

A scenic sunset over a lake with silhouetted trees in the foreground. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and purple, with the sun low on the horizon. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of trees and bushes are visible against the bright background.

ELK RAPIDS TOWNSHIP

ANTRIM COUNTY, MICHIGAN

MASTER PLAN

APRIL 2007

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Picture on cover provided by Dana Vannoy of Lewis & Clark Explorations.

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

PLAN PURPOSE

This Master Plan represents the culmination of many months of work by the Planning Commission. It reflects the community's deep concern for economic vitality and natural feature preservation. The effort that went into this plan illustrates a strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. This document outlines the preferred future for Elk Rapids Township and a comprehensive strategy to realize it.

Elk Rapids Township is dedicated to maintaining the rural character of the community.

A Master Plan acts as the basis for rezoning decisions and helps coordinate future land uses with neighboring communities. The Township Planning Act, being Act 168 of 1959, as amended, requires the Township to develop a plan. Moreover, laws in the State of Michigan stipulate that a plan be in place before the initiation of a zoning ordinance.

Elk Rapids Township is dedicated to maintaining the rural character of the community; providing economic opportunities to residents to improve standards of living; and ensuring that policies are reflective of resident needs and desires. As such, this plan attempts to achieve the critical balance of accommodating limited growth in appropriate areas while preserving natural resources and pastoral aspects of the community.

PLAN METHODOLOGY

Prior to the adoption of this plan, Elk Rapids Township had been implementing a Master Plan written in 1997. State legislation and general planning practice suggest a plan be updated at five-year intervals. The plan approved in 1997 reflects many current conditions and trends facing the Township, and this Master Plan draws heavily on the 1997 document. This plan may be viewed as a revision of the 1997 plan.

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Producing a Master Plan requires a solid foundation of data to substantiate current conditions. The Planning Commission conducted original research and utilized secondary resources to analyze trends in the Township. The implications of this information help to form the policy framework of the plan.

In addition, as part of the effort to craft the 1997 plan, the Planning Commission promulgated a community opinion survey to residents of both the Township and Village of Elk Rapids. The Planning Commission contemplated results of that process in its 2006 rewrite of the plan. Survey respondents indicated strong desires to:

- Preserve the natural environment and significant natural features; and
- Provide for economic opportunity, in terms of light industry and small business ownership, while protecting natural resources and rural character.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process to prepare this plan has involved community residents as well as public officials. The following individuals have provided key input and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged:

Township Planning Commission

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Shen B. Smith, Secretary
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Brian N. Altonen
Renee M. Mischel
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Dorance M. Amos, Trustee

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TOWNSHIP BACKGROUND

Elk Rapids Township is located approximately 15 miles north of Traverse City and just over 30 miles south of Charlevoix, in Antrim County, Michigan. The Township is bounded to the west by the East Arm of the Grand Traverse Bay, and borders a portion of Elk Lake to the east. Elk Lake is part of the Chain of Lakes of Antrim County, a 78-mile system of navigable waterways. The Elk Rapids harbor connects these waters to Lake Michigan, the other Great Lakes, and their tributaries via the Elk River. The “Power Dam” comes between the river and the harbor. Map 1 depicts the Township in its regional context.

The abundance of natural beauty and water-related recreational opportunities attracts the residents of Elk Rapids and draws tourists to the area.

The Village of Elk Rapids physically divides the Township into two noncontiguous sections. The northern section includes most of Bass Lake and Birch Lake within its area, and contains many forests and wetlands. Much of the southern portion of the Township is currently used for agriculture. The Township is slightly greater than 7 square miles in area.

The character of the Elk Rapids community is gradually changing. The Township’s previous manufacturing base has evolved to more of a service-oriented economy. While growth in a service-oriented economy may be partially attributed to state and national economic trends, it may also be reflective of the growing local retiree and tourist populations. The abundance of natural beauty and water-related recreational opportunities attracts the residents of Elk Rapids and draws tourists to the area.

