

1.0 Introduction

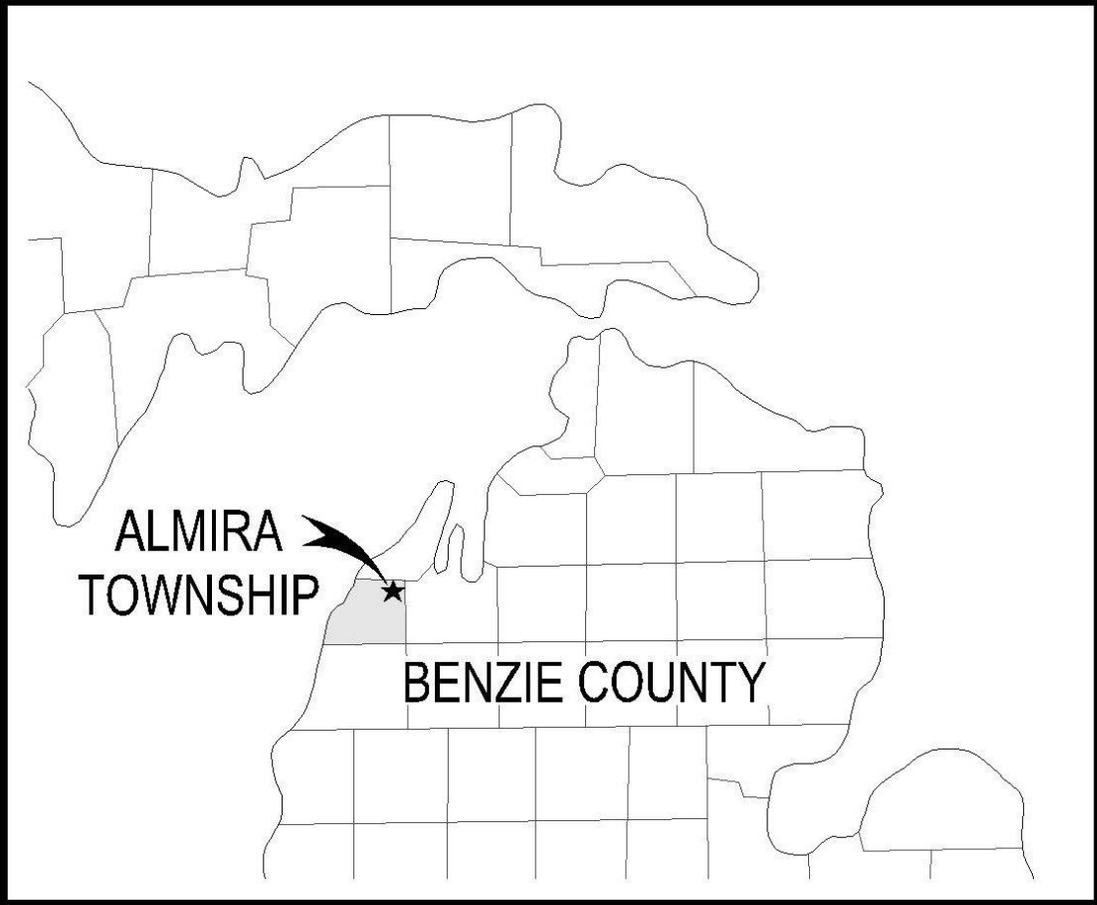
Almira Township lies in the northeastern part of Benzie County, which is situated in the northwest region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula (see **Figure 1-1**). Almira Township is comprised of one government-surveyed township, of 36 sections. The Township land area of 33.8 square miles is slightly less than the standard 36 square miles for a standard geographic township. A number of sections of the Township on the northern border (sections 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6) are less than the standard one square mile in size.

Almira Township borders on Grand Traverse County to the east and Leelanau County to the north. The Township is approximately 15 miles from Traverse City, which provides many of the employment, shopping and cultural amenities not available in the Township. To the West approximately fifteen (15) miles is Lake Michigan, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and the bulk of Benzie County

Purpose and Planning Process

The purpose of the Almira Township Master Plan is to provide guidelines for future development while protecting the water resources, other natural resources, and rural character of the Township. This plan presents extensive background information for Almira Township and the surrounding area, including socio-economic data, description and mapping of natural resources, and inventory of existing community facilities. The background information is analyzed to identify important characteristics, changes, and trends occurring in Almira Township. Community concerns are identified based on citizen participation in Master Plan meetings, New Designs for Growth Community workshops, Township citizen surveys, findings from visioning sessions, County planning studies and extensive efforts by the Planning Commission. Community developed goals and policies are presented to guide future development based on the background studies, key land use trends and community issues. These goals, along with a detailed map of existing land use, provided the basis for the Future Land Use Map that specifies the extent and location of where various types of future development can be accommodated within the Township. This plan also provides suggestions for implementation of the identified goals and policies. The guidance provided by this Master Plan will be utilized in updating the Township Zoning Ordinance and other measures the Township is authorized to take.

**Figure 1-1
Almira Township
Location Map**



LOCATION MAP

Historical Context¹

Native Americans originally inhabited this area. There were many signs of Native Americans in this vicinity in our early days. Arrowheads were frequently found in this township, as well as other artifacts including a stone nursing bottle. Well-developed apple trees were found in Almira's forests and a burial ground was discovered on the Platte River. Regrettably, large and bright beads were taken from those graves.

The first pioneers of Almira Township came mostly from eastern New York State. These people were confronted in every public place in the East with advertisements telling of the great West. These ads all boasted of how a large family could live and thrive and just how much 40 acres could produce. People also drove to the West at the beginning of the Civil War in the hopes that their boys could remain home and care for their family.

Almira Township was first platted and surveyed by government surveyors about 1860 and it was in the next five years that people began moving here. Those who moved here had to live on the government-surveyed property for five years. If they "proved up" (as the attempt of living in this wilderness was called), they were given a government deed to their farm.

The first settlers in Almira were believed to be John and Alec Heather who came from Canada in 1862. The first family to make a house in Almira Township was the Burrell family. Andrew Burrell and his wife, Almira - the township's namesake - lived on the North side of Sanrainte Creek. The next family was the Addison "A. P." Wheelock family who settled on Ann Lake, the lake being named "Ann" after his estimable wife.

A. P. Wheelock was an influential man. He spoke five different languages. Because of this unique ability, and the coincidence that many foreign people were settling in Traverse at this time, he was given a position in Hannah Lay's old store. He left his family at the edge of Ann Lake to "prove up" on his homestead. Wheelock was also the first sheriff of Benzie County.

¹ Excerpts from:

Carmien, Vera, *Lake Ann Homecoming*.

Linkletter, C.S., 1901 Annual Meeting, *Township History of Almira in Benzie County*.

Gray, Lillian, *The Township of Almira*, 1922.

Other settlers arrived quickly and made an earnest effort to make themselves a home here. An unbroken and heavily timbered wilderness challenged the settlers, who were content to live in crudely constructed hovels, many of which were often covered with bark stripped from trees. It took many years of hard toil before the land held out promise of any material returns.

The first couple who were married here was Susan Pettis and Judson Pratt who went to live on a farm near the corner of Pratt Road and County Road 669. The ceremony was performed by the first Justice of Peace, William Rosa. The first white child born here was William Rosa, Junior.

The Shirliff brothers came from Chicago and built Almira's first road, which was called State Road. They were paid in government land, but much of it was swampland and worthless at that time. State Road ran from Manistee through Benzonia and this township to Traverse City. All other roads were mere trails through the wilderness that were beaten into paths and finally roads, paying little attention to section lines.

The residents recognized the importance of religion and education and took early measures to establish institutions reflecting their values. Mrs. Elihu Linkletter (Nee Burnett) taught the first term of school, which was held in a primitive log house, about 12x16 feet inside. These were temporary quarters while the township built a schoolhouse in its first school district—School District No. 1—formed in 1862 and called the Black School. It was situated where the Lake Ann Cemetery is now located. Its first teacher was Mr. Duryea. The next schoolhouse was District No. 2, which was first taught by Alice Spafford in a barn near the corner of County Road 669 and Almira Road. During the lumber era later in the century, Almira Township boasted six school districts. Of the 356-resident population of 1880, 121 were school children.

The first church was established by the Rev. George Thompson in 1864; it was composed of Christians of several denominations and was practically Congregational in character, although it did not assume that name at its organization. It was simply called the First Church of Almira.

The Township, with more than 30 bodies of water, was formally established in 1864. The first township meeting was held at A. P. Wheelock's home at which Harrison Abbe was elected as supervisor, Andrew Rosa as clerk, and A. P. Wheelock as treasurer. One point of business at that first meeting was to dedicate the first schoolhouse.

Dr. Wilson was Almira Township's first physician, although when he first came to this country, he hid his identity. When it was discovered, he was kept galloping on horseback as needed from one homestead to another.

A Native American brought mail on the back of an Indian pony in summer and on snowshoes in winter once every week. The Post Office was in a building on Ransom Creek by Lake Ann Road. Later the Post Office was moved to Almira Corners, which is the corner of Fowler Road and Ole White Drive. The first grocery store was owned by Matt Burnett on the A. J. White farm at the corner of Ole White Drive and Fowler Road, also called Almira Corners.

In terms of social activities, there were barn-raising, sugaring-off parties, logging bees, and get-togethers to husk corn. Any help one neighbor could give another was freely and gladly given.

Lake Ann grew into a thriving lumber town. R. J. Ransom owned a saw and gristmill at Ransom Creek. In 1892, the first railroad (the Manistee & Northeastern) threaded its way through the eastern part of the township and the village of Lake Ann sprang up. Lake Ann was organized and incorporated on October 10, 1892. In a few years it had more than 800 residents and 100 buildings. By 1897, Lake Ann consisted of a general store, restaurant, hotel, drug store, meat market, saloon, livery barn and a depot. Activities centered around the Habbeler sawmill on the lakeshore (which employed 125 men) and the MNE railroad. The Grand Traverse Illustrated described Lake Ann as "a bright little town. Many chances are yet open and money is waiting to roll into the pockets of some more who get there quick. The people of the little burg are wide awake and energetic."

Timbering and agriculture were the economic base of the Township for the first fifty years. After the collapse of the timber industry, many of the offspring of the early settlers were forced to leave the community to find employment and for the next fifty years or so very little recruitment occurred.

Lake Ann Village was virtually destroyed by fire three times. The first fire occurred on July 4, 1897, when Lake Ann was in competition with Traverse City as the metropolis of this area of Michigan with 1,000 inhabitants. It is not known whether the fire began in the engine room of

William Habbeler's sawmill or by a spark from a tug anchored near the shore. The local firefighting equipment and water supply were inadequate and Traverse City was summoned by telegraph. Fifty-four minutes and two water stops later (they came by rail), and the Traverse City Fire Department was on the scene. Over a dozen businesses, freight and flatcar, the depot, endless homes and nearly a half-mile of track were all destroyed. Many of the businesses rebuilt only to be wiped out again by another fire in 1914. The third fire erupted in 1918; it was almost too much for the Village and Lake Ann was never rebuilt to its former status.

The history of the area is relatively sparse for more recent years. One of the locally noteworthy periods during the last seventy-five years was during prohibition when some prominent Chicago families operated whiskey distilleries in the Township. Some known "gangster" families had property at Harris Point and at what is now the Lake Ann Camp during this period.

Lake Ann is now a tiny, beautiful resort town with 268 residents. Almira Township, a resort and farming area with a population of approximately 3,645 persons (including the Village), is now the fastest growing township in Benzie County, due largely to its proximity to Traverse City.

Government

Almira Township was formally organized in 1864. At that time the Township was in the "Grand Traverse District" for judicial purposes. When Benzie County was established in 1867 Almira Township became the northeastern corner of the County.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the economic base of the region, which includes Benzie, Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, began to change from primarily agriculture and seasonal tourism. Industrial development and retail sales became important additions to the economic base of Northwestern Michigan.

These changes created new jobs and provided a more stable income. These factors were the harbinger of change in the Township government. As more year-round work was available more of the community's young people were able to stay in the area. This created a demand for housing and community services, such as fire protection, ambulance service, and more and larger schools.

