housing can be allayed if: (1) the location of such housing is carefully chosen, (2) its design allows appropriate open space and amenities, (3) construction is of a high standard, and (4) the site is buffered from neighboring, contrasting land uses. The 2013-14 survey asked about specific housing types, and found a majority supporting townhouse condominiums (57%), and two-family structures (51%), while smaller lots and apartment buildings had a slim majority of support if undecideds were included.

**Population and Housing**

According to census data, Chikaming Township’s population more than doubled between 1940 and 1980, declined 13.6% in the 80s, remained relatively stable in the 90s, and declined again in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On April 1, 2010, there were exactly 3,100 people living in the Township.

The median age of full-time residents of Chikaming grew from 34.9 years in 1970 to 46.0 years in 2000 to 53.9 in 2010. (For Berrien County as a whole, the median age in 2000 was 37.4.) During the same forty years, the percentage of persons under 18 declined from 31.4 to 14.0%, and the percentage of those 65 and older increased from 18.3 to 27.8. Obviously, these trends show what might be termed an alarming decline in children and a significant increase in oldsters. Furthermore, in 2010 the 65 and older people constituted the largest age segment in the population, whereas the 20-34 age segment

(the family formation and child-bearing years) declined to 9.3%. These figures suggest there is a deficiency in affordable housing in the Township and that Chikaming, therefore, may be losing a substantial share of its young adults to other areas. In the 2013-14 survey, when respondents were asked what they thought the appropriate response should be to these changes in the makeup of the Township, 69% said that we should try to accommodate and benefit from them.

The seasonal swings in the Township's population are another problematic characteristic. An assessment of the peak population of the Township on summer weekends can be estimated by adding to the year-round total (from the Census) the probable occupancy of the Township's seasonal use dwellings:

Total number of seasonal use housing units (2010 Census)	2,028
Estimated occupancy percentage	90%
Estimated number of persons per occupied seasonal unit	4
Therefore seasonal weekend persons equals (2028 x 90% x 4)	7,300
April 1, 2010 , population	3,100
Sum of two above equals estimated peak population of the Township	10,400
Peak to year-round population ratio	3.4

This high degree of seasonality (almost 3 ½ times as many people here on summer weekends) places heavy demands on the facilities and services of the community. (For example, in previous years use of municipal water on weekends had to be restricted until eventually the water supply infrastructure was increased.) It also means that retail, restaurant and certain other types of businesses thrive during the summer boom (four months at most), but suffer from a drastically reduced demand during the rest of the year.

**Importance and Availability of Housing:**

Housing is an important factor in the character of a place. Ideally, good housing should be available for people of all ages and walks of life.

Data from the 2000 and 2010 Census indicates that housing in the Township is generally of high quality. There is a mix of summer cottages and winterized homes along the shore of Lake Michigan and extending a mile or so inland. Farmsteads and rural non-farm dwellings are scattered elsewhere in the Township. The high quality of much of the housing stock reflects high property values and the desirability of this area for year-round as well as second homes.

During the 1990's, the percentage of Chikaming Township's housing units in the middle and uppermost price segments of the housing stock increased greatly, whereas the two lowest price segments decreased substantially. Between 2000 and 2010, the total housing stock increased by 318 units, and the largest increases in absolute number came in the \$500,000-999,999 range and the \$1,000,000 and higher range. This is partly due to new construction, additions to existing residences and appreciation in the value of the existing housing stock. However, here again is a suggestion of an ongoing decline in

the availability of affordable housing. The total number of housing units valued below \$150,000 fell from 2000 to 2010 by 92 units. Also, other census data indicate that multiple unit housing (which tends to be more affordable) is negligible within the Township, and, in fact, dropped by 92 units during the last decade, with mobile homes units decreasing by 35 in the same time period.

A rule of thumb in the mortgage industry is that the purchase price of a house should not exceed 2.5 times the prospective family's annual income. 2.5 times the median household income of \$44,792 in 2009 suggests that the "affordable" housing range for the average family in the township is less than \$112,000 – less than 25% of owner occupied units in the Township would be within reach of our public safety officers or teachers. The conclusion seems inescapable that if the Township wants to retain and attract start-up families – as well as seniors – it will need to have various forms of housing that is affordable.

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Increase the number of full-time residents.
- Maintain and enhance the residential environment of Chikaming Township by providing attractively sited, comfortable, safe, and affordable housing in a variety of configurations for families, singles, seniors, tourists, and persons with disabilities.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- Encourage seasonal residents to establish permanent residency in Chikaming Township through the following actions:
  - Provide to seasonal residents, through newspaper articles or brochures, information regarding tax breaks and amenities available to full-time residents.
  - Support the provision of services and facilities that enhance the year-round living environment, such as:
    - High quality public schools
    - Public facilities such as a library; community/cultural center, etc.
  - Support the provision of a variety of commuter transportation options:
    - South Shore Line shuttle.
    - Van/car/bus pooling program.
    - High speed water ferry service.
  - Support improved services for "telecommuters:"
    - High speed internet service and "hot spots" for wireless internet connections.
    - State of the art telephone services.
    - Land zoned for provision of small office spaces.
- Encourage builders and developers to offer housing more suitable to families and the elderly through actions such as the following:
  - Offer density bonuses for smaller starter homes (e.g. under 1,100 sq. ft., no garages, etc.) or homes tailored to senior citizens (independent living, assisted living and nursing care).
  - Offer density bonuses for on-site amenities such as playgrounds.
  - Change the zoning ordinance to allow higher density housing in designated locations near community centers, with requirements for provision of appropriate on-site facilities.
- Promote the creation of quiet, physically pleasing environments in and around residential areas.
  - Encourage the retention of trees in new housing developments. Promote neighborhood beautification – use the power of example by maintaining plantings of flowers and greenery on public properties.
  - Require buffer strips of vegetation to separate incompatible land uses from residential areas.
  - Provide playgrounds and neighborhood parks in residential areas.



- Use principles of Open Space Development for new residential development in rural areas to foster attractive clustering of homes and preservation of open space.
- Minimize proliferation of non-farm residential land use in rural areas, with its attendant increased traffic and infrastructure costs:
  - Carefully limit the boundaries of municipal water and sewer extensions into this rural area to discourage random proliferation of rural, non-farm dwellings.
  - Limit new home construction to the fringes of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Zone land for affordable, multi-family housing within walking distance of community centers.
  - After consultation with local landowners, zone appropriately sited areas for higher density housing, such as garden apartments and duplexes.
  - Create new zoning for mixed (residential/commercial) use in appropriate parts of “downtown” areas.
- Promote the development of assisted living housing for senior citizens which is safe, pleasant, and affordable.
  - Zone a quiet and secluded area of appropriate size and location for high-density housing for seniors and seek an interested entrepreneur to develop such a facility.

➤ **GOAL NO. 3: - Vulnerable Populations:** Assure that the level of essential services to vulnerable populations is maintained at or above what is currently available.

The mark of any community is how it treats those citizens who are less able to fend for themselves. Chikaming Township is blessed with a vibrant and diverse population and the community must continue to be aware of the needs of all of its citizens including the elderly, the young, and the disabled, as it grows and diversifies in the coming years. Because these populations may be small in number and/or less affluent, the private sector often cannot respond to their needs adequately, and it is therefore incumbent on the local officials to find ways to provide minimal service levels in essential areas.

