

# Elk Rapids Village and Elk Rapids Township



## Collaborative Master Plan

*Adopted **Amended** by Elk Rapids Village Council  
August 5, 2013 Adopted **Amended** by Elk Rapids  
Township Board August 13, 2013*



Insert Township/Village Adoption Resolution



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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

State law requires that a plan be reviewed and updated as necessary at least once every 5 years.

The purpose of this Collaborative Master Plan is to enable the Village of Elk Rapids and the Township of Elk Rapids to evaluate current trends and conditions and to plan for the future. A Master Plan represents a foundation policy statement about what a community is, what its residents value and what those residents hope the community will become. The plan outlines a preferred future for both the Village and Township and a comprehensive plan to realize it.

Constant social, economic, land use and other changes justify periodic review and maintenance of a land use plan, so the plan reflects current trends, objectives and challenges. In addition, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, being Act 33 of 2008, as amended, stipulates that a comprehensive master plan or land use plan be reviewed at least once every five years and revised accordingly as needed.

The communities determined it to be in their best interest to collaborate on a joint effort.

Prior to the adoption of this document, both Elk Rapids Township and Elk Rapids Village had been implementing separate Master Plans adopted in 2007, making this plan timely to comply with State law. While the two municipalities are politically distinct, the Township and Village frequently work in partnership on public services and also share office space. The Planning Commissions and governing bodies of each jurisdiction determined that it ~~would~~ **continues to** be in the best interest of the greater community to collaborate on a joint effort to update each plan and this **2018 Amended** Collaborative Master Plan is the culmination of that effort.

### Collaborative Planning Process

As part of the process to complete this ~~2013~~ **2018 Amended** Collaborative Master Plan, the policy elements of the ~~2007~~ **2013** documents were ~~scrutinized~~ **reviewed** by ~~a committee comprised of~~ local staff and members of each Planning Commission for relevance given today's specific issues, trends and potential challenges. The committee reviewed the ~~2007~~ **2013** plans for areas where they could be strengthened, corrected, updated, or otherwise changed to meet the current needs and desires of residents and property owners in the Elk Rapids community, without undermining the policy foundations set in the ~~2007~~ **2013** documents.

Much of the effort involved updating background information, soliciting and synthesizing public input, developing strategies and fusing the policies of each jurisdiction together into one plan. This ~~2013~~ **2018 Amended** Collaborative Master Plan reflects the community's concern for economic vitality, quality of life, community character, water quality and natural feature preservation. The effort to complete this plan represents the Village and Township's commitment to implementing an up-to-date plan that reflects current needs while also ensuring that the two communities are partnering together in actively planning for the future.

Specifically, the joint planning process involved the following inter-related phases:

- Phase 1 - Understanding Current Challenges. During the first phase of the planning process, demographic, economic and land use data was gathered to support the Plan. The purpose of this effort was to develop a snapshot

impression of trends and conditions and the challenges that will impact the community.

- Phase 2 – Outlining a Preferred Future. The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the guidelines of the Plan. To do so, it was important to gather the opinions of community residents and determine the direction they were looking for the future of their community. A community visioning workshop was conducted and Chapter 3 summarizes the input received. Comments gathered from the visioning workshop were formed into implementation strategies, as described in Chapter 5.
- Phase 3 – Developing the Blueprint. The third phase involved compilation of a future land use map and supporting narrative. The map and narrative were created using the existing future land use frameworks in both the Village and Township plans. The future land use section of the Master Plan can be thought of as the “blueprint” for the future relative to the physical land use and development of the community.
- Phase 4 – From Planning to Action. The final phase of the planning process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan.

### **The Relationship of Planning to Zoning**

Understanding the relationship between land use planning and zoning is key when using a planning document. Planning is essentially the act of planning the uses of land within a community for the future from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by law or ordinance. The laws of the State of Michigan require that a community engage in land use planning activities, including the preparation of a master plan, prior to the initiation of a zoning ordinance in a community.

Land use planning is the process of guiding the future growth and development of a community. Generally, a document known as the master plan is prepared, which addresses the various factors relating to the growth of a community. Through the processes of land use planning, it is intended that a community can preserve, promote, protect, and improve public health, safety, and general welfare. Additional considerations include: comfort, aesthetics, convenience, fire protection, community character, facilitating the adequate and efficient provision of transportation and utility services, walkability, recreation, and conservation of natural resources within the community.

Zoning is one of the instruments, along with capital improvements programming and the administration of local subdivision regulations and other ordinances, which implements the goals and policies of a plan. The enactment and administration of the zoning ordinance are legislative and administrative processes conducted by local units of government relating to the implementation of the goals and policies of the plan.



## CHAPTER 2. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Village of Elk Rapids is located within the geographic boundaries of Elk Rapids Township in southwest Antrim County, approximately 15 miles north of Traverse City and just over 30 miles south of Charlevoix. Antrim County is located in the northwest region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Township has an area slightly larger than 7 square miles, while the Village comprises 1.6 square miles. Map 1 [on page 11](#) illustrates the Elk Rapids community in its regional context.

### Character of the Built Environment

#### Elk Rapids Village

The Village is a turn of the century community, with a traditional main street and a scenic river flowing alongside its downtown.

The Village of Elk Rapids is a ~~turn of the~~ **quaint** ~~century~~ community **founded in 1855**, with a traditional main street and a scenic river flowing alongside its downtown. The Village was established ~~in the nineteenth century~~ amidst agricultural fields, prominent water features and open land, and retains much of its original character.

Single-family residential neighborhoods are the dominant land use in the Village. Many of the homes are almost one hundred years old and are built on smaller lots compared to homes in Elk Rapids Township, establishing a quaint, close-knit community character. Walkable, tree-lined streets lead to the central business district, which affords beautiful views of the Grand Traverse Bay and Elk River. The central business district includes a concentration of high-quality shopping, dining and entertainment venues and has benefitted from aesthetic enhancements that make the area more attractive to pedestrians and preserve its historic character.

The Township boasts *scenic* open spaces and natural features, which contribute to the beauty of the community.

#### Elk Rapids Township

Elk Rapids Township is a rural community that has experienced slight, but steady growth. Many neighborhoods are suburban in character, with curvilinear streets, larger lots and some newer homes, but many residents live on rural acreage home-sites that are scattered along rural roads or clustered near one of the lakes in the area. Homes in the Township are comparatively newer than homes in the Village, and median household incomes tend to be a little higher in the Township.

The Township boasts scenic open spaces and significant natural features and viewsheds, which contribute to the beauty and desirability of the community. The Township's most prominent characteristics include Grand Traverse Bay shoreline, rolling orchards and fields, as well as forests and inland lakes. Much of the southern portion of the Township is currently used for agriculture. Agriculture is a central component to the Township's heritage and the community is committed to the continuation of agricultural activity.

#### US-31

US-31 is the primary transportation route in western Antrim County, providing connections between Traverse City and Charlevoix and beyond. The mostly two-lane federal highway serves approximately 4,900 vehicles per day north of the Village, 8,000 vehicles per day south of the Village, and between 10,000 and

20,000 vehicles per day in the Village, according to MDOT's 2010 traffic report. The US-31 corridor is dotted with several clusters of commercial and light industrial development, which provide some employment opportunities for local residents. Most of these businesses are engaged in light manufacturing activity or offer tourism-based goods and services.

## **Water Resources**

The most important natural resource in the community is water.

The most important natural resource in the community is water. The community 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 in 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 Elk River. The Power Dam comes between the river and the harbor. ~~however~~

Elk River flows from the southeast to the northwest portion of the Village, dividing the Village and creating two peninsulas. Similarly, the Village divides the Township into two noncontiguous sections. The northern section of the Township includes most of Bass Lake and Birch Lake within its area, and contains many forests and wetlands.

Elk Rapids' location between Elk Lake and the Grand Traverse Bay help to define the community's character and make the area attractive to tourists. The preservation of the high-quality lakes, rivers, wetlands, and the recreational opportunities they provide is paramount to the sustainability of the community. The fishing, swimming and boating activities made possible by the presence of the water features are significant contributors to local quality of life and to the economy. Both locals and tourists enjoy pristine beaches, lakeside parks and harbors affording access to these wonderful recreation opportunities.

## **Social Characteristics**

### **Population Change**

The recently published 2010 Census figures enable the community to review overall trends in population change. Population and demographic changes are among the most important measures to express growth or decline and its likely impact on existing and planned land uses in a community.

Table 1 illustrates that the Village experienced population growth between 1980 and 2000, although growth slowed during the period between 1990 and 2000. The 2010 Census shows a decline in population occurring between 2000 and 2010. Elk Rapids Township also experienced a similar decline while Antrim County experienced a modest growth rate of 2% since 2000.

Table 1							
Population Change, 1980 - 2010							
	1980	% Change	1990	% Change	2000	% Change	2010
Antrim County	16,194	28.4	18,185	12.3	23,110	2.0	23,580
Elk Rapids Township	2,086 (582)	13.8	2,374 (748)	15.5	2,741 (1,041)	-4.9	2,631 (989)
Elk Rapids Village	1,504	8.1	1,626	4.6	1,700	-3.4	1,642

Note: Parentheses ( ) = Elk Rapids Township population less Village population.