This demand for increased services led to the need for increasing revenues to provide the services. The growth in housing both increased the tax base but also increased the cost of administering the assessing services. The work volume and complexity increased until Township officers were no longer able to adequately serve the public while working out of their homes and the current Township office building was constructed in 1989.

The increase in housing needs and an ever mobile and prosperous population also resulted in increased pressure on the resources of the Township both in terms of the geographic ability to house people and with increased interaction between people who were living increasingly close to each other. These pressures were focused on the Township government as the first level of administration available to hear complaints.

As a general law township Almira has specific duties and authorities stemming from the Michigan State constitution, by acts of the State legislature, and by case law in the court system. Among those duties is that of enacting zoning (authorized by the Township Rural Zoning Act), and through the Township Planning Act which allows creation of a Planning Commission whose duties include preparing a master plan to guide the development of the Township.

In the early 1970's a few far-sighted people recognized the need for a Township zoning ordinance as the way to bring a semblance of order in this time of rapid change. The Township's first zoning ordinance was adopted in 1972 and, with revisions and amendments, is still in effect.

The growth which created the need for a zoning board and zoning ordinance continued through the 1980's and 1990's until there was concern in the community that the characteristics which made this a desirable community were in danger of being lost.

The Almira Township Board created the Almira Planning Commission in 1995. Prior to the establishment of the Planning Commission, the Township zoning matters were addressed by the Zoning Board that was established in 1972 and was dissolved when the Planning Commission was established.

Currently, the Almira Township Planning Commission operates under, and complies with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Governor Jennifer Granholm signed it into law on March 13, 2008. The statute took effect September 1, 2008.

2.0 Socioeconomic Profile

Population and household characteristics are essential components to consider in the development of any Master Plan. An analysis of a community's existing and future population and household characteristics provides a foundation upon which a major portion of a master plan is based. While an evaluation of a community's current characteristics provides insight to immediate needs and deficiencies, population projections provide a basis for determining future land use requirements, public facility needs, and essential services.

The following examples illustrate this point. A younger population may demand more school facilities and active recreation opportunities, while an older population may require [medical support,] property maintenance assistance and prefer higher density residential development. Also, persons characterized as low income typically generate a higher demand for publicly provided facilities than persons in higher income categories who have greater access to private facilities. [In addition, as retirees move North, they want, and are willing to pay for some of the services they had downstate.] As shown by these examples, analysis of a community's demographic base is essential to the preparation of a community master plan.

This section of the Plan examines several elements, which are central to understanding a community's population and housing characteristics. These items include population growth patterns, age/gender breakdowns, and household size.

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Almira Township in 2010 was 3,645 persons, including 268 in the Village of Lake Ann. **Table 2-1** provides population statistics for Benzie County, Almira Township and the Village of Lake Ann for the period of 1970 to 2010. As can be seen, the entire Township experienced tremendous population growth between 1970 and 1980, when the combined growth of the Township and Village of Lake Ann was more than 130 percent. From 1980 to 1990, the total Township growth rate slowed to 34.4 percent and grew to 113 percent between 1990 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2010 the combined growth rate was 29.7%. The Township growth between 2000 and 2010 comprises more than 54.6 percent of the County's growth.

With respect to population, it is significant to note the 2010 Census tally, taken on April 1 does not count residents who winter elsewhere. The figures presented by the 2010 Census do not reflect the actual number of persons residing in the Township during the summer months.

Table 2-1									
Population Change									
Almira Township, Village of Lake Ann and Benzie County									
	<u>1970</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>2010</u>
Benzie County	8,593	30.4	11,205	8.9	12,200	31.1	15,998	9.5	17,525
Almira Township	296	184.8	843	46.1	1,232	105.8	2,535	33.2	3,377
Village of Lake Ann	172	36.6	235	-7.7	217	27.2	276	-2.9	268
Total Township	468	130.3	1,078	34.4	1,449	94.0	2,811	29.7	3,645

The population of Benzie County has experienced substantial growth each decade since 1960. **Table 2-2** illustrates population change for permanent residents of Almira Township and other Benzie County communities from 1980 to 2010.

**Table 2-2
Population Trends of Benzie County Communities
1980-2010**

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	Number Change 1980 - 2010	Percent Change 1980 -2010
Almira Township	1,078	1,449	2,811	3,645	2,567	238.1
Benzonia Twp	2,461	2,405	2,839	2,727	266	10.8
Blaine Township	449	424	491	551	102	22.7
Colfax Township	340	415	585	657	317	93.2
Crystal Lake Twp	753	759	960	957	204	27.1
Frankfort City	1,603	1,546	1,513	1,286	-317	-19.8
Gilmore Township	794	794	850	821	27	3.4
Homestead Twp	1,290	1,477	2,078	2,357	1,067	82.7
Inland Township	843	1,096	1,587	2,070	1,227	145.6
Joyfield Township	573	626	777	799	226	39.4
Lake Township	387	508	635	759	372	96.1
Platte Township	256	253	342	354	98	38.3
Weldon Township	378	448	530	542	164	43.4
Benzie County Total	11,205	12,200	15,998	17,510	6,320	56.4

Age Distribution

Information on age distribution within a population can assist the community in matching public services to community characteristics, by determining the special needs of specific resident groups. **Table 2-3** compares the age distribution of Almira Township, Benzie County and the State of Michigan based on the 2010 Census while **Table 2-4** illustrates the changes in the Township's age composition between 2000 and 2010.

The 25-44 age bracket covers an age span of 19 years and comprises 27.9 percent of the Township population, a decline from 33.5 percent in 2000. This segment of the population is considered to be in their working years and is likely to have school-age children at home.

For the sake of comparison, younger and older age categories are combined to consider two additional 19 year age spans for the Township population. An age bracket from 5-24 years of age incorporates the school age population and young working population, and makes up 24.2 percent of the Township population. The age bracket 45-64 years of age is considered to be the older working years. This segment of the population has grown from 21.9 percent of the Township population in 2000 to 29.1 percent in 2010 and is typically considered to be the 'empty nester' cohort where the children have moved out of the household.

The 65 and over age group does not cover a specific number of years, and therefore is not used in the age group comparisons above. This age category makes up 10.9 percent of the Township population, up only slightly from 10.0 percent in 2000. The median age in Almira Township is younger than both the State and Benzie County. The Township's median age has increased from 35.7 years in 2000 to 38.9 in 2010.

**Table 2-3
Age Distribution by Jurisdiction - 2010**

	Almira Township	Benzie County	State of Michigan
Under 5	7.9%	5.3%	6.0%
5 to 9	7.7%	6.0%	6.5%
10 to 14	6.7%	6.0%	6.8%
15 to 19	6.5%	5.8%	7.5%
20 to 24	3.3%	3.9%	6.8%
25 to 34	12.8%	9.3%	11.8%
35 to 44	15.1%	11.8%	12.9%
45 to 54	16.4%	16.2%	15.3%
55 to 59	7.5%	7.5%	6.9%
60 to 64	5.2%	7.5%	5.8%
65 to 74	6.6%	11.7%	7.3%
75 to 84	3.5%	6.4%	4.5%
85 & Over	0.8%	2.6%	1.9%
	100%	100%	100.0%
Median Age	38.9	46.2	48.5

Table 2-4
Almira Township
Age Distribution - 2000 & 2010

	2000	2010
Under 5	7.7%	7.9%
5 to 24	26.9%	24.2%
25 to 44	33.5%	27.9%
45 to 54	14.2%	16.4%
55 to 59	3.8%	7.5%
60 to 64	3.9%	5.2%
65 & Over	10.0%	10.9%
	100%	100%
Median Age	35.7	38.9
Source: 2010 U.S. Bureau of Census		

Population Projections

The future projected population of Benzie County will be 19,237 persons by 2020, based on a study done in December 2007 by the University of Michigan Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations for the Michigan Department of Transportation. **Table 2-5** projects the Township population to 2020 using two methods:

- 1) The Township population as a percentage of the County population growth and
- 2) The Township population as a percentage of the total County population.

This assumes a degree of correlation between the growth rates of the County and the Township. Using these associations, the population of the Township will range between 4,153 and 4,728 by 2020 assuming the conditions which have fueled growth in the region, remain reasonably constant and the supply of land in the Township is adequate to accommodate such growth. Neither approach is likely to capture the actual outcome, but **Table 2-5** does provide a reasonable range of possible future populations for use in local and county planning.

**Table 2-5
Population Projection
(As % of County Population Growth)**

	1970	Incr	1980	Incr	1990	Incr	2000	Incr	2010	Incr	2020
Benzie Co.	8,593	2,612	11,205	995	12,200	3,798	15,998	1,527	17,525	1,712	19,237
% of growth/decade		30.3%		8.9%		31.1%		9.5%		9.8%	
Almira Twp.	296	547	843	389	1,232	1,579	2,811	834	3,645	508	4,153
% of County Growth		20.9%		39.1%		41.6%		29.7%		29.7%	
Population Projection (As% of Total County Population)											
Benzie Co.	8,593		11,205		12,200		15,998		17,525		19,237
Almira Twp.	296		843		1,232		2,811		3,645		4,728
%	3.4%		7.5%		10.1%		17.6%		20.8%		24.6%
		4.1%		2.6%		7.5%		3.2%		3.8%	
Projected Population Ranges									2020		
									4,153 -4,728		

Households

Table 2-6 is the census data from 2010 which shows Almira Township having a total of 1,385 households (occupied housing units) of which 1,045 or 75.5 percent are family households and 340 are non-family households. A family household is defined as a household in which a person is living with one or more persons related to him or her by birth, marriage or adoption. A non-family household is a household where a person is living alone or with non-relatives only.

Single parent households comprise a relatively small portion of the households in the Township. In 2010, there were 85 single parent family households, comprising 8.1 percent of the family households in the Township. The Township has 2.63 persons per household in 2010, down from 2.67 persons in 2000. This compares to 2.37 persons per household in the County. Household size will likely continue to decline during the 20-year planning time horizon, consistent with national trends.

Table 2-6
Almira Township
Households

No. of Households	2000		2010		% Increase 2000 - 2010
	#	Size	#	Size	
	1,054	2.67	1,385	2.63	31.4%
Household Types					
Family Households	808	76.7%	1,045	75.5%	
Non-Family Households	246	23.3%	340	24.5%	
Total Households	1,054	100%	1,385	100%	

Income, Education and Employment

Income, education and employment statistics are from the [2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Set](#). Income is reflected in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars. Generally speaking, income levels for northern Michigan fall below those found in the State as a whole. **Table 2-7** compares income statistics for the year-round population of Almira Township, Village of Lake Ann, Benzie County and the State of Michigan. Households in the Township have a higher median income than the County and of the State as a whole.

Table 2-7		
Income Statistics		
Township, Village, County and State – 2009		
Governmental Unit	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Almira Township	\$53,077	\$22,873
Village of Lake Ann	\$37,250	\$19,283
Benzie County	\$44,445	\$23,225
State of Michigan	\$48,700	\$25,172
NOTE: The Township values include the Village Source: U.S. Bureau of Census		

Education is one important factor in analyzing the capabilities of the local work force. The U.S. Census Bureau tracks educational attainment. Statistics indicate that 93.9 percent of residents in Almira Township, between the ages of 25 and 64, are high school graduates or higher, as compared to 89.7 percent in Benzie County and 90.2 for the State as a whole. Township residents with a bachelor's degree or higher comprise 20.9 percent of the population compared to 21.5 percent countywide and 26.4 percent Statewide.

The available employment data does not separate the Village from the Township; therefore Township level data presented below includes the Village of Lake Ann. Employment data for the civilian labor force is presented below in **Table 2-8**, comparing the Township and Benzie County for the years 1996, 2001, and 2009. The unemployment rate for northern Michigan is typically somewhat higher than that of the State as a whole, as seen with the County's unemployment rate. The State unemployment rates for the same years were 4.9% (1996), 5% (2001), and 10.4% for 2009.