➤ **OBJECTIVE:**

- Assure that the vulnerable populations of Chikaming Township continue to enjoy accessible basic services.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- At the present time, transportation needs are met adequately via Berrien Bus (which provides one-day dial-up service to all citizens at a low cost throughout the county with lift equipped vehicles), the school bus system, the River Valley Senior Center, . This is the most crucial of needs for vulnerable populations, as it provides access to most other goods and services, both public and private. Chikaming Township should monitor the availability of transportation services to make certain that they are adequate.
- General medical and dental services are available within short drives of all areas of the Township, though there are currently no doctors practicing within the Township itself. The Senior Center provides nurse screenings and some services, but the private market is generally responsible for the provision of these services. The Township should pay attention to make sure that if there is a withdrawal of services for any reason, people will not be left at risk, and that the increasing numbers of seniors are able to access high quality medical services.
- The Township currently provides rapid response EMS service based in the Township Public Safety building in Harbert. If for any reason funding were to be diminished for this service, an alternate means must be found to satisfy this critical need.
- Housing is generally also provided by the private market, with some assist from government for persons in need. The Americans with Disabilities Act, and various other state laws, assure that

accessible housing is available. We have, however, noted that for various reasons there are more older people living in Chikaming Township. The Township should encourage the development of appropriate housing for seniors in the area, including retirement housing and assisted living facilities.

## **CHAPTER IV: FOCUS: AGRICULTURE, OPEN SPACE, AND NATURAL FEATURES**

The map of Chikaming Township reveals three distinct features – man-made and natural – that create four land areas. These features are the Red Arrow Highway/CSX Railroad corridor, Interstate Highway I-94, and the Galien River. Population density is highest west of the Red Arrow Highway along the Lake Michigan shore. Moving successively further to the east and south, the land becomes less densely developed and dominated by areas of agriculture, forested tracts, wetland environments, and the Galien River floodplain.

Approximately half of the area of Chikaming Township to the east and south of Interstate 94, is a flat or gently undulating plain cut diagonally by the Galien River. Much of it remains in agricultural fields, though interspersed with patches of woods and scattered homes. Together with the forested valley of the Galien River, this area is an immense natural and economic asset for Chikaming Township

These open spaces and natural features comprise the undeveloped open space which make the Township unique and provide the small town, rural atmosphere its residents find desirable. The tourism and 2<sup>nd</sup> home ownership which provide a significant boost to the local, seasonal economy are stimulated by the presence of the small town and rural atmosphere as well.

At the same time, these open spaces are vulnerable to residential expansion, which can drastically alter the rural character of the entire community, consuming large quantities of land in the rural heart of Chikaming Township, and causing permanent loss of woods, fields, farmlands and wetlands valuable to future generations.

It is therefore important that Chikaming Township take steps to protect these valuable resources.

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**GOAL NO. 4: Preserve the predominantly open and agricultural nature of the rural interior of the Township.**

**GOAL NO. 5: Maintain a variety of agricultural operations and promote the preservation of existing farms, farmland, and open spaces through coordinated planning and development regulations, incentives, and educational strategies.**

### **Citizen Survey Findings Concerning Agriculture and Rural Environment:**

In both the 2002-2003 and the 2013-14 public opinion surveys of Chikaming Township residents, two thirds of the survey respondents identified “nearby farmland” as either an “important” or “very important” factor affecting their choice of living location in Chikaming Township. “Nearby farmland” was ranked higher in importance than either “nearby commercial services” or “ease of commuting” as housing location factors.

It is also particularly notable that previously undeveloped properties in the residential portions of the township closest to Lake Michigan are those which are most difficult to develop because of natural features such as wetlands, flood plains, and steep slopes. As residential property in this area becomes more valuable, there is more pressure to build on such features, and thus more danger to the natural environment that is deemed most valuable.

As an alternative to conventional, homogeneously spaced residential development, Chikaming Township adopted a new zoning district in its zoning ordinance following the recommendation in the 2004 Master Plan. . It is called “Open Space Preservation Development,” and it offers local governments, land owners, and entrepreneurs a chance to be creative in the siting, layout, and construction of new developments. With foreknowledge of the characteristics of the land itself, an appreciation of the character of the community as a whole, and our position with respect to surrounding communities and urban centers, plans can be laid that minimize development costs and which exhibit a strong sense of place and neighborliness, while at the same time preserving country vistas, open space, forests, water features and the like. With the addition of the new zoning district, and some modification to the Planned Unit Development District, the Township wishes to ensure that Open Space Development is used as the preferred development method for open lands.

. The Township should actively encourage developers to utilize these tools which can meet the community’s needs by providing incentives to private developers. The township should also monitor and keep the pulse of the development community in order to determine the effectiveness of the ordinance changes and to make adjustments as deemed necessary to assure continued and expanded use of Open Space Preservation Development. A description of the concept is presented on the following pages, and a brochure has been developed to explain it to developers and builders.

### **OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT**

Subdivisions in rural areas are not encouraged. But if a rural location is selected, there are still ways to protect the rural landscape by carefully planning the new development.

Each time a property is subdivided, an opportunity exists for adding land to a community-wide network of open space. Open Space Preservation Development simply rearranges the development on each parcel so that half (or more) of the buildable land is set aside as open space. This allows the same number of houses to be built in a less land consumptive manner, allowing the balance of the property to be protected and added to a network of community green space. The density neutral approach outlined below is a fair and equitable way to balance conservation and development.

Open space or cluster developments can be more profitable than conventional developments. They can also minimize the loss of farmland and forest while increasing property values. These subdivisions

provide the same number of dwelling units as conventional development. They are carefully designed, however, to preserve parts of a rural site and cluster the houses on the remainder.

Many townships require “clustering”; while ours allows it as an option on our undeveloped lands. Open space developments can be a profitable option for small-scale subdivisions. They can blend houses into the landscape and to some degree can allow for the continuation of working farms.

It is important to recognize that while open space subdivisions provide many benefits for people, wildlife and the economy, they cannot replace the need for a solid policy of farmland and rural area protection or the need for close-in, mixed-use communities.

➤ **OBJECTIVE:**

- Preserve prime agricultural land, the Galien River floodplain and adjacent ravines, and other important open and natural features in the Township for the sustainability, health, and attractiveness of the entire community.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- Make it clear to all parties in the development process that it is Chikaming Township’s desire that all land developments of five acres or more be undertaken using the principals of Open Space **Preservation** Development.
- Undertake a professional survey to identify high quality natural areas in the Township (such as stream valleys, wetlands, **flood zones**, forested lands and other wildlife habitat) and implement steps to ensure preservation of these areas in an undeveloped condition.
- Carefully limit the boundaries of municipal water and sewer extensions into this rural area to discourage random proliferation of rural, non-farm dwellings, thereby maintaining a clear edge between town and country.
- Designate land for high density residential uses in appropriate locations **close to town centers** that support compact community expansion.
- Establish a system of walking/bicycling paths designed to access open spaces and recreation areas, promote health and tourism and boost the local economy.
- Educate prospective developers regarding the cost-savings and other benefits of clustering of residences in compact neighborhoods.

### **Agriculture and Rural Environment**

Agriculture was the principal use of land in Chikaming Township one hundred years ago, and remains a significant land use in the Township at present. However, in terms of employment and income, agriculture (plus forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining) in the Township today is a very minor component of the local economy, probably almost exclusively a part-time form of work for those who live on family farms but commute to their principal jobs elsewhere.

Nevertheless, farming is obviously carried on extensively in the southeastern half of Chikaming Township, and supplements the income of a good many families. Furthermore, the sight of so many fields being worked and producing crops of corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and livestock creates a bucolic picture which is appreciated by all the people in the Township.

One has the impression this would not be Chikaming Township without farming, and we would lose an important part of our heritage if we did not have farming going on where we were reminded of it every day. Furthermore, from a fiscal standpoint, agricultural land places less of a burden on a variety of municipal services, on a per acre basis, than land that is developed for residential, commercial or industrial use. Therefore, retaining and encouraging agriculture in the Township is a worthwhile endeavor for economic and fiscal reasons, as well as for the aesthetic contribution it makes to the character of the community.

