

Chapter 2 VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

VISION STATEMENT

Introduction

Montcalm County residents, businesses, and visitors have diverse needs, wishes, and dreams, and satisfying them is a big challenge for any community. This chapter describes those needs, wishes, and dreams in a vision for the future of Montcalm County, and includes goals, objectives, and strategies to reach that vision.

The vision statement that follows describes Montcalm County as residents at several town meetings held in 2005 countywide wanted it to be in the year 2025. The results of the 1999 Montcalm County Citizen Survey and a follow-up 2002 survey were also considered. The vision is organized into topic areas that separately focus on key elements of the county. What emerges when all sections are read together, is a complete image of Montcalm County, as residents would like it to be in 2025 and beyond. The vision statement was the basis for goals, objectives, and strategies of this Plan.

When reading this vision, it is necessary to mentally “transport” yourself into the future to the year 2025. Thus, there are references “back” to the early 2000’s.

21st Century Montcalm County

Montcalm County residents and businesses enjoy a high quality of life and are reaping the benefits of commitments to future generations made years ago. Beginning in the early 2000s, proactive policies and initiatives, economic development plans, and resource preservation plans were undertaken which went well beyond common practice of the day. These initiatives improved the quality of life, and retained and attracted people and businesses to the county. The results of this hard work are obvious to visitors and residents alike.

Montcalm County has become a true reflection of sustainability (meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). Businesses, neighborhoods, parks, schools, local government, agricultural and natural resources are healthy and self-sustaining in 2025.

When asked about Montcalm County, residents use terms like “prosperous,” “successful,” “safe,” “rural,” “clean,” “healthy,” and “well-educated.” Residents are also quick to say that Montcalm County is an outdoor recreation paradise and a great place to raise families or retire.

Economic Development - A County of Opportunity

The cities, villages, townships and county continue to work together on an aggressive economic development program aimed at retention, expansion, and attraction of business and industry within the county. The primary

objective is to create and maintain a healthy and growing economy in Montcalm County with high paying jobs. To appreciate the success of this initiative one needs only to visit the county's clean, harmonious, and compact industrial and business districts, and successful farms.

A high quality-of-life, a sense of security, and strong community values are part of the attraction of new jobs to the county. By continually reinvesting in schools, transportation, health care, police and emergency services, compact and efficient sewer and water systems, and utilities, communities within the county satisfy basic industry requirements rivaling any community in Michigan. A marketing program which proactively solicits business and industry, is a significant factor in the economic success of the county.

Revitalized older neighborhoods provide affordable housing opportunities for families of various sizes and ages. This is due to significant reinvestment by owners, but also to strict enforcement of the local building, housing, and rental codes. Many of the county's least expensive neighborhoods are some of the most popular for first time homebuyers. New subdivisions are located close to existing cities and villages and, through clustering and conservation principles, protect sensitive environments, natural scenery and prime agricultural lands.

Where the visual character, sounds, dust, smells, and level of activity of commercial and industrial development are not compatible with residential neighborhoods or other noise sensitive land uses, they are separated or buffered. Where commercial development can serve residential needs, it is built adjacent to residential neighborhoods with an architectural design and layout that fits the character of the neighborhoods.

Scenic Natural and Agricultural Landscape Character Preserved

The most common landscape view in Montcalm County continues to be a mix of farm fields, meadows, wetlands, river and lakeshores, and woods. Rather than succumbing to sprawl and the attendant loss of natural visual character that is occurring throughout the rest of the State, the alluring characteristics that initially attracted residents and businesses to the county have been maintained, and in some cases enhanced. (The visual character of a community is set by the style, size and upkeep of its homes, businesses and civic places such as parks, stores, schools and government buildings. It is also set by the presence or absence of water and vegetation, hills and highways.)

The rural landscape does more than simply provide scenery. The benefits of nature to residents' mental well-being and the attraction for visitors are important. Montcalm County is recognized as having a unique combination of soils, climate, and water resources that enable its innovative farmers to grow diverse, high quality, high-yielding crops which are managed in a sustainable manner that continues to make agriculture a vital sector of the economy. Woods and fields help with water infiltration, maintaining biological diversity, and providing habitat for wildlife. Property owners have coordinated the retention of green space connections to create ecological corridors, enhance

recreation, and provide a more continuous natural scenic view. Streams and lakes have buffer plantings that help protect water quality.