Some of the population loss in the community may be attributed to a shift in housing ownership from year-round residents to vacationers, as the northwest Michigan region is well-known as a seasonal vacation destination. Moreover, Census figures likely do not account for the swell in seasonal summer residents, and such seasonal residents may potentially skew some Census counts (Table 2 includes data on seasonal dwelling trends). Nevertheless, many communities in Michigan, and the State overall, have experienced population decline over the last decade. which is primarily attributed to the recent economic downturn.

Figure 1. Rates of Population Change for Surrounding Communities, 1970 - 2010

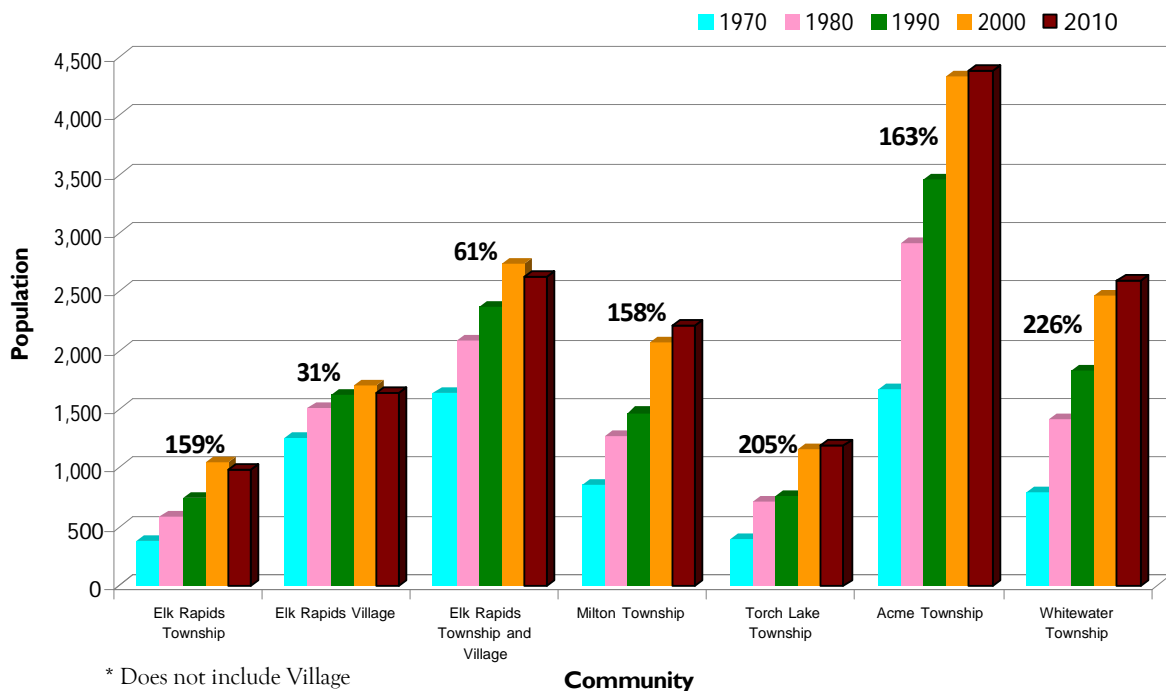


Figure 1 compares population change in the Elk Rapids community between 1970 and 2010 with that of neighboring communities. Note that the Census typically adds the population of a village to the population of a township when the village is

within the township. Figure 1 accounts for this, and has included three separate columns to illustrate the population of the Village of Elk Rapids, Elk Rapids Township and both of them combined. All neighboring communities have grown rapidly since 1970; however, the last decade appears to have been the slowest growth period over the 40-year timeframe and both the Village and Township even declined in population during this period. The Village has experienced the slightest rate of population change compared to surrounding townships, which is typical for a small, fairly built-out older community.

### Housing

Despite a slight overall population decline, Table 2 illustrates that the number of housing units in the Township and Village increased in the past decade, according to the Census. Specifically, these increases were 10% in the Township and 11.6% in the Village. Paradoxically, as the number of total dwelling units was increasing, the number of vacant housing units was also increasing. This is likely in part because of the state of the economy and the national “foreclosure crisis” of the late 2000s. However, the number of vacant/seasonal units in the Township increased by 10.3% and 15.8% in the Township and Village respectively between 2000 and 2010. This represents 27.6% of the Township’s housing stock in 2010 and 23.7% of the Village’s housing stock, and reinforces the notion that Elk Rapids is increasingly a tourist destination or seasonal community.

Table 2						
Housing Occupancy, 2000 - 2010						
	Township			Village		
	2000	2010	% Change	2000	2010	% Change
Total housing units	1,763	1,940	10%	1,056	1,179	11.6%
Occupied housing units	1,206	1,218	1%	769	791	2.9%
Vacant housing units	557 (31.5%)	722 (37.2%)	29.6%	287 (27.2%)	388 (32.9%)	35.2%
Vacant / seasonal units	435 (24.6%)	535 (27.6%)	23%	241 (22.8%)	279 (23.7%)	15.8%

Table 3 below lists median home value as reported by the Census, comparing 2000 to 2010 for the Township, Village, County and State.

Table 3		
Median Home Value		
	2000	2010
Village of Elk Rapids	\$136,900	\$183,800
Elk Rapids Township	\$168,600	\$198,100
Antrim County	\$110,000	\$154,900
State of Michigan	\$115,600	\$123,300

### Age Distribution

Information on age distribution within a community can assist in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining what, if any, special needs specific resident groups may have. Table 4 compares the age distribution of the Village of Elk Rapids, Elk Rapids Township, and Antrim County.

Table 4									
Age Distribution, 2000 - 2010									
Age	Village			Township			County		
	2000	2010	% Change	2000	2010	% Change	2000	2010	% Change
Under 5	77	66	(-14.3)	102	94	(-7.8)	1325	1155	(-12.8)
5 – 19	360	270	(-25.0)	551	440	(-20.1)	4801	4248	(-11.5)
20 – 24	62	60	(-3.2)	95	93	(-2.1)	969	914	(-5.8)
25 – 34	150	115	(-23.3)	225	171	(-24.0)	2379	2033	(-14.5)
35 – 44	244	152	(-37.7)	376	239	(-36.4)	3464	2629	(-24.1)
45 – 54	260	277	6.5	416	371	(-10.8)	3177	3628	14.2
55 – 59	108	139	28.7	196	217	10.7	1536	1934	25.9
60 – 64	100	142	42.0	180	235	30.6	1426	1823	27.8
65 & Over	339	471	38.9	600	771	28.5	4033	5216	29.3
Median Age	43.4	52.4	20.7	45.4	53.0	16.7	41.4	47.4	14.5

The 25-44 age brackets make up 16.3% of the Village population. This segment of the population is considered to be in their working years and likely to have school age children at home. The age bracket from 5-24 years of age incorporates the school age population and young working population, and makes up 20.2% of the Village population. The age bracket 45-64 years of age is considered to be the middle age, and makes up 30.9% of the Village population, and includes the “empty nesters” where children have moved out of the household. It is in the 60 years and older brackets that the greatest percentage of the population occurs, 37.3%. The percentage increase in this category is significantly higher than that of Elk Rapids Township or Antrim County, with the median age being slightly lower than the Township and higher than the County.

### Income

The following table compares median household income from 2000 and 2010 among the Township, Village, County and State. As depicted in the table, the Township experienced slightly higher incomes in 2010 than the other three jurisdictions.

Table 5		
Median Household Income		
	2000	2010
Village of Elk Rapids	\$31,382	\$40,301
Elk Rapids Township	\$36,250	\$47,202
Antrim County	\$38,107	\$40,878
State of Michigan	\$44,667	\$45,413

## Community Facilities

### Public Amenities

Public facilities play an important role in civic engagement and cultural activities. Recreational opportunities are quality of life indicators and such facilities characterize the Elk Rapids community. In addition to the myriad regional or destination facilities that make Northwest Michigan attractive to tourists, the following facilities are located in the community:

1. Veterans Memorial Park, which offers a beach, 3 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, picnic areas and a playground.
2. Dam Beach and Old Bathing Beach.
3. Elk Rapids Day Park, owned by Antrim County which includes a beach, playground, picnic area and sculpture park.
4. Lake access sites to Elk Lake, Elk River, Bass Lake, Birch Lake, and Grand Traverse Bay.
5. Senior Services at Sacred Heart Church.
6. Elk Rapids Golf Course, which offers 9 holes.
7. Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor – Upper and Lower Harbors, providing 263 boat slips.
8. Rotary Park.
9. ~~Island House~~ **Elk Rapids** District Library **at the Island Property**.
10. Elk Rapids Township Recreation Park.
11. Wilcox-Palmer-Shaw Nature Preserve.
12. Elk Rapids Community Government Center.
13. Historic Elk Rapids Town Hall Association.
14. Elk Rapids Area Historical Society and Museum.
15. Church-sponsored religious and community events.
16. Elk Rapids Community Gardens



Many community facilities take advantage of the abundant water resources.

### Schools

The Elk Rapids School District operates ~~four~~ **five** school facilities, all of which provide a variety of services and resources to the community. These include recreational opportunities, recognized educational services, and an abundance of community activities. Elk Rapids High, **Sunrise Academy**, Cherryland Middle, Lakeland Elementary and Mill Creek Elementary all serve as hubs of the Elk Rapids community. 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.