Due to the importance of farming to the character and economy of the community, Chikaming Township has amended this Plan to make it eligible for the County's Farmland Preservation Program. The area determined to be eligible for the PDR program is depicted on the Future Land Use Map as Agricultural Preservation. This area is located east of I-94 and includes **all** land currently zoned Agriculture. The Planning Commission designated these lands based on the public input received, the mapping exercise described previously, the natural features, the existing land uses, the size of the parcels, the location of utilities and services, and the condition of the soils. When all of this was considered, this area, currently used predominately for agriculture but facing development pressure, was selected.

Although these lands are eligible for farmland preservation, it does not mean that each application for funding from this area may be selected. The County has specific requirements for prioritizing its funding distribution, which determine the specific qualification of each parcel. This is just the first step.

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Encourage land owners and farm operators to continue to work the land for agricultural purposes.
- Protect the rural character of the southeastern half of Chikaming Township and its open spaces.
- Monitor utilization of the Open Space Preservation Development district to determine whether incentives should be modified so that Open Space Preservation Development is the reasonable and practical decision for the developer. (However, the incentives should not be so great as to diminish the intent of the development or the district.) Some locales have required this approach to development in rural and sensitive areas, and that should remain an option to Chikaming Township.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- Create zoning that promotes specialty farms and related activities which fit well with local tourism and the interests of part time homeowners, including incentives for organic farming which is less toxic to humans.
- Encourage property owners to apply to the Berrien County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program as appropriate to their situation.
- Encourage agricultural landowners to participate in government programs such as the "PA 116" Farmland and Open Space Development Program, which support continued agricultural use of their land.
- If development pressure hinders the efforts to preserve farmland, the Open Space Preservation Development provisions of the Zoning Ordinance should be utilized so as to preserve the rural character and/or agricultural activities in the district.
- Discourage fragmentation of agricultural land.
- Carefully weigh proposals to extend municipal water lines further into the countryside, because they then attract further non-farm development.

- Discourage construction of scattered non-farm dwellings whose inhabitants tend to resent certain farming practices such as fertilizing, crop dusting, harvesting, etc.
- Discourage spot development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas.

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➤ **GOAL NO. 6: Ensure that the future growth and development of Chikaming Township is compatible with the long-term health of the natural systems that sustain man and other life and that contribute greatly to the character and attractiveness of the Township.**

**Citizen Survey Findings Concerning Natural Features and the Environment:**

In **both** Chikaming Township public opinion surveys strong support was expressed for measures to protect natural features and open space as essential parts of the character of the Township and its citizens' quality of life.

The natural features and environmentally sensitive areas of Chikaming Township are defining elements of the Township's character and quality of life, **and they** are important in several ways –

- They contribute greatly to property values and the attractiveness of the community as a place of residence and
- They provide residents a clean, healthy living environment **by absorbing** carbon dioxide from the air and replacing it with oxygen,
- **They provide** habitat for an abundance of wildlife, and maintain a rich biodiversity.
- They are the stimulus for our primary economic activity – recreation and tourism.
- The wetlands cleanse surface water of pollutants in a natural filtering process, and provide natural holding areas for excess runoff, thus protecting the streambeds from erosion and the lakes and ponds from silting.
- The agricultural lands enable the area to be more sustainable and self sufficient, and also contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide and production of oxygen.

Among the significant natural features and environmentally sensitive areas in the Township are the following:

- Lake Michigan shoreline and adjacent sand dunes, many of which are wooded
- Galien River Watershed and adjacent floodplain and ravines
- Wetlands
- Instances of mature maple-beech forest
- Agricultural lands in the interior of the Township
- Groundwater supplies

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Protect selected high-priority open lands (including woodlands, wetlands, river corridor lands, floodplains, streambeds and ravines, dunes, beaches, and other valuable natural resources) for future generations through a variety of public and private initiatives.
- Strengthen the environmental protection measures contained in the Township's development regulations.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- Continue to encourage the use of the Open Space Preservation Development provisions of the zoning ordinance, and to refine and adjust the ordinance provisions.
- Direct developers and landowners to clearly identify and assess valuable natural features and environmentally sensitive areas of the land prior to preparing and submitting plans for developing such land, and to prepare site development plans that preserve those natural features and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Prepare a natural lands protection plan, to include:
  - An inventory of the Township's most important natural lands,
  - A planned network of publicly and/or privately owned "greenways" through the Township, and
  - Identification of protection methods and funding sources for permanently preserving these lands.
- Work in close cooperation with land trusts, other non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies to preserve the natural assets of the Township through legal instruments such as conservation easements or outright acquisition of selected high-priority natural lands.
- Develop an overlay zoning district in the zoning ordinance for application to areas of especially sensitive environmental features which sets forth measures required to ensure that new development protects these features.
- Assess the merits and drawbacks of enacting an ordinance to regulate the alteration of small wetlands that are not now subject to State regulation under the State's wetland protection statute.
- Adopt standards for new development for protection of surface and ground water quality, addressing such measures as storage and containment of hazardous material and use of floor drains in commercial and industrial buildings in areas not served by public sewers.
- Develop standards and requirements for the control of the quantity and quality of storm water runoff discharged from development sites in the Township, to protect the water quality and channel integrity of lakes, rivers, and streams in the Township.
- Continue to build upon measures in place to coordinate the Township's review of new development proposals with other governmental agencies, such as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Berrien County Drain Commissioner, the Berrien County Road Commission, the Berrien County Health Department and the Galien River Conservation District, to ensure that new development is in compliance with state and local environmental regulations concerning:
  - Disturbance of "critical dunes."
  - Wetlands.
  - Floodplains.
  - High-risk erosion areas.
  - On-site well and waste disposal systems.
  - Erosion and sediment control.
- Enact measures to reduce surface runoff which carries pollutants to streams and ground water sources:
  - Require developers to reduce the rate and volume of runoff by substituting permeable for hard surfaces in large parking areas, or by utilizing other proven methods
  - Encourage developers to use Low Impact Development (LID) techniques.



- Encourage use of native plant species in landscaping of development sites.
- Maintain a “no-disturb” zone, or vegetated riparian buffer, along all streams, ditches, rivers, lakes and wetlands. The provision of a 25 foot setback of buildings from inland lakes, river, streams, creeks, and regulated wetlands was enacted as an amendment to the zoning ordinance in 2006.
- Consider extending the 25 foot setback requirement to include all construction areas, including roads and utility easements.
- Prohibit excessive intrusion on any identified wetlands regardless of their extent or surface connection to a waterway, and apply setbacks with natural vegetative strips in all cases
- Develop regulations to provide for detention and metered discharge on site for all increases in runoff generated by development.
- Require all development to meet or exceed the Berrien County Drain Commissioner’s “Guidelines for Stormwater Management, Berrien County, Michigan,” as amended.
- Attempt to achieve “net-zero” loss of wetlands by insisting that wetlands either be preserved as is, or replaced on an acre for acre basis with biologically equivalent substitutes within the Township.
- To minimize surface runoff, limit the amount of parking provided at centers of commercial, industrial or civic activity to a reasonable number that may be less than the absolute peak that occurs on a very limited number of days per year.
- Encourage use of shared parking by multiple establishments with staggered peak parking demands, to help minimize the amount of paved surface on development sites.
- Promote prudent application of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Promote smaller application of lawn and garden chemicals, through public education regarding use of lawn chemicals, and encouragement of greater use of natural landscape features.
- Implement other measures recommended for protection of surface water quality contained in the *Galien River Watershed Management Plan*, completed in July 2003 by the Berrien County Drain Commissioner.
- Take measures, through zoning, to encourage the retention of woodlands throughout the Township.
  - Discourage the siting of residences in undisturbed woodlands; work with landowners to minimize negative effects of development on woodlands, including encouraging tree replacements either on-site or off, or with a tree replacement fund where those options don’t exist.
  - Find ways to reduce the amount of land required to be cleared for private roads in new developments.
  - Promote an appreciation for the benefits of woodland environments by inviting experts to conduct field trips into wooded areas for educational purposes, and support organizations whose goal is to plant more trees within appropriate areas of the Township..
- Enact a change to the zoning ordinance to regulate lighting in new developments in order to eliminate off-site glare and to maintain dark skies in Chikaming Township
- Consider measures to encourage the burying of power and cable lines

## **CHAPTER V: FOCUS: TRANSPORTATION, ACCESSIBILITY, AND THE RED ARROW CORRIDOR**

Transportation and land use are inextricably related: land uses generate the need and desire for trips to transport people and goods, while transportation facilities provide accessibility that make it possible to utilize the land successfully. . A change made to one part of the transportation/land use network can easily affect other parts in unexpected ways. Managing this interdependent relationship is a primary concern of this master plan.