US-31 Corridor

The US-31 corridor is a highly visible and significant thoroughfare in the Township, as it connects the Elk Rapids community to the larger Traverse City region and beyond. As such, the Township seeks to preserve existing scenic views along the corridor and where growth is appropriate, implement standards to ensure safe traffic movements and attractive development sensitive to the character of Elk Rapids. It is the Township’s intent to minimize curb-cuts onto US-31 through consolidated access; require greater front yard setbacks and landscaping to foster a natural appearance; restrict signage and site lighting; buffer parking; encourage coordinated developments; and to enact other restrictions.

The Township and Village concur that agricultural lands adjoining the roadway should be preserved and protected from encroaching development, and that more intensive development should be concentrated in or near the Village. In addition, this Master Plan anticipates those portions of the corridor appropriate for growth to be comprised of mixed-use development as permitted by the Township Zoning Ordinance.

The Township seeks to preserve existing scenic views along the corridor.

The Township has conducted a Corridor Study which illustrates the preferred future for the US-31 corridor; and the Planning Commission has a continuing interest to refine and implement the recommendations of that study. It is recognized that the Township will need to work collaboratively with the Michigan Department of Transportation on any major future improvements. It is also recognized that cooperation with Acme Township, Milton Township, the Village, and the Antrim County Road Commission would be helpful in preserving a safe and aesthetically pleasant US-31 corridor.

In implementation of the Corridor Study, the Township has had success in requiring deeper setbacks and encouraging mixed-use development. The Planning Commission anticipates crafting a US-31 Overlay Zone to continue realization of the values and visions expressed in the Corridor Study and throughout the planning process. Further, the Township will actively pursue any available grant dollars applicable to the roadway.

Natural Areas and Agriculture

The Township’s most prominent characteristics include shorelines, rolling orchards and fields, as well as forests and lakes. The Township cherishes these features and has crafted this plan to help protect scenic views, water resources, and forestlands. In addition, agriculture is a central component to Elk Rapids Township’s heritage and this Master Plan seeks to encourage the protection and continuation of agricultural land uses.

This Master Plan seeks to encourage the protection and continuation of agricultural land uses.

As the population of Elk Rapids Township continues to grow, natural resources will be impacted. The groundwater supplies in the Township can be affected as more area becomes impervious and with greater demand placed on groundwater supplies. Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds; they help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. It is the intent of the Township to foster the preservation of critical water resources in the Township; to sustain water quality; to potentially help minimize any flooding; and protect

habitat for specialized plants and animals. Wetlands are delineated on Map 2.

A goal of the Township is to promote open space development, often referred to as “clustering,” to facilitate the preservation of open space during the development process. In addition, the Township’s goal is to work with the Village of Elk Rapids on extending public sewer to lakeshore and adjacent properties, to help preserve groundwater and surface water resources. These elements are discussed further in Section II of the plan.

Economic Development

As revealed in the community opinion survey conducted for the 1997 Master Plan, residents would like development which protects natural features and resources; provides employment in light industry; and promotes the establishment and cultivation of small businesses. This plan will attempt to achieve the expressed citizen desires, planning for small commercial and home-based occupations in appropriate locations.

This plan will attempt to balance economic development needs of the community with the preservation of rural character and natural features.

The Township and Village concur that more intensive development should occur in and around the Village, near existing development and public utilities. The two communities also agree that the small town character of the Village and rural character of the Township should be preserved to the extent possible.

This plan will attempt to balance economic development needs of the community with the preservation of rural character and natural features.

SECTION II. CURRENT TRENDS & FUTURE LAND USE

The following six chapters briefly describe current conditions in the Township as they relate to land use planning and extend the community's vision into the future. In addition to broad policy statements on which this plan is formed, each chapter includes a general description of future land uses or improvements and a course of action to bring that preferred future to fruition.

The subject areas include:

- Chapter 1. Natural Resources & Agricultural Lands
- Chapter 2. Residential Land Use & Housing
- Chapter 3. Commercial & Manufacturing Land Use
- Chapter 4. Transportation
- Chapter 5. Utilities & Public Services
- Chapter 6. Public Facilities

Map 5, Future Land Use, provides a graphic summary of how the Township desires to develop and be preserved over the next twenty years or so. This map is supported by narrative future land use descriptions in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 1. NATURAL RESOURCES & AGRICULTURAL LANDS

OVERVIEW

As stated in the introduction to this plan, a defining characteristic of Elk Rapids Township is the abundance of natural resources that enhance quality of life for residents and offer recreational opportunities for visitors. Elk Lake, the East Arm of the Grand Traverse Bay, Bass Lake, Birch Lake, the forests and wetland areas in the northern portion of the Township, and the rolling fruit orchards in the southern portion of the Township are examples of resources that this plan seeks to preserve for future generations. Some of these features are outlined on Map 3, Community Facilities and Resources.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goal statements are intentionally general, but are supported by more specific objectives that may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the broader goal. These goal statements are the policy foundation for this Master Plan and they define the values of the Township in connection to natural resources and agriculture.