Table 2-8						
Civilian Labor Force Comparisons Almira Township and Benzie County 1996-2009						
	Almira Township			Benzie County		
	1996	2001	2009	1996	2001	2009
Labor Force	825	950	1,831	7,000	8,075	8,527
Employ	775	900	1,651	6,500	7,575	7,523
Unempl	50	50	180	500	525	1,004
Unempl Rate	6.3	5.2	9.8	7.4	6.4	11.8
Source U.S. Bureau of Census						

Housing Stock and Property Values

An evaluation of the housing stock and property values can be very beneficial in determining community characteristics and housing needs. Statistics from the 2010 Census show a total of 1,772 housing units for Almira Township. RVs, boats, vans, etc are not considered as part of the housing stock. Housing stock in Almira Township is primarily owner-occupied, with owner-occupied housing making up about 78.2 percent of the total housing units. Of the 1,385 occupied units, 1,258 are owner occupied, and 127 rented.

One comparative measure of the local housing stock is housing value. The median value of owner-occupied, year-round housing units for Almira Township from the 2010 Census is \$165,500, (including the Village of Lake Ann). The Lake Ann median value is \$153,600, Benzie County is \$162,700, and the State of Michigan is \$147,500.

Property values can also be analyzed by reviewing State Equalized Value (SEV) figures. By law, SEV, which constitutes a community's tax base, is equal to approximately one-half of the true market value of real property and certain taxable personal properties. **Table 2-9** shows SEV by property class for the Township (including the Village of Lake Ann) in 1991, 2002, and 2011. As indicated in the table, the majority of the Township's tax base is derived from residential property.

The total SEV for the Almira Township increased more than 215 percent between 1991 and 2011. Benzie County, as a whole, experienced significant increases during this time period. Total SEV for the County was \$306,199,545 in 1991, \$1,093,871,689 in 2002, and \$1,488,124,173 in 2011.

Table 2-9							
Almira Township							
State Equalized Valuation by Property Class							
Property Class	1991 SEV	%	2002 SEV	%	2011 SEV	%	%* Change
Agriculture	2,181,300	4.3	3,372,000	2.7	3,265,400	2.0	49.7
Commercial	1,070,900	2.1	3,479,900	2.8	2,556,500	1.6	138.7
Industrial	N/A	0	N/A	0	44,300	-	100.0
Residential	45,368,400	88.8	116,858,200	92.7	152,597,062	94.6	236.4
Timber Cut Over	1,092,500	2.1	N/A	0	N/A	0	NA
Total Real Property	49,713,100	97.3	123,710,100	98.2	158,463,262	98.2	218.8
Personal Property	1,396,360	2.7	2,250,700	1.8	2,932,000	1.8	110.0
TOTAL SEV	51,109,460	100	125,960,800	100	161,395,262	100	215.8
Source: Benzie County Equalization Department							
* numbers have been rounded							

3.0 Natural Resources

One of the greatest attractions for residents and visitors to the Almira Township area is the natural environment, most notably the water resources. The natural environment that attracts people to the area also imposes constraints on the use of the land. Often the alteration of sensitive environments creates problems that cannot be corrected easily. For example, the combination of increasing impervious surfaces and the filling of wetlands will result in increased volumes of storm water runoff while reducing the natural storm water retention areas. It is essential that any future development consider the varied characteristics of the natural environment in order to preserve the character of Almira Township.

An analysis of Almira Township's physical environment can assist government officials in planning for future use. Natural resources addressed in this chapter include climate, geology, topography, soils, water, wetlands, and wildlife.

Climate

The Township's climatic conditions are similar to those across northern Lower Michigan: long, cold winters, and moderate, warm summers. However, the proximity to Lake Michigan serves to moderate temperature extremes as compared to more inland communities of northwestern Michigan. The average date when temperatures drop to freezing is in the fall and is typically several weeks later than the areas further inland, with the first frost in the township occurring as late as the middle or end of October. [Lake Ann is in a 'snowbelt'. Snow accumulations of 1"/hour are common, with accumulations occasionally accumulating 24" a day] According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, Frankfort Station, Benzie County, for the year 2000, **Table 3-1** illustrates some important weather data for Benzie County, including Almira Township.

Table 3-1
Weather Data for Benzie County

January average minimum temperature	18.9 degrees F
January average maximum temperature	30.6 degrees F
July average minimum temperature	57.5 degrees F
July average maximum temperature	76.4 degrees F
Average annual rainfall	30.25 inches

Average annual snowfall	122.4 inches
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Geology

According to geologists, the bedrock underlying Almira Township was laid down during the Devonian age of the Paleozoic Era. The bedrock in the Township consists of Antrim Shale in the northwest portion and Ellsworth Shale in the remainder of the Township.

The surface geology of the Township was formed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago by glacial activity. Numerous advances and retreats by the glaciers resulted in the locally complex pattern of erosion and deposition. The Township’s surface geology consists primarily of glacial pale brown to pale reddish brown fine to coarse sand, alternating with layers of mixed small gravel/heavy cobbles, and is three to 65 feet in thickness. A narrow strip north of Lake Ann to the north-central Township boundary is made up of gray, grayish brown or reddish brown, non-sorted coarse textured glacial till, and is 30 to 90 feet in thickness.

In the northwestern portion of the Township, the outwash landform is pitted with ice-block depressions. These depressions are frost pockets. Some of the largest ice-block depressions in the outwash are seasonally or permanently flooded.

Topography

Almira Township is characterized by a diversity of topography from relatively flat expanses to gently rolling to steep slopes. A relatively flat area extends north-south in the western portion of the Township with much of the remainder of the township rolling. Steeply sloped areas are scattered across the Township, often in proximity to one of the lakes. The lowest point in the Township is in the southeast near Sanford Lake, at 803 feet above sea level. The highest points are Varney Hill and Warner Hill in the north-central portion of the Township at approximately 1,122 feet above sea level.

Soils

One important determinant of land use is the soil's suitability for development. The physical and engineering properties of a soil type should be considered before development occurs.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has mapped the soils in Benzie County. The mapping of the soils provides significant information regarding various limitations posed by the particular soil types in a given area. The soil survey information identifies which soil types have limitations for locating septic systems, or have building construction limitations. Since water and sewer do not presently serve the Township, more detailed analysis of the soils by the District Health Department will determine suitability of the site for a septic system (state law requires District Health Department approval). Additionally the soils are grouped by slope, so areas with steep slopes can be identified. Hydric or wetland soil types are also identifiable from the soil survey. Soil type limitations do not preclude the development of specific sites. However, the Township and developers should realize that construction on some soils might be more costly. Soil mapping for the Township is pertinent information for consideration in the planning process.

Water Resources

One of the most valuable natural resources in Almira Township is water. The Township is located within the Leelanau and Platte watersheds see **Figure 3-1**. Both groundwater and surface water are vital for Almira Township. Because there is no central water distribution system, residents must rely on individual wells for household water. Surface waters in the lakes and creeks of the Township are an important resource for scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife habitat, and groundwater recharge. Therefore, it is important that water resources, both groundwater and surface water, be protected and managed in a manner which will ensure their quality.

Surface Water

The largest body of surface water, Pearl Lake, with approximately 543 acres in surface area is located in the northwest quarter of the Township. Ann Lake, the second largest lake in Almira Township at 527 acres, is located in the southeast quarter. Approximately 30 other smaller lakes can be found in the Township. These lakes and their associated streams and creeks offer scenic and recreational amenities to Township residents and visitors. It is extremely important that the quality of these surface waters be protected from the negative impacts of development, such as non-point source pollution and loss of scenic views to open water.

To protect the public's right to recreate and enjoy inland lakes, the State regulates construction activities adjacent to inland waters under the Inland Lakes and Streams Act,

Public Act of 1972. This statute applies to any natural or artificial lake or pond greater than five acres and any stream or creek with defined banks and continued flow or regular occurrence of flow. A permit is required for the following activities:

- Construction and/or operation of a marina.
- Creation or modification of an inland lake or stream.
- Interference with the natural flow of a stream or lake.
- Dredging or filling of a stream or lake.

Installation of seasonal, noncommercial docks and the reasonable sanding of beaches are allowed without a permit. The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended, protects lakes and streams from sedimentation. The Act requires a permit for any new construction within 500 feet of a lake or stream, or construction that will open up more than one acre of land. In Benzie County the Act is administered by outside sources as contracted with County.

Groundwater

Since there is no municipal water system, the entire Township relies on groundwater from individual wells. Important factors in the evaluation of groundwater are the quantity and quality of water. The geologic and hydrologic features of the Township provide residents with sufficient water quantities. Water availability will not likely be a factor in limiting growth. However, the potential for water quality problems is more a limiting factor. While water hardness, iron content and salinity are of little or no concern, the potential for contamination of wells and other water bodies due to septic system failure is of concern. Substandard wells and septic systems constructed prior to current sanitary codes can still be found throughout the Township.

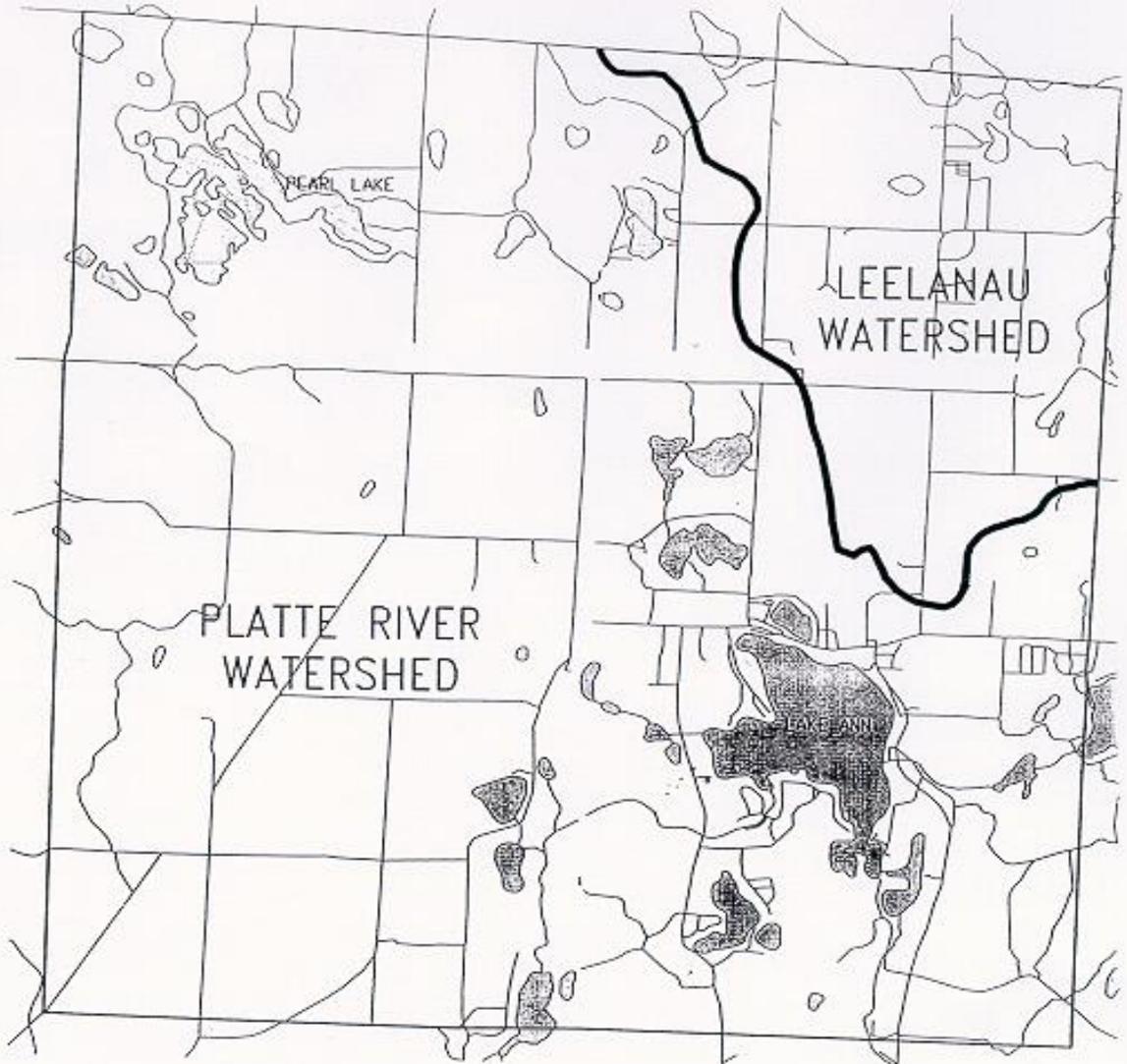
The 'Aquifer Vulnerability to Surface Contamination in Michigan' map, prepared by the Center for Remote Sensing and Department of Geography at Michigan State University, reveals the Township is located in an area where the vulnerability of drinking water aquifers to surface contamination is high, due to highly permeable soils over highly sensitive drift lithology.

