

# Acme Township Master Plan

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*Revised: September 25, 2013*

## Introduction

### Regional context

Acme Township is located in the northwest quadrant of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, abutting the East Arm of the Grand Traverse Bay. The lands surrounding the Grand Traverse Bay constitute the greater Grand Traverse region, with topography characterized by forests, productive farmland, rolling hills formed by glacial activity, and copious inland lakes, streams, and wetlands. As these characteristics have shaped the settlements that grew up among them, the region has become known for its agricultural products, its "resort" quality, and its abundance of recreational opportunities.

Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford Counties came together in 2007 to launch a comprehensive and far-reaching planning initiative called The Grand Vision. Three years of intensive public participation yielded six guiding principles and a new web of partnership networks across the region. In the summer of 2013, the Grand Traverse County Planning Commission released a master plan concurrently with the writing of this plan that expresses its intent to serve as convener, educator, and resource provider to its communities in order to help match local goals and objectives with the principles of the Grand Vision.<sup>1</sup> Acme Township's position at the intersection of US-31 and M-72 has brought it to the attention of the Grand Vision's "Growth and Investment" principle.

"Growth and Investment areas are based on the existing development pattern, zoning, community assets like schools and post offices, and infrastructure. In these areas, growth consists of existing towns and established contiguous areas of a township where infrastructure and services are or will be available. Land use in these areas are of a mixed-use village form and provide excellent opportunities for new businesses and housing modeled after the region's pattern of traditional towns and villages."

[box with Grand Vision principles]

[regional location map]

## Context

### Community Character

As in nearly all communities, Acme Township's varied history is etched into its landscape. Its forests hearken back to its pre-European settlement landcover of sugar maple, elm, basswood, yellow birch, hemlock, and white pine,<sup>2</sup> although the sawmill established by Village of Acme founder L.S. Hoxie in 1858 transformed most of those trees into building material for the rapidly expanding Chicago area and the American west. The sudden wealth generated from this export gave rise to development as commerce, industry, and the buildings, roads, and rails to serve them arrived in concert with Acme's lumber boom.

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<sup>1</sup> Grand Traverse County Planning Commission. "A Master Plan for Grand Traverse County (DRAFT)." 2013. [http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/departments/planning/A\\_New\\_Master\\_Plan\\_for\\_Grand\\_Traverse\\_County.htm](http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/departments/planning/A_New_Master_Plan_for_Grand_Traverse_County.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Acme Township Planning Commission. "Acme Township Master Plan." 1999. [http://www.acmetownship.org/planningzoning\\_files/Master%20Plan%20-%20Updated%20through%202005-18-2009.pdf](http://www.acmetownship.org/planningzoning_files/Master%20Plan%20-%20Updated%20through%202005-18-2009.pdf)

Those fortunes waned with the tree supply in the early 1900s. The cut-over condition of the land saved prospective farmers from having to clear their fields, although it soon became apparent that not all of the soils were suitable for agriculture. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century waxed, the area found its niche in fruit production on the fertile lands while state and federal conservation departments acquired the marginal or infertile acreage, and all of the elements coalesced to set the stage for what we now call scenic rural character.

That character has long been prized by urban refugees seeking respite in water and woods. Chicago tourists promptly used their newly-invented cars to venture up Lake Michigan's eastern coast, and in 1911 the West Michigan Lakeshore Highway Association began planning the first improved highway from Chicago to Mackinaw City to support a neophyte resort industry.<sup>3</sup> That road, called the West Michigan Pike and advertised as "Lake Shore all the Way," was completed in 1922, literally paving the way for new lodging, restaurant, and attraction opportunities. It became part of the state highway system as M-11 and joined the national highway system four years later as US-31. M-72's east-west route across the peninsula grew more slowly, but its route between Traverse City and Kalkaska via Acme had been established by 1946 and fully paved by 1959.<sup>4</sup>

Today, the northern and interior portions of Acme Township are lined with productive farms, protected by one of only two Purchase of Development Right (PDR) programs in the county. Commercial development hugs the trunklines and continues to intensify as development of the Grand Traverse Town Center gets underway. The Grand Traverse Resort, owned by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, offers a getaway experience complete with premiere golf, spa, and casino. The southwest corner of the Township provides growing Traverse City with suburbs, while residential development of a more rural nature dots the northern East Bay shoreline. And the heart of Acme Township, at the junction of US-31, M-72, and the East Bay, is undergoing intensive revitalization to connect commerce, recreation, and livability as part of the Acme Shores Placemaking Project.

[West Michigan Pike sign]

[Acme Shores plan pic]

## Demographics

Statistics can be overwhelming. As interesting as any individual fact may be, poring over pages of charts and percentages can rapidly descend into confusion. Figure XXX presents a "demographic dashboard" to illustrate key Acme Township facts and place them in context relative to Grand Traverse County, the State of Michigan, and the United States.

### Population

The 2010 Census counted 4,375 Acme Township residents, a 43-resident gain over the 2000 count. This 0.1% rate of growth was slower than the United States (0.97%) or Grand Traverse County (1.2%), but avoided becoming part of Michigan's notorious population loss during that decade (-0.06%). These residents make up 1,806 households with an average household size of 2.42 persons, slightly larger than in Grand Traverse County (2.39) and smaller than the rest of Michigan (2.49) and the United States (2.58). More households are made up of families than in the aggregated populations (71.1% vs. 64.8-66.4%), particularly husband-wife families (60.3% vs. 48.0-51.2%), though fewer have children in them (27.2% vs. 29-33.4%).

The median age of 46.6 is older than in any of the aggregated populations (range: 37.2-41.3 years), and more households have at least one individual aged 65 or older than in the larger populations (32.3% vs. 24.9%-25.8%). Figure XXX shows that on closer inspection, there is a particular dearth of Acme residents between about 20 and 40 years old. This situation merits attention because this age group is among the most productive: as can be seen in table XXX, they are one of the two age brackets which contribute a greater share of Acme Township's total

<sup>3</sup> [www.MichMarkers.com](http://www.MichMarkers.com). "West Michigan Pike." Accessed August 2013. <http://www.michmarkers.com/startup.asp?startpage=S0718.htm>

<sup>4</sup> [www.MichiganHighways.org](http://www.MichiganHighways.org). "US-31," "M-72." Accessed August 2013. <http://www.michiganhighways.org/listings/MichHwys30-39.html#US-031>, <http://www.michiganhighways.org/listings/MichHwys70-79.html#M-072>

disposable income than the share of households it represents. Acme Township business owners particularly noted a need to attract younger families to the area during their public engagement session.

[Income by age graph]

[Disposable income by age of householder table]

### *Housing*

Housing construction history paints a vivid picture of Acme Township's explosion in popularity circa 1970. Before that year, the township had a total of 473 homes. Nearly twice as many were built in the following decade alone, followed by two more decades of frantic development before the housing crisis returned the pace back to the level of the 1960s. Today, there are 2,399 dwelling units in the Township, of which 1,806 are occupied. Sixty-four percent of the unoccupied units, or 15.8% of all housing structures, are for seasonal or recreational use, a number that is significantly higher than in other populations (range: 3.5-8.6%) and provides hard evidence of the Township's appeal to those looking for a getaway. Most homes (86.1%) are heated by utility gas, with a few using bottled, tank, or liquid petroleum gas (7.0%), electricity (3.4%), wood (1.7%), or fuel oil (0.4%).

[Housing unit construction over time]

Most of the homes (81.7%) are owner-occupied, and three quarters of the owner-occupied homes are mortgaged. The median home value is \$195,000. Thirty percent of the structures are multi-family units, with the rest either detached or attached single-family units. The median gross rent is \$782, and over a quarter of renting households (27.3%) are paying more than 35% of their household income for rent. The rental vacancy rate of 30.9% is three times that at the county, state, and national levels, perhaps reflecting seasonal rentals.

### *Education*

Acme Township is home to a well-educated populace. It comes remarkably close to achieving universal secondary education: 97.3% of residents have a high school diploma, compared with 85.4% nationwide. Well over one third (38.1%) have bachelor's degrees, about 10 percentage points higher than in the aggregated populations, and an impressive 15% hold a graduate or professional degree.

### *Income*

The strong link between education and income is demonstrated in Acme Township, where the median household income of \$76,870 is 146% of the national median. Almost 15% of households earn more than \$150,000 per year, more than twice the rate of Grand Traverse County (6.4%) or the state of Michigan (6.6%). Due to Acme's higher median age, slightly more people have Social Security or retirement incomes than in the larger populations (33.1% vs. 27.9-30.6% and 24.5% vs. 17.5-22.3%, respectively).