Goal 1. The preservation of large tracts of interconnected woodlands and wildlife habitat corridors will be realized throughout the Township as any future development occurs.

Objectives:

- a. Create a detailed inventory of key natural features and utilize the inventory via regulatory structures to preserve natural features.
- b. Develop and implement feasible approaches to acquire and/or protect important natural areas. Such approaches may include concerted efforts to raise funds from public and private sources, universities, and conservancies.
- c. Develop and adopt a forest protection ordinance to minimize land clearing and mass grading within proposed development to preserve natural terrain, and to require tree planting within proposed development.

Goal 2. Existing and future development in the Township will be integrated with natural and open areas in harmony with, and connected to, permanently preserved natural features coordinated with plans for greater, contiguous greenways.

Objective:

- a. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for open space development as the preferred use by right with conventional subdivisions to be treated as special uses, in specified and appropriate portions of the Township. New zoning provisions should stipulate that a bulk of the preserved open space shall be adjacent to the roadway, for corridor viewshed protection.

Goal 3. Water features in and abutting Elk Rapids Township will be clean, healthy and will support a balance of native plant and wildlife communities and a sustainable level of human use.

Objectives:

- a. Evaluate the effectiveness of Section 2.11 of the Township Zoning Ordinance, “Restrictions Applicable to Property Abutting Lakes, Rivers or Streams,” and develop new regulations, as appropriate.
- b. Define the environmental carrying capacity of the inland lakes in the Township and employ the resulting analysis to guide land use decisions and utility policy.
- c. Inventory wetlands and identify groundwater recharge areas, and evaluate and implement appropriate standards to protect wetland areas of less than five acres and recharge areas.
- d. Educate property owners on the effects of fertilizer use and encourage property owners to limit fertilizer application on lands directly adjacent to waterfront properties, to help prevent pollution and eutrophication.

Goal 4. Elk Rapids Township will have profitable and sustainable farming operations.

Objectives:

- a. Avoid policies that artificially inflate land prices or may have other detrimental effects on farming establishments, which may encourage growth and development to encroach into prime agricultural areas. This will be done while protecting natural resources and quality of life for citizens.

- b. Explore the feasibility of a Purchase of Development Rights and/or Transfer of Development Rights (upon enabling legislation adopted by the State legislature) program.
- c. Explore mechanisms for, and the feasibility and extent of, small farms advocacy that would encourage and support the continuation of independent agricultural enterprises, including farms and related support businesses.

FUTURE LAND USE

Preservation of natural resources and agricultural activities are the preferred land use in the areas delineated as Significant Natural Areas and Agricultural on Map 5, Future Land Use. Permitted uses in those areas are described in the Township Zoning Ordinance under Agricultural Zone and Environmental Zone.

Agricultural and residential land uses have historically coexisted in the Elk Rapids community and the Township anticipates that compatibility to continue into the future.

CHAPTER 2. RESIDENTIAL LAND USE & HOUSING

OVERVIEW

The Elk Rapids community, including the Township and Village, is blessed with a wide range of high quality housing.

The natural features described on the preceding pages offer stunning visual interest and residential environments. The Elk Rapids community, including the Township and Village, is blessed with a wide range of high quality housing, offering a variety of opportunities for current and future residents. This plan's intent is to continue that diversity while preserving the rural character of the Township.

The following figures, as presented by the United States Census taken in 2000, offer a "snapshot" of the Township:

- Between 1990 and 2000, the population had grown by 367 people, or by 15.5%, from 2,374 to 2,741.
- The median home value reported for a single-family owner-occupied home was \$168,600.
- 21.4% of housing units in the Township were reported as renter occupied, which likely reflects seasonal residential units.