Benzie County has taken steps to protect groundwater by adopting a septic system maintenance ordinance. This ordinance requires substandard septic systems be upgraded at

the time of sale or transfer of property ownership. There is growing concern regarding the cumulative impact of septic systems especially those located in close proximity to lakes or wetlands.

Figure 3-1

Almira Township
WATERSHED MAP



Source: Northwest Michigan Council of Government

The threat of water pollution from point sources is not a significant issue in the Township, but non-point sources can be a major concern. Proper land use management can help control water quality conditions in the Township. Some methods to curb pollution include runoff control measures, additional storm water management, and proper maintenance of septic systems. Lakes, creeks and wetlands are important for surface drainage, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat. Alterations to the water features can contribute to flooding, poor water quality, and loss of valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

Wetlands

Wetlands are unique and diverse ecosystems where water is found, either on the surface or near the surface, at various times during the year. These areas often contain poorly drained soils which support water-loving vegetation. Wetlands are also referred to as marshes, swamps [fens???] or bogs.

Residents of Michigan are becoming increasingly more aware of the value of wetlands. Beyond their aesthetic value, wetlands protect the water quality of lakes and streams by filtering polluting nutrients, organic chemicals and toxic heavy metals. Wetlands are closely related to high groundwater tables and serve to discharge or recharge aquifers. They serve a critical role in storm water management, by providing temporary flood or storm water storage areas. Wetlands support wildlife, and wetland vegetation protects shorelines from erosion. Wetlands areas are found primarily where mucky soils and low elevation occur simultaneously in the Township. Wetland areas are mapped on the Existing Land Use Map, **Figure 4-1**.

Michigan's Wetland Protection Act defines wetlands as "land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp or marsh." The Act further specifies State jurisdiction depends on proximity to lake, stream, pond, or Great Lake, and/or having a direct hydrological relationship with it. Wetlands that meet the statute criteria are considered regulated and require a permit before draining, filling, dredging or construction.

Woodlands [“The nicest forest I ever worked in was just south of Lake Ann.” Lloyd Bates, early 20th century lumberjack]

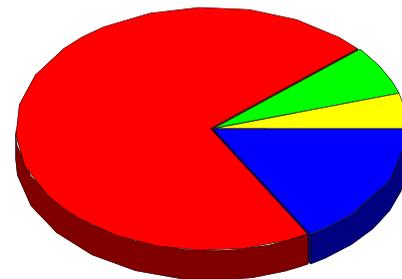
In addition to the scenic characteristics of woodlands, forested areas provide habitat for wildlife, protect soil from erosion, and buffer noise. The distribution of forested lands within the Township is shown on the Existing Land Cover/Use Map, (**Figure 4-1**). The forestland is divided into two categories, upland forestlands and the lowland forestlands.

The dominant forest associations in the upland forest category within Almira Township are northern hardwoods (maple, beech and basswood). Pine and aspen are also included in the upland category and found within the Township. The lowland forest lands are typically forested wetlands, therefore these forested areas are distinguished from the upland forests. The common lowland hardwood species found in the Township include oak, ash, elm and red maple. The common lowland coniferous associations are cedar and tamarack.

[mention Woodland challenges of recent: Emerald Ash Borer, Oak Wilt, Beech Blight, Gypsy Moth ???]

Forest Types

Figure 3-2



	Lowland Hardwoods - 645 acres
	Aspen-Birch - 856 acres
	Northern Hardwoods - 9,341 acres
	Pine - 2,149 acres

Fish and Wildlife

Sport fishing is popular on several inland lakes in Almira Township. The Fisheries Department of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) conducts periodic fish inventories at selected lakes.

The most recent inventory in the Township was conducted in 2004 on Ann Lake. Twenty-one species of fish were collected, with the most prevalent being Rock Bass, Bluegill, Sunfish, Common Shiner, Yellow Perch, both Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike. Snapping and painted turtles are also abundant in Ann Lake.

A fish inventory of Sanford Lake was conducted at eight Sanford Lake sites in 1989. Species collected included bluegill, largemouth bass, green sunfish, rock bass, white sucker, yellow

bullhead and brown bullhead. Painted and snapping turtles and bullfrogs were observed along the shoreline. Based on the results of that survey, albeit dated, it appears that Sanford Lake contains one of the best bluegill populations in the area.

The most current fish inventory for Pearl Lake was conducted at 12 sites in 1983. Species collected were: northern pike, bluegill, rock bass, perch, largemouth bass, and assorted pan fish. Turtles and clams were also evident.

The wetlands, lakeshores and forests within the Township provide habitat for populations of songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, muskrat, mink and raccoon. Predominant mammal species found in the Township's forests and wetlands are squirrel, rabbit, fox, coyote, raccoon, bear, skunk, and deer.

Sites of Environmental Contamination

The Michigan Environmental Response Act 307 of 1982, as amended, provides for the identification, evaluation and risk assessment of sites of environmental contamination in the State. The Environmental Response Division (ERD) of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is charged with administrative responsibility.

A site of environmental contamination, as defined by ERD, is "a location at which contamination of soil, ground water, surface water, air or other environmental resource is confirmed, or where there is potential for contamination of resources due to site conditions, site use or management practices." The agency publishes an annual list of environmentally contaminated sites by county, showing the sites by name, Site Assessment Model score, pollutant(s) and site status. The April 1995 *Michigan Sites of Environmental Contamination* identified seven sites within Benzie County, none of which are in Almira Township. A second list for Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (April 1995) is also published, which lists an additional 23 sites in Benzie County. Clean up plans for 22 of these sites were filed with the MDEQ, and corrective actions are currently underway. For Almira Township, the only listed site is B&M Party Store in the Village of Lake Ann. This site is one of the sites where cleanup actions are in progress, and nearing completion. [Environmental Cleanup has been completed] [In the late 1960s, Oil and gas companies were helping remote homeowners living in remote locations by installing In Groiund gasoline tanks. Heating with Fuel Oil was also common. The numbers and locations of these buried fuel tanks is unknown.]

Surface Water Discharge Permits

All point source discharges into surface waters are required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit which the Michigan Water Resources Commission upon recommendation by MDEQ, Surface Water Quality Division issues. Permit requirements generally address discharge limitations, effluent characteristics, monitoring and reporting requirements, along with facility management requirements. Currently there are no point source discharge permit holders located in Almira Township.

Air Quality

The Air Quality Division of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) monitors air quality. Standards have been established as acceptable levels of discharge for any of the following air pollutants: particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, lead, and trace metals. These pollutants are monitored on a continuing basis at selected locations around the state. Monitoring in recent years has shown the level of pollutants in the region to be within the established acceptable standards.

Air discharge permits are required for businesses discharging more than the acceptable level of any of the regulated air pollutants. As of March of 1998, there were four active air discharge permits issued within County. There are currently no known permits issued to businesses located in Almira Township.

4.0 Existing Land Use

Pattern of Land Divisions

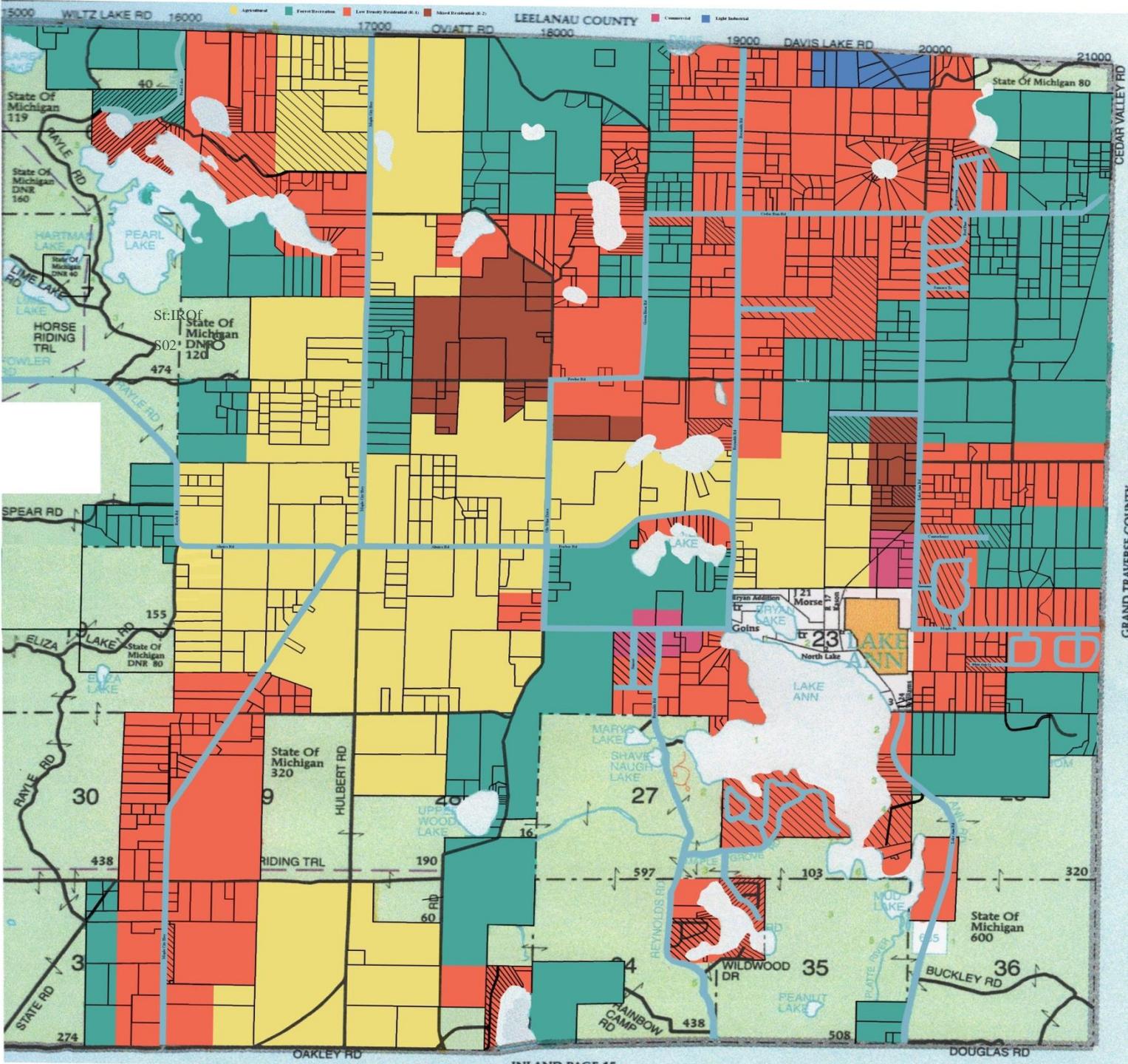
As development occurs, larger tracts of land are generally broken down into smaller parcels. Therefore, studying the existing pattern of land divisions is one way to analyze the status of land use and development. Land division patterns for Almira Township are discussed below.

State owned, large undivided parcels are located in the forested lands of the Pere Marquette State Forest. These properties are found in the southern and western regions of the Township in Sections 6, 7, 18, 19, 25-31 and 33-36. Privately owned large tracts can be found in nearly every section of the Township and are typically nonforested open fields, upland forest, or wetlands. The category of nonforested land is simply open field, grassland or shrub land, not being used for agriculture or any other active use. [Generally speaking, these were first forests, then cut over land, then homesteads with gardens, then orchards and potato farms. Sometimes, these became vinyards or Hops farms.]

