



Smart Growth Audit

Grand Traverse County, Traverse City and Peninsula Township



Grand Traverse County, Traverse City and Peninsula Township Smart Growth Audit: Executive Summary and Recommendations

Benjamin de la Peña and Susan Weaver

NOTE: This abridged version of the SGLI Smart Growth Audit Report for the Traverse Communities is intended as an executive briefing and a quick reference to SGLI's findings. Please refer to the full report for a more comprehensive exploration of the Audits and the Strategic Assessment.

Overview

In mid-2006, the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, Grand Traverse County, Traverse City, and Peninsula Township agreed to work collaboratively on a review and audit of the *Grand Traverse County Comprehensive Plan*, the *Traverse City City Plan*, and the *Peninsula Township Master Plan* as part of SGLI's beta test of its Smart Growth audit tools. Also to be reviewed were the planning and zoning ordinances for both Traverse City and Peninsula Township. Officials from the County, the City and the Township conducted audits of their respective documents using the SGLI audit tools. A parallel audit was conducted by SGLI.

The smart growth audits (policy and code and zoning) are designed to help local communities identify incongruence, weaknesses and areas for improvement in their existing

regulatory frameworks. The aim is to strengthen the regulatory frameworks so as to make smart growth development the default rule rather than the exceptional exceptions. It is not meant to be a performance score or a measurement of a community's progress in implementing smart growth.

This executive summary presents SGLI's findings and recommendations from the audits as well as a summary of the strategic assessment of smart growth implementation in the Traverse communities.

The SGLI Project Team included Susan Weaver of Weaver Consulting & Research; and Benjamin dela Pena, Associate Director for Implementation at the Smart Growth Leadership Institute.



About the Institute

The Smart Growth Leadership Institute (SGLI), a project of Smart Growth America, was created by former Maryland Governor Parris N. Glendening to help state and local elected, civic and business leaders design and implement effective smart growth strategies. Funded in part by a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Technical Assistance

About Smart Growth

Outcomes

Smart Growth is defined by the outcomes —outcomes that mirror the basic values of most Americans. Smart growth is growth that helps to achieve these six goals:

Neighborhood Livability

The central goal of any smart growth plan is the quality of the neighborhoods where we live. They should be safe, convenient, attractive, and affordable.

Better Access, Less Traffic

Smart growth's emphasis on mixing land uses, clustering development, and providing multiple transportation choices helps us manage congestion, pollute less and save energy.

program provides assistance to communities that have made a commitment to smart growth but are grappling with implementation, building support, identifying the most problematic policies, and other issues that typically accompany a major change in development practice.

Thriving Cities, Suburbs And Towns

Smart growth puts the needs of existing communities first. By guiding development to already built-up areas, money for investments in transportation, schools, libraries and other public services can go to the communities where people live today.

Shared Benefits

Sprawl leaves too many people behind. Divisions by income and race have allowed some areas to prosper while others languish. Smart growth enables all residents to be beneficiaries of prosperity.



Lower Costs, Lower Taxes

Taking advantage of existing infrastructure keeps taxes down. And where convenient transportation choices enable families to rely less on driving, there's more money left over for other things, like buying a home or saving for college.

Keeping Open Space Open

From forests and farms to wetlands and wildlife, smart growth lets us pass on to our children the landscapes we love. Also, protecting natural resources will provide healthier air and cleaner drinking water.

Summary of Strategic Assessment

SGLI's Policy and Code Audit tools help communities to get to smart growth by identifying sections in their policy and codes and zoning that are incongruent or are at odds with the principles of smart growth. The instruments and the recommendations (if implemented) allow communities to achieve technical and regulatory alignment. The audits spot

Ten Principles

In practice, smart growth implementation is shaped by 10 principles:

- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Mix Land Uses
- Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
- Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Area
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design and Efficient Infrastructure Design

infirmities in the regulatory instruments and the prescribed changes can lead to a more robust support for smart growth in the regulatory framework.

Success in implementing smart growth though requires more than technical alignment. Most proposals for changes in



policies and codes and zoning fail if there is no political will, powered by a strong public consensus, to move the proposals forward in the political process. As such, the program for technical alignment must be led by a strategic plan to build political will and public consensus for smart growth. Leaders and implementers can leverage strategic advantages and

opportunities available to the local community to create an even stronger framework for smart growth.