~~Recently,~~ Elk Rapids schools received their authorization as Northern Michigan's first ~~and only~~ International Baccalaureate (IB) World School for the Middle Years Programme (MYP) in 2013. **Both Lakeland and Mill Creek are now IB World Schools too.**

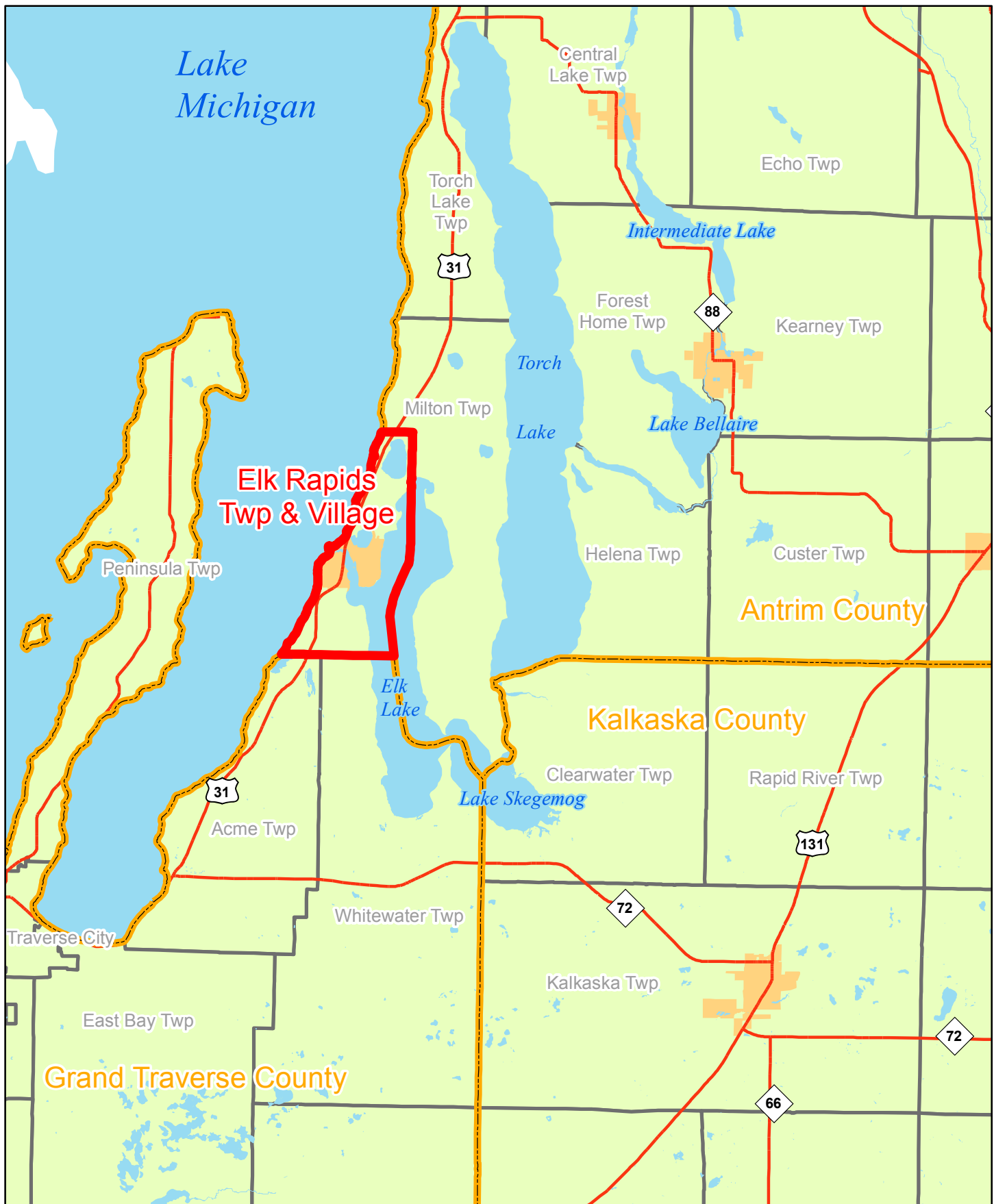
The following summarizes recent academic year enrollment figures for the District:

Table 6s								
School District Enrollment								
2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>
1,561	1,561	1,555	1,555	1,464	1,429	<b>1,367</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>1,309</b>

Community facilities and resources, as well as wetlands and sanitary sewer infrastructure, are illustrated in Maps 2 - 4.



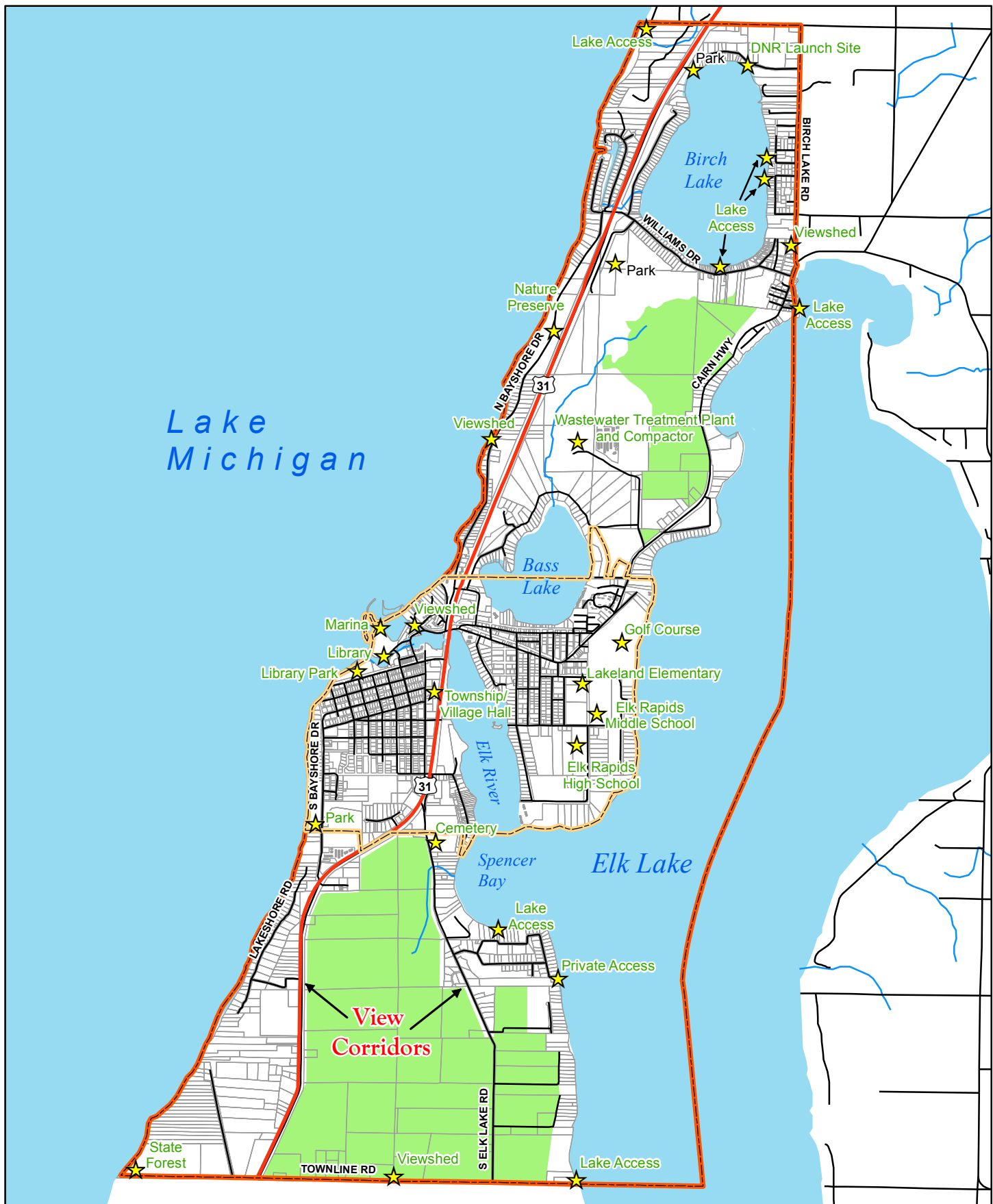




# Village of Elk Rapids Elk Rapids Township Antrim County, Michigan

Map 1. Regional Location





# Village of Elk Rapids Elk Rapids Township Antrim County, Michigan

Map 2. Community Facilities and Resources



## Legend

- Village Boundary
- Township Boundary
- Parcels
- Streets
- Open Water
- Agricultural Land
- Community Resources





Village of Elk Rapids  
Elk Rapids Township  
Antrim County, Michigan

**Legend**

- Potential Wetland Areas\*
- Village Boundary
- Township Boundary

\*This Wetlands Inventory Map is intended to be used as one tool to assist in identifying wetlands and provide only potential and approximate locations of wetlands and wetland conditions.

This map is not intended to be used to determine specific locations and jurisdictional boundaries of wetland areas subject to regulation under part 303 Wetlands Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. Only an on-site evaluation performed by MDEQ in accordance with Part 303 shall be used for jurisdictional determination. A permit is required from the MDEQ to conduct certain activities in jurisdictional wetlands.