The ratio of manufacturing jobs to retail jobs in Acme is 1.26 (272/222), indicating an economy balanced between the two sectors and therefore best able to adjust to changes in either. Because the median earnings of retail workers are about 57% of the median earnings of manufacturing workers, the slight tilt toward manufacturing is advantageous to the workforce.

Just under 20% of all workers are employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation fields, a figure that is higher than in Grand Traverse County (11.7%), Michigan, or the US (both 9%). These fields consistently rank among the lowest-paid: among all workers in the US, the median income in this sector (\$15,343) is 46% of the overall median income (\$33,149), and among year-round, full-time workers, it is 62% (\$26,303 vs. \$42,431). In Acme Township, the ratio of all workers' earnings in art, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation to overall median earnings is even smaller at 41.2%. However, there is a dramatic reversal among full-time, year-round workers in those fields, where earnings shoot up to 167.2% of the overall median. This is primarily due to the

Grand Traverse Resort and its workforce. According to the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce, the Grand Traverse Resort is the third largest employer in the Grand Traverse County with 943 employees.<sup>5</sup>

The median earnings for all female workers in Acme Township are about 60% of the median earnings for all male workers. This wage gap is slightly greater than in Grand Traverse County (65%), Michigan (63%), or the United States (69%). It is slightly smaller among full-time, year-round workers at 69%, but still lags behind the aggregated populations (range: 70-78%). These numbers offer a somewhat homogenized view of what turns out to be a quite varied landscape. As can be seen in table XXX, the highest-paying profession for all workers is Public Administration, and so many of those workers are female that a median income for males could not be computed. On the other hand, educational services, health care, and social assistance had by far the greatest number of workers, and there the females' median earnings are dwarfed by the males' (\$104,667 vs. \$32,083) despite making up over three quarters of the workforce. Only in the field of manufacturing do the women out-earn the men.

[Income by industry and gender table]

Poverty is low in Acme Township at 6.5%, as compared with 10.9% for Grand Traverse County, 15.7% for Michigan, and 14.3% for the country overall. Child poverty, which is often substantially higher than the overall poverty rate due to a single household's economic circumstances affecting several children simultaneously, is also low at 7.3%. The highest poverty rates in the township occur in female-headed households (15.1%), and female-headed households with dependent children are more than three times as likely as the general population to have had an income below the poverty level in the last 12 months. This is particularly salient given that over the same period, 61.4% of the women who gave birth were unmarried—almost twice the rate in the larger populations (range: 34.3-37.6%). Addressing the wage gap is a critical piece of the solution to this disparity, as are support systems for child care, flexible work and school schedules, and a breadth of transportation options.

### *Businesses*

According to the proprietary Esri Business Analyst software, 245 businesses in Acme Township employ 3,736 persons. Since there are only 2,359 employed Acme Township residents, the jobs-to-workers ratio is 1.58, meaning that there is a net influx of persons into the Township for work. While the discussion in the previous section focused on the employment of Acme Township residents, this section focuses on persons who work in Acme Township, regardless of their place of residence.

Almost half of Acme Township workers (45.1%, or 1,684 workers) are employed in the 24 businesses with the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) code of "Accommodation and Food Services," and nearly another quarter (22.4%) provide "other services, except public administration." "Retail trade" has the highest number of businesses at 43 (17.6% of all businesses) and the third highest number of employees at 415 (11.1% of the workforce). "Construction" and "Professional, scientific, and technical services" each occupy just over 10% of the share of businesses (30 and 27, respectively) and 3% of the share of employees (116 and 125, respectively).

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

One of Acme Township's largest and most obvious natural resources is its approximately 9.5 miles of shoreline along the East Grand Traverse Bay. Proximity to water is a draw for nearly any human habitation, and the turquoise expanse of Lake Michigan is a unique jewel. The seemingly limitless supply of freshwater has been of critical value since the early days of Acme's settlement, and its moderating effect on the otherwise harsh northern Michigan climate is similarly fundamental. Less essential, but still pivotal, benefits include stellar aesthetics and recreational opportunities. The Grand Traverse Bay as a whole has anchored attraction to the Traverse City area throughout the region's developed history, and Acme Township's position on the "east coast" is a great privilege.

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<sup>5</sup> Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce. "Expertise and Information: Economic Data." Accessed September 2013. <http://tcchamber.org/expertise-and-information/>

Another of Acme's important natural resources is its fertile soil. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, XXX acres of land in the Township is classified as "prime farmland," meaning the land has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of food, fiber, and forage. Producing primarily apples and cherries, much of this land is either already protected by Acme's Purchase of Development Rights program or eligible to receive such protection.

Acme's topography includes a series of glacial moraines running north and south through the Township. These ridgelines and valleys are part of the region's distinct setting, offering lovely views of the surrounding landscape and breathtaking vistas of the East Bay. They also play an important role in soil fertility by affecting water drainage and air circulation patterns.

The Northern Michigan wine industry has been building steam since the 1970s and has begun maturing into international recognition since the 1990s. Good agricultural conditions have given rise to a cluster of vineyards and associated tasting rooms, which have begun to coalesce into a regional draw. Though a 2008 assessment of seven Michigan counties for vineyard suitability found weather conditions in Acme Township to be less than ideal due to its short growing season,<sup>6</sup> its immediate proximity to a vast swath of eminently suitable land indicates that it vineyard cultivation may still be possible with a few adjustments. Vineyards sited to face south or west can best take advantage of the sun's warmth during the day. Those on sloping ground can take advantage of the tendency of cooler, heavier air to sink, passing by the delicate fruit and leaves to pool in concentrated valley pockets. These circulation patterns, known as "airsheds," can be significantly affected by the built environment, as when a structure at one end of a valley blocks the flow of warmer daytime air and thus traps the frost.

*"At the tip of the [Old Mission] peninsula, you will stand in the center of a band, from about the 50th to 30th degree latitudes, that circles the globe like a necklace strung with some of the world's great winemaking regions. To name but three in the Northern Hemisphere, they are Bordeaux in France, Piedmont in Italy and our own Columbia Valley of Washington and Oregon. (Ditto for the Southern Hemisphere's similar stretch embellished, for example, with New Zealand's Central Otago region.)*

*All the benefits that nature can give a grapevine shine within this band. Northern Michigan (a bit more luckily than the winemaking areas of southern Michigan) polishes them all: a lengthy, slowly ripening growing season; plenty of sunshine; mild, warm days, and crisp, cool nights. Michigan also sports large bodies of water that modulate temperature extremes, making for regularly gentle grapevine budding, flowering and ripening."<sup>7</sup>*

The Hoxie House, built for founder Leonard Hoxie, has stood beside the East Bay since 1875. Most recently known as the Knollwood Motel, the parcel was among the shorefront properties purchased in conjunction with the Acme Shores Placemaking Project. The Acme Township Heritage Society, formed in 2010 and now headquartered in the Hoxie House, rallied the community around an effort to save the house through public awareness efforts and regular fundraisers.<sup>8</sup> The Society secured an agreement from the Township to move the house and received an offer of a parcel of land 4,000 yards away on the 182-acre Village at Grand Traverse development slated to host a Meijer store.<sup>9</sup> The Acme Heritage Society plans to raise \$125,000 for moving and improvements so that the house can arrive at its new site in May of 2014, where it will become the Society's historical museum.

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<sup>6</sup> Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council. "Development of the Viticultural Potential Map for the Wine Grape-Producing Regions of Michigan," Sasha Kravchenko. January 2009. <http://www.michiganwines.com/docs/Research/08kravchenko1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The Chicago Tribune. "Say yes to Michigan wine country," Bill St. John. May 2013. [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-05-08/features/sc-food-0503-wine-michigan-20130508\\_1\\_chateau-grand-traverse-old-mission-peninsula-napa-valley](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-05-08/features/sc-food-0503-wine-michigan-20130508_1_chateau-grand-traverse-old-mission-peninsula-napa-valley)

<sup>8</sup> UpNorthLive.com. "Historic Hoxsie House finds a new home," Holly Baker. April 2013.

<http://www.upnorthlive.com/news/story.aspx?id=887410#UinSaH-PsR8>

<sup>9</sup> Traverse City Record-Eagle. "Hoxsie House could be Meijer neighbor," Brian McGillivray. April 2012. <http://record-eagle.com/local/x333968888/Hoxsie-House-could-be-Meijer-neighbor>

The John Pulcifer House, constructed in 1883 by Acme Township’s organizer and first supervisor, fulfilled a promise to Mr. Pulcifer’s Ohio schoolteacher wife that he would build her a fine house for accompanying him so far from home.<sup>10</sup> It remained in the family until Pulcifer’s niece ceased to occupy the house in 1964, and then the un-plumbed, un-electrified house stayed vacant for the next 35 years. The Veliquette family bought the property toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to add the 150 acres of Pulcifer cherry orchards to the 250 adjacent acres the Veliquettes already owned. The family decided to embark on a full restoration of the home in 1999. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001 and is now operated as the Country Hermitage Bed and Breakfast.