Parcels of ten acres or less are found throughout the Township in nearly every section. Small tracts and small lot residential subdivisions have developed in many areas, primarily located on the east side of the Township. Hardwood Acres was one of the initial subdivisions in the Township, located in Section 24. Some of the other residential subdivision areas include areas adjacent to Pearl Lake in Sections 5 and 6, Lake View in Section 15, Sunnydale in Section 22, Samara Woods in Section 12, Bronson Lake in Section 33, and Sanford Lake in Sections 34 and 35. In addition, several plats and small tracts are noted adjacent to Ann Lake and in the Village of Lake Ann.

Almira Township Existing Land Use Map

Figure 4-1



Existing Land Use Statistics and Characteristics

According to the 1990 Census, Almira Township's land area is 33.8 square miles. The map of existing land use, shown as **Figure 4-1**, illustrates the distribution of land uses throughout the Township as of March 1998. Michigan Resource Information Systems (MIRIS) land cover/use classification categories were used to map the existing land use. The original state MIRIS mapping (1978) was updated with 1987 aerial photographs in combination with extensive field checking (conducted in March 1998). The updated information was then computerized to produce the existing land use map and statistics. **Figure 4-2** graphically represents the percent of the Township in each land use category. **Table 4-1** presents the land uses in current rank order, showing the number of acres and percent of the Township in each of the land use categories. Each of the land use categories is discussed later in this chapter.

Table 4-1 Existing Land Use Statistics Almira Township		
Land Use Category	Number of Acres	Percent of Township
Upland Forest	12,393.4	53.8
Nonforested/Undeveloped/Open	4511.4	19.6
Wetlands/Lowland Forest	1,464.1	6.4
Water	1421.1	6.2
Residential	1324.2	5.8
Agricultural	1,227.8	5.3
Institutional/Recreation	327.0	1.4
Village of Lake Ann	276.7	1.2
Industrial/Extractive/Utilities	52.9	0.2
Commercial	37.9	0.2
TOTAL	23,036.5	100.1
Source: Michigan Resource Inventory System		
Note: Due to rounding, the total percentages of land uses do not equal 100 percent.		

Upland Forest

The forested lands are the most predominant land cover in the Township and account for 53.8 percent, or 12,393 acres. Of the forested lands, northern hardwoods comprise approximately three quarters of the upland forested lands, with pine as the second most common upland forest type, followed by aspen-birch associations. Large upland forested areas are noted

along the southern and western regions where state forestland exists. Mapped woodlands include such tree types as beech, oak, maple, aspen, birch, white pine and red pine.

Nonforested/Undeveloped/Open

Nonforested land consists of herbaceous open and shrub land. As shown in **Table 4-1**, more than 19 percent of the Township is nonforested. Nonforested areas are scattered throughout the Township and are found in nearly all sections of the Township, except Sections 26 and 27.

Wetlands/Lowland Forest

Wetlands include land that has sufficient water at, or near, the surface to support wetland or aquatic vegetation. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes and bogs. The identified wetlands include areas that support lowland hardwoods and conifers, such as northern white cedar, willow and aspen species, as well as lowland brush and grasses. Wetlands and lowland forests comprise 6.4 percent of the Township area. Due to past draining and development this amount is much reduced from what would have originally been classified as wetland. The majority of the wetland areas can be noted on the Existing Land Use Map in the southwest portion of the Township, in the vicinity of Ann Lake and many of the other smaller lakes and streams in that portion of the Township (Sections 21, 22, 24-28, 31 and 35 of the Township). A few additional wetland areas are clustered in the northeast portion of the Township (Section 1, 11-13).

Water

Open water comprises over six percent of Almira Township. Included in this category are Ann Lake, Pearl Lake and approximately 30 other smaller inland lakes. For a full discussion of the importance of surface water, see Chapter 3, Natural Resources.

Residential

As can be seen on the Existing Use Map and table, residential use ranks fifth in the amount of land currently in this use. Residential use occupies more than five percent (1,324 acres) of the land in the Township. Residential development on various size parcels is distributed throughout the Township and in the platted subdivisions mentioned earlier in the chapter. This category would also include multiple family housing, although none was identified during the field checking.

Agricultural

Agricultural lands currently comprise approximately 1,227 acres or 5.8 percent of the Township. The agricultural land is clustered in the central and north central portion of the Township with a few scattered parcels located in the southwest portion of the Township.

Institutional / Recreation

This category includes both institutional and recreation lands category, which cover 1.4 percent of the Township's land area. Included in this category are Township offices, parks, campgrounds, public access sites, cemeteries, the Lake Ann Camp and Retreat Center, and the Mistwood Golf Course. These sites are shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

Industrial/Extractive/Transportation

Land in this use category covers less than one percent of the Township and includes the landing strip in Section 32, just off Maple City Road. Additionally, two other areas are mapped as this land use, a sand and gravel excavation operation off Almira Road, (east of Maple City Road) and a sawmill south of Almira Road.

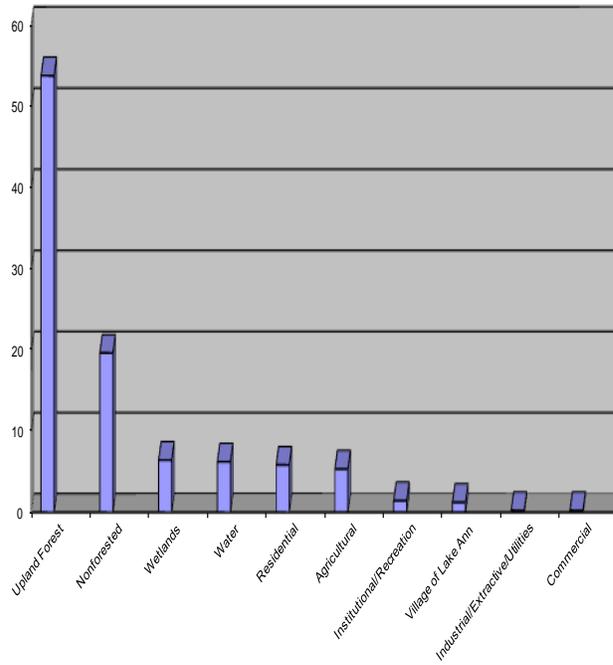
Commercial

A small commercial area is located on Almira Road, which includes an automotive shop, a restaurant, a self-storage facility and other businesses. Additionally, two resorts and the ultra light airstrip are mapped as commercial. Although not mapped, limited commercial activities are located in the Village of Lake Ann. For most shopping needs, residents travel to larger regional commercial areas, such as Traverse City. Lands used for commercial purposes comprise less than one percent of the Township's area.

Figure 4-2

Almira Township
1998 Existing Land Uses

Percent of
Township



5.0 Community Services, Facilities and Transportation

Water and Sewage Disposal Systems

Almira Township does not have a public water system. Instead, Township residents rely on on-site private wells for domestic water. All private water wells are regulated by the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. Likewise there is no public sewage disposal system operated by the Township. Local residents rely primarily on private on-site septic systems that are regulated by the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. The District Health Department requires an inspection [and upgrades, if needed] of the septic system prior to any property transfer.

Two important determinants for siting a septic system are soil suitability and depth to bedrock. Chapter 3, Natural Resources, discusses the Township's geology and soils. [Regionally speaking, any politician or government official who talks about a municipal waste water treatment plant is recalled, or voted out of office]. Lack of Municipal sewer and water prevents the township from receiving FHA, HUD, etc type loans]

Storm Water

Storm water management is an important issue throughout the region as development occurs and the amount of impervious surface increases. There are only two storm drains, [four storm drains in the village of Lake Ann. Two of these drain directly into Lake Ann. There is also a storm drain at the end of East Sanford Lake Road. There may be others in various subdivisions. Many homeowners have built storm drains for their driveways, because of the hilly terrain of many lots.] both of which are located along Maple Street in the Village of Lake Ann and empty into Ann Lake. All other roads in the Township are ditched and do not connect to a Township storm water system. [The Benzie County Road Commission has been placing rip rap at many road/stream crossings]

Solid Waste

Residential and commercial rubbish pick-up is offered within the Township only by several private haulers. [There are three different waste haulers that are contracted with by the homeowners. Oftentimes, all three companies drive through the same neighborhoods every week. In addition, John and Sandy's General Store accepts bagged trash for a nominal fee.]

No waste transfer station is located within the Township. Since there are no landfills located in Benzie County, the solid waste collected in Almira Township is taken to Grand Traverse County, Wexford County or Manistee County, depending on the hauler.

A Benzie County drop-off recycling site is located within the Almira Township Park off Ole White Drive. The county recycling program [is 'single stream, and] accepts glass, paper, cardboard, certain plastics, plastic bags, and tin [in the same roll off container]. The county also coordinates a household hazardous waste collection program, in which the Township may participate one day in the spring of the year.

Other Public Utilities [The Almira Firedepartment has a map of the DTE Gas distribution, but could not find it for us. In addition, Cherryland Electric /wolverine builtthe new substation Greater capacity, that portion is wired in a 'loop', so is easier to repair after an outage,

Cherryland Rural Electrical Cooperative and Consumers Power each have designated service areas for electric power within the Township. A substation owned by Wolverine Power is located off Ole White Drive at Barber Road. Natural gas service, provided by DTE Energy Co., is limited to primarily the eastern portion of Almira. The remainder of the Township must rely on propane, provided by various venders. Century Telephone (CenturyLink) provides local phone service in the Township, while a variety of long distance carriers are available.

Emergency Services [well? Enthusiastically? Consistently? Supported by the taxpayers at millage time. The new fire truck is here,too]

Almira Township Fire & EMS Department is a part time paid on-call department with 20-25 firefighters and 2 paid full time EMT/Firefighters. The department provides primary service to all of Almira Township and by mutual aid agreements to other neighboring departments and agencies. The department is equipped with a fire engine with 1,250 gpm capabilities, a 2,000 gallon capacity water tanker and a brush fire pumper, as well as equipment for vehicle extrication. The Township's ISO rating for hazard insurance risk is 9. The Department also owns and operates two ambulances that are licensed as basic life support. Benzie County EMS provides advanced life support.

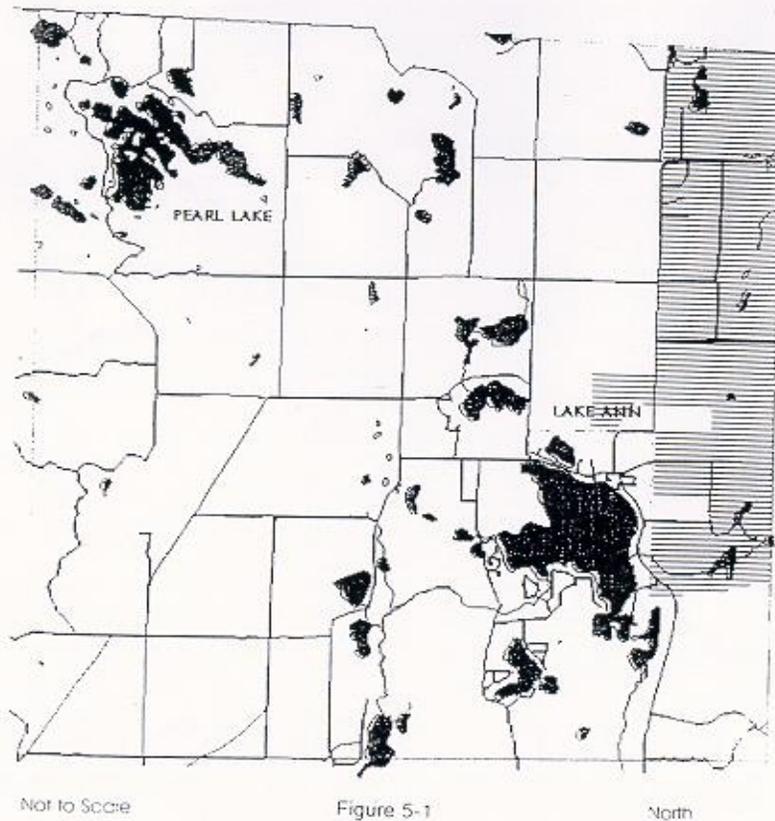
Almira Township has enhanced 911 service that dispatches the Township fire and ambulance services, as well as law enforcement from the Benzie County Sheriff's Department in Beulah. Almira Township does not have a local police force. Law enforcement is provided by the

County Sheriff's Department in Beulah and the State Police from both the substation in Honor and the Traverse City post.