Map 3. Wetlands

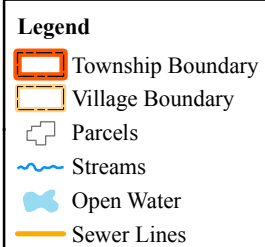






Village of Elk Rapids  
Elk Rapids Township  
Antrim County, Michigan

Map 4. Sanitary Sewer System







## **CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY INPUT**

Elk Rapids is committed to citizen input and has been dedicated to using this input to assist in evaluating trends and in forming goals and objectives for the community. To gather input, a community visioning workshop was facilitated on Tuesday, June 19, 2012, beginning at 6:30 PM at the shared Government Center, located at 315 Bridge Street. The purpose of the session was to provide citizens with the opportunity to comment and share ideas on the future of the community and over 50 people participated. Williams & Works directed the workshop and, along with local volunteers, facilitated group discussions. The atmosphere was open and informal, although the meeting followed an established format to assure a useful outcome.

The consultants from Williams & Works provided a brief introduction to the process and an overview explanation of how the results of the activity will be incorporated into the Collaborative Master Plan. The presentation also included a discussion of the purpose of master planning generally, the process, and some observations gleaned from the two current plans. Moreover, the purpose and function of this collaborative effort was also described so that participants could understand the role of this new plan in both communities.

Following the presentation, participants were asked to break-out into groups organized by topic. The topics were pre-selected based on themes taken from current goals and objectives listed in both the Village and Township plans. Theme boards presented the combined goals and objectives from both the Village plan and the Township plan. Participants were asked to evaluate the current goals and objectives in terms of effectiveness; and participants were also asked to suggest new ideas or concepts for inclusion on the new joint plan. A summary of public commentary on each of the themes can be found at the Elk Rapids Community Government Center.



## CHAPTER 4. FUTURE LAND USE

The future land use map establishes a general blueprint of land uses.

This section of the Collaborative Master Plan builds upon public input and the 2007 plans and translates the overall community vision into a future land use plan for physical development and preservation. In addition, a zoning plan is provided, which relates the future land use categories to the current zoning districts for both jurisdictions, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

Planning is guiding land uses from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by ordinance or law. The future land use map and the supporting narrative below, is meant to be a guide for the Township and the Village as each contemplates rezoning and development applications. The future land use map is not a zoning map; but it, along with the zoning plan, will guide rezoning decisions.

### Village Future Land Use

#### Conservation / Recreation

The Conservation/Recreation future land use designation provides protection to existing recreation property, areas planned for future recreation use, or other environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources, while allowing for very limited and low intensity recreation development to occur, consistent with recreational and conservation uses.

The Conservation/Recreation category incorporates the following existing public and private recreational properties: Veterans Memorial Park, Grace Memorial **Upper and Lower** Harbors, Elk Rapids Day Park (county owned), the ~~Harbor Commission's newly acquired~~ **Elk Rapids Landing** property at Dexter Street, and Rotary Park. The Antrim County property located adjacent to the ~~generator building at the~~ **Elk Rapids hydroelectric** dam is also designated Conservation/Recreation. This includes the property commonly referred to as the Dam Beach **and Fishing Park**.

It is recommended that all publicly owned recreational land remain as Conservation/Recreation lands. As the Village grows, it is also recommended that the Village continue to monitor opportunities to acquire more land designated for public recreational use. While it is desirable that the golf course remains as recreational open space, it is recognized that this private property could be developed for residential use. If developed, cluster residential is the recommended approach for this property, thus maintaining some protected open space within the development.

#### Conservation Residential

The Conservation Residential category, a special designation, is intended to protect environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands. Development in this category will continue to be restricted due to the environmental conditions. The privately owned Conservation Residential lands occur in three locations in the Village, some of which contain wetlands. These locations are:

- The wetland area in the southwest portion of the Village, primarily south of Third Street. This is the largest of the three private areas. The Village purchased specific lots in the vicinity of Third Street for storm water management. The remainder of the area south of Fourth Street is **privately owned and could be developed as** ~~currently under development as~~ a Planned **Unit Development** residential area.
- A wetland area south of Ames Street and east of Waldemar Mitchell Road. Bounded by Todd, Hamilton and Earle Streets and has Rivershore Drive on its eastern-most limit it is currently zoned for multi-family residential development. Recognizing the small lot size and area of the platted lots, it is recommended that this area be considered for rezoning to R-3, Single Family Residential.
- A smaller area east of Rivershore Drive and south of East Third Street, as shown in Map 5. This area is currently designated for single family residential zoning. It is recommended that clustered residential use be allowed as a special conditional use in these Conservation/Residential areas, using a more condensed design layout. This approach allows for some development on the upland areas, while protecting the more environmentally sensitive areas. This approach may require the combining of some parcels.

#### General Residential

The General Residential future land use classification encompasses the zoning designations R-1, R-2 and R-3, which are described in detail in the Village of Elk Rapids Zoning ~~and Unified Development~~ Code. The distribution and general location of these residential zoning designations are described below.

The residential area within and adjacent to the central downtown area of the Village of Elk Rapids is intended to preserve and promote the historic restoration of small lot residential neighborhoods. This area is located in the western portion of the Village, and has already been platted with small lots, typically 66 feet wide with depths ranging from 100 to 132 feet. Therefore, existing typical lot sizes are between 6,600 and 8,710 square feet (or 0.15 and 0.19 acres) in size. The designated zoning in this area at the present time is noted as R-2. It is recommended that allowable densities and minimum lot sizes be consistent with the existing platted lots in this area.

The recommended uses to be allowed in this residential area are both single-family and two-family residential, bed and breakfast establishments, daycare facilities and compatible institutional uses such as libraries, buildings for small-scale educational uses and churches. Due to the historic character of this residential area and local concern for historic preservation, it is also recommended that any use other than single or two family residential use proposed for a building or property that is on or eligible for either the state or national historic register be classified as a special land use.

The General Residential category also encompasses a wide range of lot sizes located in the east, southeast and southwest portions of the Village. The size of the existing lots in this category ranges significantly, from approximately 7,400 to 217,800 square feet (or 0.17 to 5 acres) in size.

The east, southeast and southwest areas of the Village typically have larger minimum lot size requirements than the residential area adjacent to the downtown of Elk Rapids, and thus accommodate low to medium density residential development. However, the existing platted small and narrow lots are intended to remain. Due to the wide range of lot sizes in these three areas of the Village, all three designated zones (R-1, R-2 and R-3) are found here.

The suggested uses to be allowed in these areas of the Village include all those recommended in the areas adjacent to the central downtown area. It is also recommended that a residential clustering option be allowed as special conditional use for areas identified on the future land use as General Residential. Clustering would allow for the preservation of some larger open areas, and encourage housing be located on the portion of the parcel most suited for development.

#### **Mixed Residential**

The Mixed Residential category is designated to accommodate higher density residential use than the other two residential categories, incorporating uses such as apartments and other residential developments with a recommended density not exceeding eight dwelling units per acre. This Mixed or multiple-family residential designation occurs in a few locations in the Village, including the existing mobile home park as well as existing apartments and condominiums. The other areas designated for mixed residential use are at the most outer Village boundaries (at northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest points) and along the west Elk River riverbank north of Fourth Street. These areas could be suitable for apartments, condominiums or other residential development. Water and sewer services are not currently available in select areas and must be provided prior to development for any higher density use. The current residential zoning in this category is designated as RM-L— Multiple Residential-Low Density, RM-H— Multiple Residential-High Density and RM-MH— Multiple Residential-Mobile Home.

#### **Village Commercial**

The Village Commercial category comprises three different areas that are designated as 1) the Central Business District of the Village, 2) the Ames Street Commercial area and 3) the Bridge Street commercial area. All these areas incorporate existing commercial uses that are primarily in the retail and service sectors. The Village offices and Township Hall are also within the Village Commercial district and are considered compatible with existing commercial uses. At present, a number of residential uses exist in the Village Commercial area and add to the activity level in the Central Business District. It is intended that these in-town residential uses, found above the business establishments, will remain and that limited accessory residential uses may be added in the future, consistent with the central business district environment.

The Village Commercial category comprises three different areas.

The character differs for the three areas designated as Village Commercial. One of the areas has served as the commercial corridor in the Village since its early days, while the other two areas are currently in developmental stages. To plan effectively

for the future development of these areas, the past and present character of each are briefly addressed below.

The Central Business District is the oldest district, with the development of retail and service businesses occurring early in the history of the Village. Today the buildings, some dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, are mostly contiguous along each side of River Street. The current zoning classification is designated as B-2. While the design of each storefront provides contrast from building to building, there is a continuity of style in the buildings characterized by mainly rectangular, brick-front, one, two or three story structures with flat roofs. The well-marked parking places, wrought iron lamps and benches, trees and garden areas and micro-gardens in front of many individual storefronts make River Street an attractive and pleasant place for pedestrian shoppers. It is recommended the Village maintain this ambience in the Central Business District.



(could we insert actual photo here?)

The well-marked parking places, wrought iron lamps and benches, trees and garden areas and micro-gardens in front of many individual storefronts make River Street an attractive and pleasant place for pedestrian shoppers.

A second Village commercial area, known as the Ames Street Commercial Area, has developed east of US-31 Highway. ~~that provides access to points north of Elk Rapids.~~ The zoning classification in this area is designated as B-3. Much of this road was once lined with farmhouse style dwellings on spacious lots providing an “open space” feeling, and today the openness of the area has been maintained along with the development of many service-oriented businesses to which people walk, bike and drive. In keeping with public comment and noting the increasingly greater use of this street by pedestrians and bikers, ~~it is recommended that~~ shared driveways, sidewalks and landscaping requirements ~~be~~ have been incorporated into zoning requirements to facilitate a comfortable pedestrian and biking environment along Ames Street. In addition, it is recommended that the character of the expansion of the Village along the Ames Street Commercial corridor be planned to be compatible with the ambience found in the Central Business District.