[airshed map]

[ridges and viewsheds map]

[natural and sensitive landscapes map]

### **Open Space and Recreation**

Acme Township owns four of its own recreation facilities and hosts 15 more which are owned by the county, the state, and the private sector. The largest Acme Township facility is Yuba Creek Natural Area, a 413-acre preserve in the northern portion of the Township with trails. Deepwater Point Natural Area, much smaller at 14.9 acres, also has trails and includes East Bay frontage as well as parking. Further north on the shoreline is Sayler Park, a 22-acre facility with three shelters, picnic tables, grills, horseshoe pits, volleyball, and restrooms.

[existing recreation facilities map]

The 11-acre Bayside Park is Acme’s smallest park, but it is the most centrally located at the intersection of US-31 and M-72. The site and its surrounding area are presently at the center of the “Acme Shores Placemaking Plan,” which began as a citizen-driven strategy to acquire and preserve shoreline properties as public parks and beaches for future generations. Two of three acquisition phases have been completed, and the shoreline corridor has been master planned to determine and incorporate citizen preferences, address multimodal traffic concerns along the thoroughfares, and lay the groundwork for beneficial connections between local businesses and the emerging public space.

[Acme Shores master plan map]

Grand Traverse County owns four boat launches in Acme Township, located at Dock Road, Bunker Hill Road, Yuba Park Road, and Shores Beach. It also owns the Bartlett Park Vasa Trailhead, part of the Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation trail system, and provides restroom facilities to serve them. Maple Bay County Park is a former 400-acre dairy farm which is currently being master planned. The State of Michigan offers 433 acres of natural open space at the Petobego State Game Area, 2.2 acres of beach access, picnic tables, grills, and restrooms at MDOT Gilroy Roadside Park, and boat access and parking to the East Bay.

Private recreation facilities provide a greater diversity of uses. The largest is the 1,400-acre Grand Traverse Resort, with 54 holes of golf, indoor and outdoor tennis and pools, and beach frontage. Equestrian amenities including stables and competition fields are available at Horse Sports Park. New Hope Community Church’s 20-acre grounds have softball, soccer, and all-purpose fields, two tennis courts, playground equipment, and restrooms, while Bertha Vos Elementary School has playground equipment and a winter ice skating rink and hut. Boat access is obtainable at East Bay Marina, and rustic camping is available at Everflowing Water Campground.

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<sup>10</sup> Country Hermitage Bed and Breakfast. “History – About the Inn.” Accessed August 2013. <http://www.countryhermitage.com/history.php>

## Community Facilities

In addition to the four Township-owned parks mentioned above, two other community facility systems warrant Acme's attention: water and sewer, and the Township Hall/Fire Department site.

Presently, no public water facilities are available in Acme Township. The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians has provided private water facilities for their Grand Traverse Resort and has contracted to provide water to the Grand Traverse Town Center. Such piecemeal solutions are likely to be inadequate to serve future needs, however. As noted above, the Grand Traverse Metro Emergency Services Authority fire chief recommended that the Township needs public water for future commercial growth, citing problems with a new Goodwill retail outlet on M-72 as an example. The Grand Traverse County Health Department expressed concerns about water quality, particularly as they relate to septic systems in residential development. Acme Township's status as a regional "Growth and Investment Area" is highly predictive of greater demands on its infrastructure system, of which water and sewer are primary components. By taking the lead on the siting and construction of these infrastructure improvements, the community can both encourage development in desired areas as well as discourage its encroachment into areas more suited for other uses.

Acme Township is part of a collaborative with other Grand Traverse Townships and Elmwood Township in Leelanau County known as the Grand Traverse County Septage Treatment Facility (GTCSTF), which provides Township property owners access to a sanitary sewer system and centralized treatment facility. The Grand Traverse County Department of Public Works is the facility owner.

Acme Township, East Bay Township, and Garfield Townships have constituted and been served by the Grand Traverse Metro Fire Department since 1980, reorganized in 2008 to become the Grand Traverse Metro Emergency Services Authority (MESA). At the regional agency meeting hosted by Acme Township, the agency noted that it was looking for a location for a new fire station building. Construction of this facility in Acme Township would allow for an improved Township Hall, and could also offer an opportunity to include a library.

Acme Township Hall, located at 6042 Acme Road, houses the Acme Township substation for MESA and Township Administration offices for the Supervisor, Treasurer, Clerk, Assessor and Zoning Administrator. A large room serves as the central board room for the Trustees, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and other committees, uses for which the building was not intended. It is functionally obsolete and not conducive to Township operations.

In addition to the facilities mentioned, the Township also owns and operates the Acme Township Cemetery located south of the entrance to the Grand Traverse Resort on the east side of US-31.

[Community Facilities map: water, sewer, FD/Twp Hall, parks]

## Economic Development

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

*have a difficult time attracting and retaining talented workers and entrepreneurs, or being attractive to business.*"<sup>11</sup>

*"Placemaking is a community-based approach involving the discovery and implementation of practices that make our communities distinctive, economically viable, accessible, and visually pleasing. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and economic well-being."*<sup>12</sup>

In keeping with the state and the region, Acme Township has embraced placemaking as the heart of its economic development strategy. It is remarkably well-suited to do so, containing within its 25 square miles a topographic and developmental diversity that encompasses four of the six "transects." Transects are zones characterized by the level of intensity of their natural, built, and social components, arranged on a continuum from the most natural places to the most urban. This classification system, developed at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an alternative to conventional use-based zoning systems, figures prominently in the Placemaking curriculum developed by the State of Michigan MIPlace Partnership.

[Transect Map of Acme Township]

#### *T1 – Natural and Open Space:*

The consequences of Acme Township's Growth and Investment Center designation may be just as profound for its pristine areas as for its built ones: as land use intensifies at the US-31 and M-72 intersection, the tendency for that intensity to diffuse itself by "sprawling" onto adjacent land is well-known and will almost certainly occur if no preventive action is taken. Currently, nearly all of the land north of M-72 is agricultural, vacant, forested, rural residential, or conserved—and citizens like it that way. When they were asked about protecting natural features, a majority of residents named rural character, wildlife habitat, farmlands and orchards, water quality, and the East Bay shoreline as "high priority."

Our understanding of the economic value of undeveloped land is changing along with the global paradigm. Since the industrial revolution, cheap land and access to resources for exploitation have been the chief business input considerations. With the advent of the knowledge economy, good talent has become a more valuable resource than cheap land in many cases, so communities wishing to attract business must begin aiming to change what they offer. Understanding why people choose to live where they do, then, is a paramount concern to the issue of economic development. Acme Township residents have articulated clearly their appreciation for the juxtaposition of the largest commercial center in northern Michigan with the open vistas provided by the operating farms, orchards and resorts.

#### *T2 – Agricultural*

Approximately 34% of the existing land use in the Township is agricultural, primarily devoted to cherries and apples. Citizens have demonstrated their commitment to preserving this land use by passing a millage to support participation in the Grand Traverse County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program designed to offset the financial incentive of development.

*"Agri-tourism generates economic and social benefits to agri-tourism operators, their customers, rural communities, and the state of Michigan. Through on-site sales, value-added production, and services (i.e. school tours, corn mazes, and Halloween activities), agri-tourism yields the additional income that enables operators to maintain a "way of life" and the family farm. For its customers, agri-tourism provides a place to obtain fresh produce and experience nature with their families. For rural communities and the state of Michigan, agri-tourism generates employment*

<sup>11</sup> Governor Rick Snyder. "A Special Message from Governor Rick Snyder: Community Development and Local Government Reforms." March 2011. [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/2011Special\\_Message-1\\_348148\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/2011Special_Message-1_348148_7.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. "Placemaking in Northern Michigan." Accessed September 2013. <http://www.nwm.org/planning/planning-policy/placemaking/>

*and tourism and tax revenues, while helping to maintain open space and the viability of Michigan agriculture. By expanding product offerings, agri-tourism's sales potential can be further increased while simultaneously providing visitors with greater choice.*

*It is recommended that the state of Michigan provide further support for agri-tourism, which integrates Michigan's second and third largest industries, agriculture and tourism.”<sup>13</sup>*

Perhaps the most overt combination of agricultural activity with placemaking for economic benefit comes in the form of agricultural tourism. Often shortened to “agritourism,” the word refers to the practice of visiting working agricultural establishments for the purpose of entertainment or education. The concept is far from new to the region—Traverse City’s famed cherries were joined by grapes in the 1970s, and no less than four wine tasting rooms had thrown open their doors by the end of the decade<sup>14</sup>—but it has grown so rapidly as a practice that the United States Census of Agriculture included it in its study of “agricultural diversification” for the first time in 2007, and the activities so classified offered the highest average income during that same year. Combining as it does Michigan’s second and third largest industries, this is a uniquely local economic opportunity to be supported and encouraged.