The table on the following page summarizes a history of building permit issuance in the Township from 2000 to 2005.

ELK RAPIDS TOWNSHIP ZONING /BUILDING PERMITS; 2000 - 2005						
<u>PERMITS ISSUED</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2000</u>
New Dwellings in R-1	5	7	8	9	5	13
New Dwellings in R-2	0	1	0	0	2	0
Replacement Dwellings	3	2	3	2	4	0
Addition to Residential	13	16	10	14	8	14
Attached Garages	0	1	3	1	2	7
Detached Garages	2	1	5	5	3	5
Remodels	2	0	0	1	4	1
Residential Storage Buildings	2	6	6	8		
Ag Zone Storage Buildings	0	3	1	0	0	1
Commercial - New	1	1	1	0	0	1
Commercial - Addition	1	1	1	2	0	2
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	3	3
TOTAL	29	39	38	42	31	47
<u>PERMITS PROFILE</u>						
Permits - North Of Village	21	24	23	27	23	34
% Of Total Permits	72%	62%	61%	64%	74%	72%
Permits - South Of Village	8	15	15	15	8	13
% Of Total Permits	28%	38%	39%	36%	26%	28%
Permits - New Dwellings, Waterfront	5	5	6	4	1	8
% Of Total New Dwellings	63%	50%	55%	36%	9%	62%
Permits - Waterfront Properties	19	23	20	23	19	28
% Of Total Permits	66%	59%	53%	55%	61%	60%

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The overall intent of this Plan with regard to residential land uses and housing is to foster the preservation of the Township's cherished rural character.

The overall intent of this plan with regard to residential land uses and housing is to foster the preservation of the Township's cherished rural character, even as any future development occurs. The following goals represent what the Township hopes to accomplish within the next twenty years or so; and the objectives present an approach to achieve those respective goals.

Goal 1. New development will be designed in a manner that maximizes the retention of the rural character of the Township.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and adopt a forest protection ordinance to minimize land clearing and mass grading within proposed development to preserve natural terrain, and to require tree planting within proposed development. (repeated from Chapter 1)
- b. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for open space development as the preferred use by right with conventional subdivisions to be treated as special uses, in specified and appropriate portions of the Township. New zoning provisions should stipulate that a bulk of the preserved open space shall be adjacent to the roadway, for corridor viewshed protection. (repeated from Chapter 1)
- c. In appropriate and specified locations, explore the effectiveness of increasing setbacks from major roadways to preserve the community's natural character along heavily traveled roadways.

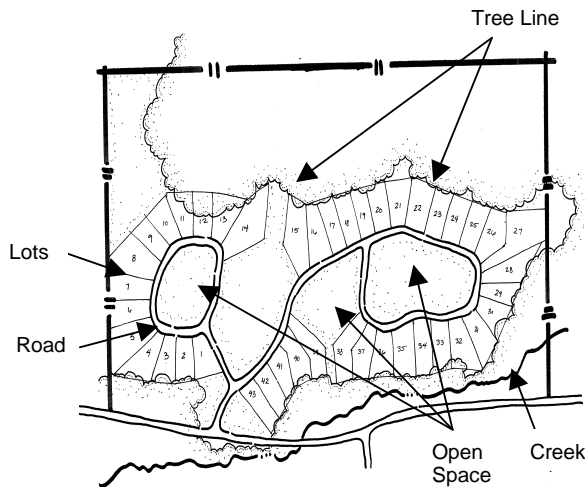
Goal 2. Neighborhoods in Elk Rapids Township will include housing for the entire spectrum of our community.

Objectives:

- a. Identify impediments to the location of affordable housing and housing to serve elderly residents and develop mechanisms to encourage facilities that allow aging residents to remain in the community in suitable locations, including the Village.
- b. Avoid policies that concentrate multiple-family or high-density development in the Township. Work with the Village to ensure that high-density land uses occur in and adjacent to the Village, where necessary utilities and services exist.
- c. Review and expand, as appropriate, zoning and land division ordinances to incorporate standards for such common facilities as play areas, community buildings, and walking paths throughout open space developments.