Schools and Library

Almira Township is served by two different school districts: the Benzie County Central Schools (BCCS) and the Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS). As can be seen on **Figure 5-1**, the majority of the Township is in the BCCS district. The BCCS district covers an area of 364 square miles, of which approximately 29 square miles are in Almira Township. Approximately five square miles of the Township are within the TCAPS district. BCCS elementary students

ALMIRA TOWNSHIP School Districts Service Areas



Benzie County Central School District
Traverse City School District



Figure 5-1

Schools and Library (continued)

attend either Platte River Elementary in Honor or Lake Ann Elementary on Bronson Lake Road in Inland Township. TCAPS elementary students attend Westwoods Elementary on Fisher Road in Long Lake Township. The middle schools and high schools are located in Benzonia and Traverse City areas.

A vital component of 16 different school districts, including the BCCS and TCAPS school districts, is the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD). TBAISD is available as a resource and provides a variety of services including general education programs, special education and alternative programs, a regional education media center, a math, science and technology center, and administrative services. The programs offered by the TBAISD are conducted either at the individual schools or at the TBAISD offices centrally located in Traverse City.

An Almira Township Library is located in the Village of Lake Ann. While cozy and with limited hours, it offers residents and visitors access to a collection of books and periodicals for both children and adults, as well as two on-site computers and free WIFI within the vicinity.

Recreational Facilities

The Almira Township Recreational Resources Committee serves as an advisory committee to the Township Board. The Almira Township Recreational Development Plan was adopted and approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) through the year 2016. Consequently specific projects are eligible to apply for recreation grant funds from the state.

The Almira Township Park, located adjacent to the Township office, includes 3 ball/soccer fields, a full-size basketball court, a paved walking trail, 2 tennis courts, a sand volleyball court, playground equipment, covered pavilions, and restrooms. This Township property is approximately 58 acres in size, with space available for additional recreation facilities.

Almira Township also owns the Ransom Lake Natural Area. This property is 220 acres, including 3,500 feet of frontage surrounding Ransom Lake. There is an entrance drive and

parking area at the east end of Nofsger Road, and another along Lake Ann Road. The latter entrance affords barrier free parking and restrooms, and a handicap accessible trail along Ransom Creek to a deck overlooking the lake. Another hiking trail circles the lake. The property may be used for hiking, wildlife observation, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or snowmobiling.

There is also a state-owned and operated rustic campground facility located on Ann Lake. This property [The Lake Ann Pathway] includes several miles of hiking/skiing trails ,[is open to hunting and mushrooming] and a public boat launch [recently upgraded by the DNR with a dock]. The MDNR maintains boat launch access sites on many of the lakes in the Township, including Pearl Lake, Davis Lake, Stevens Lake and Herendeene Lake.

The privately owned and operated Lake Ann Camp & Retreat Center covers approximately 300 acres. While primarily utilized for youth camp and church activities in the summer, the facility is available for conferences and retreats year around.

Township residents also have access to a park in the Village of Lake Ann that includes a public playground, a half-court basketball court, picnic facilities and a restroom. [This has also been enthusiastically supported by taxpayers, and used by many.

Municipal, State and Federal Facilities

All Almira Township administrative offices are located on Ole White Drive. The Fire & EMS facility includes a central meeting room utilized by the various township committees and boards, including Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Commission and Township Board of Trustees. All elections are held in this facility also.

There are no county, state or federal facilities located in the Township, with the exception of state forest land described above under Recreation Facilities.

Civic Organizations

Although private civic organizations are not affiliated with any governmental unit, they are listed in this chapter because of the important services they provide to the community residents. Organizations presently active in Almira Township include:

- Lions Clubs
- Almira Historical Society
- Ann Lake Property Owners Association
- Pearl Lake Association
- Sanford Lake Association
- Platte River Watershed Group
- Almira Citizens for Preservation

Churches

- Lake Ann United Methodist Church
- Woodside Wesleyan Church
- Advent Lutheran Church

Transportation and Road Maintenance

There are approximately 40 miles of paved roads and 65 miles of gravel roads within the Township, of which approximately 30 miles are county roads. There is no state highway. The Benzie County Road Commission is responsible for maintenance of the public roads, although the Township does provide funding assistance for road improvements.[While there are no designated State or Federal Highways in Almira Township, M 72 and US 31 are major East/West atwo lane highways, just North and South, respectively of Almira Township. Inb Almira Township, County Road 669 and Reynolds Road are both heavily used by North / South traffic. The Benzie County Road Cimmission certifies 23.93 miles of Primary Road and 63.32 miles of Local Road in Almira Township and is responsible for maintenance of the public roads. The Township provides funding, in some cases.

In the past few years, the Benzie County Road Commission has completed some notable major and minor improvements. The Benzie County Road Commissiob abd funding partners, Almira Township, The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS), and the Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA) provided funds for stream crossing work, such as culvert replacement and has rip rapped a number of river crossings with stone. By6 controlling the storm water runoff, maintanence costs are reduced, soil erosion is better controlledk stream and water quality improve, as does fish habitat.

Two very visible major projects that the Road Commission completed are the wooden bridges over the Platte River, and Burnt Mill Road. Replacing the undersized metal culverts with these bridges restores the natural riverbed, providing improved water quality and habitat for fish. Funding Partners with the Road Commission were; The CRA, NCRS, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

Another noteworthy project was improving the crossing, and replacing the culvert at the unnamed tributary to Cedar Creek/Tucker Road crossing. Funding Partners were the Benzie County Road Commission, Almira Township, and the Property owner.]

Public transportation for the Township is provided by the Benzie Bus system, which can take anyone within the boundaries of Benzie County to any location within Benzie County. The Benzie Bus also provides rides to Munson Medical Center and the BATA Transfer Station in Traverse City. Reservations can be scheduled with a phone call during regular business hours.

[Public transportation for Almira Township is provided by the 'Benzie Bus', operated by the Benzie Transportation Authority. Their on demand Dial a Ride service is available from 5 AM until 7:30PM, with four hour advance notice for reservations requested. Reservations can be scheduled by telephone or Internet.

The Benzie Bus Flex Line Route operates hourly between Lake Ann Village, Frankfort and Thompsonville with a dozen stops each way. The Flex routes will deviate up to a quarter mile off the route for scheduled pickups.

The TC X Route has had six regularly scheduled daily (reservations required) stops in the Village of Lake Ann since 2014. Three go to Frankfort in the western part of Benzie County. Three go to Traverse City in Grand Traverse County.

In 2016, The Benzie Transportation Authority built a bus shelter in Burnett Park, adjacent to the basketball courts in the Village of Lake Ann. The Benzie Bus has connecting transit service with Manistee, Leelanau, and Grand Traverse Counties. It offers free rides to

Medicaid clients to medical appointments. In addition, it's centrally located Terminal, near Honor is a designated Emergency Warming Shelter, in times of severe weather.

In January, 2007, when Benzie Transit Authority took over operation of the Council on Aging's bus fleet, the ridership grew from 40,000 annually to 72,000 in 2015. Taxpayers support 1/3 of the Benzie Transit Authority's annual budget. Typically voters support millage requests by a 3 to 1 margin.]

The only airport within the Township is a small private one for "ultra light" aircraft, located on County Road 669, between Hooker Road and Oakley Road. Commercial air transportation is available at the Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City, approximately 16 miles from Almira Township.

[The only airport in the Township is located on County Road 669

Between Hooker and Oakley Roads. The Michigan Department of Transportation classifies it as a Basic Utility Airport. It is open to the public. It has a 2600 ft. grass East/West runway that is suitable for single engine light aircraft. There is also a North/South runway that is used by ultralight aircraft and light sport aircraft. This is an Airport/Condo development in a 'taxi to your hanger at your house' type of development.

Commercial Air Transportation is available at Traverse City's Cherry Capitol Airport, and Manistee's Blacker Airport.]

6.0 Community Goals and Policies

Community Goals

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the Township's goals and policies to guide future development. Community participation and input is a critical component in the development of these goals. In analyzing the data compiled from census reports, it is clear that Almira Township is located in an environmentally sensitive area. Uncontrolled development could dramatically alter the character of the Township. By encouraging new development to conform to community based standards and guidelines, both the rural character and the natural resources of the Township can be preserved to the fullest extent possible.

Community Survey

In the spring of 1997, a community survey was conducted by the Township to clarify the views of Township residents regarding issues identified at the visioning sessions. Strong support was shown for preserving and protecting natural resources and open spaces, encouraging smart growth in all development, limiting commercial and light industrial development, and encouraging recreational opportunities for Township residents, in particular bike paths along existing roads.

Once again, in the summer of 2009, the Planning Commission conducted a survey of the residents in Almira Township. The results were essentially the same as the 1997 survey. Township residents want to maintain the current quality of life found in our township and, for the most part, agree the best way to do this is by preserving and protecting natural resources and open spaces, encouraging smart growth in all development, limiting commercial and light industrial development, and encouraging recreational opportunities for Township residents, in particular bike paths along existing roads.

Following on the next pages are the results of the most recent survey.

SUMMARY TOTALS, SURVEY - SUMMER 2009

Total # forms returned 250
 Total # responses tallied 243

Subject	Yes		No		Other	
Primary residence is Almira Twp.	159	65%	50	21%	34	14%
Property within village of Lake Ann	30	12%	123	51%	90	37%
Primary source of income:						
work or business within township	14	6%				
work or business outside township	104	43%				
retirement	107	44%				
Land use preferences, Residential						
single family less than one acre	66	27%	65	27%	112	46%
single family 1-5 acres	139	57%	27	11%	77	32%
single family at least 5 acres	80	33%	37	15%	126	52%
duplexes and townhouses	39	16%	75	31%	129	53%
apartment complexes	21	9%	80	33%	142	58%
subs mixed single and multi-family	40	16%	58	24%	145	60%
residential mixed with retail or offices	57	23%	64	26%	122	50%
subs clustered homes and open space	108	44%	35	14%	100	41%
affordable housing	68	28%	56	23%	119	49%
senior citizen residences	113	47%	34	14%	96	40%
Land use preferences, Commercial/Industrial						
more acreage zoned commercial	32	13%	70	29%	141	58%
new commercial development	49	20%	67	28%	127	52%
only light industry, e.g., research	79	33%	54	22%	110	45%
mix of light industry and manufacturing	65	27%	67	28%	111	46%
more stores/offices to serve residents	104	43%	54	22%	85	35%
Land use preferences, Natural Environment						
preserve open, undeveloped spaces	165	68%	10	4%	68	28%
preserve lakes, streams, wetlands	215	88%	5	2%	23	9%
preserve farmland and woodlots	184	76%	9	4%	50	21%
cooperate to preserve natural areas	162	67%	10	4%	71	29%
would consider paying more taxes to do so	104	43%	74	30%	65	27%