This section outlines SGLI's assessment of strategic opportunities for the client communities to build a strong public consensus around smart growth.

Strengths

- Strong landscapes and spectacular waterfront view sheds encourage concern for natural environment.
- Planning staff committed to smart growth
- Long tenures of planning staff in Traverse City and Peninsula County
- Local chamber of commerce supports smart growth.
- Demonstrated success in downtown Traverse City (success in historic preservation, adaptive re-use, use of DDA, use of TIF)
- Success of PDR program in Peninsula Township (exhibits strong consensus for preservation of open space and viewsheds)
- Strong demand for housing
- Developers are mostly local
- Good use of PUD and SLUP mechanisms in Traverse City
- Good case studies in adaptive re-use (re: downtown and The Villages)
- Presence of strong and well-resourced charities tackling affordable housing
- Presence of leading state advocates (MLUI) and leading academic institutions (Great Lakes Water Studies Institute)
- Demographic changes driving demand for more downtown housing
- Energy and climate change issues (including cost of fuel) driving demand for increased transportation options, walkable neighborhoods and bike infrastructure.



Weaknesses and Threats

- In Traverse City, the consensus for smart growth was built on a visioning process that is now a decade old.
- Smart growth implementation is not shielded from electoral cycle or loss of planning personnel as there is no formal consensus or active, independent and citizen-led coalition driving smart growth.
- Master plans in Michigan do not have the force of law and local land use decisions are often contested in (and decided by) the judicial system.
- Competition for tax dollars coupled with the township structure of local government in Michigan (and with it, the lack of annexation power for cities) encourages leapfrog development.
- Traverse City and Peninsula Township may be committed to smart growth within their borders but they have no control or influence over the patterns of development in the adjacent townships.
- Most of the other townships in the county lack full time planning staff. This gap has lead to disjointed development and exacerbates the challenge of creating congruency within the region.
- The local population in the Traverse communities is very homogenous and graying.
- The area may miss out on attracting college educated 25-34 year-olds who are at the core of the information-based economy. This particular cohort prefers ethnically, racially and age diverse communities.
- The demand for second or vacation homes has driven property prices upward. Low-income families, young families and the elderly are priced out of the market.
- Severe lack of affordable housing. Lack of options that cater to life-cycle changes.
- Large number of absentee property owners (seasonal residents) also creates issues related to social cohesion or shared community vision.
- For Peninsula Township, the growing specialty agriculture industry (wineries, orchards, etc.) is increasing the demand for labor. As demand grows, the congestion will increase on Peninsula's one major road unless the township considers *in situ* housing solutions for the seasonal labor.
- Peninsula's PDR ordinance has also not been tested post-sale. Given the state's track record of using the judiciary to determine planning regulations, the PDR's continuance in the long term could face serious challenges in the courts.



Strategic Opportunities

Build a new community vision

The lack of a more current shared vision for smart growth in the Traverse communities is both a challenge and an opportunity. The appointed and elected leaders would do well to encourage the local chamber of commerce to lead a new community visioning exercise. The new exercise would be an occasion to re-define the shared definitions of the "good city" and re-affirm the community's commitment to smart growth. It would also be a good chance to nurture a new, citizen-led smart growth coalition that will shepherd the continuing implementation, protect the current gains, and insulate the implementation from future changes elected officials and local planning staff.

Leverage ongoing conversations

The city and the Downtown Development authority should leverage the recent disagreements over the 145 West Front Street property (and the failed bond issue) to re-ignite discussions about the future of Traverse City and remind the community that although much has been accomplished, there is still much more to do to ensure the city's future.

The city and the county should also use the visioning process for the newly opened waterfront to discuss shared city values.

The ongoing Land Use and Transportation Study (LUTS) and TC-TALUS is also a chance to discuss more regional growth impacts and is an opportunity for more regional thinking.

Fill in and shape the vacuum

Grand Traverse County should fill in the planning vacuum among the townships and consider providing both staff time and incentives to the townships to get them to align their own plans with county master plan.

The Traverse communities are exemplary in the strength of their policy frameworks for smart growth. The danger lies in the community resting on its success, a risk that is recognized by current elected officials and planning staff.