FUTURE LAND USE

Many lands in the residential future land use designation shown on Map 5 host unique wildlife and ecological areas, scenic hills and dramatic vistas. A central goal of this plan is the practical protection of those lands that serve as habitat for wildlife and provide extraordinary open space and lake views for residents.



An example of an Open Space Subdivision, which has been specifically designed to preserve the site's woodlands

As any future development occurs, it is expected that prime environmental features – such as forest stands, water features, upland openings, ridgelines or hilly topography, and views toward water bodies – will be preserved.

This plan will not specifically speak to density and type of residential development, as the Township Zoning Ordinance will address these aspects of residential land use. Uses in these areas may include single-family dwellings, two-family

dwellings, and multiple-family dwellings, as determined by the Zoning Ordinance. Resource conservation and natural resource-based recreational uses are also encouraged. In addition, environmentally friendly agricultural activities that do not permanently and negatively modify the natural landscape of the area may be encouraged.

It is anticipated that any residential development that may materialize in an agricultural area will comply with the regulations of the Agricultural Zone of the Township Zoning Ordinance. Master planning agricultural lands for agricultural use corresponds with the goals of the community to preserve farmland and open space.

Every five years this plan should be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with State law. At that time, the Township can assess the demand for residential uses in the Elk Rapids community. If at that time the Township determines there is a lack of available land for residential development, it may be appropriate to shift recommended future land use from agriculture to open space residential in certain areas suitable for such uses.

Should this occur, this plan encourages open space subdivision principles, with a minimum of 40% of a development site being preserved as open space, with the bulk of that space being adjacent to

the main road to provide a buffer between homes and motor vehicles and to maintain rural aesthetics along roads. Further, any future residential development should be designed and planned to connect to adjacent lands. The Township Zoning Ordinance should be amended at that future time to accommodate such development.

CHAPTER 3. COMMERCIAL & MANUFACTURING LAND USE

OVERVIEW

As indicated earlier, survey respondents have expressed a desire for the Township to protect natural features and resources while providing the opportunity for employment and the development of small commercial and home-based occupations. Moreover, the Township and Village have historically agreed that intensive development should occur in and around the Village, near existing development and public utilities. The Village and the Traverse City region meet most daily service and employment needs of residents and visitors, and large-scale commercial and manufacturing development is not anticipated in the Township.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

With regard to commercial and manufacturing land use, it is the overall intent of this plan to promote economic development opportunities in suitable locations in Elk Rapids. The Township hopes to realize the following goals by accomplishing the respective objectives.

Goal 1. Viable, attractive, community- and environmentally-friendly businesses and manufacturing facilities will be located in proximity to appropriate infrastructure and services.

Objectives:

- a. Evaluate and, as necessary, adjust the Zoning Ordinance to regulate architecture, site utilization, landscaping, fenestration (window coverage), access, and other elements, so new buildings integrate well with existing buildings, neighboring properties and the natural environment.
- b. Analyze the feasibility of adding a square footage limitation to the Zoning Ordinance to preclude big box retail and regional shopping centers.

Goal 2. Elk Rapids Township will be home to a diverse mix of businesses and manufacturing facilities, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.

Objectives:

- a. Contemplate and implement polices which would encourage innovative manufacturing uses to locate in the Township, as appropriate.

It is the intent of this Plan to promote economic development opportunities in suitable locations.

- b. Work with the Village Downtown Development Authority, Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce and the local business community to provide needed services to Elk Rapids residents to foster local ownership and entrepreneurship.
- c. Evaluate the need for additional home occupation/home-based business zoning regulations which would balance the economic development and entrepreneurship aspirations of the community with the desire to maintain the dominant, rural residential character.

FUTURE LAND USE

The Township Zoning Ordinance specifies uses within the Manufacturing/Commercial future land use designations shown on Map 5. Generally, these include professional offices, light manufacturing and research facilities, and retail businesses. These uses will not be disruptive to residents and natural resources under this Master Plan.



Two examples of McDonald's restaurants that were designed to respect the local character: This Plan encourages architectural elements that deviate from conventional brand archetypes, and developments that utilize site design approaches which hide parking lots behind buildings and landscaping.