Northwest Michigan is at the forefront of a new and growing movement to do just that by linking food production, distribution, and consumption through regional “Food Innovation Districts.” A food innovation district is “a geographic concentration of food-oriented businesses, services, and community activities that local governments support through planning and economic development initiatives in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional food system development, and increase access to local food.”<sup>15</sup> Such districts do away with a narrow, produce-and-ship focus to extend the benefits of agricultural production through the business community (clusters, retail opportunities, supply chain management, skilled workforce development) and the public at large (healthier food, stronger job market, development of a food-based cultural component). They are considered a tool for “economic gardening,” the practice of spending a community’s resources to help native businesses grow and expand rather than offering incentives to established businesses to relocate within the community (“economic hunting”).

When United States Department of Agriculture deputy secretary Kathleen Merrigan presented her organization’s 2011 finding on food hubs, including the identification of 170 already operating across the country, she did so in Michigan and mentioned Traverse City’s Cherry Capital Foods specifically. The Food and Farming Network makes up one of The Grand Vision’s six issue area networks. As the region focuses on development of its comprehensive Food Innovation District, individual communities with the involvement of local growers and producers can adopt a narrower focus that is particularly well-suited to its contribution.

### *T3 – Residential*

Residential zones are not always considered as part of the creation of an economic development strategy, but they are a critical part of a community’s economic system. They are the places that workers, shoppers, and customers must travel to and from, and thus their location and accessibility can either fuel or choke the activity. Traditional suburbs in the southern portion of the Township offer a medium-density setting attractive to many, and the fact that most travel is necessarily done by car widens residents’ comfortable reach. In addition to these traditional single-family developments, the Township intends to cultivate a “mixed housing” neighborhood type close to the new developments, to include clustered residential and open space subdivisions, small-lot residences, and apartments.

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<sup>13</sup> Western Michigan University. “Michigan Agritourism: Strengthening Michigan’s Agriculture and Tourism Industries,” Deborah Che, Gregory Veeck, Ann Veeck, David Lemberg. March 2004. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRD3248005>

<sup>14</sup> Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council. “A timeline of the early history of the Michigan wine industry to mid-1980s.” February 2010, revised September 2013. [http://www.michiganwines.com/docs/About/history\\_timeline.pdf](http://www.michiganwines.com/docs/About/history_timeline.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Regional Food Solutions, LLC; Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems; Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. “Food Innovation Districts: An Economic Gardening Tool.” 2012. <http://www.nwm.org/planning/planning-policy/food-systems-and-food-innovation-districts/>

These slightly more dense, diverse, and close housing options change the market base of the community by creating an expanded pool of workers and customers with an incentive to work and play nearby. As the neighborhoods, Acme Village, and Grand Traverse Town Center mature, they are envisioned to join the Grand Traverse Resort to build a cohesive, interconnected, mixed-use core in the Township.

#### *T4 – General Urban Corridor*

As described by the MIPlace curriculum, strategic placemaking as an economic development approach is specifically targeted to key activity centers, transportation corridors, and nodes of intersection. Acme Township's position at the nexus of US-31 and M-72 offers two corridors and a development node, contributing significantly to its selection as a Growth and Investment Area in Grand Traverse County.

The Grand Traverse Resort and Spa anchors the corner. Its contributions to the local economy are twofold: it draws tourist dollars from outside the community, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians is the largest employer within the community.

Vacancies in the traditional business district along the US-31 corridor signal a readiness for departure from that model and offer potential for infill redevelopment.

Two large-scale commercial placemaking projects are underway along the M-72 corridor:

- Acme Village: This is a late 1990's planned development which focused on professional offices and health-care related businesses. Based on recent market demands this concept may be re-visited by the owner and modified accordingly.
- Grand Traverse Town Center (formerly known as Village at Grand Traverse) is a planned mixed-use development which includes a 190,000 square foot Meijer Store as the development anchor. Other components of the planned development include retail, restaurant and entertainment uses, as well as, single family and multiple family residential.

The shoreline urban parks system along US-31, far from being an accessory or "extra" feature, plays a defining role in Acme's use of placemaking as an economic development strategy. Placemaking proceeds from the premise that human-scaled, well-designed spaces influence the behavior of people by attracting them, and that a critical mass of human activity yields economic benefit. The new Bayside/marina parks system enjoys an enormous advantage in that its creation and design were citizen-driven—its importance to the public was indicated even before its existence—and it has been designed with clear linkages to the adjacent business and mixed-use districts. This parks system has the potential to be the "face" of Acme Township, a unique and memorable feature that serves as a brand for the overall community.

Acme Township residents cited recreation/tourism as their top economic growth opportunity priority for development (55.1%). Because the economic benefits of parkland are not represented in a single transaction, they can be easy to overlook or misunderstand, but a growing body of research has consistently documented such benefits. The Trust for Public Land's 2003 publication "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space" offers an overview: "Numerous studies have shown that parks and open space increase the value of neighboring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit on commercial property value. The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality-of-life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well-educated individuals choosing a place to live. City parks such as San Antonio's Riverwalk Park often become important tourism draws, contributing heavily to local businesses."<sup>16</sup> The paper's text and bibliography go on to quantify parks' further contributions to a community's health, environment, infrastructure, and social fabric.

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<sup>16</sup> The Trust for Public Land. "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space," Paul M. Sherer. January 2003. <http://www.tpl.org/publications/books-reports/park-benefits/benefits-of-parks-white-paper.html>

[Transect images]

[Photos of vacancies on US-31 Corridor]

[Growth and investment strategy map: to include commercial and ag]

## Preferred Future

### Community Visioning and Expectations

#### *Community Survey*

The primary method of collecting public opinion for use in this Master Plan was a community-wide mail survey sent to 2,400 Acme Township households and business April 9, 2013. A total of 584 completed surveys constituted an approximate 24% response rate; the overall sample consisted of 499 resident/non-business owners and 77 business owners (eight respondents did not designate a status). The overall margin of error, based upon a contact database of 2,922 households and businesses combined, was +/-3.63%.

Respondents were given a series of 16 issues and asked to both indicate the issue's importance to them and to rate Acme Township's performance with regard to it. Issues most frequently identified as Very Important include Property Tax Rate, Availability of Emergency Services, and Quality of Roads (58%, 56%, and 55%, respectively). Acme Township received the highest ratings (Excellent, Above Average) regarding Proximity to Traverse City, Access to Water and East Bay, and Availability of Emergency Services (31%, 29%, and 25%, respectively). With regard to the issues assessed, the largest gap between importance and rating of Acme Township is found with Quality of Roads.

Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents indicated they are Somewhat or Very Satisfied, overall, with the quality of life in Acme Township. Concerning satisfaction with current services, respondents expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with Recycling Center and Emergency Medical Services/Fire Protection, while the lowest levels of satisfaction were assigned to Road Condition/Maintenance, Zoning/Blight Enforcement, and Public Transit Service. Regarding a variety of issues which could be pursued within Acme Township in the next 10 years, the majority of respondents indicated they believe Road Maintenance/Reconstruction should be pursued "Even if it raises my taxes," while the majority also indicated they believe Recycling Center and Senior Services should be pursued "Only if it does not raise my taxes." In addition, the majority of respondents indicated they do not believe Web/Televised Township Meetings, Community Newsletter (mailed), or New Township Hall should be pursued.

When presented with a list of statements regarding options for growth and development in the township, approximately 50% indicated they would prefer to "Encourage new growth and development," while 32% expressed preference for "Maintain current rate of growth and development." Approximately 39% of survey respondents indicated they are Likely to vote to continue the township's current special property tax millage for Farmland Preservation when it is up for renewal in 2013-2014; approximately 31% of respondents indicated they are not likely to vote in support of renewal. Respondents most frequently identified Recreation/Tourism, Retail (locally owned), Restaurants/Entertainment, and Residential (single family) as high priority for development in Acme Township (55%, 53%, 49%, and 41%, respectively). Similarly, respondents were asked to rate each of several characteristics based upon priority for protection. While five out of six characteristics were rated High Priority by the majority of respondents, Water Quality for Streams/Watersheds/East Bay and East Bay Shoreline received the strongest support, with 83% and 75%, respectively, assigning High Priority ratings.

Concerning desirability when planning for US-31 in Acme Township between M-72 and 5 Mile Road, the majority of respondents rated "Promote safe, fast and efficient traffic flow" and "Meet the needs of vehicular traffic" as Very Desirable (60% each); approximately one-third of respondents rated "Should remain the same" Very Undesirable.