In addition, in areas of low-density development with few sidewalks and bike paths, many routine trips are made by car, impacting the road system more per capita than in urban areas, and sometimes creating conflicts or disrupting the community character. Persons with limited mobility, without access to a car, or who are unable to drive may also be at a hardship. Thus, the master plan gives consideration to modes of transportation other than the automobile, and to alleviating conflicts and unsafe conditions.

The Red Arrow Highway corridor is a visually prominent “gateway” into the community, forming an important “first impression” for visitors, and contributing greatly to the Township’s highly valued natural and small town character. Increasing traffic along this corridor in recent years, both motorized and non-motorized, along with a number of hazardous design conditions, has created safety concerns and difficulties with the movements of people and vehicles. The linear spread of commercial development along the highway corridor could seriously degrade the predominantly rural visual character of the corridor, cause traffic congestion and safety problems and further jeopardize the safety of non-motorized transport. Another important goal of this plan is therefore to establish a “Chikaming Green Corridor” along the Red Arrow Highway, as the protected centerpiece of the Township.

In 2009, the Friends of Harbor Country Trails hired a planning consultant with the generous funding of the Pokagon Fund, and completed work on the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan. The plan covers Chikaming, New Buffalo and Three Oaks Townships, and the cities of New Buffalo and Three Oaks. This plan is described more fully at the end of this chapter. It was developed with much public input, was well received by the people and government officials in the Harbor Country area, and implementation of parts of it is underway. Funding is the major impediment to full implementation.

In 2011 the Berrien County Road Commission hired an engineering firm to undertake an engineering study of the Red Arrow Highway, which addressed the safety concerns laid out in the 2005 Chikaming Master Plan, and included the stretch of road from US12 in New Buffalo Township to Browntown Road at the north edge of Chikaming Township. Preliminary results of the study were presented to the public at two open meetings. Though people agreed with the safety concerns addressed, several elements of the plan were not well received, and the study was shelved.

The fate of these two studies reveals a lesson in planning: the Hike and Bike Trail Plan emanated from the public, was implemented by a group of interested citizens who were subsequently appointed by their jurisdictions from all parts of the area, and was openly discussed and modified throughout the course of its development; the road study, on the other hand, was simply awarded to an engineering firm which did the work and then presented it publicly with no input during the process.

In order to achieve the goals of this plan, the Township should initiate a planning process for the Red Arrow Highway corridor that is inclusive of and responsive to the public at all stages of its implementation. The process known as a “design charrette” has been used successfully in other communities and Chikaming Township should explore hiring a consultant, or possibly a non-profit organization skilled in working with the public, to facilitate such a process.

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- **GOAL NO. 7: Provide a safe transportation system which includes and separates different modes of movement of people and goods (including bicycle, pedestrian, and public transport) in Chikaming Township, and which promotes and supports the community character and land use goals described herein, while providing good access to services and amenities for all Township residents.**

#### **OBJECTIVES for Transportation and Accessibility**

- Ensure accessibility to basic needs for all Chikaming Township residents.
- Ensure that a range of transportation modes, including non-motorized options, is available to, from, and within the Township by implementing the portion of the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan that falls within the Township boundaries, and by requiring that new development include paths for non-motorized transportation
- Ensure that the Township transportation system is safe and efficient.
- Ensure that the roadways through the Township maintain their scenic beauty and do not divide land areas from each other.
- Ensure that any new or improved roads proposed for the Township are necessary, support the land use and character of the Township as envisioned in this Master Plan, and meet the standards of safety, efficiency, and scenic beauty envisioned by this Master Plan, and other recognized authorities.
- Limit the impact of commercial and industrial land uses at interstate exits.

#### **ACTION STRATEGIES for Transportation and Accessibility**

- Continue the emergency vehicle service of the Township.
- Monitor, publicize and publicly support available transportation services such as The River Valley Senior Center transportation services, The Berrien Bus Program of the County, inter-city public transportation services such as the Amtrak and South Shore Line passenger train services, airport shuttles, and inter-city buses, as well as proposals for taxi service, commuter ferry boat service and high-speed train corridors
- Encourage the provision of private taxi and/or other transportation services such as shuttles or jitneys, in the Township, particularly those that connect with other forms of public transportation such as the South Shore Line, Amtrak, city bus systems, and intercity bus stations.
- Follow the leadership of Friends of Harbor Country Trails in funding and implementing hike and bike trails in the Township, beginning with those sections of the Priority Plan which promise the most return on investment.
- Support the establishment of a bike sharing program in the Township if such a proposal is put forward.
- Designate land for high density residential uses in appropriate locations that support compact community expansion and encourage the use of non-motorized transport for local needs.
- Closely review and control the vehicular flow, parking, and ingress/egress plans for any proposed developments, especially those that are high traffic generators and those which are located on high traffic roads.
- Identify any areas where there are existing or potential transportation conflicts, such as between vehicles, trains, bikes, and/or pedestrians; develop strategies for alleviating that conflict.
- Continue rigorous enforcement of the sign ordinance.
- Require new developments to provide paths for non-motorized transportation, landscape buffering along public roads, and connections to pedestrian and bicycle ways in neighboring areas.

- Conduct thorough site plan reviews with attention paid to the impact of changes on the transportation system.
- Work with the County Road Commission and State Highway Department to ensure that the needs and desires of Township residents are clearly understood.
- At Interstate Highway interchanges:
  - Establish zoning boundaries, and placement, height, signage, landscape buffering, and permitted use restrictions appropriate to the location.
  - Take an active role in the discussion of any proposed changes to the interstate highways and the state and county highway systems which may impact the Township.
- Amend zoning rules to emphasize green space along the Red Arrow Highway corridor, by placing limits on the percentage of a development site that may be covered by buildings and pavement, and increasing minimum setback requirements for buildings and pavement.

Survey results regarding bike trails suggest that over 75% of Chikaming residents think that pedestrian/bicycle trails are important or very important to them, and that more than 56% of registered voters would support a bond issue to build hike/biking trails.

### **Summary of the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan**

The Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan was developed by an ad hoc group called Friends of Harbor Country Trails which formed in order to promote a network of hiking and biking trails in the region. The study was funded by the Pokagon Fund, and conducted by Landscape Architects & Planners, a firm located in Lansing, MI. It addresses hiking and biking trails in the three townships of Chikaming, Three Oaks, and New Buffalo.

The plan shows that Berrien County is addressed by three regional bike trail proposals, each connecting to a major interstate bicycle route: 1) the US-12 Corridor route; 2) the Blossomland Trail route between South Bend and Benton Harbor; and 3) the Lakeshore route running north along the entire eastern shore of Lake Michigan and southward to connect with the Marquette Greenway continuing around the southern tip of Lake Michigan. Of these, only the Lakeshore route extends through Chikaming Township, and is a major component of the plan.