The communities must re-ignite discussions about the future of the area. It must also ensure continued success by encouraging a citizen-led, alternate center of smart growth thinking. The community is ripe for such a coalition and the formation of such will counterbalance dangerous NIMBY movements that would block continued growth in favor of the status quo.

Apart from the above, the Traverse communities should also consider implementing the recommendations arising from the SGLI audits (next section) with a focus on changes that will accomplish the following:



Make codified design standards

Using the Chamber's Guidebook as template, the city and the township should move to codifying design standards in exchange for expedited approval processes.

Make smart growth the easiest track

The city and the township should allow smart growth development patterns that currently require PUD and SUP decisions to proceed "by right" as long as they adhere to specific standards (such as codified design and/or performance standards) or in exchange for the inclusion of affordable housing.

Tighten relationship between incentives and regulations

Again, to make smart growth the easiest development track, the city and the township should consider adding incentives (density bonuses, fast-track permitting) to encourage desired development. The city and the township should also consider using a scorecard or a similar instrument to identify and green light smart growth projects.

These changes can be accomplished within the regular code and zoning revision processes for both the township and the city (i.e. –code amendments during Planning Commission meetings).



Plans and Codes Reviewed

The Grand Traverse County Master Plan (GTC Master Plan) was first drafted in 1996 and was updated in 2002. Since the County cannot dictate land use in the municipalities, the document is intended to give guidance to municipal plan makers on issues that overarch municipal boundaries. The plan is the articulation of public sentiment gathered from a series of public meetings and opinion surveys conducted in 1991 and in 2001. The document contains a statistical portrait of the county, policies in support of growth management goals, an analysis of local ordinances for consistency with county goals and a future land use plan. A set of implementation strategies, aimed at reducing the inconsistencies between the countywide goals and the ordinances of the municipalities, has not yet been drafted.

The *Traverse City City Plan (City Plan)* was adopted by a resolution of the Traverse City Planning Commission in 1994. Like the County Master Plan, the City Plan is not binding. It is a document intended to give guidance to developers on the type of community that Traverse City citizens desire. It articulates community goals and lays out plans for resource protection, community facilities, trafficways, land use, and parks, recreation and open space. The Traverse City Planning and Zoning Codes are contained in the City's Code of Ordinances. They were reviewed along with relevant sections of the Streets, Utilities and Public Services Code, and the Building and Housing Code. Michigan state law does not require consistency between the City Plan and city ordinances.

The *Peninsula Township Master Plan (Master Plan)* was adopted in 2004. It was reviewed along with the Zoning Ordinance, which

was originally adopted in 1972 and amended in November 2004. Other documents reviewed included Peninsula Township Ordinance #8, the Subdivision Control Ordinance, and Ordinance #23, the Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance, which was revised in April 2006.

In this audit we have looked at the policies and the ordinances of Grand Traverse County, Traverse City and Peninsula Township to see not only how they jibe with Smart Growth principles, but also to see whether they are consistent with one another on each of these counts. Some states require that ordinances must be found consistent with general plan principles in order to be adopted. That is not the case in Michigan, so a check for consistency, though voluntary, is necessary if the general plans are to carry any weight at all.

Since the County has no local land use authority, we do not have ordinances to compare against it. Instead we have viewed it as the regional document and compared the *Traverse City City Plan* and the *Peninsula Township Master Plan* to see if they reflect the policies contained in the GTC Master Plan.

The next sections summarize, in table form, our:

1. Findings from the Policy Audits
2. Findings from the Code Audits
3. Consistency Comparisons and Recommendations



Policy Audit: Summary of Findings

SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
Provide A Variety Of Transportation Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grand Traverse County Master Plan (GTC Master Plan) covers a large area and, because the County has no local land use jurisdiction, it does so from a fairly high altitude, so to speak. The County can adopt guidance policies, but it is up to local discretion whether those policies will find their way into ordinances. In general, the document is a smart-growth friendly one. To varying degrees it provides support for each of the ten principles of smart growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Traverse City City Plan (City Plan) recognizes the need to expand transportation choices by calling for expansion of transit (“To preserve our small town character, public transit must play a greater role in reducing traffic congestion and parking demands.”) and for increasing density in certain areas in order to create the conditions that support transit use. The City Plan also calls for residential uses to be mixed into commercial developments in order to strike a jobs-housing balance that will reduce the demand for single-occupant vehicles. Circulation Policy 1 recognizes the need “to address traffic issues on a regional level.” The Circulation recognizes the need for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It calls for the provision of bicycle lanes in most street classifications, while a Parks and Recreation policy envisions trails that will link recreational amenities to neighborhoods and to each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peninsula Township has a very limited road system with one major road serving as a north-south conduit to the rest of the county. Though it is a rural area, the Master Plan recognizes the need for alternatives to private vehicles and encourages “access to a public transportation system.” The Master Plan also calls for a system that would accommodate “non-motorized recreational traffic.”