New growth and development have occurred in compact form and in locations that retain ample open space throughout the county, reinforcing the scenic visual character rather than detracting from it. In Montcalm County, large-scale changes to the landscape (especially of vegetation, views, open spaces, and the water's edge), are minimized by encouraging thoughtfully designed and buffered new development, and redevelopment, in select locations. Places that were unattractive or lacked scenic character in 2005 were improved. This philosophy was applied to both residential and non-residential development. Existing and new development, particularly along transportation and scenic corridors is screened with buffer plantings in character with a rural, nature-oriented landscape. Parking lots, big buildings, and outside storage areas are buffered by landscaping and natural vegetation. The number of signs has been reduced and remaining signs are well designed to enhance commerce and direction-finding without detracting from scenic views.

A public well-versed in land and water protection approaches is deeply involved in making decisions about preservation. Working with conservancies and the State Purchase of Development Rights Program, key parcels are preserved through development rights purchases, donations, and other approaches over the past two decades. As a result, wetlands, forests, farmland (particularly prime farmland), and green spaces that comprise the rural character and ecosystem of the county are permanently protected.

City and Village Centers

Montcalm County citizens and officials long ago recognized that for a city or village to remain "economically viable," it must be a vital place for citizens and businesses. Structures and places of historical and architectural significance are protected and renewed and serve as reinforcing elements of visual character. City and village sidewalks are lined with shops and amenities and as a result are full of people. Community events make these centers the place to be on a regular basis. Parks and streets lined with stately trees welcome visitors and residents alike. Strip commercial corridors are attractive and fit into the rural setting.

New developments complement existing transportation systems and serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and automobile drivers safely and efficiently. The cities of Greenville, Stanton and Carson City, as well as the villages in the county are known as walkable communities, providing safe connections, separate from roads when practical, between residential areas and the many types of destinations within the community: shops, businesses, public buildings, churches, schools, parks and restaurants. As a result of its increased walkability, more active residents enjoy a greater level of health than in 2005.

Links continue to be established between residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial development to provide safe, attractive and low cost pedestrian and bike routes as alternatives to automobile circulation.

There are also links to greenways with trails that extend beyond Montcalm County into the surrounding region. These greenways serve both as recreational opportunities in themselves and to connect destinations such as communities, parks, and schools.

Quality of Life - A County of Education and Stimulation

The county has long held education as a critical element of quality of life. The public and private school systems including pre-school, K-12 plus the Montcalm Community College, provide excellent educational opportunities. Students are well disciplined, computer literate, and ready to pursue any endeavor. Citizens can continue higher education, obtain technical, job-related training, and can take adult enrichment courses in a wide variety of subjects. Lifelong learning is a way of life in Montcalm County. Music, art, and museum events in many civic and private facilities continue to provide entertainment for all generations of Montcalm County citizens.

Quality of Life - Recreation

The county has long held recreational opportunities as an important aspect of quality of life. Montcalm County residents enjoy a variety of recreation opportunities at local and county parks, National Forest lands, State Game Areas, public access sites, golf courses, and other facilities. Trails link many parts of the county, extend beyond the county and provide opportunities for fitness and enjoyment of the outdoors. Boating, fishing and swimming on the inland lakes continues to be a popular pastimes.

Montcalm County has established one of the most comprehensive regional recreation programs found in the State. The public schools provide ample indoor recreation opportunities during the winter months.

Friendly, Cooperative Community

County business and government leaders long ago recognized that working together is critical to the long-term economic and cultural vitality of the county. Civic groups also play an important role, assisting in keeping Montcalm County clean, attractive, and healthy with a sustainable environment and positive community spirit. Participation in community events, music concerts, and festivals is high.

Montcalm County is a friendly and caring place to live and visitors feel the hospitality. The community is supportive of its citizens and helps provide mentoring and constructive guidance. Members of all generations of the community share in its identity. Both cultural and natural resources are preserved through wide community support by citizens who understand the value and principles of preservation.

Leaders work to encourage a high level of citizen involvement from both residents and nonresident property owners. In return, leadership is responsive to the direction expressed by citizens. Leaders hold the public's trust when enforcing regulations that protect the environment, implement the County General Plan, and otherwise ensure protection of public health, safety, and welfare.