With regard to desirability when planning for M-72 in Acme Township between Lautner Road east to Arnold Road, the majority of respondents (62%) rated “Promote safe, fast and efficient traffic flow” as Very Desirable, while 47% rated “Retain opportunities for agriculture” as Very Desirable; 48% and 46% of respondents rated “Strip commercial development” and “Industrial/Warehousing,” respectively, Very Undesirable.

When considering the current amount of several types of housing in the Township (Senior Citizen, Low/Moderate Income, Work Force Housing, Assisted Living), the majority of respondents, in each instance, indicated there is “The Right Amount;” however, 46% of respondents indicated there is currently “Too Little” Senior Citizen Housing and 42% indicated there is “Too Little” Assisted Living.

With regard to a series of zoning issues, the majority of respondents rated “Junk/Trash Quantity Restrictions,” “Noise Regulations,” and “Signs-Size Regulations” High Priority (61%, 58%, and 51%, respectively). In addition, the majority of respondents (64%) rated “Guest House on same lot as Primary House” a Low Priority.

Respondents most frequently cited Grand Traverse Resort, Bayside Park, and TART Trail as public/private outdoor parks, trails and/or indoor recreation facilities used “Several Times a Year” (51%, 38%, and 32%, respectively). With regard to recreational facilities/services initiatives, the majority of respondents indicated they “Strongly Agree” *Acme Township should support the development of trails that connect with other adjacent parks and the TART Trail, Acme Township should have an adequate public boat launch, and Parks and recreation facilities/services are important to our community and worthy of taxpayer support* (62%, 56%, and 54%, respectively). When asked to indicate which of several recreation facilities/activities Acme Township should plan for and develop, top three cited as “First Choice” include Fishing Access Areas, Non-Motorized Trails, and Swimming Beach (49%, 47%, and 46%, respectively).

[Survey graphics]

### *Regional Agency Meeting*

In the interest of collaboration, shared resources, and good communication, 39 representatives from adjacent and inclusive jurisdictions and area agencies were asked to join Acme Township representatives for a discussion of mutual goals and concerns. A short survey was distributed along with the invitation. The work session, held at 9 a.m. on February 5, 2013 at the Bay View Inn and Grill, was attended by 17 of the invitees.

A large portion of the conversation focused on motorized and nonmotorized transportation. An update from the Michigan Department of Transportation noted planned projects, including construction along US-31 between Three Mile and Holiday Roads and potential pedestrian improvements at two locations. East Bay Township and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians both mentioned an interest in pedestrian safety and access management along US-31. Whitewater Township joined as the discussion turned to M-72; a signal or roundabout at the entrance to the Turtle Creek casino was suggested twice. The Traverse City Area Transportation and Land Use Study, currently working on a long-range transportation plan (2015), offered to review the future land use plan and make any needed changes to the regional traffic demand model.

Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails encouraged the use of Complete Streets as a strategy for expanding road access to a broader range of users. The agency’s stated priority was completion of the linkage between Bunker Hill and Lautner Roads, and working with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to use existing County roads to connect Acme Township with Elk Rapids. The Bay Area Transportation Authority expressed a desire to collaborate on bus and transit stops, suggesting a regional wayfinding system including Acme, East Bay, and Elmwood Townships as well as Traverse City and also noting the potential for an Acme Township transfer station. The Disability Network advocated projects that are walkable, bikeable, and/or connected to public transit, and offered to review the master plan and site plan for issues related to accessibility.

The Grand Traverse County Planning and Development department reiterated its identification of Acme Township, specifically at the US-31 and M-72 interchange, as a “Growth and Investment Area,” adding that these are “priority areas for implementation of [the Grand Vision’s] land use, economic development, and housing programs” and that the County “is also interested in the expansion and development of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Counties trust lands and the impact on tax revenues.” However, the Grand Traverse Metro Fire Department cited the availability of public water as a priority for new development, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians mentioned water as a “critical element” in the development of the Grand Traverse Town Center. The GTBO&C partnered with the GTTC for water services, and stated that while it has no immediate plans for its 168 acres, it is in master planning discussions and intends to provide its own infrastructure.

Other issues included water quality, which was a primary concern of both The Watershed Center and the Grand Traverse County Health Department. Low impact development stormwater practices, e-coli monitoring in the East Bay, and particular attention to septic systems in residential development were recommended. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments reported that it is working on a regional energy policy that will include the Township, and the Grand Traverse Metro Fire Department said it was looking for a new fire station building.

#### *Business Owner Meeting*

All members of the Acme Township business community were invited by mail to an input meeting on February 6, 2013; a small questionnaire and relevant sections of the previous master plan accompanied the invitations. Approximately 40 business owners attended the meeting, which was held in the conference room at Hope Village.

When asked what services they required from the Township, the business owners cited water, sewer, underground utilities along the shoreline parks, road improvements, traffic control such as a left-turn arrow from US-31 onto M-72 and a signal light at the Grand Traverse Resort, signage, expanded or improved recreation facilities (specifically, a new soccer field and repaired volleyball court), and a more professional Township website to attract new business. Planning and zoning recommendations included reduced building setbacks along US-31 and M-72, expanded uses in the industrial district, use of incentives to attract business, and an expedited permitting process. Participants repeatedly emphasized cooperation between government and the business community, as exemplified by the statement that “government and businesses need to work together to create an atmosphere where commerce drives capital, creates jobs, spurs growth in housing sales, preserves land, etc.” Finally, attendees expressed a “need to attract Millennials [people born between 1980 and 2000] and younger families” who could become business owners themselves and thus increase economic activity. They recommended an active Twitter presence and a peer-conducted marketing campaign.

#### *Agriculture Community Meeting*

Several members of Acme Township’s farming community gathered at Acme Township Hall on January 30, 2013 to discuss master planning issues relevant to agriculture. A primary concern was the desire for more flexibility with regard to the use of their property. They recommended zoning changes which would encourage related uses within an existing agricultural operation, such as a farm market, wine tasting room, restaurant serving locally produced fare, and other agricultural tourism uses. They also wished to expand that flexibility to include other commercial uses, such as the ability to lease out available accessory buildings regardless of whether the incoming tenant intended to conduct farming activities in them. Permitting the construction of additional family homesteads on the property without subdividing the parcel was another suggestion.

With regard to residential development in general, participants overall favored a clear delineation between agricultural and residential uses. Concerns about encroachment of residential development into active agricultural areas included issues related to spraying, equipment use, noise, and hours of operation. They recommended maintaining a 1 unit per 5 acre density for rural development, with the possibility of reviewing clustered development at 1 unit per 2.5 or 2 acres. Defined development, as in a hamlet or small settlement, was preferred. Other issues cited were management of deer and other invasive species and traffic speeds on US-31, particularly

north of M-72, which present a safety issue when moving machinery across the road or traversing the highway between parcels.

Farmers in attendances viewed Acme Township’s purchase of development right (PDR) program as the single most useful resource available to protect existing farms from future encroachment, though they expressed a preference for a less restrictive program. In 2004, Acme Township became one of only two communities to pass an ordinance participating in the Grand Traverse County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. Under the agreement, the County establishes criteria for eligible lands, determines whether PDR applications should be accepted, approves the restrictions on the subsequent easement, establishes the prices, and oversees compliance monitoring. For its part, the Township establishes the amount of matching funds to be available on an annual basis (voters approved a 10-year, 1-mill levy that is expected to raise \$3.1 million through 2014), decides the allocation to be awarded to each application, and coordinates its efforts with the County.

[PDR ordinance excerpt box]

“The purchase of development rights and the placement of an agricultural conservation easement on farmland through the Grand Traverse County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program as provided for in this Ordinance is a public purpose of Acme Township. Financing of such purchases requires that Acme Township enter into agreements with property owners to obtain such development rights. Properties of which Acme Township has purchased development rights and entered into an agricultural conservation easements should remain substantially undeveloped in order to remain viable for agricultural use.

Acme Township’s agricultural lands are an economically important resource. These lands support a locally important and globally unique agricultural industry, which includes excellent fruit production and processing, dairy, livestock, food from grains, and vegetables, as well as nursery and greenhouse crops. The climate, micro-climate, topography, and accessibility of the area make Acme Township uniquely suited for the production, processing, and distribution of agricultural products on a regional, national, and international level.”