Subject	Yes		No		Other	
Public Services						
police protection is adequate	128	53%	42	17%	73	30%
enforcement of laws on lakes is adequate	124	51%	36	15%	83	34%
enforcement snowmobile trails adequate	85	35%	24	10%	134	55%
fire protection adequate	170	70%	4	2%	69	28%
maintenance of cemeteries is adequate	156	64%	10	4%	77	32%
roads should be upgraded and improved	107	44%	37	15%	99	41%
roads should be kept two-lane	191	79%	4	2%	48	20%
provide paved shoulders for bike paths	142	58%	50	21%	51	21%
enforcement of junk/nuisances adequate	84	35%	97	40%	62	26%
should bid out garbage collection service	83	34%	86	35%	74	30%
continue to provide site for recycling	215	88%	2	1%	26	11%
should provide curbside recycling	65	27%	108	44%	70	29%
continue to provide clean-up disposal day	212	87%	5	2%	26	11%
Initiate planning for public sewage system for:						
Village of Lake Ann	59	24%	90	37%	94	39%
residential subdivisions	31	13%	106	44%	106	44%
whole township	23	9%	129	53%	91	37%
Website should be enhanced and maintained						
I do, or would, use website	117	48%	14	6%	112	46%
Recreational Facilities; added or improved						
play fields (baseball, soccer, etc.)	46	19%	64	26%	133	55%
playgrounds	55	23%	61	25%	127	52%
ice skating rink	77	32%	50	21%	116	48%
basketball courts	39	16%	64	26%	140	58%
picnic areas	60	25%	56	23%	127	52%
bicycle paths	104	43%	48	20%	91	37%
public beaches	108	44%	43	18%	92	38%
Recreational Facilities; promoted or encouraged						
teen dances	56	23%	55	23%	132	54%
basketball and/or tennis camps	61	25%	52	21%	130	53%
baseball/softball leagues	96	40%	34	14%	113	47%
soccer	81	33%	44	18%	118	49%
swimming lessons	98	40%	38	16%	107	44%
youth programs	120	49%	36	15%	87	36%
adult programs	86	35%	41	17%	116	48%
senior programs	118	49%	28	12%	97	40%
Township should purchase more parkland						
Twp/village should consolidate functions	49	20%	88	36%	106	44%
Twp/village should consolidate functions						
	99	41%	55	23%	89	37%

Goals and Policies

In developing community goals and policies, it is important to analyze existing community conditions, as described in the earlier plan sections including the Socioeconomic Profile, Natural Resources, Existing Land Use and Community Facilities sections. In addition to examining existing characteristics, another important tool in the development of community goals and policies is to identify community assets and problem areas. By combining the outcomes of the working session discussions, the citizen survey, and Master plan research efforts, the Planning Commission was able to develop the following set of goals and policies:

GENERAL GOALS
PRESERVE THE UNIQUE BEAUTY OF ALMIRA TOWNSHIP-- by protecting the waterfront setting, small town/rural character, and maintaining an overall clean, healthy and well maintained living environment.
Protect the HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE of Township residents by coordinating the land use so that efficient public services are provided.
Promote and maintain a centralized business area. Protect and PRESERVE HISTORIC areas, sites, buildings, structures and features. Recognize the importance of the tourist industry to the local economy.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL:

Maintain a balance between human activities and the natural environment.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage site designs and plans that preserve and protect natural assets and the rural character of the township.
2. Require planning review of the following types of public projects, including:
 - a. The opening, closing, vacating, widening, or extension of roads.
 - b. The acquisition or enlargement of any park, playground or public open space.
 - c. The construction, acquisition, or authorization of public buildings or structures.
3. Encourage roadside and open space buffer strips of vegetation, both to enhance the visual image of the Township and to protect the land uses adjacent to the roadway from traffic noise, dirt and glare.
4. Encourage buffers (e. g., berms or vegetative screening) to shield residential properties from adjacent non-residential development.
5. Encourage general public, civic organizations and all commissions to provide input for Township decisions.
6. Encourage the preservation, maintenance and restoration of historic sites, structures and features.
7. Periodically review and revise both the Zoning Ordinance and this Master Plan to be easily understood and to conform to the character of the Township and the prevailing priorities of its residents.

HOUSING

GOAL:

Allow for suitable housing opportunities for all income levels and age groups.

POLICIES:

1. Consider the development of housing to meet the needs of all household types and income groups, including affordable single family housing and housing options for seniors.
2. Encourage the maintenance of the existing housing and residential neighborhoods in good repair, appearance, usefulness and safety.
3. Protect the residential neighborhoods from intrusion of incompatible uses.
4. Encourage high-density residential development only in those areas that are suitable for such use.
5. Encourage the development option of clustered single-family housing in buildable portions of the Township, to protect open space.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

GOAL:

Protect and preserve natural resources.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage a land use pattern that respects the natural features and water resources of the area. Promote the protection of sensitive features including wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, lakes, streams, steep slopes and wooded areas.
2. Evaluate the environmental impact of all new development.
3. Protect land resources and water quality related to our lakes, streams and wetlands, including shorelines.
4. Encourage the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge and stormwater holding areas.
5. Utilize Best Management Practices (BMP) to regulate and minimize direct stormwater discharge into lakes and rivers.
6. Identify and protect desirable open space areas, scenic vistas and environmentally sensitive lands.
7. Collaborate with conservation agencies and private groups to preserve natural areas.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

GOAL:

Recognize the importance of agricultural lands within Almira Township.

POLICIES:

1. Maintain and provide for the preservation of agricultural farmland where feasible, including tree farming and specialty crop farms.
2. Allow for and encourage farmland protection through the "transfer of development rights" and "purchase of development rights". Encourage clustering of non-farm development to minimize agricultural land consumption.
3. Support legislative reform measures to assist in retaining farmland.
4. Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses.
5. Recognize farmland as contributing to the scenic and rural character of the Township.

RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS

GOALS:

To preserve, protect and maintain environmentally sensitive areas, open space and public parks for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations.

Maintain and improve the current high level of recreational facilities.

POLICIES:

1. Preserve and maintain our state land, public parks, access sites and natural areas.
2. Preserve environmentally sensitive lands for open space and passive recreational purposes.
3. Encourage creative design and planning techniques for all new development so as to produce visual harmony, preserve special features and protect vital natural resources.
4. Evaluate, periodically, the need for public acquisition of environmentally sensitive and available properties located in the Township.
5. Preserve and maintain existing active recreation areas, especially the Township Park.
6. Continue efforts to provide seasonal outdoor recreational opportunities.
7. Support cooperative recreational planning and development with the Village of Lake Ann, the surrounding townships and the schools.
8. Expand, improve or develop recreational facilities, especially playgrounds, bike paths, picnic areas and a public beach.
9. Provide more recreational activities, such as youth programs, baseball/softball, soccer, swimming lessons and senior programs.
10. Pursue outside funding sources, such as grants for land acquisition and/or recreational development either passive or active.

COMMERCIAL AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

GOAL:

Promote a varied business environment to serve the needs of residents and visitors while preserving the natural environment and small town appeal.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage development of stores and small businesses such as professional offices.
2. Provide areas for future commercial development adjacent to already existing commercial zones, i.e. Village of Lake Ann.
3. Encourage zoning techniques such as clustering and/or shared parking.
4. Promote safety by controlling the size, number, illumination and configuration of signs.
5. Encourage the re-use of existing facilities where appropriate and consistent with existing zoning.
6. Encourage home occupations compatible with existing residential areas.
7. Ensure developments occur in a sensitive manner and are harmonious with the existing community.
8. Encourage light industries that do not pollute the air, soil or water nor offend because of noise, odor or visual impact to locate in designated industrial park areas.
9. Promote greenbelt buffers and landscape regulations.
10. Foster cooperation with businesses in the Township.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

GOAL:

Maintain and improve the Township's transportation systems, community facilities, programs and public utilities to accommodate the needs of residents and visitors.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage the efficient use and maintenance of existing roadways and infrastructure.
2. Maintain 2-lane roads where ever feasible for controlling speed and maintaining the rural character.
3. Plan for safe access and movement of vehicles as well as pedestrians.
4. Support the development of bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways.
5. Encourage the placement of utilities underground.
6. Plan utility improvements to coincide with development, where possible.
7. Encourage cooperative Township and Village planning for public utilities, such as water and sewer systems.
8. Require fire hydrants or necessary fire protection systems to be installed as development occurs with the costs borne by the developer.

GOVERNMENT

GOAL:

Provide services in an efficient, environmentally responsible and caring manner to meet the needs of the residents, property owners, business people and visitors.

POLICIES:

1. Promote intergovernmental and regional cooperation on issues of mutual concern.
2. Ensure a responsible fiscal policy and budget process to finance the Township government.
3. Promote the involvement of volunteers in the government process.
4. Utilize the proactive master planning process as a check and balance on decision-making.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

GOAL:

Provide access to quality education, training and community facilities for all residents.

POLICIES:

1. Continue to work with the schools to present information programs about the community to school classes and other groups
2. Promote quality education and training opportunities for all residents.
3. Support and expand the public library.

7.0 Future Land Use Plan

At present, Almira Township is primarily a rural residential and agricultural community. Lakeshore living is available along the shores of Ann Lake, Pearl Lake and the many additional lakes in the Township. While active agricultural uses have declined from historic levels, the remaining active farms are highly valued by the local residents, according to the 2009 Survey conducted by the Almira Township Planning Commission.

Through land use planning and land use controls, Almira Township intends to ensure that existing rural residential, agricultural, and recreational uses can continue, and reasonable growth can be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts. Based on the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the Township, six general categories of land use have been identified to serve existing and future development needs. These categories are listed below:

- Forest/Recreation
- Agricultural
- Low Density Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Commercial
- Light Industrial

Forest/ Recreation

Forest/Recreation areas are primarily intended to accommodate park and recreational lands and uses including all existing state forest lands, Township owned parks, and other forested or environmentally sensitive lands. These lands are not intended to undergo intense development pressures due to existing public ownership or easement status. Consequently, only environmental preservation and low intensity recreation are anticipated on these public properties. It is intended that these lands be designated for continued conservation and recreational use. Low density residential and agricultural uses are anticipated for privately owned properties though resort or camp type uses are also intended to be accommodated, owing to the attraction of Almira Township as a seasonal and recreational home community.

The maximum density residential is intended to be one unit per five acres. It is also intended to preserve large areas of permanent open space consisting of woodlands, wetlands, steep slopes, lakeshore, view sheds, and similar natural resources, by clustering and employing Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). The Township encourages the establishment and preservation of larger areas of contiguous and permanent open space including prime, unique and valuable farm lands; wetlands; woodlands; steep slopes; and ravine habitats, as scenic, recreation and wildlife corridors. The preservation tools intended to be employed include donations, acquisition, and cooperative efforts with other units of government and landowners, conservation easements, deed restrictions, and zoning ordinance provisions that support the use of sound open space conservation practices.

Agricultural

An Agricultural land use category has been designated consistent with the Township's goal to continue agricultural production. Almira Township recognizes that the presence of agricultural activity contributes significantly to the scenic and rural character valued by Township residents. The Agricultural land use designation is primarily intended to encourage the continued agricultural use of areas on prime, unique or locally important agricultural soils. The designated area is primarily located in the north central portion of the Township, as shown on the Future Land Use Map, **Figure 7-1**.

ALMIRA TOWNSHIP BENZIE COUNTY, MICHIGAN FUTURE LAND USE

- FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES**
- FOREST / RECREATION
 - AGRICULTURAL
 - LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
 - MIXED RESIDENTIAL
 - COMMERCIAL
 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
 - VILLAGE OF LAKE ANN

- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Section Lines
- Streams and Rivers
- Lakes