The plan identified a set of destination points to be connected by the trails. Those in Chikaming Township are: Warren Dunes; Warren Woods; Harbert Park; Chikaming Township Park and Preserve; Chikaming Elementary School; and the River Valley High/Middle School. The committee first developed a network of paths linking these destinations as well as the town centers, and then held public meetings to get feedback on the preliminary plan before finalizing it and developing a phasing plan.

The final plan includes the following elements within Chikaming Township, connected in a coordinated system with the rest of Harbor Country and eventually to the multi-state Marquette Greenway. It also includes some prototypical examples of roadway and path designs and identification of problem areas and estimated costs, but much more work needs to be done.

#### **A. Priority Plan \***

- Designated bike routes on shared use roads – signage and pavement markings
  - Lakeshore Rd – full length. (priority 1)
  - Townline Road – Red Arrow Hwy to the lake
  - Tower Hill and Browntown Roads loop from Red Arrow Highway

- Separate bike lanes and an off the road shared use path
  - Red Arrow Highway – full length (priority 1)
- Bikelanes/paved shoulders – separate lanes at the road edge
  - Flynn Road (priority 3)
- B. Trail Priority Plan
  - An off road trail from the Galien R. parks to Chikaming Township Park & Preserve, Warren Woods and RV H.S
    - via Kruger Road and the I-94 right-of-way
- C. Full Plan – later phase
  - Bike lanes/paved shoulders
    - Warren Woods Road
    - Harbert Road
    - Three Oaks Road
    - Prairie Road

\*Priority 2 was assigned to the US-12 route, outside Chikaming Township

### **Progress and Phasing of the Hike and Bike Plan**

The Regional Lakeshore Bike Route passing through the full length of Chikaming Township can provide both recreational and commuter passage, and can become a boost to tourism and the economy of the township.

Some work has been and can be completed relatively quickly and inexpensively.

36 miles of shared roadway hike and bike routes connecting New Buffalo to Sawyer and creating three loops, have already been designated with signage, including the following segments in Chikaming Township:

- Lakeshore Road
- Youngren, Prairie, and Harbert Roads
- Warren Woods Road
- Sawyer and Flynn Roads
- A stretch of Union Pier Road

Work on trail crossings and off-road paths at Lakeshore/Red Arrow/Youngren and Warren Woods/Red Arrow/Lakeshore will begin in the summer of 2014, with local matching funds provided by Chikaming Township. These were considered critical safety links to the system.

In addition to the safety and accessibility factors of the trail, the Hike and Bike Trail network can greatly help to knit together the various elements of the Township: our natural areas, our charming communities, the agricultural areas, and most importantly, our people. The trail network can also provide a big boost in identifying our area as a distinct and special community with a character and pace all its own.

### **➤ ACTION STRATEGIES FOR THE HIKE AND BIKE TRAILS**

- It is the strong recommendation of this plan that other such links be established in the near future:
  - Separate Bike Lanes with appropriate crossways at the following locations:
    - Between Harbert Road and Old M-11 along Red Arrow

- Between Old M-11 and Sawyer Road along Three Oaks Road
- Between Three Oaks Road and the Sawyer CBD along Sawyer Road
- Bike crossing at Browntown Road, and safe routing into Warren Dunes State Park
- Signage and pavement markings designating Bike Routes as follows:
  - Old M-11 from Red Arrow to Three Oaks Road
  - the Tower Hill Road/Browntown Road loop
  - the Townline Road spur to the beach.

These will all require slightly different designs, but the goal should be to keep non-motorized and motorized transport safely separated while connecting activity centers and destinations. The Hike and Bike Plan provides a vocabulary of proven design options for various applications.

- **GOAL NO. 8: Preserve and enhance the Red Arrow Highway corridor as a safe, efficient and visually attractive thoroughfare for motorized and non-motorized travel into and through the Township – the “Chikaming Green Corridor.”**

### **The Future of the Red Arrow Highway Corridor Study**

Clearly more work needs to be done before any of a corridor study’s plan elements come to fruition:

- an open and responsive planning process, such as through a design charrette,
- public meetings,
- intergovernmental discussions,
- engineering work, and
- identifying funding sources.

However, this is a long range plan, and it should point the direction for the future:

The Red Arrow Highway could contain both motorized and non-motorized pathways for its entire length through the township. With a 66’ minimum existing R.O.W. width, even wider in some areas, the configuration possibilities are numerous. It need not continue as a broad, high speed thoroughfare that is a barrier to passage from one side to the other.

Safer and saner ways of efficiently moving people along and across the highway are available, while at the same time treating Red Arrow Highway as the Main Street of the lake shore communities. It is not too early to begin developing the plans into a consensus proposal that can be moved into the funding queues of local, state, and federal agencies.

### ➤ **OBJECTIVES for The Red Arrow Highway Corridor**

- Promote an inter-governmental transportation corridor study of the Red Arrow Highway utilizing a design charrette or similar process to ensure extensive public involvement.
- Initiate development of the Chikaming Green Corridor along the Red Arrow Highway, as the protected “Main Street” of the Township, preserving the quiet, friendly, healthy, and attractive rural/small town character of the community.
  - Features of the “Green Corridor” should be:
    - Community Centers at their current locations (Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer), but with clearly defined boundaries. These centers will have mixed commercial and residential uses, and will have approximately the same area, height, and placement regulations as at present. For a determination of the boundaries, look in the Land Use Policies.

- Along the Corridor but outside the Community Centers, commercially zoned land will have lower density and land coverage regulations and particular attention should be paid to preserving the natural scenic beauty through the Township.
- Inside the Community Centers, higher density and more intense land coverage regulations will be provided for areas designated as Central Business Districts (CBDs). Currently, the only such areas envisioned are the downtown areas of Sawyer and Union Pier, whose boundaries are defined in the Land Use Policies.

The purpose for looking at changes along the Red Arrow Highway Corridor is twofold:

- 1 - Examine ways in which the traffic conditions and safety can be improved so that the highway is compatible with the nature of the community centers for which it is the main street, and
- 2 - Maintain and enhance the functionality and visual attractiveness of the highway frontage and land uses along it, to keep its semi-rural and small-town character.

➤ **ACTION STRATEGIES for the Red Arrow Highway Corridor:**

- Chikaming Township should seek the cooperation of the Berrien County Road Commission and other agencies in completing a new professional Corridor Study of the Red Arrow Highway, utilizing a design charrette or similar method to help the public provide input in conjunction with engineers and planners to create public consensus on a plan for the Red Arrow Corridor.
- This plan should identify measures to improve traffic safety and function, provide for bicycles and pedestrians, and enhance the visual appearance of the corridor, and should specifically examine the following:
  - The feasibility and impacts of reducing speed limits and installing other traffic controls at critical locations.
  - Changing lane configurations.
  - Providing paths or lanes for non-motorized traffic.
  - Intersection safety improvements.
  - Adding traffic controls at critical locations.
  - Limitations on driveways and/or provision of frontage roads.
  - Signage controls.
  - Desirable changes to the roadway edges to enhance esthetics, such as landscaping along the railroad R.O.W.
- Since implementation of any roadway improvements awaits a lengthy planning and funding process, the Township should take immediate steps to reduce excessive speeds and ensure motorists' awareness of the presence and rights of pedestrians and bicyclists using the highway and shoulders. This might include:
  - electronic speed measurement signs at the gateways to populated areas,
  - pavement marking and/or overhead downlit signage for crosswalks,
  - warning rumble strips, etc.
- Enact appropriate zoning regulations (such as an overlay or other unique zoning technique) to implement the Green Corridor changes described in the objective above.
- Develop traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, and control measures to improve safety and accessibility in the Community Centers and to create pedestrian friendly environments.
- Create esthetically pleasing ways to channel deer and other animals into identified road crossings
- Cooperate closely with New Buffalo Township in amelioration of traffic problems at Union Pier.
- Continue to prohibit any parking where vehicles must back directly onto the highway when departing. Endeavor to work with property owners to alleviate such situations that are pre-existing.