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
Mix Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-use developments are identified as desirable in the GTC Master Plan. Live-work units are not specifically mentioned, however home-base occupations are encouraged. Since the County has no local land use authority, the plan only addresses these topics in general terms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-use developments are specifically called for in several sections of the City Plan. Though generally mixed use is suggested at the site level, mixing uses within buildings is encouraged in the commercial districts. Community centers are expected to develop with a full range of uses to serve local residents' needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-uses are not provided for in most areas, however the Master Plan includes a goal to consider establishing villages at Mapleton, Bowers Harbor and Old Mission. There is also a goal to expand the types of businesses that would qualify for home occupations.
Create A Range Of Housing Opportunities And Choices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County indicates it will cooperate with other agencies to encourage the provision of a mix of housing types so that affordable housing will be available to all residents of the region. Live-work housing is not addressed, but home-occupation is encouraged so long as it does not detract from community character. Lot sizes and development patterns (such as traditional neighborhood design) are not addressed as the County has no local land use jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Plan calls for a wide range of housing densities, but stops short of detailing types of housing units desirable. It does identify accessory dwelling units as a way to provide housing affordability, but makes no mention of mixed-income developments. Live-work units are mentioned in circulation policy as a way to decrease traffic congestion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Master Plan does not directly address the provision of a range of housing types or housing affordability. The goals set with respect to housing are to provide housing with minimal environmental impacts and to anticipate the need for housing in village settings near commercial areas.



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
Create Walkable Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-motorized travel is addressed in general, but since the County has no jurisdiction at neighborhood level, the GTC Master Plan does not get into specifics. It does provide policy support for links between modes of transportation—pedestrian, non-motorized, public, and automotive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Plan provides ample policy support for building a walkable community. The Circulation policies call for the provision of sidewalks, limits on curb cuts, and linkages between neighborhoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkability is addressed in two goals. One calls for the provision of “pedestrian movement in areas of higher density, such as neighborhood school districts and commercial areas.” The other requires plans for subdivisions, condominium projects and planned unit developments to include provisions for “internal pedestrian movement and pedestrian links to adjacent subdivisions.” As mentioned above, there is also a goal to establish a system to accommodate non-motorized recreational traffic, which might accommodate pedestrian traffic if it were a multi-use trail.
Encourage Community Stakeholder Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GTC Master Plan provides strong support for stakeholder collaboration and states that the County will act in a leadership role to promote regional cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Plan explicitly recognizes the importance of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation in several sections including one entitled Regional Cooperation. On the local level, it contains provisions for annual review of the Plan which must include “at least one public forum or meeting.” Self-referentially it notes that the Plan is not law and that the policies therein contained are “permissive, not mandatory.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Master Plan does not address community stakeholder collaboration.



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
<i>Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities With A Strong Sense Of Place</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though it has little more than the power of persuasion at its disposal, the County has incorporated several policies aimed at creating, strengthening and preserving community character into the GTC Master Plan. It advocates development that is in harmony with the natural setting and that promotes a “friendly, inclusive social climate.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community character is addressed mainly in policies contained in the Land Use/Design Plan and the Historic Resources sections of the City Plan. The emphasis is on retaining already established character by requiring new development to enhance rather than detract from it. The Plan also calls for zoning regulations that preserve the development patterns in historic districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Master Plan frequently refers to the natural assets that make it a desirable place to live, but it does not directly address community identity in its goals, perhaps because it is mainly a rural community with no distinct center. Most goals seek to protect the natural beauty of the area and the Master Plan does recognize the need to preserve “structures and locations of historical significance.”
<i>Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair And Cost Effective</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GTC Master Plan does not address the issue of development decision predictability. Development decisions rest with the city, villages or townships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Plan does not address the issues of development process predictability, fairness or cost effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This topic is not addressed in the Master Plan.