The Ames Street Commercial area is bounded by a large residential area. It provides the major connecting route to the grounds of the Elk Rapids Public Schools. With the close proximity of Ames Street to both residential and educational uses, and in keeping with public comment regarding community development and commercial areas, it is recommended that there be adequate landscaping, screening and buffering areas between the commercial businesses that abut residential uses along Ames Street. It should also be noted that the volume of all types of traffic along this street has increased greatly, including traffic to the public schools, to the businesses, to the Central Business District and to points north of the Village. With this steady increase in traffic, the Village needs to monitor the overall flow of traffic and plan aggressively to meet the needs that inevitably come with continued development.

A third area in the Village Commercial category, known as the Bridge Street commercial area is on the west side of Bridge Street between Traverse Street and Fourth Street. The zoning classification in this area is designated as B-1. This commercial area is currently evolving from a former residential area, where houses

are set back from the street with an “open space” feeling along the street to a commercial district. It is recommended that low impact businesses operating during standard business hours and compatible with residential uses be allowed in this area. Similar to the Ames Street Commercial area, it is recommended that specific landscaping, screening and buffering be considered due to the adjacent residential area. As businesses increase on Bridge Street and the industrial areas revive on its eastern side, the Village should monitor the volume and flow of traffic in this area to meet the needs of future development. Furthermore, it is recommended that the character of the expansion of the Village along Bridge Street should be planned to be compatible with the ambience found in the Central Business District and future ambience along Ames Street. It is recommended that the concept of a mixed use be considered for the B-1 District.

The US-31/Ames Street/Dexter Street Intersection should continue to be examined in detail. The Intersection Improvement Plan, U.S. 31/ Ames Street/ Dexter Street’ (Wade-Trim, 1998 on file in the Village Office) should be reexamined and considered for implementation (in whole or in part) when funding is available.

### General Business

The General Business sub-category accommodates commercial uses and serves the pass-through traffic as well as local needs along the US-31 and Ames Street corridors, such as restaurants, motels and gas stations. The character of development in these areas should complement surrounding uses and development patterns.



These two restaurants are provided as examples of design that deviate from corporate architecture and reflect small-town character.

Architectural details are paramount in the General Business areas. New development and redevelopment should be designed to reflect Elk Rapids’ small-town character. Chain establishments should be designed to deviate from conventional corporate architecture, to maintain the community’s unique pastoral quality. Building facades should be constructed of high quality elements where possible, such as stone, brick, wood or other natural materials. Meaningful pedestrian circulation patterns, ground-mounted signage, and efficient site illumination are encouraged. Landscaping standards are needed to ensure proper buffering and attractive, welcoming facilities.

In addition, large expanses of parking area should be avoided, with some parking placed to the side or rear of buildings. Site access should be coordinated with neighboring properties to minimize traffic conflict points 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 commercial driveways.

### Public Service

The Village of Elk Rapids is fortunate to have many village-owned and other public facilities. The current zoning designation for public service lands is P. The Village and Township facilities located within the Village Commercial and General



Business districts ~~should be~~ **are** allowed as a special use condition. This Plan recommends that the Public Service designation accommodate the unique circumstances for the larger non-recreation public properties including the water tower property, the Elk Rapids Department of Public Works facility, **the Iron Treatment Facility**, the Township Fire Hall, Elk Rapids Government Center and the Elk Rapids Public Schools. It is recommended that the Village contemplate dedicating appropriate public lands for public parking to accommodate demand generated by local businesses, to help them continue to develop and thrive. In addition, the Village may have to consider providing land for communication technology infrastructure.

The churches in the Village are located in the residential areas or the General Business designation and are considered consistent with either of these environments. Utilities and related facilities are allowed in all land use areas. However, depending on the nature of the facility, conditions such as landscape buffering and screening should be considered.

#### **Light Industrial**

The Light Industrial future land use designation is designed to accommodate the existing industrial park. The zoning classification for this category is I-1. The industrial land use category is designed to provide sites for wholesale activities, warehouses, and repair operations, food processing, manufacturing and other light industrial operations. High technology industries can be developed within this District if they offer clean operation and environment characteristics and are compatible with the community. Uses permitted within the Light Industrial designation are compatible with those in the General Business District, but not those adjacent to residential districts without a significant buffer between the two districts.

### **Township Future Land Use**

#### **Agricultural**

Agricultural operations are a primary land use in the Township. Public input exercises revealed that these operations are viewed positively, as farms establish a strong rural character and help to define the community. It is well documented that farms and non-farm uses can conflict with each other, for a variety of reasons. It is further recognized that non-farm development in transitional agricultural areas tends to have a domino effect, undermining the economies of scale in agricultural production that is afforded with relative size and contiguity of highly productive or unique soil classifications. Land use decisions in the Agricultural areas should be mindful of these considerations.



Agricultural operations  
are a primary land use in  
the Township.

The Agricultural land use designation is meant to accommodate farming activities and to recognize the desire of residents to maintain the Township's farmland and rural character. Agriculture **and the right to farm** is an important component of the heritage of Elk Rapids Township and the region. This Collaborative Master Plan recognizes this fact and the Agricultural designation is therefore crafted to encourage farmers to continue operating in the Township. As such, non-farm development should be limited. Agricultural and residential land uses have historically coexisted in the Elk



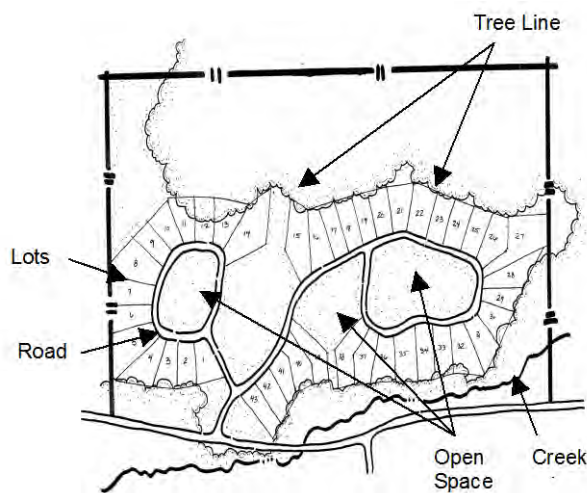
Rapids community and the Township anticipates that compatibility to continue into the future.

Agricultural uses are encouraged, as well as associated farm homesteads. Future extension of public water and sewer into these areas is not contemplated over the life of this Plan; and densities should therefore be relatively low.

#### **Low Density Residential / Medium Density Residential / High Density Residential**

Many lands in the residential future land use designation 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, **park land** 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.

The predominant land use will be residential. 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.

### **Manufacturing / Commercial**

Land uses accommodated within the Manufacturing / Commercial future land use designation include professional offices, light manufacturing and research facilities, and retail businesses. These uses will not be disruptive to residents and natural resources under this Collaborative Master Plan.

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.

### **Significant Natural Areas**

Areas shown on the future land use map as Significant Natural Areas delineate lands with sensitive environmental attributes, **park/nature areas** or known development limitations. 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. Moreover, the Significant Natural Areas designation reflects large areas of woodlands, wetlands, and other features that should be protected or observed as any future development occurs.

### **View Corridors**

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 improvements.

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 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 has conducted a Corridor Study which illustrates the preferred future for the US-31 corridor; and the Planning Commission has a continuing interest in being guided by the study recommendations when working on the US-31 corridor. 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 Township will actively pursue any available grant dollars applicable to the roadway. 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.

Additionally, 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 home sites that contribute to the rural character that helps define the community. 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. The Township anticipates working collaboratively with the Michigan Department of Transportation and Antrim County Road Commission on any significant future road developments.

With respect to Elk Lake Road, the 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 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.

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.

## **Zoning Plans**

Section 33, (2), (d), of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires that Master Plans adopted after September 1, 2008 include a Zoning Plan to explain how the future land use categories in this Plan relate to the zoning districts incorporated in the Zoning Ordinance. The following tables relates the more general future land use categories for both the Village and Township with the zoning districts of each community's Zoning Ordinance and discusses features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands consistent with this Plan. The tables are presented on the following page.<sup>1</sup>

In considering a request to rezone property, the Planning Commission must consider the future land use map and the future land use descriptive narrative of this plan. The foregoing table should be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is, or may be, consistent with this plan together with an evaluation of the specific request. The proposed rezoning decision should also consider whether the proposed site may be reasonably used as it is currently zoned, whether the proposed site is an appropriate location for any and all of the land uses that might be permitted within the requested zoning district, whether there may be other locations in the community that are better suited to accommodate such uses and any potential detrimental impact on the surrounding property that could result from the proposed rezoning.

In all cases, this Zoning Plan should be applied as a guideline for the Planning Commission subject to the appropriate application of the discretionary authority permitted to the Planning Commission and Village Council/Township Board by statute, case law and good planning practice. Nothing in this Zoning Plan will preclude the Planning Commission and Village Council/Township Board from considering amendments to this Collaborative Master Plan to better serve the public interests of the community.