- Modify zoning rules to reduce building and pavement coverage and to increase minimum setback requirements from the highway for new buildings and parking areas, in areas outside of the community centers.
- Modify zoning rules to encourage new commercial growth to cluster around the community centers of Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer so they become more compact, walkable, and attractive activity centers with adequate but not excessive off-road parking.
- Divert new light industrial operations to areas zoned specifically for that use.
- Select and plant appropriate trees along the narrow strip between the highway and the railway in the southern half of the Township so as to enhance the greenness of the corridor and create a sound barrier.
- Promote attractive landscaping on developed properties and in new development in the corridor.
- Ensure that regulations on signs prohibit overly intrusive numbers and sizes of commercial signs.
- Enact regulations on lighting which eliminate glare to motorists and users of pathways.



## CHAPTER VI: FOCUS: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The community facilities and infrastructure serving Chikaming Township include those which are essential to the well being of its citizens and visitors, as well as facilities and services that are enhancements to the quality of life in the community. It is no surprise that Chikaming Township residents place a high value on the provision of basic life safety services such as fire protection and ambulance service. However, they rank some discretionary amenities almost as highly in importance, such as having attractive natural areas nearby, and quality park facilities. The master plan goals for public infrastructure and services recognize these priorities by calling for selective investment in improved community facilities and services.

Following are highlights of the status of various types of public facilities and services in the Township, together with a summary of needs, goals and objectives for their future.

### **Recreation Facilities:**

Chikaming Township and the surrounding area have a variety of park and recreation facilities, both public and privately owned, that serve the needs and interests of year-round residents, seasonal residents and short-term visitors. The existing facilities, facility needs and improvement plans are described in greater detail in the Appendix to this document, based on information contained in the Chikaming Township Parks and Recreation Plan, 2001-2005, which was approved by the Chikaming Township Park Board on July 31, 2000. At the time of this writing, the Parks Board is reviewing its earlier plan and current conditions with a view to creating a new plan, which is incorporated here by reference.

Park and recreation facilities contribute greatly to the well being of the citizens of the community, and enhance the tourism economy as well. Recreation facilities in or near the Township include many that are oriented toward enjoyment of and access to Lake Michigan. Among these are Cherry Beach, several small road-end beaches and Warren Dunes State Park which abuts the northern boundary of the Township, one of the busiest parks in the entire State park system.

The other major emphasis of the Township's recreation facilities is access to and enjoyment of high-quality natural areas, such as the Warren Woods State Park climax maple/beech forest, the Township's 260-acre Chikaming Township Park and Preserve on Warren Woods Road as well as the various preserves set aside by land conservancies. Harbert Community Park meets the needs of younger residents for playground and ball field facilities, contributing to a well-rounded recreation system in the community.

The 2001-2005 Parks and Recreation Plan programs the following improvement projects to the Township's park and recreation facilities:

- Addition of parking and pedestrian/bicycle facilities at the Township's beaches.
- Addition of potable water, restrooms, basketball court and skating rink at Harbert Community Park.
- Interpretive signs and trail markers at the Nature Preserve.
- Non-motorized trail development along Red Arrow Highway is identified as a planned recreation facility improvement in the 2001-2005 Recreation Plan.

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- **GOAL NO. 9: Provide a variety of opportunities for relaxation, competitive sports and other active endeavors, as well as nature appreciation and education through a well-balanced system of private and public parks and recreational facilities for all age groups.**

<b>Citizen Survey Findings Concerning Recreation Facilities:</b>
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The citizen surveys conducted in 2002-2003 and 2013-14 indicated that there is very strong support in the community for publicly funded programs to preserve open space land in the community. The survey results also revealed that a majority of residents rank improvements to existing parks, and purchase of land for new parks, high in importance among various types of public facilities and services.

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Concentrate the Township's efforts on improvements to existing parks, and in particular the new Chikaming Park and Nature Preserve, with the addition of native plantings, walking and ski touring trails, trail markers, interpretive signing and brochures, viewing platforms and picnic areas.
- Acquire land for small neighborhood parks in or near neighborhoods which lack nearby park and recreation facilities.
- Encourage developers to reserve areas for parks and open space in new residential developments.
- Encourage provision of open space for active and passive recreational use by residents in new residential development, through use of Open Space Preservation Development principles in residential development layout.
- Continue cooperation with the school system in providing recreational facilities and programs for public use.
- Promote close cooperation between the Township Board, the Planning Commission, the Public Safety Commission and the Park Board in managing the Township's road-end beaches.

**Public Utilities:**

The Township provides public water and, through a regional authority, sanitary sewer service to the more densely developed portions of the community. Service area expansions are initiated primarily on the basis of citizen requests. The Township has and continues to invest in its existing water distribution system to improve service, by eliminating long dead-end mains. Future plans call for additional elevated storage capacity, to serve peak daily demands and provide improved fire protection flows.

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➤ **GOAL NO. 10: Provide reliable, quality, cost-effective water and sewer service within planned service area boundaries which support the land use plan herein.**

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Explicit consideration should be given to the land use goals and policies of this Master Plan any time expansion of public water or sanitary sewer service to new areas is being proposed.
- Carefully limit the boundaries of municipal water and sewer extensions into this rural area to discourage random proliferation of rural, non-farm dwellings.
- Continue to make improvements to the existing water storage and distribution system, to enhance system reliability and provide water in a quantity and at pressures necessary for adequate fire protection.

**Public Safety:**

At the present time the Township is the main provider of police, fire, and emergency medical service, all based at the Township Hall and Public Safety Building in Harbert. This array of services is excellent for a small community. However, because of the current fiscal difficulties at all levels of government, there will be pressures to conserve tax dollars by reducing services.

➤ **GOAL NO. 11: Maintain the current level of public safety services to the people of Chikaming Township.**

➤ **OBJECTIVE:**

- Keep the public informed of the vital role played by these services, and actively campaign for the renewal of tax measures dedicated to their continuance.

**Government Offices and Community Facilities:**

Chikaming Township has invested in and relies upon several buildings to provide essential services to its residents. The Township has enhanced efficiency in the provision of public services by consolidating several fire stations into a single public safety facility in Harbert, while at the same time providing improved opportunity for citizen access and participation in Township meetings with a new multi-purpose meeting room, expanded parking, and Township Offices. The former Township office building in Lakeside and the unused fire stations have been sold.

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➤ **GOAL NO. 12: Locate and design community facilities in the Township which are visible and accessible to the public, support the land use plan, and model the desired environmental character of the Township.**

➤ **OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop the Township Hall and Public Safety Building site so that it provides a sense of place and community pride for the residents of the Township, including design of parking, landscaping, signage, and lighting in a way that provides a model for the desired character of private developments in the Township. Upon recommendation from the Master Plan Committee, in 2005 the Township implemented the following actions:
  - Initiate a volunteer/donation-based program to install attractive landscaping at the site.
  - Encourage the utilization of the facility for community events and activities.
  - Establish an annual, Township sponsored event to bring all residents together with each other and with Township officials and community organizations.
  - Utilize native plants in landscaping.
- However, the Township has not yet acted on the final recommendation from the earlier plan:
  - Utilize low impact development techniques such as porous pavement and rain gardens. It is therefore recommended that as site improvements become due, the Township implement L.I.D. practices on the site as well as on other properties it owns
- Two additional recommendations for the Township Hall are as follows:
  - Modify the lighting in the parking lot and on the building so that it models the Good Neighbor Policy adopted in 2009. It is possible to meet safety and security concerns while at the same time eliminating light glare onto neighboring property and the roadway.
  - Develop a program for installing community solar photovoltaics on the vast, south facing roof of the building. Community solar is a concept whereby individuals and businesses purchase shares in the project and receive the energy and tax benefits generated by solar panels. Photovoltaics are now cost-competitive with conventionally generated electricity, and demonstrating this in a very visible way can begin moving the Township and its businesses and residents away from reliance on fossil fuels and toward a more sustainable energy future.