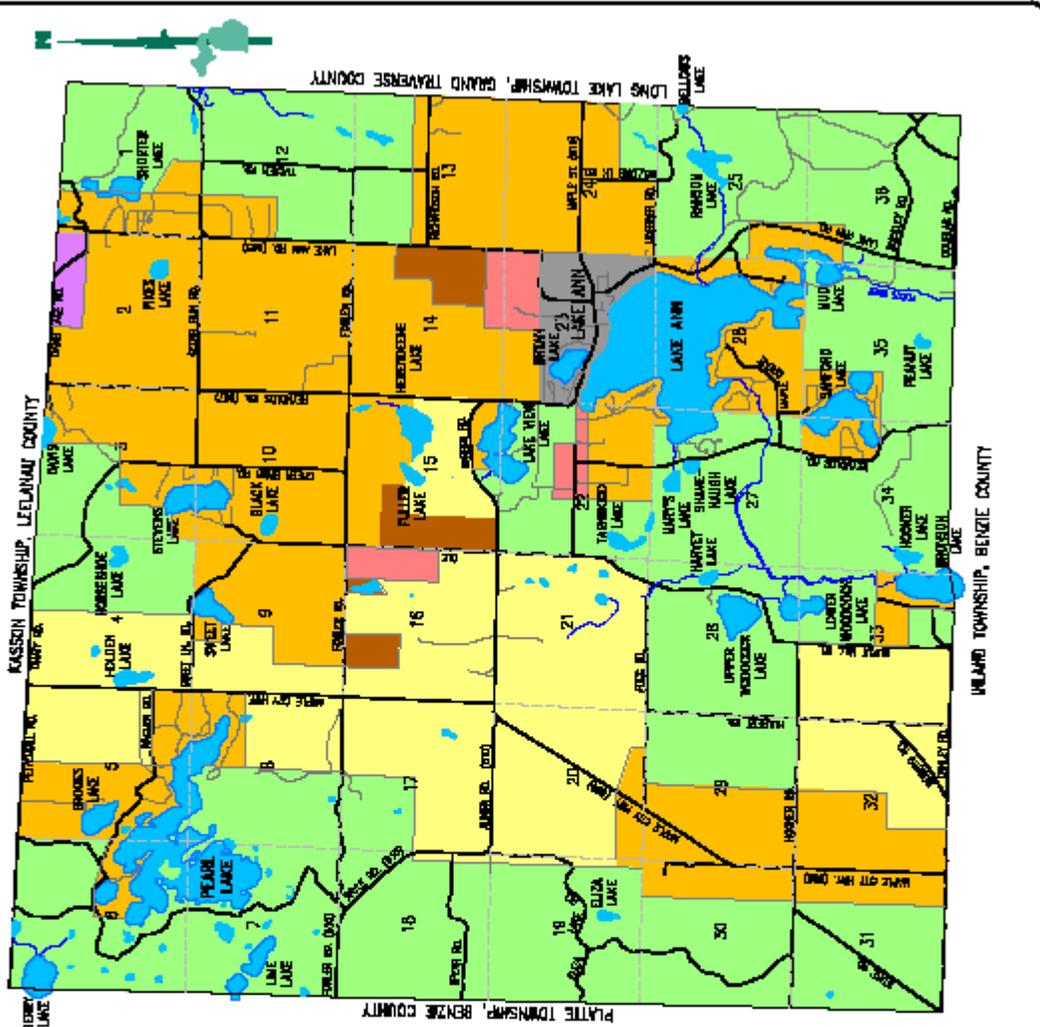


Figure 7-1

Farm dwellings and customarily accessory uses and buildings are to be encouraged, including crop production and the raising of livestock normally associated with farming activities but excluding intensive farming or feedlot operations. Non-farm dwellings and home occupations are also intended to be permitted as a matter of right, along with, plant nurseries and greenhouses, churches, tourist home/bed & breakfast, riding stables and roadside stands selling farm products. Other uses such as golf courses and campgrounds may also be allowed with special conditions where they are found to be compatible with surrounding land uses.

The Township intends to encourage methods that accommodate the preservation of farmlands, farming activity, open space, natural resources, and the rural character of the Township, and at the same time accommodate landowners who want to reduce or discontinue farming. The methods include innovative zoning provisions that allow for the preservation and conservation of essential natural resources, farmland, and open space by providing opportunities for the clustering of development. Some methods which other communities have employed to help protect and preserve agricultural land while protecting a landowner's desire for a larger economic gain include the purchase of development rights (PDR); transfer of development rights (TDR), which has not yet been enabled by state law; open space community zoning provisions for non-agricultural uses and density incentives to encourage clustering. These alternatives should be investigated for possible application to Almira Township, as a way to balance private property rights with agricultural and open space preservation goals.

The agricultural land use is primarily intended to provide for the continuation of farming activities while limiting encroachment by other uses. This land use category is intended to have a low base density of one unit per five acres. In an effort to recognize that some of this land will be developed with non-agricultural uses, the intent is to promote cluster residential development on relatively small lots that are sufficient in size to support on-site utilities, either along road corridors or in accessible areas that are not suitable for agricultural activities, as a means to minimize the overall loss of agricultural land and encourage the continuation of farming activities. This can be accomplished by the employment of Planned Unit Development (PUD). The most important criteria include the permanent preservation of agricultural land by means of irrevocable conveyance and the preservation of the rural character of the area as viewed from the road. The most serious challenge will be to preserve the rural appearance where homes are built with full visibility from the road.

Low Density Residential

The Low Density Residential category is designed to provide for very limited and low intensity residential development, while allowing for the protection of privately owned environmentally sensitive areas. This land use category allows for residential use at a low density of not more than one dwelling unit per two acres. Provisions in the Zoning Ordinance encourage a cluster development pattern to be utilized to avoid or minimize development impacts on environmentally sensitive areas, forests, or farmland. The Low Density Residential land use category is consistent with the Township's resource policy to "promote the protection of sensitive features including wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, lakes, streams, steep slopes and wooded areas," as well as promote the preservation of productive agricultural lands. Development in this category is intended to be limited due to environmental conditions.

Several areas with unique or fragile environmental characteristics were identified during the planning process. Areas intended to be protected from potential high-density development have been proposed as Low Density Residential. These areas have already experienced some residential development, and are designated as low density residential to allow new development in a manner, which respects these resources. The Low Density Residential lands are dispersed throughout the Township, with the largest area located in the northeast portion of the township, as shown in **Figure 7-1**.

Mixed Residential

The Mixed Residential land use category is primarily intended to accommodate existing residential development, where land has already been subdivided into smaller lots, and to direct future residential growth of a more urban nature to areas of the Township that are more accessible by and in need of public services. In addition to areas identified for residential development on the future land use map, this plan recognizes that residential development has occurred and will continue to occur in locations near the Village of Lake Ann, as shown in **Figure 7-1**, Future Land Use Map.

Mixed Residential development is intended to accommodate a variety of dwelling types on a range of lot sizes including attached and detached single-family, apartment, and condominium units at an average density of one unit per acre. It is also intended to accommodate such

other residential, community, and institutional uses as parks, churches, schools, libraries, cemeteries, campgrounds, assisted living and convalescent facilities, golf courses, resorts, if designed to be compatible with the residential setting. Home-occupations are also encouraged in areas where mixed residential uses occur, provided the residential character of the area is preserved.

Due to the lack of public water and sewer services, the location of higher density residential uses, such as apartments, townhouses, condominiums, and manufactured home developments should be restricted to areas where soils are capable of supporting adequately engineered community wastewater disposal systems and areas where public utilities might be made available at a future date.

Commercial

While much of the commercial services for Almira Township are met by facilities located in Lake Ann and regionally in Traverse City, the Township wishes to designate certain areas for local convenience commercial uses, generally adjacent to and within close proximity to the Village of Lake Ann. This future land use plan recognizes that a few existing commercial businesses in outlying areas are operating in areas surrounded by non-commercial uses. This plan further recognizes that these businesses provide important services to nearby residents. The plan is not intended to infringe upon the continuation or expansion of such services or facilities.

Uses intended to be accommodated within commercial areas designated on the future land use map include: retail stores, business and personal services, professional offices, food service, lodging facilities and similar uses. **Figure 7-1** shows two general areas for commercial uses in the vicinity of the intersection of Almira Road and Reynolds Road, and additionally an area adjacent to the Village of Lake Ann.

Light Industrial

Consistent with the 2009 Survey findings, which support the establishment of light industrial uses in an industrial park and the Township goal to promote a varied business environment, a light industrial area has been designated along the northern edge of the Township at Lake Ann and Davis Lake Roads. Primarily, uses such as the following are intended for the

proposed light industrial area: light industrial manufacturing or assembling establishment, wholesale commercial businesses, machine shops, sawmills or wood products industries, transportation facilities, storage facilities, utility facilities and similar uses. Industrial operations are subject to performance standards to minimize impacts on the Township. This district is compatible with a business district, but not compatible with residential districts without a buffer. Housing and commercial activities compatible with an industrial setting are also intended to be accommodated in light industrial development areas. As in commercial development areas, this plan does not advocate the interference with existing industrial activities that may be operating in outlying areas, which are surrounded by other predominant land uses.

8.0 Plan Implementation

A comprehensive or master plan is developed to provide a vision of the community's future. It is designed to serve as a tool for decision-making on future development proposals. A master plan will also act as a guide for future public investment and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications and administration of utilities and services.

According to the Township Zoning Act, comprehensive or master planning is the legal basis for the development of a zoning ordinance. Section Three of the Act states: "The zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare; to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, and to limit the improper use of land; to conserve natural resources and energy; to meet the needs of the State's residents for food, fiber, and other natural resources, places to reside, recreation, industry, trade, service and other uses of land; to insure that uses of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships; to avoid the overcrowding of population; to provide adequate light and air; to lessen congestion of the public roads and streets; to reduce hazards to life and property; facilitate adequate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, education, recreation and other public requirements and services to conform with the most advantageous use of land resources, and properties."

With this legal basis in mind, Almira Township intends to revise and update the zoning ordinance based on this master plan. The zoning ordinance is the most important tool for implementing the comprehensive plan. Zoning is the authority to regulate private use of land by creating land use zones and applying development standards in various zoning districts.

The zoning ordinance defines zoning districts and specifies the boundaries of these districts on a zoning map. The zoning districts should be closely related to the land use categories identified in the Chapter 7, Future Land Use, of this master plan. Each district should define what uses are generally permitted and what uses can be permitted under certain circumstances. Zoning standards are established for each district, which set forth the rules governing each district. Some common standards include: rules governing the height, bulk and location of structures; off street parking and loading requirements; sign regulations; and regulations for accessory structures and uses. The standards in the zoning ordinance will be

based in part on the goals and policies set forth in Chapter 6 of this Master Plan. The zoning ordinance also needs to address nonconforming uses. A nonconforming use is defined as a use that was in existence when the ordinance (or amendment) was enacted and which does not conform to zoning standards of the district in which it is located.

One of the most influential tools often included in the zoning ordinance is site plan review. Michigan law permits the zoning ordinance to require site plan review as part of the approval process for a project. The site plan review process provides the Planning Commission the opportunity to review a project to assure compliance with local, state and federal laws. The site plan review process and criteria for approval must be clearly defined in the zoning ordinance, including the conditions under which a plan may be reviewed; who must review the plan and approve or deny the proposed project; the procedures and standards for site plan review. Site plan review is not a type of "contract zoning" where the particular arrangements are negotiated. The zoning statute requires the ordinance specify what is required for site plan approval. If those conditions are met, the community government is obligated to approve the plan and if the project does not meet the standards, it must be denied.

Zoning ordinances are local laws. The adoption of the zoning ordinance (and any subsequent amendments) must follow specifically defined procedures in order to be an enforceable law. In Almira Township, the Planning Commission is responsible for the initial development of the zoning ordinance, but the Township Board of Trustees must adopt the ordinance before it is legally enforceable.

The administration of the ordinance must be carefully considered and specified in the ordinance to ensure a successful implementation of Township zoning. Administration of the ordinance includes the specification of procedures and establishment of a fee schedule for various activities such as rezoning, special approval uses or site plan review. Township personnel need to be identified to handle the day to day operations including providing copies of the ordinance, answering zoning questions, providing rezoning applications and accepting site plan review requests.

Grants and Capital Improvements Investments

A master plan can also be used as a guide for future public investment and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications and administration of utilities and services. Many communities find it beneficial to prioritize and budget for capital improvement projects, (such as infrastructure improvements, park improvements, etc). A Capital Improvements Program

(CIP) is one tool that is often used to establish a prioritized schedule for all anticipated capital improvement projects in the community. A CIP includes cost estimates and sources for financing for each project, therefore can serve as both a budgetary and policy document to aid in the implementation of a community's goals defined in the Master Plan.

Recreation Plan

A recreation plan is one way to implement important recreation related goals defined in the Master Plan. The Almira Township Recreation Development Plan 2011-2016 is consistent with the Master Plan. An updated and MDNR approved recreation plan should be maintained to ensure Almira Township recreation projects are grant eligible. When the recreation plan is updated it should be reviewed to ensure it remains consistent with the Township goals and the Master Plan. Grant funds should be pursued for recreation projects identified in the Recreation Development Plan, and consistent with the Township recreation goals.

Summary

The Almira Township Master Plan is designed to aid in the protection of the health, safety and general welfare of the Township residents. The future land use plan establishes land use categories in consideration of the social and economic characteristics of the Township, the natural resources of the area, the compatibility of adjacent land uses and the Township goals. This plan should serve as the base in updating the Township zoning ordinance and be used to help guide future development in Almira Township.