[updated PDR map – Matt is working on]

*Acme Shores (Placemaking) Visioning*

In keeping with the concept of “placemaking” as a way to form lasting connections between people and spaces, the Acme Shores coastal redevelopment project relied heavily on community engagement. A website was launched at [www.acmeshores.org](http://www.acmeshores.org) to host general information, a calendar of events, a photo gallery, project documents, and a communication link between the public and the Leadership Team members. To gather input about the priorities of the redeveloped shoreline’s potential users, a meeting was held with noncommercial property owners along US-31 in addition to a community-wide public meeting. Leadership Team members also hosted a public “Meet Your Beach” day on the redevelopment site, at which they spoke one-on-one with attendees and collected comment cards. About 72 citizens came to the public meeting, and about 80 shared their opinions at the beach. The top priorities from each session are summarized here:

| <b>Noncommercial Property Owners on US-31</b>         | <b>Community-Wide Public Meeting</b>                | <b>“Meet Your Beach” Day</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| Balance of residential, commercial, recreational uses | US-31 bypass to the east                            | Access via foot and bicycle   |
| Beach resembling state park at 3 Mile Road            | Complete streets with walking and biking trails     | Cleaner beach, including vegetation                                 |
| Walkability / bikeability; link with TART             | Open, pristine, beautiful beach and improved marina | Amenities: playground, buoys, picnic tables, handicap mat, restroom |

After the plans and drawings for a revitalized Acme Township were completed, the public was again invited via postcard to a community meeting and offered the opportunity to provide feedback. This time, over 100 citizens came to view the drawings in person, and 223 unique visits were made to webpage hosting digital versions. Comment cards were distributed which gave an overview of the project, listed the public priorities incorporated in the plan, and presented small versions of the overall and park plan drawings. In addition to providing their positive and negative preferences, respondents also offered some additional ideas:

| <b>Likes</b>   | <b>Concerns</b>   | <b>Other Ideas</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| Local US-31 bypass option; reduced lanes and speeds on US-31 | Traffic: roundabouts, impact of lower speed on tourism      | Parking area suggestions, including for trailers  |
| Walkability and bikeability                                  | Cost: can taxpayers afford it, loss of tax base to parkland | Encourage concerts, festivals, restaurants  |
| Integration of nature, development, open space               | Whether boat launch would work as expected                  | More kid-friendly areas   |
| Aesthetic and swimming improvements                          | Parking for commercial district and boat launch             | Nonmotorized water launches   |
| Boat launch and associated parking                           |   | Process: establish “authority” for implementation; measure expectations so they can be delivered upon; continued regional collaboration |

## Cornerstones

### *FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT.*

About 90 miles of road run through Acme Township. Just over half of them (46.8 miles) are rated “poor” according to the state’s Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER), a mandatory visual survey conducted by transportation professionals, and another 31.7 miles are rated “fair.” Overall, then, just 13% of the township’s roads are in good condition. Residents have noticed, responding to the community survey with top-frequency statements like “We should pursue road maintenance even if it raises my taxes” (54.9%), “I am very dissatisfied with the roads” (39.7%), and “Acme Township is doing a poor job on the quality of its roads” (33%).

There is also a need for public water to serve the business district. At a meeting of regional agencies and neighboring communities convened for the purpose of discussing the Acme Township Master Plan update, the Grand Traverse Metro Fire Department called public water for new commercial growth “a priority for new development” and members of the business community also cited water, sewer and storm water as the top services they need from Acme Township. Discussions regarding the need for a public water system reference back to the Acme Township Infrastructure Citizens Advisory Committee Township/Tribal Bulk Water Agreement Task Force in 2005. Further, the Grand Vision identified a portion of Acme Township in proximity to US-31 and M-72 as a “Growth and Investment” area for development, job creation and new housing.

The lack of public water and the inability to meet building and fire codes is a particularly pressing issue for the redevelopment of the US-31 and M-72 corridors. The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB) has partnered with the Grand Traverse Town Center for water, a critical element of development for that property and a potential partnership with the Township may be a reasonable and cost effective solution.

- 1) Complete an assessment of all public roads using the PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating System) to determine the status of road conditions and create a database to establish priorities and funding levels. (Table 7, 9, 10)<sup>17</sup>
- 2) Continue collaboration with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians on infrastructure projects, especially public water. (Table 7)
- 3) Incorporate into the zoning ordinance specific provisions that address the quantity and quality of storm water treatment and handling, especially low event storm flows. (Table 14)
- 4) Prepare a capital improvements programs for the Township which includes strategies and potential budgets for water, sanitary, storm water and road improvements. (Table 10)
- 5) Collaborate with Metro Fire on the location of new Fire / EMS station. (Table 7 and 9)

*DEVELOP A TRAIL SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS TO LOCAL PARKS AND THE TART TRAIL.*

The Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) trail begins its journey toward Traverse City from the intersection of M-72 and Bates Road in Acme Township. From there, a bike route provides a connection to the Vasa pathway into the Pere Marquette State Forest. Acme Township residents would like to see this non-vehicular mobility extended through more of the township. Over a third of survey respondents (34.5%) said they visit the TART or Vasa trails at least once a week, and another 27.1% said they visit several times a month. A full 90% of residents agreed that “Acme Township should support the development of trails that connect with other adjacent parks and the TART trail,” with 62% offering “strong” agreement. When asked to select a recreation facility/activity Acme Township should plan for and develop, 99.9% of residents included “non-motorized trails” as one of their top three choices. TART and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) are currently coordinating efforts to create a non-motorized connection with Elk Rapids via existing county roads, and TART encourages the use of Michigan’s Complete Streets legislation as a strategy for expanding access to the street network for all users. Further, 55.1% of households in the Acme Township Resident and Business Survey noted Recreation/Tourism as a future economic growth activity for the township. (Table 13)

- 1) Establish a formal agreement with the Grand Traverse County Road Commission regarding the classification and utilization of a “community street” based on their March 22, 2005 memorandum to the Township. As stated in the memorandum, “this proposed addition (community street) would allow a developer to reduce the width of asphalt from 30 to 24 feet and place the utilities inside the road right-of-way. What the Road Commission wants in return is for the developer, or future owners, to maintain the right-of-way outside the 24 foot roadway (including raised edges, curbing, shoulders, ditches etc.). The property owners and the utilities would also be required to hold harmless the Road Commission from any liability if the maintenance is not performed.” This type of street cross-section is ideal for vehicles and pedestrian because it allows for the non-road right-of-way to be used for sidewalks and pathways. (Table 10)
- 2) Work with TART and Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy on the establishment of the BR US-35 bike route through the Township along Bates Road to Elk Rapids Road. (Tables 21, 22, and 23)
- 3) Preference should be given to locate trails within scenic areas with minimal agricultural activity. (Table 13)
- 4) Collaborate with MDOT, regional, and other local units of government on a shared pathway network connecting the communities along the US-31 corridor. (Table 22)
- 5) Establish public and private road standards for community streets in residential neighborhoods with densities exceeding 3.5 dwelling units per acre. (Table 4)
- 6) Consult the 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan for township-road bike paths when reviewing new development projects for their incorporation and implementation. (Table 4)
- 7) Collaborate with the Grand Traverse Town Center and MDOT on the implementation of the pedestrian tunnel under M-72. (Tables 10 and 17)
- 8) Collaborate with MDOT and GTRLC on a pedestrian tunnel of US-31 at Maple Bay Farms. (Tables 10 and 15)

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<sup>17</sup> (Table # References) Acme Township Resident and Business Survey Summary Report, 2013, prepared by the Research Division, Northwestern Michigan College.

*RECONFIGURE US-31 AND M-72 TO PROMOTE SAFE, FAST, AND EFFICIENT TRAFFIC FLOW WHILE MAINTAINING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL ROAD USERS.*

Of the 1,464 crashes recorded in Acme Township by Michigan Traffic Crash Facts between 2004 and 2012, it is estimated that about 35% of them happened on US-31 between M-72 and 5 Mile Road, and another 6% took place on M-72 between Lautner and Bates. Clearly, improved traffic safety in these locations can have an appreciable impact on the overall traffic safety of the township. Residents felt similarly about both intersections: just under a third of residents said that the status quo at each of them is “very undesirable,” and another quarter called it “somewhat undesirable.” At a meeting convened to discuss planning and zoning issues specific to the agricultural community, attendees said that traffic speeds on US-31, especially north of M-72, are a safety issue when moving machinery across the road or traversing the highway between parcels.

The traffic issue is part of a delicate balance required for full utilization of the parks along the bay and the appropriate redevelopment of the corridor. About 60% of residents said it would be “very desirable” to “promote safe, fast, and efficient traffic flow” at each intersection. Just under half of respondents (48.6%) also felt it was “very desirable” to “meet the needs of local pedestrian traffic” on US-31 between M-72 and 5 Mile Road, and about the same percentage of respondents (47%) said it was “very desirable” to “retain opportunities for agriculture” along M-72 between Lautner and Arnold Roads. Successful placemaking along this node and associated corridors will take an integrated approach to both the proposed solutions and the jurisdiction of the problem-solvers. The Michigan Department of Transportation has included pedestrian improvements as part of planned construction along US-31 between 3 Mile and Holiday Roads, likely in the form of small median pedestrian refuges in two locations. East Bay Township has articulated concerns about US-31 that it shares with Acme Township, including speed, pedestrian safety, and access management. Both the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB) and Whitewater Township are interested in traffic control measures at the entrance to Turtle Creek Casino, while East Bay and Whitewater each have a shared interest in the form and quality of new development.