It is the Township's intent to balance the realities of the marketplace with the Township's desire to preserve its unique identity and rural character. As such, any future development occurring within the commercial and manufacturing areas identified on the Future Land Use map should be planned and designed to reflect Elk Rapids' heritage. This plan encourages architectural elements that deviate from conventional brand archetypes, and developments that utilize site design approaches which hide parking lots behind buildings and landscaping.



In addition, parking areas should include landscape islands and shade trees to soften the development presentation and to minimize the appearance of large expanses of concrete. Where visible from a roadway or neighboring residential uses, building facades should be constructed with high quality elements such as stone, brick, wood, and other natural materials.

Efficient pedestrian circulation patterns, ground-mounted signage, and restricted site illumination are contemplated.

Access will be coordinated with neighboring uses to minimize traffic conflicts and to foster safe vehicular movements. This may be accomplished with shared access and service drives, and by requiring

relatively large distances between street intersections and non-residential driveways.

CHAPTER 4. TRANSPORTATION

OVERVIEW

Generally, the existing network of roadways in the Township is sufficient to meet the needs of residents. To conserve sustainable traffic movements, high-density development and uses that generate significant traffic should be located in or near the Village near essential facilities, infrastructure, and services to lessen vehicle miles traveled, which may help protect air quality and lessen wear on roads.

Mean travel to work time reported in the 2000 United States Census for the Township was 22.4 minutes, indicating that many residents find employment outside the community. Following is a summary of traffic counts, or the average number of vehicles traveling on the respective roadway per day, for selected roadways in the Township:¹

Roadway	Count	Location of Count	Date of Count
Elk Lake Road	2,491	1 mile north of Townline Rd	June 13/14, 2005
Cairn Highway	5,116	600 feet northeast of Herman Rd	June 13/14, 2005
Williams Drive	468	3,300 feet west of Cairn Hwy	June 20/21, 2005
US-31	7,700	At south Village limits	2004
US-31	4,800	At north Village limits	2004

As of April 2006, the Antrim County Road Commission anticipates one roadway improvement in the foreseeable future: Cairn Highway, from the north Village limits north to Quarterline Road, will be pulverized and repaved in 2007.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The Township hopes to bring the following goals and objectives to fruition over the life of this Master Plan.

Goal 1. A safe, efficient, aesthetically attractive and well-maintained system of roadways will serve the businesses and residents of Elk Rapids Township, providing effective linkages between and among dwellings, services and employment areas and within the larger Northern Michigan region.

¹ The Antrim County Road Commission has not adjusted average daily traffic counts for seasonal variation on County primary roads. The Michigan Department of Transportation has adjusted average daily traffic counts taken on US-31 for seasonal variation.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and implement access control regulations which would encourage shared access and access drives and limit curb-cuts along primary roadways. The new standards may also encourage greater front yard setbacks and increased landscaping; limited exterior illumination and signage; and screened parking areas.
- b. Build and strengthen the relationship with the Antrim County Road Commission to facilitate cooperative approaches to transportation improvements and design.
- c. Develop and implement standards to preserve the rural road aesthetics of key roadways. New provisions may require preservation of natural areas adjacent to roadways and increased front yard setbacks, and buffering requirements so that new development is screened from public view.
- d. Complete an analysis of the viability of a land use and setback regulatory structure based on posted speed. Implement if feasible.
- e. Actively seek grant dollars for streetscape improvements, including replanting maple trees along both sides of Elk Lake Road.
- f. Evaluate private road standards and modify, if necessary, to permit flexibility in road design and construction to minimize impact on natural features and topography.
- g. Assess the feasibility of a bike path parallel and adjacent to Elk Lake Road and coordinate the efforts for its construction, if desirable.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Any future development along the US-31 corridor should:

- Consolidate access and minimize curb-cuts;
- Respect a greater front yard setback and preserve natural features adjacent to the road; and
- Screen parking areas from public view by landscaping or by placing parking to the side or rear of the building.

In 1995, the Township conducted a Corridor Study with the Village which illustrates the preferred future for the US-31 corridor. The Township has an ongoing desire to evaluate the recommendations of that study, and to implement those recommendations through a new Overlay Zone.

The Elk Lake Road corridor is blessed with significant scenic features and agricultural resources. Currently, these attributes include productive, rolling orchard lands; large, mature trees that provide a unique, wooded canopy over the roadway; and homesteads and acreage homesites that contribute to the rural character that helps define the community.