Intergovernmental Cooperation/Coordination

A shared set of policies structured around a common vision of the future serves as a framework for decision making between all governmental entities in Montcalm County.

The common vision and related policies recognizes the autonomy of each unit of local government, but also establishes a mechanism for addressing issues of greater than local concern. Communities apply the dual principles of respect and cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Cooperation promotes achievement of area-wide interests and the uniqueness of each local government is celebrated.

Coordination of costs, timetables, responsibilities, and resources to continue upgrading the quality of life of the area are all included as an integral part of these cooperative policies. All county and local public services and facilities are coordinated, as are state, federal and private services and facilities when appropriate to do so.

While local land use decisions are guided by local zoning standards, issues of greater than local concern are subject to input from surrounding local governments both within and outside the county before a final decision is made. Special ad hoc committees aid communication among county and local governments in this process and promote adequate public participation.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The goals, objectives and policies that follow were based on the results of a survey of local leaders and the visioning sessions held in Montcalm County in 2005.

Goal: Goals are broad-based statements of intent and establish the direction for the Montcalm County General Plan. Goals could generally be thought of as the desired "ends" of successful implementation of the County General Plan.

Objective: Objectives are the stated "means" of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be carried out in the process of realizing goals.

Strategies: Strategies are action statements in order to accomplish the goal and objective.

I. GOAL – INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS AND COMPETITION IN THE COUNTY.

- A. Objective – Ensure land suitable for commercial and industrial development is adequately served with public sewer, water, and other essential public services and facilities.**
- B. Objective – Increase awareness of available land and strengths of area businesses.**
- C. Objective – Promote involvement of county and local governmental units in economic development decisions.**
- D. Objective – Encourage the establishment of businesses that provide year-round employment and offer quality jobs.**
- E. Objective – Promote measures and activities which result in diversification of the economy.**

1. Strategy – Encourage the county’s Economic Development function to prepare a 5-year countywide economic development plan and update the plan on a regular basis in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, and other appropriate entities.
2. Strategy – Allow for publicly funded economic development activity based on the following criteria:
 - a) Development will either preserve or create jobs according to ratios endorsed by the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.
 - b) Development will accompany or result in a significant amount of private sector leverage using brownfields, renaissance zones, tax abatement and related tools.
 - c) Development will result in a significant return on the investment of public funds.
3. Strategy – Enhance the future viability of agriculture and natural resources enterprises by working toward ensuring that further processing of agricultural and natural resource products harvested from the county will, where feasible, be undertaken within the county.
4. Strategy – Establish a Convention and Visitors Bureau which in cooperation with existing Chambers of Commerce promote Montcalm County tourism attractions for day visitors from the surrounding counties.

II. GOAL – VILLAGE AND CITY CENTERS HAVE AN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY.

A. Objective – Create vibrant and bustling villages and cities that are functional, people-oriented, and the center of cultural activity within the county.

1. Strategy – Existing civic and cultural facilities are retained in village and city centers and new or expanded civic and cultural facilities are placed in or very close to village and city centers.
2. Strategy – Maximize existing public infrastructure by utilizing brownfield redevelopment strategies to revitalize areas of the county.
3. Strategy – Encourage revision of city, village and township zoning ordinances, if necessary, to permit mixed use development in city and village downtowns and other important nodes in order to increase the base population near businesses and cultural facilities.
4. Strategy – Encourage the preservation of historic structures through maintenance and renovation that retains historic character.
5. Strategy – Encourage pedestrian activity in cities and villages through the design and construction of sidewalks and small public spaces that are safe and filled with art and other amenities.
6. Strategy – Promote voluntary participation in community and cultural activities.
7. Strategy – Encourage businesses and institutions to install public art, flowers, trees, benches and fountains.
8. Strategy – Expand the number and type of festivals and fairs and participation in community events.

9. Strategy – Support use of housing programs to assist with new housing or rehabilitation of housing in cities and villages in the county.
10. Strategy – Evaluate and support where appropriate, new tools and incentives to facilitate economic development in cities, villages and townships.