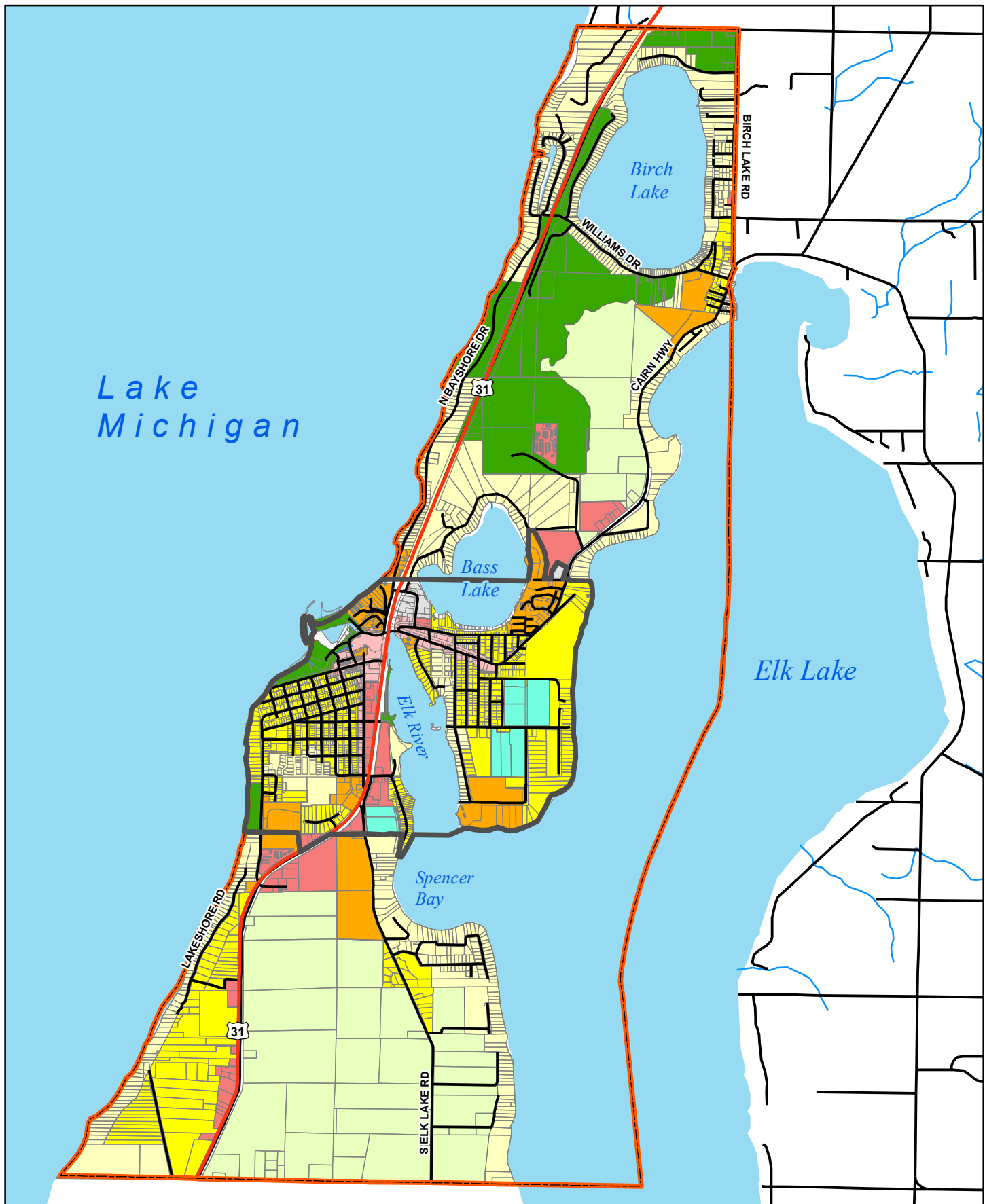
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<sup>1</sup> Note that Planned Unit Development or Planned Development are presented as optional districts or land uses and further, that several overlays exist. Additionally, note that where private property has been classified as "public," the intent is that land remain in public use; however, if land were to become developed for other purposes, it should develop under the predominant zoning district surrounding the subject property, as determined by the respective Planning Commission.

Table 7. Village Zoning Plan Table			
Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts	Evaluation Factors and Features to Determine Eligibility for Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts
Conservation / Recreation	P, Public Lands	None	
Conservation Residential	R-1, Residential	None	
General Residential	R-1, Residential R-2, Residential R-3, Residential	None	
Mixed Residential	R-1, Residential RM-L, Multiple Residential Low Density	RM-H, Multiple Residential High Density	If development is compatible with adjacent land uses and includes open space and pedestrian amenities, and if adjacent to land zoned RM-H
		RM-MH, Mobile Homes	If located at the northwest corner of Lake Street and Ames Street
Village Commercial	B-2, Central Business District	B-1, Local Business	If development is compatible with adjacent residential uses, if aesthetically compatible with the central business district, and if located along the west side of Bridge Street
		B-3, Commercial	If development is compatible with adjacent residential uses, if aesthetically compatible with the central business district, and if located east of US-31
General Business	B-3, Commercial	I-1, Industrial	If located east of US-31 between 1 <sup>st</sup> Street and 4 <sup>th</sup> Street
Public Service	P, Public Lands	None	
Light Industrial	I-1, Industrial	None	

Table 8. Township Zoning Plan Table			
Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts	Evaluation Factors and Features to Determine Eligibility for Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts
Agricultural	A, Agricultural Zone	None	
Low Density Residential	R-1, Residential – One-Family Zone	None	
Medium Density Residential	R-2, Residential – One-Family and Two-Family zone	None	
High Density Residential	R-3, Residential – Multiple Family Apartment Zone	None	
Manufacturing / Commercial	C, Commercial Zone	M, Manufacturing Zone	If located at the northwest corner of Cairn Highway and Herman Road or if located along the north side of Herman Road east of the Elk Rapids wastewater facility
Significant Natural Areas	E, Environmental Zone	None	





Village of Elk Rapids  
Elk Rapids Township  
Antrim County, Michigan

Map 5. Joint Future Land Use

Future Land Use (Village)

- Conservation/Recreation
- Conservation Residential
- General Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Village Commercial
- General Business
- Public Service
- Light Industrial

Future Land Use (Township)

- Significant Natural Areas
- Agricultural
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Manufacturing / Commercial
- Township Boundary
- Village Boundary







## **CHAPTER 5. IMPLEMENTATION**

The Collaborative Master Plan must be implemented if it is to serve as an effective guide for the Township and the Village. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the elected governing bodies, the Planning Commissions, and municipal staff. The Plan can be implemented through ordinances and administrative procedures and other policy frameworks. This section describes the most important steps to take in implementing this Plan.

Many of the strategies presented will be long-term in nature and in many instances, entities in addition to Elk Rapids Township and the Village of Elk Rapids and its boards, commissions and staff will need to cooperate in order to fully implement this Plan. In other instances, the community's role is that of facilitator or administrator. Many of the approaches outlined below will require significant public and private investment. While a few of the policies conceived during the planning process are challenging and ambitious, they will be feasible with the commitment of the Township and Village, property owners, businesses, and regional entities.

### **Implementation of Future Land Use Framework**

The Village and the Township should strive to make decisions that are in harmony with their respective future land use plans presented in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the policies of this Master Plan should be viewed as flexible, and they should be revised as the character of the community changes over time. The Plan should be reviewed and periodically updated at least once every five years to remain current and to meet statutory provisions. Each Planning Commission has jurisdiction over implementation of their respective future land use plan. Proposed land uses should be consistent with the future land use designations; however, a Planning Commission may determine that a proposed land use would not be consistent with the applicable future land use designation, but would not be incompatible with the underlying policies of the Plan, and would represent a logical extension of land use. It may therefore be a preferred alternative to the respective future land use plan, and such plan may be amended accordingly.

### **Implementation of Guiding Principles**

This Collaborative Master Plan is intended to be used as a guide for residents, landowners, decision-makers and elected and appointed officials to assist in planning for a cohesive and vibrant Elk Rapids community. As such, this Plan is predicated on several guiding principles, which indicate the community's distinct preferred essential direction. They are general and are meant to serve as a basis for the goals and objectives. The guiding principles are the result of community input and form the policy foundation of the Plan. Additionally, the guiding principles are consistent with The Grand Vision, a regional planning effort which this Plan supports.

### Complete Streets

This Plan supports complete streets policy. Complete streets are thoroughfares that are planned, designed and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another. Users in the Elk Rapids community include pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, users of assistive devices, snowmobilers, and truck-drivers. Complete streets can result in increased safety for non-motorized users, improved public health, a cleaner environment, mobility equity and enhanced quality of life through increased modal choices and more inviting streets.



Complete streets are thoroughfares that are planned, designed and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another.

In addition, another key motivation to enact complete streets policies is that Michigan law encourages MDOT to give additional consideration to enhancement and other grant applicants with such policies. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act has also been amended to stipulate that transportation improvements be respectful of the surrounding context, further ensuring that more equitable and attractive streets become reality.

The community's objective will be to work jointly with surrounding communities to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities through the development of a non-motorized network. Suggested design elements may include sidewalks on both sides of a street; pedestrian signals and signage; bike lanes; local and regional multi-use trails; and other features. The Village has passed a resolution committing itself to support complete streets. Even though the Township is a rural community, many complete streets elements are feasible, especially in the more developed areas of the Township.

Some features may be accomplished through simple road restriping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. The Township and Village should cooperatively work with neighboring communities, the Road Commission, MDOT, and other pertinent agencies in implementation of complete streets policy.