When asked to select a future configuration for US-31, 42.5% of survey respondents selected the option that included right-of-way landscaping, bike lanes in the road, and sidewalks. For M-72, 36.5% of respondents selected the landscaped median with sidewalks and 30.5% selected the option calling for right-of-way landscaping and sidewalks.

- 1) Collaborate with other US-31 communities to reduce the speed to 35 mph on US-31.
- 2) Work with MDOT when road improvements are made on US-31 to implement the recommendations in the Acme Township Placemaking Plan which calls for raised intersections at US-31 and M-72, US-31 and Mount Hope Road, and US-31 and Bunker Hill Road. (Table 15, 16, and 18)
- 3) Collaborate with BATA to install transit stops along US-31 and M-72. (Table 9)
- 4) Work with MDOT to secure a signalized intersection at US-31 and Mount Hope Road to meet the needs of local pedestrian traffic and provide a safe crossing to Bayshore Park. (Table 15)
- 5) Collaborate with the Grand Traverse Town Center and MDOT on the implementation of the pedestrian tunnel under M-72. (Tables 10 and 17)
- 6) Collaborate with MDOT and GTRLC on a pedestrian tunnel under US-31 at Maple Bay Farms. (Tables 10 and 15)

*CREATE A VIBRANT, HIGH-QUALITY, COMPACT COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USE DISTRICT ADJACENT TO THE US-31 AND M-72 CORRIDORS.*

Acme Township’s designation as a “growth and investment center” in the six-county Grand Vision for northwest Michigan, specifically at the US-31 and M-72 corridors, has the potential to transform both the look and feel of one of the busiest parts of the community, particularly in conjunction with the forthcoming Grand Traverse Town Center. Residents felt it was “somewhat” or “very” desirable to attract new business and commercial growth on US-31 (75.2%) and M-72 (67.7%), and they also had definite preferences related to its form: 73.1% of residents found strip commercial development either “somewhat” or “very undesirable,” while 65.3% found compact commercial

development either “somewhat” or “very desirable.” The business community requested traffic calming measures and a reduction in setbacks to 100’ or less; comments from that meeting also expressed a desire to “get the buildings down on the shoreline” and a “need to see something happening” along the shore.

The Township recently completed the Acme Township Placemaking study which consolidates and connects the US-31 corridor between US-31 and 5 Mile Road with Acme Village and the Grand Traverse Town Center. The vision for this area is the establishment of a planned mixed use district which extends from Bayshore Park along the East Bay shoreline to Lautner Road. This area is planned to include more dense and compact residential and commercial development achieved through vertical mixed uses and the integration of pedestrian amenities for walking and bicycling.

- 1) Continue collaboration with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians on infrastructure projects, especially public water. (Table 7)
- 2) Review and modify the zoning ordinance to allow for greater residential density and vertical real estate development. (Tables 11 and 13)
- 3) Consider the use of a form based code to effectuate the changes outlined in the Acme Placemaking Plan. (Table 11)
- 4) Ensure that off-street parking lots are inter-connected and properties have sidewalks wide enough to encourage outdoor dining, displays and pedestrian activity.
- 5) Collaborate with other US-31 communities to reduce the speed to 35 mph on US-31. (Table 17)

#### *MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER THROUGHOUT THE TOWNSHIP AND IN EAST BAY.*

Access to water and East Bay is “very important” to 50.5% of survey respondents. 43.1% of residents believe that shoreline and water quality protection should be pursued in the township over the next 10 years even if taxes must be raised to do it, and another 48.6% believe that it should be pursued if it does not raise taxes. Altogether, then, a total of 91.7% of residents support a focus on water quality. Asked about protection priorities, respondents cited “water quality for streams, watersheds, and East Bay” and “East Bay shoreline” most frequently as a “high priority” (83.4% and 75% respectively). Both the Watershed Center and the Grand Traverse County Health Department monitor the quality of the water in East Bay; the Watershed Center also encourages the use of low impact development stormwater practices in Acme Township.

- 1) Adopt a new stormwater ordinance which includes techniques to manage the quantity and quality of storm water. (Tables 10 and 14)
- 2) Incorporate into the zoning ordinance low impact development (design) techniques, especially addressing low event storms, such as rain gardens and bio retention, rooftop gardens, sidewalk storage, vegetated swales, buffers, and strips; tree preservation, roof leader disconnection, rain barrels and cisterns, permeable pavers, soil amendments, impervious surface reduction and disconnection. (Tables 10 and 14)
- 3) Collaborate with the Watershed Center and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB) on e-coli monitoring along East Bay.
- 4) Reinforce in the zoning ordinance the use of riparian buffers adjacent to tributaries and wetlands. (Table 14)

#### *ENCOURAGE RECREATION-BASED TOURISM.*

About half of survey respondents (50.2%) want to “encourage new growth and development,” and the greatest number of respondents (55.1%) cited “recreation / tourism” as a high priority for economic growth. In addition to widespread support for trail development (62.4% “strongly agree”), 56.4% of residents strongly agree that the township “should have an adequate boat launch facility” and 54% strongly agree that “parks and recreation facilities and services are important to our community and worthy of taxpayer support.” When asked, “What services to you require from Acme Township?” members of the business community cited expanded recreation facilities, such as soccer fields, and fixing the volleyball courts. When asked to select their top three recreation activities, fishing

access, non-motorized trails, swimming on the beach, passive parks, public boat docks, and walking trails rated as top selections.

The Township, in conjunction with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), has procured properties along East Bay for public recreation and open space. This effort was visually realized when the former Mountain Jack Restaurant and adjacent motel were demolished, creating a long-hidden vista of East Bay and Lake Michigan. Phases 1 and 2, at a total cost of about \$7.3 million, focused on the acquisition and clearing of properties adjacent to Bayside Park including The Shoreside Inn, The Willow Beach, and The Knollwood Motel, The Sun N' Sand Motel, Mountain Jack's Restaurant, and a vacant parcel north of Mountain Jack's. The main house of the Knollwood Motel, formerly known as the Hoxsie House (built in 1875 for Leonard Hoxsie, founder of Acme), will be maintained by the Acme Heritage Society as a historical museum and will be moved to a new location by June 30, 2014.

To prepare the community for this eventuality, the Township commissioned a placemaking plan which included Bayshore park and the newly acquired properties. Concurrently, the GTRLC, in conjunction with Grand Traverse County, acquired Maple Bay Farm with its unique and diverse ecosystems in the northern portion of the Township. Combined, these facilities create an enviable collection of active, passive and natural parks.

- 1) Implement the Action Plan in the Acme Township 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- 2) Collaborate with other agencies to establish a blue water trail along the West Bay, East Bay, and Lake Michigan for canoeing and kayaking. (Tables 13 and 23)
- 3) Implement the proposed boat launch at Saylor Park. (Tables 13, 14, and 22)
- 4) Work with TART and Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy on the establishment of the BR US-35 bike route through the Township along Bates Road to Elk Rapids Road. (Tables 21, 22, and 23)
- 5) Implement proposed improvements for Bayshore Park. (Tables 10, 13, and 22).
- 6) Work with MDOT when road improvements are made on US-31 to implement the recommendations in the Acme Township Placemaking Plan which calls for raised intersections at US-31 and M-72, US-31 and Mount Hope Road, and US-31 and Bunker Hill Road. (Table 15, 16, and 18)

#### *SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS AND PRESERVATION OF FARMLAND*

The community recognizes the value of farmland as an economic component of the local economy and also its intrinsic value as a rural landscape. Through the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's purchase of development rights (PDR) program supported by a dedicated Acme Township millage, 220 acres of land is permanently protected. About 40% of survey respondents reported that they were "likely" to vote to continue this millage when it is up for renewal in 2013-2014, while another 20% were undecided and 10% did not reply. At a meeting convened to discuss planning and zoning issues specific to the agricultural community, representatives cited PDRs as "the single most useful resource to protect existing farms from further encroachment" and stated a preference for a less restrictive program than the one currently in use.

Agricultural community members also expressed a desire for zoning that allows them maximum flexibility in the use of their land for economic viability. Examples included zoning for related uses within an agricultural operation (e.g., farm markets, wine tastings, food service, ag-tourism), allowing an "enterprise within an enterprise" such as leasing accessory buildings for non-farm operations, and building an additional family homestead on a property without subdividing a separate parcel. They were concerned about their relations with the inhabitants of residential development, noting that encroachment into active farmland raises issues related to spraying, equipment use, noise, and hours of operation. It was suggested that the current density of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres of residential development be maintained, and that a possible option for 1 dwelling unit per 2 to 2.5 acres of clustered development be considered.