## CHAPTER VII: FOCUS: FUTURE LAND USE

In this chapter, we attempt to look forward about fifteen years to forecast how the land use map of Chikaming Township might appear if the suggestions of this Master Plan are carried out. This is admittedly an idealized picture, but it is based upon our present perception of trends in population, economics (land costs, public expenditure, technology, transportation) and social pressures. We have attempted to foresee where these elements in our community and the larger world around us are taking us and thereby judge how we might seek to shape the future. We have tried to formulate this view of the future to take advantage of our assets, to protect property values, to promote community welfare, and to save the elements of our environment that we value and wish to preserve and enhance.

### Commentary on the Map of Future Land Use

The Map of Future Land Use (which follows this text) is purposefully treated in a “broad brush” manner. No attempt is made to delimit future land uses precisely. Instead, boundaries between land use areas have been shown as bands rather than lines, because we cannot know the future with absolute certainty. Also, we do not wish to provoke disputes over boundaries but to advance the concept that Chikaming Township has distinctive regions and to illustrate the logic of their positions, makeup, orientations, and purposes.

#### ➤ The Chikaming Green Corridor

We believe that the character of the Township as a whole is intimately tied to the viability, preservation, and enhancement of the Chikaming Green Corridor along the Red Arrow Highway, so this feature of the landscape occupies a place of prominence. This vital artery is now green and semi-rural and should be treated as a major asset of the Township. In order to give the Chikaming Green Corridor the attention it needs, we have firstly (in Chapter V) proposed that the Township and Road Commission conduct a design charrette as a means of consulting and working with the people of the Township to devise ways to make the highway safer, calmer, and more inclusive of all transportation modes, and thereby more inviting to the many and varied users of the road.

Secondly, we propose creation of an overlay zone or other measure to control more carefully its future use and development. This overlay zone would encompass several types of existing land use along the length of its path through the Township and would emphasize retention and enhancement of its green character. It is anticipated that the overlay zone would also include measures to restrict use of the Corridor mainly to local and tourist traffic at reduced speeds, and that it would include bicycle and pedestrian use in a dedicated lane. Commercial zoning regulations should be adjusted so that Community Centers and CBDs are more dense and the open road between centers is less dense with more open space surrounding buildings.

Finally, we propose that the Township take a close look at the strip of land running from Union Pier northward past the North end of Lakeshore Road between the Red Arrow Highway and the CSX railroad tracks. This strip is made up entirely of right-of-way land owned by the Berrien County Road Commission and CSX. It is an untapped resource which could easily become a linear park encompassing hike and bike trails, roadside pocket parks, native plantings, parcours exercise stops, interpretive and educational features or a variety of other possibilities.

## ➤ **Chikaming's Community Centers**

Rather than facilitating the further spread of commercial sites along the Chikaming Green Corridor, growth of new commercial enterprises is foreseen in the form of incremental growth in the existing community centers of Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer. These centers appear as beads on the necklace of the Chikaming Green Corridor. If things proceed as planned, they should develop as compact areas where patrons park their cars off the Red Arrow Highway and walk between their various errands. Mixed commercial/residential zoning and multi-residential zoning at appropriate sites in and near these community centers is suggested as a means of creating walkable, and attractive shopping areas.

Community Centers are divided into two parts: a dense, more urban-like, mixed-use Central Business District (CBD) and a less dense but still walkable, mixed-use Community Center. Not every designated Community Center has a CBD; only Sawyer and Union Pier are large enough to support the density of traffic and use and still maintain the character of the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods. These surrounding areas are buffered by the Community Center area that surrounds the CBD. In time, the other designated areas may grow to have the CBD designation as well,

The CBD area is envisioned as similar to the downtown of a small, traditional Midwestern town: storefronts built up to the street with large windows; large sidewalks with benches and outdoor cafes; apartments and offices located above the retail; parking on the street or behind the building; and traditional architectural design elements. This environment creates the identity and vibrancy necessary to sustain the community.

The Community Center area surrounds the CBD and acts as both a buffer to the surrounding neighborhoods and a transition to the CBD. It is dense enough to remain mixed-use and walkable, but the requirements include setbacks and open space consistent with the surrounding area. The Community Center area works together with the CBD to create nodes of activity and desirable places to live and shop along the Corridor thereby limiting development pressure elsewhere in the Township. As a rule of thumb a Community Center is that area within an easily walkable ½ mile from a CBD, or if there is no CBD, then ½ mile along roadways from an activity area or central point such as an intersection.

Taken together these elements comprise what has come to be known as “placemaking”, a concept that has been embraced by Gov. Snyder as part of his community development initiative, and put forth in the State of Michigan’s MPlace and Pure Michigan programs.

### *Descriptions and Boundaries of Community Centers and CBDs*

#### **Sawyer**

Sawyer, though unincorporated, is the largest and most complex community in Chikaming. “Downtown Sawyer,” which grew up close to the railway crossing and a vanished railway station, should be recognized as a historic district where structures and features of historic value are maintained and enhanced. At the Sawyer exit of I-94, a second node of commercial activities within Sawyer, catering to long haul vehicular traffic, may well enlarge and intensify. Further west, a third commercial concentration is strung along the Chikaming Green Corridor, but it is hoped that measures can be adopted to make this node more compact and dense through attractively planned development. On the South side of Sawyer, and removed from the Chikaming Green Corridor, is Chikaming’s only area zoned for light industry, which we anticipate will develop as another center of employment for the Township. Expansion of these residential, commercial, mixed residential/commercial, and industrial uses in and near Sawyer will no doubt take place, but we urge that a clear edge between town and country be maintained.

*Central Business District –*

All properties (with frontage on Sawyer Road) on both sides of Sawyer Road starting at the CSX railroad tracks traveling east to Flynn Road.

*Community Center –*

Sawyer shall have Community Center boundaries that encompass all three sections with a Central Business District designated for the downtown section. All properties with frontage on both sides of Sawyer/Holloway Road starting at the west side of Red Arrow Hwy , and north on both sides of Red Arrow to Tower Hill Road, traveling east to Flynn Road, north along Flynn Road to include Centennial Woods site condominium, and south on Flynn Road to Aplona, then heading west to the railroad tracks and continuing west across Red Arrow Hwy to include the antique store across from Chikaming Dental.

Harbert

*Central Business District –*

There is no CBD in Harbert.

*Community Center –*

Properties along both sides of Red Arrow Hwy, starting at the northeast point where “Center of the World Workshop” currently resides and Harbert Community Park are located, then traveling southwest to the Harbert Post Office and Olson Realty. Also, the triangular area bordered by Red Arrow Hwy, Prairie Road and Harbert Road.

Lakeside

*Central Business District –*

There is no CBD in Lakeside.

*Community Center –*

Properties on the west side of Red Arrow Hwy starting on the northwest with the Lakeside Antique property, then the properties in the triangle bordered by East Road, Lakeside Road and Red Arrow Hwy, and the property on Lakeside Road between Pier Street (Lovell & Whyte) and Red Arrow Hwy (Methodist Church).

Union Pier –

*Central Business District –*

Properties on Red Arrow Hwy starting at Goodwin Ave (Frankie’s Place) to Townline Road, then west on Townline to “On the Lounge”, then north on Greenwood to Pier 9 Bungalows.