### Sustainability and Natural Resources

The Elk Rapids community is committed to plan for sustainability and the protection of natural resources. The community is distinctively positioned amidst significant water features and other resources and it is recognized that proactive planning is necessary to ensure the continued viability of these features and resources. In addition to the principles noted below, the community supports continued efforts to help protect the vital natural resources by directing development to areas of minimum sensitivity.



Parking lot rain gardens are a sustainable approach to managing stormwater runoff.

A review of the ordinances regulating the built environment in both the Township and Village should be conducted to identify provisions that result in inefficient site design and development. Depending on context, excessive parking standards, limitations on locating alternative energy such as solar panels or local wind generators, and excessive or unjustified lot area or buffering requirements can contribute to inefficient forms of development. Inefficient forms of development can result in excessive stormwater runoff that can pollute the community's prized

water resources. Additionally, a lack of provisions preventing tree clear-cutting and scenic road protection can result in built patterns that erode rural character and that can be harmful to the environment.

Communities across the United States, as well as in Michigan, have adopted a policy requiring that all new municipal buildings or additions thereto be built to the standards established by the United States Green Building Council for Leadership in Energy and Efficient Design. Such a policy in Elk Rapids could set examples for private development encouraging energy efficiency and environmental stewardship. These concepts are consistent with the direction of the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Action Plan prepared by the Township and Village. Other approaches may be taken to foster “green” development in the private sector through zoning and other incentives. Desired features include porous pavement, green roofs, and localized alternative energy infrastructure as appropriate.

A stormwater ordinance detailing acceptable techniques for handling runoff and establishing discharge limitations should be contemplated. Such an ordinance would be generally consistent with the County’s applicable requirements, but would include best management practices and encourage sustainable features such as rain gardens.

### **Placemaking**

Placemaking is an interrelated process that results in high-quality, distinctive and attractive physical spaces reflecting the needs and ideals of those who use them. Placemaking places emphasis on public art, walkability, people-oriented design, and accessible outdoor amenities that encourage pedestrian use and extend the stay of visitors. ~~Continued~~ Placemaking efforts are a priority to bolster downtown Elk Rapids and other areas. ~~The Michigan Main Street program, which the Village is currently participating in, will assist in these efforts.~~

Downtown Elk Rapids ~~should~~ **must** continue to be an attractive, ~~and~~ vibrant destination, with a healthy and prosperous mix of retail, office, housing, arts and cultural institutions and other land uses to serve the needs of permanent residents and visitors alike. Development in the downtown and in other areas of both the Village and Township will reflect the community’s unique character and history and will complement existing built patterns.

Amenities to contemplate include a variety of meaningful, high-quality public open spaces placed to accommodate casual use and formal events. These spaces can be supported with benches, bicycle racks, and other non-motorized amenities. Streets ~~should~~ **must** be walkable and ~~should~~ provide connections to downtown and the lakeshores to the extent possible. Parking in the Village should be convenient, but not dominant; with on-street parking and a shared-use system.

In and near downtown, development will continue to utilize site design approaches that screen parking lots and promote walkability. Building facades should be constructed with high-quality elements and be oriented toward and sited at the sidewalk to promote the extension of Elk Rapids’ main street aesthetic.

### Technology Infrastructure

As with many rural areas, portions of Elk Rapids may not be sufficiently served with a variety of innovative communication systems. The community desires to be sufficiently served with the appropriate telecommunication infrastructure necessary to promote desired economic growth and to augment quality of life.

Businesses, schools and residents alike will benefit from such improvements.

The community desires to be sufficiently served with the appropriate telecommunication infrastructure necessary to promote desired economic growth and to augment quality of life. Possible milestones to implementing this policy include the following:

- Conduct an inventory of technological resources available in Northwest Michigan; and become familiar with regional technological advancement strategies
- Establish an alliance with neighboring communities, telecommunication companies, local schools, and NMCOG to identify the communication and data processing needs of businesses, governments and residents and to define regional objectives
- Petition regional legislators to assist in the effort to develop and implement a plan to generate responses to local telecommunication needs and to identify and secure resources.

### Farmland Preservation

A defining element of Elk Rapids Township is the rolling fruit orchards and other farm fields, notably in the southern portion of the Township. An objective of this Collaborative Master Plan is to foster sustainable farming operations and encourage the continuation of agricultural enterprises.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program includes several instruments that the Township can help to promote. The program also authorizes local governments to participate in several methods to encourage the continuance of agricultural operations. Following are tools that should be endorsed and advertised by the community, to the extent possible:

- A. **Transfer of Development Rights.** A transfer of development rights program would identify "sending zones" or areas to be preserved – such as agricultural lands and sensitive environmental areas – and "receiving zones" or planned development areas. The sending zones are areas where farmland and open space preservation is most important and the receiving zones are areas where development is appropriate, and these zones may overlie adjacent municipalities. A program would permit a landowner to dissolve development rights from a property in a sending zone, and sell the rights to someone seeking to increase density in a development in a receiving zone.

Legal authority to establish a transfer of development rights program is unclear, as State enabling legislation has not been enacted. Local leaders may work with legislators to craft such legislation to promote transfer of

development rights as an effective and viable means to preserve open space and farmland. As the community explores the possibility of creating a program, procedures and regulations that govern the transfer of rights should be aligned to meet local objectives.

- B. Farmland Development Rights Agreements. This is a temporary, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State; which protects the agricultural use of the land in return for tax benefits and special assessment exemptions. This tool is commonly known as P.A. 116.
- C. Purchase of Development Rights. This is a permanent, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State that preserves the land for farming in exchange for a cash payment. This State program is currently not funded, but may be in the future.
- D. Local Open Space Easement. These are also voluntary and temporary, but represent an agreement between the landowner and the Township; where certain tax benefits and exemptions from various assessments are made possible.
- E. Conservation Easement Donation. Conservation Easement Donations are permanent restrictions voluntarily entered into by the landowner between the same and the State; preserving the land for either farmland or open space.
- F. Designated Open Space Easement. This is a temporary, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State; which maintains the land as open space in return for tax benefits and special assessment exemptions.

## **Implementation of Goals and Objectives**

In addition to the guiding principles, goals and objectives are presented on the following pages. They are based on the goals and objectives in the ~~2007~~ 2013 master plans for each jurisdiction, but have been grouped and organized by general theme and refined to better reflect current priorities. The goal statements are also organized by responsible or applicable party and where the same is headed with the term “collaborative,” it is anticipated that the two jurisdictions will work together in achieving the goals and objectives. The goals are intended to describe the desired end state of the community within about a 5- to 10-year period. While the goal statements are intentionally general, they are thought to be attainable if the more specific objectives are achieved. The goals define the values and vision the Plan must support. The goal statements define a desired end, are stated in positive terms, are bold but realistic, and reflect a consensus. The objectives are milestones along the way to achieving the goal, and can be thought of as action steps.

## Collaborative Goals

### Natural Resources

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

#### Objectives

1. Create a detailed inventory of key natural features and utilize the inventory via regulatory structures to preserve natural features.
2. 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.
3. 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 community 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

1. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for open space development as the preferred use by right. In 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.

### Housing

**Goal 3. Neighborhoods in Elk Rapids will include housing for the entire spectrum of our community.**

#### Objectives

1. Identify impediments to the location of affordable **work force** housing and housing to ~~serve~~ **accommodate our senior elderly** residents. ~~and~~ Develop mechanisms to encourage ~~facilities~~ **alternative housing options, such as Accessory Dwelling Units**, that allow ~~aging~~ residents to remain in the community in suitable locations.
2. Encourage high-density land uses in and adjacent to the Village, where necessary utilities and services exist, and encourage policies that distribute multiple-family or high-density development rather than concentrate it.
3. 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 new developments.

## Economic Development

**Goal 4. Viable, attractive, community- and environmentally-friendly businesses and manufacturing facilities will be located in proximity to appropriate infrastructure and services.**

### Objectives

1. Evaluate and, as necessary, adjust the Zoning Ordinances of each jurisdiction 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.
2. Analyze the feasibility of adding a square footage limitation to the Zoning Ordinances of each jurisdiction to preclude big box retail and regional shopping centers.

**Goal 5. Elk Rapids will be home to a diverse mix of businesses and manufacturing facilities, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.**

### Objectives

1. Contemplate and implement policies which would encourage innovative manufacturing uses to locate in the Township, as appropriate.
2. 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.
3. 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 small town and rural character.
4. Work with the Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce, **Downtown Development Authority**, and regional economic development entities to develop incentive programs for business retention and attraction.

## Storm Water

**Goal 6. Storm water will be effectively managed through advanced techniques that are sensitive to environmental impacts and offer aesthetic amenities to the community.**

### Objectives

1. 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.
2. Explore the possibility of shared storm water systems coordinated among neighboring developments.

## Recreation

**Goal 7. The residents of Elk Rapids will enjoy a meaningful network of trails and pathways and inviting, non-intrusive connections to local and regional natural areas and recreation facilities.**

### Objectives

1. 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.
2. Seek grant dollars for the above-described plan and its suggested improvements and to develop trailhead staging areas as trailways are constructed.
3. Work with the Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails in ensuring that the regional TART trail passes through the village instead of bypassing it.
4. Explore the “trail town” concept to connect businesses, neighborhoods and key community features through a trail system.