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
<p>Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty And Critical Environmental Areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GTC Master Plan establishes several policies aimed at preserving natural resources. Critical environmental areas are to be inventoried and a wetlands ordinance is proposed. The County also promises to support grassroots efforts to establish transfer or purchase of development rights programs in order to conserve open space and farmland. The GTC Master Plan also calls for the recruitment of industries which employ environmentally sustainable processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Plan contains a substantial amount of policy support for the preservation of open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas, starting with the goal to “protect and enhance the rich natural environment.” In the Natural Resources section, the Plan seeks to limit development on environmentally sensitive and productive lands and to preserve important vistas and viewsheds. It suggests that the standards set in the Grand Traverse Bay Region Development Guidebook (now New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook) be followed in order to minimize environmental impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Master Plan sets as a goal the preservation of “the unique and prime agricultural land on Old Mission Peninsula,” and includes an action item to use purchase or transfer of development rights to that end. Additional action items in support of agricultural preservation include clustering residential development and encouraging landowners to establish conservation easements as buffers to reduce the pressure to convert agricultural land. The Master Plan also seeks to protect water resources and wetlands by restricting the use of pesticides and fertilizers within specified distances from lakes, streams and wetland, and by mapping significant wetland resources.



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
<i>Strengthen And Direct Development Towards Existing Communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In addition to calling for new and infill development to be encouraged in those areas where infrastructure is already in place, the GTC Master Plan defines growth management areas. For each area, the County establishes appropriate development intensities. Policy D.2 calls for the County to support and encourage programs that will provide incentives to direct development into areas within the established growth boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall, the City Plan provides good policy support for directing development into already urbanized areas. The issues of revitalization, redevelopment and adaptive reuse are addressed in the Commercial Lands and Historic Resources sections. The former calls for commercial centers to “expand internally,” while the latter promotes adaptive reuse of historic structures. Infill development is not specifically discussed and none of the strategies is discussed in the context of residential areas; however, a Community Facilities policy states that incentives should be provided to increase densities in urban areas in order to dissuade development outside them. An Industrial Lands policy seeks to direct new industry to areas where supportive infrastructure is already in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Master Plan says little about directing development to specific areas, but does set a goal of limiting commercial zone expansions to the areas of Bowers Harbor, Mapleton and Old Mission.



SG Principle	Grand Traverse County	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
<i>Adopt Compact Building Patterns And Efficient Infrastructure Design</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Since the County has no local land use jurisdiction, the GTC Master Plan does not address compact building patterns or lot configurations. It does however address the issue of infrastructure and supports development where sufficient infrastructure currently exists rather than extending it prematurely into currently rural or undeveloped areas as such actions would run counter to the County’s growth management policies and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many of the policies that serve to direct development into currently urbanized areas do double duty by promoting compact building patterns and efficient infrastructure design. While the City Plan does not provide specific policy support for utilizing the full development potential of sites, it does suggest the allowance of higher densities as an incentive to direct development into already developed areas. It also encourages the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and the incorporation of residential uses into commercial projects. Several Community Facilities policies support connecting land use decisions to infrastructure planning. The Plan also contains policies that support shared parking—in particular parking decks—which reduces the amount of land given over to parking and therefore permits more compact building patterns, at least in commercial areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The main goal promoting the use of compact building patterns found in the Master Plan is that calls for basing density decisions on the “carrying capacity of the land, water and ability, as well as the desire, to provide infrastructure.” Other goals that work to this end are those to promote clustering of residences to reduce environmental impacts.



Code Audit: Summary of Findings

SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Provide A Variety Of Transportation Options

- While the City Plan does a fairly good job of addressing the need to provide for a variety of transportation modes, the codes are virtually silent. There is no mention of transit facilities, and apart from the requirement for bicycle parking, little in the codes compels developers to consider either of these transportation options in their plans. This inconsistency is problematic because the City Plan is only advisory; it carries no weight of law. Without requirements in the codes to provide transit stops or bicycle lanes in new development, the onus rests on the transit authority or the City to do so except in cases where special permits or planned unit development allows them to be required as a condition of approval. To its credit, the City has retrofitted bicycle lanes into some downtown streets.