Approximately 63% of survey respondents selected agricultural tourism as medium to high priority for potential economic growth. Likewise, 88.6% rated farmland and orchards as a medium to high priority for protection.

- 1) Continue the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. (Tables 12, 13, and 14).
- 2) Re-evaluate the agricultural zoning district and other agricultural related zoning ordinance provisions to determine if modifications should be made to provide greater flexibility and uses with the district. (Table 14)
- 3) In concert with the agricultural community, determine and map the location of airsheds within the Township. Further, incorporate provisions in the zoning ordinance to minimize their disturbance in agricultural zoned areas.

*CREATE A "COMMUNITY" ATTRACTIVE TO ALL AGE GROUPS.*

Over half (56.1%) of all Acme Township residents who responded to the community survey were between 50 and 69 years of age. This age bracket represents just 31.8% of Acme residents as a whole, and less than a quarter of the populations of Michigan and the United States as a whole (24.6% and 23% respectively). As can be seen in the chart below, the survey response demographics are an exaggerated version of the actual demographics in the township. Of particular note is the dip in population among people in their 20s and 30s—the generation known as “Millennials.” Their absence has been noticed by the business community, which has stated that the township needs to attract this cohort of younger families and business owners.

A separate cross-tabulation by age group highlighted distinct differences of opinion between those younger than 50 years of age and those older than 50. For example, the under-50 age group is willing to pay extra taxes for a township pathway system, where the over-50 crowd is not. Similarly, the younger cohort places a high priority on restaurants and entertainment where the over-50 respondents identified it as a medium priority. “Quality of schools” and “Recreation opportunities for adults” were high priorities for younger respondents and somewhat important priorities for older residents.

- 1) Developing codes for higher density development. (Tables 11 and 13)
- 2) Ensuring affordable, accessible housing in the Township. (Table 19)
- 3) Creating transportation plans that work for all ages and abilities. (Table 10)
- 4) Promoting walkability and public transportation. (Tables 10, 15, 22, and 23)
- 5) Creating opportunities for intergenerational interaction.
- 6) Establishing an advisory group and creating goals and objectives aimed at becoming a community for all ages

*COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOALS*

| County Master Plan Goals                   | Grand Vision Principles   |
|--|---|
| Preserve Agricultural and Rural Land       | Local Farms and Regional Food Systems as a viable part of the economy |
| Revise Development Standards               |   |
| Plan for Town and Village Centers          |   |
| Plan for Transportation and Infrastructure | Regional Multi-Modal Transportation System                            |
| Address Housing Needs                      | A diverse mix of Regional Housing                                     |
| Grown the Local Economy                    | Unique and Vibrant Communities that strengthen the Local Economy      |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Collaborate and Plan Together |  |
|                               | Protected and Preserved Water, Forests, Natural and Scenic Areas                 |
|                               | Sustainable-energy uses in Construction, Transportation and Economic Development |

## Community Assets Worth Enhancing

### *Park System Along US-31*

Acme Township, in partnership with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, has expended \$3.5 million dollars and hundreds of hours of personnel and volunteer effort to acquire the former “Mountain Jack’s” property and other obsolete commercial properties for waterfront parks. Once the demolition of these buildings was completed in the summer of 2013, the waterfront along East Bay, long inaccessible to the community, was open. Plans are underway by the Parks Advisory Board to develop a system of connected parks which extend along US-31 from M-72 to Bunker Hill Road. Once completed, this waterfront park system will provide a variety of outdoor recreation facilities for the community and serve as a destination of regional residents and tourists. This new “place” will also create opportunities for adjacent businesses and provide a platform for other mixed uses seeking to locate on an active urban waterfront.

As illustrated in the Acme Shores Placemaking process, the waterfront parks and the Grand Traverse Town Center, if connected by a new internal road, can provide the downtown (Town Center) that was envisioned in the previous master plan. Combined with a Form Based Code to replace the various business zoning districts, this area can become a mixed use district providing a variety of retail, restaurant, entertainment and housing venues.

### *Public Water for Growth*

Without a reliable source of potable water, growth will not occur as planned. For an area to develop as a compact, mixed use district, it needs a sufficient source of public water to satisfy the needs of consumers and residents, and to meet the requirements and standards of fire safety codes. The US-31 corridor and the Acme Village property require public water. The Grand Traverse Town Center has an agreement with GTB to provide water to the 188 acre mixed-use development. The Township will need to leverage this investment with a connection to a larger water network. Regardless of ownership or management, public water is a necessity to appropriately plan for and leverage development in this growth and investment corridor.

### *Connecting GTTC with Acme Village*

Both the GTTC and Acme Village developments incorporate cross-access opportunities to connect with each other. This connection is critical to create an alternate internal access between the projects, resulting in a continuous road network between Lautner Road and US-31. The low-lying land along the Acme Creek corridor where both developments show stub streets and/or cul-de-sacs is an area of concern. In addition, it is not a requirement of either project to make the physical connection, only to provide for it. As a result, Acme Township will be required to serve as the conduit to make the project happen. When connected, the Township will have a planned roadway which balances the demand for vehicular traffic with the need to create a pedestrian environment.

### *Public Facilities*

Both the Fire Department and Township Hall are in need of replacement. The current facility is functionally obsolete for both operations and is not an efficient or private workspace for Township administration. One potential site is the property in the southwest portion of the Grand Traverse Town Center, near Acme Creek and the adjacent wetlands, which is designated as an institutional campus. Township Hall should provide modern, technologically outfitted office space with defined offices, conference rooms, and a large assembly room for Board and Committee meetings. If practical, a district library branch would be appropriate to serve all age groups residing within the Township.

### *Agricultural Preservation and Expansion*

As discussed previously, the Township has a Purchase of Development Rights program that is being used by some agricultural property owners. During the meeting with the agricultural community, it was noted that the interest in the PDR program exceeds the funding for it. In addition to the PDR, the Township has adopted an Agricultural Tourism ordinance to provide property owners with other revenue opportunities. Another outcome of the meeting advanced the point that agriculture today is different than ten years ago and the need to review Township ordinances to lower the barriers which prevent ag-related activities.

### *Utilization of Form Based Codes*

Traditional zoning ordinances have done a wonderful job of segregating land uses to an extent where vehicular transportation is the only practical way of getting from point A to point B. Unfortunately, this form of land development has resulted in some stark and extremely pedestrian-unfriendly environments where little activity outside of the car occurs. Subdivisions are developed without sidewalks, commercial buildings are surrounded by asphalt, and there is an absence of connectivity between uses. Another outcome of traditional zoning is that private property bears little relationship to the public space. Coupled together, these factors create wide streets void of pedestrian traffic, set buildings 50 to 100 feet back from the property line, and result in an expanse of asphalt (road and parking lots) sometimes two-thirds the width of a football field. A solution to this condition is planning and regulating the private and public space together, and the most effective tool is the Form Based Code. The result is a private development that is conducive for pedestrian activity and mixed uses, and public spaces designed for pedestrians and cars.

### **Growth and Investment Areas**

This plan delineates four growth and investment areas for the Township. These include the agricultural properties north of M-72, the Grand Traverse Resort, the commercial mixed-use zone created by the connection of GTTC and Acme Village, and the East Bay waterfront. The agricultural, resort, and commercial growth and investment areas are primarily focused on private development, and the East Bay waterfront is focused on public development. It is a reasonable strategy for public sector investment in the waterfront because of the leverage and multiplier effect it will have on the local economy. Public parks and open space create economic development and place and, in turn, attract private investment.

A component of the GTTC project is the redesign of M-72 to accommodate two roundabouts on M-72 and one roundabout on Lautner Road at the GTTC entrance. M-72 will undergo a significant realignment to include medians and a pedestrian tunnel under M-72 which connects GTTC with the Grand Traverse Resort. These road improvements, in conjunction with non-motorized trails and corridor amenities, will redefine Acme Township.

Distinguishing growth and investment areas helps to strategically focus limited resources in zones to maximize the greatest potential gain. This is an advantage when partnering with other agencies which need reassurance that their funds will be expended toward a defined community priority. In some communities this is called “strategic doing,” where alignment of community priorities and recognition of these priorities by other network collaborators results in funding and implementation.

At the local level, infrastructure and regulatory requirements should be evaluated to ensure that they do not inhibit investment and development.

[MAP OF Growth & Investment Areas]

### **Future Land Use**

[Future Land Use Map]

### **Zoning Plan**

### **Implementation/Action Program**