*Community Center –*

Properties along Red Arrow starting at Wintergreen on the north heading south to Townline Road, past Greenwood to “On the Lounge”, then north on Greenwood, including properties on both sides of Greenwood to Pier 9 Bungalows, then down Goodwin from Pier 9 on the southwest side and Beachside Condominiums on the north side to Red Arrow Hwy.

It should be remembered that Union Pier south of Townline Road is in the New Buffalo Township jurisdiction, and any planning for this area should include coordination with them.

➤ **Chikaming’s Residential Concentration**

Most of the single-family housing within the Township is now concentrated within a band a mile or two broad along the shore of Lake Michigan. Infilling of new residences and upgrading of old ones within

this band is expected to continue. Neighborhoods on the southeast side of the Chikaming Green Corridor will probably expand somewhat to the east and south. I-94 forms a natural barrier enclosing a large area now zoned for residential use and into which new residences may be expected to expand within the next fifteen years. Also, suitable locations in areas now vacant might be found for such needed facilities as assisted living quarters for seniors and attractive high density – thus affordable – housing for young families. Since much of the previously undeveloped lands in this area were left vacant because of impediments to development such as wetlands, flood plains, steep slopes, and poorly drained soils, care should be taken to ensure that these and other natural features are not lost in the rush to build new housing. The Township should continue to develop ordinances and zoning regulations to protect the natural features of these lands and the character of the built environment surrounding them.

➤ **Chikaming’s Critical Dunes**

Along the Lake Michigan lakefront extending northward from Turner Shores, an overlay zone is suggested to coincide with the area designated as “Critical Dunes” by the State of Michigan. This is an especially scenic area which is vulnerable to wind erosion if cleared of vegetation or bulldozed, and development in this area should be carefully monitored and controlled where possible.

➤ **Exit 6 off I-94 for Union Pier**

At the northwestern corner of the I-94 exit at Union Pier, an area of approximately 120 acres has been zoned for multi-family use for many years. While it may be appropriate for development of this site to include a multiple-family residential component, there is not foreseeable demand for the use of the entire 120 acres for this use.

The size of this property and its proximity to the interstate highway lend it to a mixed-use development approach, which could include retail, office and residential components. Development of the site should provide well-planned vehicular and non-motorized traffic movement between uses on the site, and should be coordinated with neighboring New Buffalo Township. Use of a PUD zoning designation would provide the regulatory flexibility to accommodate mixed uses while also providing the Township with the discretion and oversight of the site design and the overall land use mix.

➤ **The Interior of Chikaming**

The rest of Chikaming Township lies to the east and south of the aforementioned areas and for the sake of simplicity is referred to here as The Interior. It now consists almost exclusively of farms, woodlots, parks, and scattered rural non-farm residences served by a one-mile spacing of section-line roads. It is zoned for agricultural use. Since Chikaming Township lies squarely in the path of suburban-style development advancing from both the north and the south, The Interior may experience the Township’s greatest growth pressures in the future. . The zoning of this area should remain Agriculture, it should be designated as land appropriate for Farmland Preservation, and incentives should be provided in the Zoning Ordinance to encourage the use of Open Space Preservation Development as opposed to conventional development in this area. A professional survey should be conducted at the earliest opportunity to locate precisely on large scale maps water bodies, wetlands, woods, floodplains, unfarmed open spaces, and other natural lands within The Interior. Then, the Township should encourage residential developers to utilize principles of open land development as well as the Open Space Preservation Development zoning district in order to preserve these valuable aspects of the environment. (Among other techniques, open land development clusters new residences fairly tightly, often in free form design, making it possible to preserve valuable natural features and open space.) Thus, The Interior might avoid the more usual rectangular suburban sprawl so wasteful of land resources. And by this means, farming, too, might be retained on the areas containing good soils. The Township should consider adopting further incentives in its ordinances to

retain farmland, such as an organic farming incentive within the Open Space Preservation Development district. Scenic easements should also be considered as a means to preserve the rural appearance of portions of The Interior. And a system of dedicated, off-road, bicycle and walking paths lacing this area would provide an attraction within this open landscape. The Township should require that developers of property in this area provide such paths interconnected with the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Trails system.

As described earlier in this Master Plan, a significant portion of The Interior was designated for Agricultural Preservation. The Planning Commission determined this area to be best suited for the County Farmland Preservation program and was therefore selected to be eligible for the PDR assistance. See the discussion in Chapter IV for more information on the selection process.

Lying within The Interior is a small concentration of commercially zoned properties at the crossing of Three Oaks and Warren Woods roads. This little commercial node is informally known as Riverside. It is anticipated that Riverside will expand as a convenience shopping center should residential land uses multiply nearby.

➤ **The Galien River Valley and Watershed**

Last, but by no means least, the Galien River, which bisects the Interior, needs to be set aside as another overlay zone, protecting both its flood plain and its enclosing steep slopes from encroachment by development. This would be a valuable contribution to the larger effort to bring back a healthy Galien River, including the valley and its watershed, both of which extend well beyond the confines of Chikaming Township.

A watershed is an area of land that drains to common body of water. Part of Chikaming Township is within the Galien River Watershed. All land in the township drains to Lake Michigan. **Water quality protection needs to happen at the site level, municipal level and watershed level to be effective.**

While the Future Land Use map delineates only the Galien River floodplain and its adjacent river valley slopes, it should be recognized that land use activities far beyond this immediate area potentially impact the water quality of the river and its flow characteristics.

The Galien River Watershed is 112, 222 acres in size, with 82,665 acres in Michigan. Approximately 16,635 people live in Michigan's portion of the Galien River Watershed. A watershed does not respect state, county, township, village or city boundaries. Through the efforts of the Galien River Watershed Project, there is a recognition that watershed communities must work together to improve and protect water resources. The inland half of Chikaming Township and a small section of the Lake Michigan coast are in the watershed. Three Oaks and Weesaw Townships (including the Villages of Three Oaks and Galien) are entirely within the Galien River Watershed. The Townships of Galien, New Buffalo, and the City of New Buffalo have between 60% and 90% of their areas in the watershed. Bertrand, Baroda, Buchanan, Lake, and Oronoko Townships each have less than half of their area in the watershed.

The branches of the Galien River wind through southwest Michigan in Berrien County and northwest Indiana, in LaPorte, and St. Joseph Counties emptying into Lake Michigan at New Buffalo, Michigan. The outlet of Dayton Lake defines the headwaters of the Galien River. The East Branch of the Galien River begins at Boyle Lake. The eastern portion of the watershed includes a few small lakes and ponds. The ultimate destination of the watershed drainage is Lake Michigan.

The communities in the Galien River Watershed have expressed concerns about water quality and the impacts on public safety, wildlife habitats, and financial livelihoods. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has included several reaches in the watershed on the Clean Water Act, Section 303(d) list for not meeting water quality standards. In consequence, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process was initiated. The identified pollutants that are impairing those waters include



sediment, nutrients, and bacteria. The Galien River Watershed Management Plan identifies the causes and sources of the pollutants and recommends actions to improve water quality.

Further, the water quality of the ground and surface waters is being threatened by growth and development that does not limit impacts on these water resources. If not planned carefully, growth and development will cause water currently reaching the river through groundwater to be redirected and reach the river through overland flow via runoff from impervious surfaces. This threatens to change the watershed's flow regime - creating flashy streams and rivers with high flows after storm events. The increased runoff will also increase stream bank erosion and result in more pollutants (sediment, nutrients, etc.) reaching surface waters.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is providing grant funds to The Conservation Fund and Chikaming Open Lands to preserve and improve the water quality of the Galien River Watershed. Some of these grant funds will specifically be used to provide tools and planning assistance to local units of government within the watershed and to purchase conservation easements in the watershed. For more information on the Galien River Watershed refer to the "Galien River Watershed Management Plan" which can be found at [www.swmicomm.org](http://www.swmicomm.org).