It is envisioned that in time, Elk Lake Road would be widened, as it becomes an even more important thoroughfare connecting the Elk Rapids community to the larger Traverse City region and beyond. Should this widening occur, the Township seeks to preserve the existing scenic views along the corridor, and where growth is appropriate, implement standards to ensure safe traffic movements and attractive development that is sensitive to the character of Elk Rapids.

It is recognized that the Township should work collaboratively with the Michigan Department of Transportation on significant future road developments. It is also recognized that cooperation with Whitewater Township and the Antrim County Road Commission would be helpful in preserving a safe and aesthetically pleasing Elk Lake Road corridor.

This plan seeks to preserve the existing rural character along the corridor and encourages the following:

- Replanting of maple trees along both sides of the roadway;
- A bike path parallel and adjacent to the roadway that would be designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, and which would be non-intrusive on neighboring property owners while offering meaningful connections;
- Greater setbacks from the road and natural landscaping to foster the preservation of the corridor’s natural aesthetic; and,
- Preservation of agricultural lands along the roadway to the extent possible.

Any future development adjacent to Elk Lake Road should respect the Township’s desire to preserve rural viewsheds along roadways.

Any future development adjacent to Elk Lake Road should respect the Township’s desire to preserve rural viewsheds along roadways. Any future development that may materialize should incorporate deep setbacks from the road right-of-way to accommodate a natural landscape, maple trees, and if appropriate, a bike path. Any development should utilize existing access drives rather than create new curb-cuts along Elk Lake Road to the extent possible.

The Planning Commission anticipates crafting an Elk Lake Road Overlay Zone that will implement the vision for the Elk Lake Road corridor.

Finally, this plan supports interconnection where any future developments abut. Connectivity may allow for more meaningful pedestrian connections, may improve traffic flow and reduce congestion, and may provide increased access in cases of emergency.

CHAPTER 5. UTILITIES & PUBLIC SERVICES

OVERVIEW

Since Elk Rapids Township is generally a rural, sparsely populated community, it provides few services and utility infrastructure facilities. Police and safety services, social services, and most recreation facilities are maintained by instrumentalities of Antrim County.

Two exceptions are the Township's local volunteer fire department, which serves the Township and Village; and the Township's emergency ambulance service, which assists residents of the Township, Village, and Milton Township.

A majority of the Township's population utilizes on-site individual septic tank and drainfield systems and individual household wells. However, the Village of Elk Rapids owns and maintains public sewer facilities which serve limited portions of the Township, as shown on Map 4. As of April 2006, the wastewater system is operating at 67% of design capacity, according to the Village Department of Public Works.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following objectives may be regarded as steps to achieve the broader goal.

Goal 1. Utility services in Elk Rapids Township, including water and wastewater services, will be extended strategically to encourage development patterns consistent with the preferred future land uses expressed in this plan. The community will be served with abundant clean water, power, emergency services, and fuel and communication linkages to support the requirements of a prosperous community.

Objectives:

- a. Work with the Village of Elk Rapids to expand cooperative and coordinated utility policies to assure that public utilities may be readily available in areas of the Township of more intense land uses, and to prevent utility improvements that foster intense growth where it is not planned.
- b. Analyze the opportunity to extend water and sewer to developed areas adjacent to waterfront properties.
- c. In conjunction with Antrim County, establish a program of septic system and water well inspections.

- d. Initiate discussions with the Antrim County Sheriff Department to explore the possibility of a full-time satellite office in Elk Rapids to lessen the response time to local emergencies.

Goal 2. Storm water will be effectively managed through advanced techniques that are sensitive to environmental impacts and offer aesthetic amenities to the community.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and implement standards which recognize detention and retention facilities as an amenity; and encourage innovative and improved engineering, such as pond enhancement, landscaping, stream restoration and green roof systems, to mitigate the effects of impervious surface runoff.
- b. Explore the possibility of shared storm water systems coordinated among neighboring developments.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Utility systems have the potential to aid in growth management by enabling higher densities in selected locations. Public utility systems give the community the ability to provide effective stewardship over such important natural features as groundwater and surface water.