## Coordination

**Goal 8. Plans for public facility improvements will be coordinated with the plans of other public entities.**

### Objectives

1. Explore the feasibility and necessity of a joint recreation plan between the Township, the Village and the Elk Rapids School District.
2. As appropriate, work with the **Networks** Northwest ~~Michigan Council of Governments~~, Antrim County and surrounding communities to coordinate any future plans to ensure sufficient facilities to serve a growing regional residential and tourist population.
3. 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 community.

# Township Goals

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Goal 1. 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

1. 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 2. Elk Rapids Township will have profitable and sustainable farming operations.**

Objectives

1. 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.
2. Explore the feasibility of a Purchase of Development Rights and/or Transfer of Development Rights (upon enabling legislation adopted by the State legislature) program.
3. 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.

Housing

**Goal 3. New development will be designed in a manner that maximizes the retention of the rural character of the Township.**

Objectives

1. 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.
2. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for open space development as the preferred use by right in 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.
3. 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.

Utilities and Public Services

**Goal 4. 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.

Objectives

1. 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.
2. Build and strengthen the relationship with the Antrim County Road Commission to facilitate cooperative approaches to transportation improvements and design.
3. 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.
4. Complete an analysis of the viability of a land use and setback regulatory structure based on posted speed. Implement if feasible.
5. Actively seek grant dollars for streetscape improvements, including replanting maple trees along both sides of Elk Lake Road.
6. Evaluate private road standards and modify, if necessary, to permit flexibility in road design and construction to minimize impact on natural features and topography.
7. Assess the feasibility of a bike path parallel and adjacent to Elk Lake Road and coordinate the efforts for its construction, if desirable.

**Goal 5. 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

1. 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.
2. Analyze the opportunity to extend water and sewer to developed areas adjacent to waterfront properties.
3. In conjunction with Antrim County, establish a program of septic system and water well inspections.
4. 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.

Recreation

**Goal 6. Local public parks and recreational facilities will be conveniently located, safe and well maintained.**

### Objectives

1. Contemplate the establishment of a Recreation Commission to oversee facility planning and maintenance, grant administration, and the development of a recreation plan.
2. Assess the feasibility of a bike path parallel and adjacent to Elk Lake Road and coordinate the efforts for its construction, if desirable.
3. Evaluate lake access facilities and as needed, install appropriate signage and implement a maintenance program.

## Village Goals

### Natural Resources and Beautification

#### Goal 1. Natural resources will be protected and preserved.

### Objectives

1. Encourage a land use pattern that is oriented to and respects the natural features and water resources of the area.
2. Evaluate the environmental impact of all new development.
3. Protect land resources and water quality related to our lakes, streams and wetlands.
4. Encourage the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge and storm water holding areas.
5. Identify and protect desirable open space and scenic vistas.
6. ~~Establish~~ **Evaluate and amend** regulations and standards **as** necessary to protect shoreline and beach areas.
7. Establish regulations and standards necessary to protect and preserve the quality of the air from degradation due to fumes, odors, smoke, dust and other pollutants.
8. ~~Establish~~ **Evaluate and amend** regulations and standards **as necessary** to protect the community against high noise levels and exterior lighting glare.
9. Utilize Best Management Practices (BMP) to regulate and minimize direct storm water discharge into lakes and rivers.
10. **Evaluate and amend regulations and standards to protect our valuable water resources from septic system discharge.**

#### Goal 2. Environmentally sensitive areas, open space and public gardens will be maintained for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations.

### Objectives

1. Preserve and maintain our public gardens and natural areas.
2. Preserve environmentally sensitive lands for open space and passive recreational purposes.
3. Protect our most prized features, such as the ~~public library~~ **Island Property** grounds, public parks, beaches, gardens, natural areas, tree lined streets, and open spaces.
4. Preserve and protect all healthy trees growing on public property and

replace or add to the stock **with native species** when needed.

5. Encourage creative design and planning techniques for all new development so as to produce visual harmony, preserve special features and protect vital natural resources.
6. Evaluate, periodically, the need for public acquisition of environmentally sensitive and available properties located within the Village.
7. Preserve and maintain existing active recreation areas.

## Housing

**Goal 3. The quality and integrity of Village neighborhoods will be maintained and enhanced.**

### Objectives

1. Encourage the maintenance of the existing housing stock and residential neighborhoods in good repair, appearance, usefulness and safety.
2. Establish architectural standards to preserve the architectural integrity of traditional neighborhoods and ensure new development will be compatible with the desired Village character.
3. **Identify impediments to the location of affordable work force housing and housing to accommodate our senior residents and develop mechanisms to encourage facilities such as Accessory Dwelling Units that allow residents to remain in the community.**
4. Protect residential neighborhoods from intrusion of incompatible uses.

## Economic Development

**Goal 4. Downtown Elk Rapids will feature high-quality architecture, a unique visual character and a distinctive vibrancy that contributes to the viability of the Central business district.**

### Objectives

1. Through the Zoning Ordinance, discourage strip commercial and big box development, as well as conventional suburban development. Analyze the feasibility of adding a square footage limitation in the Zoning Ordinance to discourage big box retailing.
2. ~~Install additional wayfinding signage.~~
2. Provide additional public amenities, such as restrooms, benches, bike racks, and picnic tables in key locations.
3. Expand year-round tourist activities.
4. Continue and increase downtown shopping opportunities and festivities, such as outdoor shopping events, art displays and festivals.
5. Incorporate concepts from New Designs for Growth into the Zoning Ordinance and encourage developers to take advantage of the New Designs for Growth review program during site plan review.
6. Require the installation of underground utilities with all new developments and major renovations.

## Utilities and Public Services

**Goal 5. Residents and visitors will be provided with access to up-to-date and efficient medical, safety and public services.**

Objectives

1. Encourage the development and retention of adequate medical and health care facilities.
2. Maintain efficient emergency services and police protection to all parts of the Village.
3. Maintain an up-to-date and efficient solid waste handling system.
4. Encourage community wide recycling efforts.
5. Maintain up-to-date and efficient public water and sewer systems.

**Goal 6. Transportation systems, community facilities, programs and public utilities will be improved and maintained to accommodate the needs of residents and visitors.**

Objectives

1. Encourage the efficient use of existing roadways and infrastructure.
2. Monitor traffic counts, parking and use patterns on a continuing basis for transportation planning.
3. Plan for safe access and circulation of vehicles and pedestrians.
4. Support the development of bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways.
5. Correct hazardous and unsafe areas by improving street and road alignments where possible.
6. Implement and complete the Major Sidewalk Improvement Plan.
7. Improve the placement and operability of water, sewer and storm water drainage systems with health, safety, efficiency and economy in mind.
8. Encourage the placement of utilities underground.
9. Plan utility improvements to coincide with development, where possible.
10. Support public transportation.
11. Encourage combined use and development of governmental facilities.

**Goal 7. Access to quality education, training and community facilities for all residents will be provided and maintained.**

Objectives

1. Encourage the school system to continue to center its activities, where appropriate, in the Village of Elk Rapids.
2. Support the school's effort to maintain the generally quiet and peaceful atmosphere in their area of the Village.
3. Recognize that school needs impact the community's overall land use planning.
4. Encourage community use, to avoid duplication, of the school facilities and resources.
5. Promote an interactive program between the school government classes and units of the Village government.
6. Develop presentations about the community and share them with school classes and other groups.

7. Promote quality education and training opportunities for all residents.
8. Support the public library.

### Recreation, Parks and the Harbors

**Goal 8. Maintain the high quality of both harbors for public use in perpetuity.**

#### Objectives

1. Provide for public boat access, dockage, moorage and parking.
2. Recognize the lower harbor is to be available for refuge.
3. Continue to recognize that the harbor is under the jurisdiction of both State of Michigan and Village of Elk Rapids rules and regulations.
4. Harbor development projects should consider the overall needs of the harbor vicinity, protection of the surrounding natural features and its impact on the Village.

**Goal 9. Recreational facilities will be enhanced and the amenity level will be expanded to meet the needs of residents and visitors.**

#### Objectives

1. Continue efforts to provide seasonal outdoor recreational opportunities.
2. Maintain existing public access to lakes and waterways within the Village limits.
3. Support cooperative recreational planning and development with the surrounding townships and the schools.
4. Encourage the consideration of recreational facilities as an integral part of community development plans.
5. Include a community center, serving community needs for indoor recreation in the community development plans, possibly developed cooperatively with surrounding Townships and schools (See #3 above).
6. Preserve and maintain existing recreation areas.
7. Construct modern restrooms within park facilities
8. Add a dog park to the community.

## A – Summary of Information Sources

- US-31 Corridor Joint Study (1995)
- Joint Village and Township Community Attitudes Survey (1997)
- ~~2007~~ **2013** Elk Rapids Township, **Village of Elk Rapids Coordinated** Master Plan
- ~~2007 Village of Elk Rapids Master Plan~~
- Elk Rapids Township US-31 Corridor Ad-Hoc Committee Report (2008)
- Collaborative Master Plan Community Visioning Workshop (June 19, 2012)
- Elk Rapids Village Parks and Recreation Commission Citizen Input Session  
(September 13, 2012)
- Elk Rapids School District
- United States Census Bureau (1970-2010)

Notes from public input exercises are available at the Elk Rapids Community Government Center.

## B – Village Recreation Plan (Available at Village Offices)

## C – Adopting Resolutions

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