III. GOAL – GUIDE THE TYPE AND AMOUNT OF GROWTH.

A. Objective – Encourage county and citizen understanding of, and involvement in the growth management process.

1. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities and leadership on planning and zoning techniques to manage growth in general, and the specifics of this Plan as may be available from MSU Extension, the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, the Michigan Association of Planning and related organizations.
2. Strategy – The County Planning Commission and local jurisdictions meet annually to discuss growth and land use issues.
3. Strategy – Review this General Plan every five years and update as necessary.

IV. GOAL – ESTABLISH A SET OF LOCAL REGULATIONS AND A PROGRAM OF LOCAL ENFORCEMENT THAT PROTECTS QUALITY OF LIFE AND IS FAIR AND CONSISTENT FOR PROPERTY OWNERS.

A. Objective – Explore the options to ensure that every local jurisdiction which has zoning does so consistent with this County General Plan and any adopted city, village or township plan.

1. Strategy – Educate officials and the public about the benefits, attributes, powers and limitations of zoning.
2. Strategy – Work with local authorities to ensure local zoning in all areas of the county that prevents over-crowding of land, loss of prime agricultural land, overuse of natural resources and promotion of economic development where there are adequate public services as this Plan indicates.
3. Strategy – Through coordination of local authorities with county and state authorities, ensure that areas with limitations for development are protected if they possess any of the following conditions:
 - a) Flooding, as determined by National Flood Hazard maps
 - b) Inadequate drainage as determined by county Drain Commissioner
 - c) Soil formations with contra-indications for development as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service)
 - d) Topography with steep slopes as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
 - e) Inadequate water supply and sewage disposal capabilities as determined by the District Health Department and/or the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).
 - f) Wetlands as determined by the MDEQ.
 - g) Prime and unique farmlands as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
4. Strategy – Encourage the development and maintenance of formal site plan review procedures and standards in city, village and township zoning

ordinances for environmental protection of each of the environmental features listed above, and for groundwater protection in rural areas of the county.

5. Strategy – Urge adoption where they do not exist and promote fair and effective administration of junk and related ordinances at the township, city and village level.
6. Strategy – Promote the fair and effective administration of the County construction code, junk ordinance, private road ordinance and addressing ordinances.

B. Objective – Encourage city, village and township zoning ordinances to be consistent with this Plan, kept up-to-date and enforced in a professional, fair and consistent manner.

1. Strategy – Encourage local officials to stay abreast of changing laws and regulations regarding planning and zoning and implement changes when necessary.
2. Strategy – Provide annual training for city, village and township planning and zoning commissioners on basic and advanced principles, procedures, laws, cases, tools and techniques to guide quality community development.
3. Strategy – More clearly define terms in local zoning ordinances to avoid confusion.
4. Strategy – Encourage city, village, and township zoning ordinances to be enforced in a consistent and fair manner.
5. Strategy – Modernize and utilize clearly defined procedures for granting or denying variances and rezoning efforts in an objective measurable manner consistent with the County General Plan.
6. Strategy – Encourage cities, villages and townships to make zoning variances the exception rather than the rule.
7. Strategy – Educate the public regarding the role of the city, village and township planning commission, zoning board of appeals and the zoning procedures outlined above.

V. GOAL – REVIEW EXISTING AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AS THEY RELATE TO NON-FARM RESIDENCES.

A. Objective – Preserve Montcalm County’s unique agricultural sector and promote mutually healthy relationships between farm and non-farm residential neighbors.

1. Strategy – Encourage farming operations that utilize the Michigan Right-to-Farm Act to solicit dialog and input from local communities and governing bodies.
2. Strategy – Encourage those farm practices that minimize odor, noise, and environmental risk and maximize natural resource conservation.
3. Strategy – Encourage farmers to participate in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

B. Objective – Assure the sustainable use of the unique combination of soils, climate, and water resources that characterize Montcalm County agriculture.

1. Strategy – Encourage the development and use of sustainable cropping systems that preserve and enhance the quality of agricultural soils.

2. Strategy – Manage irrigation systems according to Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for Irrigation Water Use.
3. Strategy – Encourage continuing sustainable production of the diverse, high quality, high yielding crops in which Montcalm County has a unique position in U.S. agriculture.

VI. GOAL – PRESERVE MONTCALM COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE BEAUTY OF ITS LANDSCAPE.

A. Objective – Provide for planning mechanisms and regulatory techniques that will preserve forests, wetlands, and other natural resources as well as farms and other vegetated landscapes.