Water and sewer facilities should be part of the equation when determining future land uses. If such infrastructure is available to a particular site or area, a variety of development options can be contemplated. Therefore, if the Township decides that an area should be reasonably preserved for agriculture, it may be counterproductive to encourage the extension of water and/or sewer into this designated area.

However, it is the intent of this plan to foster the extension of public water and sewer into existing residential areas abutting water bodies to protect the lakes and associated groundwater and tributaries from effluent pollution. The predominant intent of the Township with regard to utilities and public services is to prevent groundwater and surface water contamination and to ensure a safe drinking water supply for the community. Even with these proposed extensions, this plan anticipates that high-density or intense development will not occur in areas not designated for such development in the plan.

The predominant intent of this Plan is to prevent water contamination and ensure safe drinking water.

CHAPTER 6. PUBLIC FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

Public facilities play an elemental role in augmenting civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride. Recreational opportunities are quality of life indicators and such facilities characterize Elk Rapids Township and the greater region.

In addition to the myriad regional facilities that make Northern Michigan a desirable tourist destination, recreational facilities located in the Township or Village include:

Recreational opportunities are quality of life indicators and such facilities characterize Elk Rapids Township.

1. Memorial Park, which offers a beach, 4 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, picnic areas and a playground.
2. Antrim County Day Park, which includes a beach, playground and picnic area.
3. Lake access sites to Elk Lake, Elk River, Bass Lake, Birch Lake, and Grand Traverse Bay.
4. Village Senior Citizen Center and Recreation Area.
5. Elk Rapids Golf Course, which offers 9 holes.
6. Elk Rapids Village Marina.
7. Upper and Lower Harbors, providing 243 boat slips.
8. Rotary Park.
9. Island House Library Park.
10. Elk Rapids Township Recreation Park.
11. Nature Preserve.

In addition, Elk Rapids School District operates four school facilities which provide recreational opportunities: Elk Rapids High, Cherryland Middle, Lakeland Elementary and Mill Creek Elementary. All facilities except Mill Creek Elementary are located in the Village. Facilities include Lakeland Elementary's playground, and Elk Rapids High and Cherryland Middle athletic and physical education facilities, such as two basketball courts, a baseball diamond, softball diamond, track, football field, and soccer field.

The following summarizes recent academic year enrollment figures for the District:

2005/2006	2004/2005	2003/2004
1,507 students	1,490 students	1,546 students

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following framework is intended to preserve and augment existing recreational opportunities, and to explore the potential for additional facilities.

Goal 1. Local public parks and recreational facilities will be conveniently located, safe and well maintained.

Objectives:

- a. Contemplate the establishment of a Recreation Commission to oversee facility planning and maintenance, grant administration, and the development of a recreation plan.
- b. Assess the feasibility of a bike path parallel and adjacent to Elk Lake Road and coordinate the efforts for its construction, if desirable. (repeated from Chapter 4)
- c. Evaluate lake access facilities and as needed, install appropriate signage and implement a maintenance program.

Goal 2. The residents of Elk Rapids Township will enjoy a meaningful network of trails and pathways and inviting, non-intrusive connections to local and regional natural areas and recreation facilities.

Objectives:

- a. Establish a detailed trails and greenways plan which coordinates non-motorized pedestrian and bike trails, and snowmobile or other motorized recreational uses, with existing and proposed public and private open space areas.
- b. Seek grant dollars for the above-described plan and its suggested improvements and to develop trailhead staging areas as trailways are constructed.

Goal 3. The Township’s plans for public facility improvements will be coordinated with the plans of other public entities and other Township plans.

Objectives:

- a. Explore the feasibility and necessity of a joint recreation plan between the Township, the Village and the Elk Rapids School District.

- b. As appropriate, work with the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, Antrim County, the Village, and surrounding townships to coordinate any future plans to ensure sufficient facilities to serve a growing regional residential and tourist population.
- c. Foster collaboration with the Elk Rapids School District regarding facility placement and site design for any future school facility that may be proposed in the Township.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Township recognizes that the health and leisure benefits of accessible recreational facilities extend beyond the Township and that such facilities provide local and regional spaces for interaction and the cultivation of sense of community. This plan anticipates that future public facility improvements will be the result of joint effort among various stakeholders.