1. Strategy – Encourage city, village, township and the county to support applications of agricultural land owners to enroll in agricultural land preservation programs like PA 116, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs.
2. Strategy – City, village and township planning commissions are encouraged to work with the County Planning Commission to develop design guidelines for small parcels and large parcel development that promote voluntary approaches to the protection of natural resources and scenic quality.
3. Strategy – The county and local governments encourage the creation of conservancies and land trusts to acquire or obtain development rights to natural resource and scenic parcels that have been identified as important to preserve.
4. Strategy – The county and local governments support the voluntary donation of conservation easements for important natural resources and scenic areas, especially roadside areas along scenic corridors.
5. Strategy – Encourage careful land use management on the part of county officials and landowners alike.
6. Strategy – Encourage cluster zoning and open space preservation techniques in rural areas and compact settlement patterns in villages, cities, and in townships with urbanized areas where the proper infrastructure is available.
7. Strategy – Further develop and refine local greenbelt zoning techniques via maps and other tools to consistently protect and preserve sensitive environmental areas.
8. Strategy – Work with individual jurisdictions to establish uniform floodplain protection ordinances.
9. Strategy – Work with the County Road Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation, and local jurisdictions to refine private road standards to limit construction on steep slopes and to restrict private roads that contribute to erosion.
10. Strategy – Urge cities, villages and townships to adopt ordinances that limit construction clearing on steep slopes and set performance standards for any construction on steeper slopes.
11. Strategy – Develop design guidelines that illustrate the least damaging building approaches for slopes.

B. Objective – A greenspace system of interconnected, undeveloped land, buffers, ecological corridors, forests, floodplains, wetlands, and other open space in private and public ownership is identified and protected in Montcalm County.

1. Strategy – Develop guidelines for property owners, developers, communities, and business owners on how to preserve or sensitively develop near wildlife corridors.
2. Strategy – Adopt conservation subdivision (a subdivision that groups lots together on a portion of a property in order to save large blocks of open space) and cluster ordinances and promote the use of these techniques for new development of both residential and commercial development.
3. Strategy – Develop educational materials and programs for residential and commercial property owners on how to foster wildlife while protecting properties from wildlife damage.

C. Objective – The identity and location of threatened and endangered species is documented and plans for their protection are drafted and implemented.

1. Strategy – Urge volunteer groups to document the identity and location of threatened and endangered species and develop protection plans.
2. Strategy – Urge volunteer groups to provide educational programs for the public regarding the value of preserving wildlife habitat and alternative preservation methods.
3. Strategy – Urge volunteer groups to develop and implement preservation plans for areas of threatened and endangered species.
4. Strategy – As the above strategies are implemented, an effort should be made to include the Conservation District, County Farm Bureau and related organizations.

VII. GOAL – PROVIDE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CITIZENS OF THE COUNTY.

A. Objective – Ensure a wide range of housing choices.

B. Objective – Allow for reasonable and fair low to moderate-income housing where compatible with other housing types.

C. Objective – Priority should be given to meeting the most urgent unmet housing needs of the physically and developmentally disabled, those with low and moderate incomes, the elderly, and those who are on public assistance.

D. Objective – Continue to provide for compatibility among and between housing types for neighborhood stability.

E. Objective – Encourage senior-friendly housing.

1. Strategy – Encourage local governments to allow for mobile home parks and manufactured homes in local zoning districts that are appropriately sited for those uses.
2. Strategy – New housing developments/subdivisions should occur only in areas where soils are suitable for on-site sewage treatment and for adequate and protected on-site water supply; and/or public sewer and water are available or economically feasible.
3. Strategy – New housing developments should be compatible with existing and planned, neighboring land uses.

4. Strategy – Senior-friendly housing should be available in all cities and villages in the county.
5. Strategy – In the downtown area, encourage development of mixed-use housing, especially above retail establishments.

VIII. GOAL – PROVIDE AN ATMOSPHERE WHEREBY AREA YOUTH HAVE A STAKE IN THE COMMUNITY.

- A. Objective – Develop and promote area recreational and cultural opportunities targeted to meeting the needs of youth.**
- B. Objective – Encourage continuation/expansion and better awareness of the local recreational and cultural opportunities.**
- C. Objective – Encourage involvement of youth in their community.**
 1. Strategy – Provide direction and policy assistance so that entities like Montcalm Community College can attract the best students, faculty, and facilities in conjunction with the state-wide network of 4-year institutions.
 2. Strategy – Involve youth, whenever and wherever possible, in local governing, planning and collateral activities.
 3. Strategy – Utilize existing recreational centers.
 4. Strategy – Utilize existing cultural centers such as Montcalm Community College to expand and enhance the diversity of cultural information available.
 5. Strategy – Support Community College/Public School System collaboration on educational initiatives such as the Tech-Prep Partnership.
 6. Strategy – Support and expand the activities of Montcalm’s 4-H community.

IX. GOAL – MAINTAIN THE VIABILITY OF THE PRIMARY LAKE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTY.

- A. Objective – Support local planning and zoning mechanisms to maintain current levels of attractiveness and viability of the inland lakes in the county.**
- B. Objective – Execute steps necessary to achieve improvement and enhancement of overall water quality for these lakes and connecting waterways.**
 1. Strategy – Encourage strict enforcement of local lakefront zoning that protects water quality and minimizes risk of overuse of lake resources.
 2. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and other forums to educate lake residents regarding fertilizer practices and other actions that could affect water quality.
 3. Strategy – Utilize and promote lake boards and property associations to implement best management practices as recommended in lake studies including the importance of watershed management strategies and sanitary sewers.
 4. Strategy – Encourage the development of appropriately sited access sites/boat launches for all citizens.
 5. Strategy – Develop increased waterfront access opportunities for all of Montcalm residents

X. GOAL – PROVIDE UPGRADED TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND BETTER MANAGED ACCESS WHERE SUCH FACILITIES WILL PROVIDE THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO THE PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, AND TOURISTS IN THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE.

A. Objective – Safe and efficient movement of people and goods with a variety of transportation modes.

1. Strategy – Prepare a countywide transportation plan addressing all transportation modes.
2. Strategy – Encourage the expansion of Greenville’s dial-a-ride transit service to a countywide demand responsive transit system utilizing existing resources such as EightCAP.

B. Objective – Provide reasonable access by all segments of the population to jobs, services, recreation, and other opportunities.

1. Strategy – Encourage transportation infrastructure development that complements anticipated future land use patterns.
2. Strategy – Encourage MDOT to finance access management plans along each state highway in the county, and promote a uniform approach to access management regulations across the county.
3. Strategy – Pave or improve only those roads where soils and other natural features will support increased development.
4. Strategy – Facilitate a coordinated approach to transportation planning and financing among responsible government units.
5. Strategy – Encourage planning and zoning for only noise compatible land uses along state highways.
6. Strategy – Utilize where feasible, the resources of the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

XI. GOAL – PROVIDE A RANGE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY, WHICH MEETS PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORTS THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

- A. Objective – Public sewer and water is provided to businesses and residents efficiently and in locations in which development does not negatively affect natural resources and community character.**
- B. Objective – Public facilities, services, and programs provide for the health and safety needs of Montcalm County citizens, workers, and visitors.**
- C. Objective – Police, fire and emergency services are consistent with public need and the ability to finance improvements in the most cost-effective manner.**
- D. Objective – Solid waste, recyclable and hazardous materials are disposed of safely, effectively, and efficiently according to the adopted County Solid Waste Management Plan.**
- E. Objective – Cities, villages and townships should detail when, and under what circumstances sewer and water service will be extended to new areas consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan and any relevant local plan.**
- F. Objective – Police, fire, and emergency services respond as rapidly and effectively as possible in a largely rural county.**
- G. Objective – Residential development without public sewer or water service is limited to locations within the county where construction of on-site**

septic systems or on-site wells is not limited by soils.

H. Objective – Review sale of public land for other possible public uses prior to sale.

1. Strategy – Encourage expansion of sewer and water into an area only when consistent with the planned intensity of land use for that area and scheduled as to affordability as determined by the respective city, village or township.
2. Strategy – Encourage county participation in regional management of solid waste and recycling.
3. Strategy – Cities, village and townships in the county should adopt site plan review regulations to protect groundwater and septic system inspection programs to protect the quality of groundwater, inland lakes, and streams.
4. Strategy – Expansion of public facilities (especially sewer and water) should be timed to guide future development into particular areas consistent with the demand for additional service.
5. Strategy – Encourage the District Health Department in cooperation with the MDEQ to develop a program to maintain the quality of water wells by establishing wellhead protection zones around municipal water wells.
6. Strategy – A county capital improvement plan should be annually prepared and updated listing proposed public improvements by location, cost and means of financing for the next six years. All proposed county facilities should be reviewed and approved by the County Planning Commission as consistent with this Plan prior to final approval and construction (as is provided by Section 5 of the County Planning Act, P.A. 282 of 1945, as amended).
7. Strategy – Every five years, if feasible, assess the future land use and facility needs of governmental offices, schools, hospitals, parks and cemeteries to provide adequate services without harming the quality of surrounding areas.
8. Strategy – Develop a map for the whole county that indicates the appropriate location of new public facilities, extensions of sewer and water service, and new development.
9. Strategy – Review the county’s ability to satisfy long-term solid waste disposal needs in a cost effective manner and expand recycling services through five-year reviews of the County Solid Waste Plan.
10. Strategy – Coordinate infrastructure construction, repair, or maintenance with road construction, repair, and maintenance.
11. Strategy – Cooperate regionally in the provision of public safety and emergency services, community facilities, and programs.
12. Strategy – Provide educational opportunities to residents regarding emergency, social and health services, and self-help actions to reduce risk.
13. Strategy – Coordinate service provision with other interested public agencies such as schools.
14. Strategy – Encourage notification of the County Planning Commission prior to the sale of public land, so the Commission can ensure that local governments have the first opportunity to consider acquiring it.

XII. GOAL – ENCOURAGE COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

A. Objective – Provide for better living conditions and business opportunities for the largest contiguous area possible.

1. Strategy – Encourage the involvement and cooperation of local governments, citizens, businesses, and public educational institutions in the development

and construction of sanitary sewer and water systems as appropriate for future growth.

2. Strategy – Form advisory boards and (where possible) unified operational boards to more cost effectively deliver public services across multiple jurisdictions where feasible.
3. Strategy – Educate local leaders on local land use issues/economic issues/economic development programs.
4. Strategy – Encourage local leaders in jurisdictions that are adjacent to on another to work with each other on planning and zoning issues (to promote continuity between these jurisdictions).

XIII. GOAL – PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES SERVE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO THE AREA ECONOMY.

- A. Objective – Maintain and periodically update a County Recreation Plan.**
- B. Objective – Coordinate efforts with local jurisdictions and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to implement the recommendations of the County Recreation Plan.**
- C. Objective – Identify and explore new opportunities for recreational projects with local jurisdictions as a means of better serving residents and enhancing tourism.**
- D. Objective – Link new and existing recreation facilities with non-motorized trails.**
- E. Objective – Improve youth recreational opportunities throughout the county including indoor and outdoor sports activities.**
- F. Objective – Expand recreation opportunities to include heritage, ecological, and agricultural experiences.**
- G. Objective – The parks and state game areas are protected and expanded where appropriate.**
 1. Strategy – Support coordinated recreation planning at the state, county, and local level and involve private partners and the schools.
 2. Strategy – Develop a funding program for the purchase of recreational lands in planned areas where a need has been determined or where a special opportunity exists.
 3. Strategy – Develop a funding program for enhancing recreational programs and facilities throughout the county.
 4. Strategy – Give priority to funding recreational projects that utilize existing facilities, underutilized facilities, and those locations that do not generate increased traffic in light traffic areas.
 5. Strategy – Support development of a Montcalm County Heritage Trail which links cultural and historic attractions across the county.
 6. Strategy – Promote opportunities for eco-tourism and agri-tourism.
 7. Strategy – Support trail links throughout the county with a special focus on preservation of abandoned railroad right-of-way.
 8. Strategy – The county parks system is expanded and developed to provide quality facilities to all residents in all areas of the county.
 9. Strategy – A county trail authority is established as part of the county park system to oversee and maintain the county’s trail system.
 10. Strategy – A variety of recreational opportunities are made available to all county residents in locations that are accessible in all parts of the county.