- The Peninsula Township Zoning Code does not address the provision of transportation choices. It has very little to say about roads except that they must conform to the adopted road plan for area and that road standards established by the Grand Traverse County Road Commission.

Mix Land Use

- Mixed-use developments are encouraged in the codes, though they are mainly confined to the site level in planned unit developments, development districts, and most commercial areas. Mixing uses within a single building is addressed in commercial zones where exceptions to height limitations are provided if the bonus floor is dedicated to residential uses. Home occupations are allowed as long as only 2 people are employed and both live at the residence. Other conditions applied are intended to maintain the residential character of the neighborhood. The code also allows tourist homes to operate in residential neighborhoods as long as the use is secondary to the buildings use as a dwelling unit; spacing limitations also apply.

- Mixed uses are not permitted by the zoning code except for home occupation and by special permit. Home occupation requires a permit. Up to 2 employees are allowed; limitations are placed on the area the business can occupy and on the number of cars that may be parked outside at any one time. Retail sales are precluded.

**SG Principle****Traverse City*****Create A Range
Of Housing
Opportunities
And Choices:***

- The Traverse City codes provide for a wide range of housing densities which should allow for a wide range of housing opportunities. The R-1b zone allows for lot sizes as small as 5,000 square feet. Multiple-family and commercial districts allow for densities as high as 29 dwelling units per acre. Manufactured homes are allowed by right, though in some districts they must meet design requirements. Conversions of single-family homes to two-family homes are allowed by special use permit in the R-1a and R-1b districts, which may help with both affordability and the ability of elderly residents to remain in their neighborhoods as their situations and needs change. The code also allows the development of accessory dwelling units, but it is so restrictive as to be virtually useless in providing affordable housing (the accessory unit must be able to qualify as a separate unit on regulation-sized parcel). Adult day care facilities are permitted in R-1 districts, but residential care facilities are not; they are permitted in the R-2 district. The code makes no provisions for live-work units, but allows for home occupations as long as they are unobtrusive (area dedicated to business, number of employees and parking are restricted; retail sales are prohibited).

Peninsula Township

- The code does not directly address the provision of a range of housing opportunities. Large lot size requirements limit the type of housing that might be provided, though smaller lots are possible in a planned unit development. Manufactured housing is permitted in all zones. Accessory dwelling units are permitted but lot size and setback requirements are onerous.



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Create Walkable Neighborhoods

- In its core, Traverse City is a highly walkable place with a good street grid, relatively short blocks, signalized intersections and sidewalks that are generally in good repair both in residential and commercial areas. The code however does not ensure that newly developed areas will be as walkable. The word that best describes the code with respect to walkability is “inconsistent.” While the code requires sidewalks (a minimum 5 feet in width) in new commercial development, it paradoxically does not require them in new residential areas which leaves the policies in the City Plan advocating pedestrian facilities to link neighborhoods and recreational areas hanging without support. The code does establish block lengths that are conducive to pedestrian activity because they ensure relatively good street connectivity, but it also allows cul-de-sacs which discourage pedestrian activity. While curb cuts are regulated on arterial and collector streets, they are not regulated on local access streets. While no mention is made in the codes of traffic calming devices, which work to the benefit of pedestrians, they are in evidence in some older residential neighborhoods.
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- Few accommodations are made for pedestrians in the Peninsula Township subdivision or zoning ordinances. Section 4.4 of the subdivision ordinance indicates that pedestrian walkways may be required and where required the right-of-way will be 10 feet. In subdivisions, block lengths are limited to fairly walkable lengths (500-foot minimum, 1,320-foot maximum length) and cul-de-sacs are prohibited except where no feasible connection to an adjacent street exists.

Encourage Community Stakeholder Collaboration

- The code sections reviewed do not address community stakeholder collaboration.

- This topic is not addressed by the Peninsula Township codes reviewed.



SG Principle	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
<i>Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities With A Strong Sense Of Place</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only reference found in the codes dealing with community identity was in the section dealing with Planned Redevelopment Districts. It called for architectural and landscape design to be “harmonious” with surrounding development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The zoning ordinance does not directly address this issue.
<i>Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair And Cost Effective</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The code sections 1322—Administration, Enforcement, and Penalty and 1324—Board of Zoning Appeals set forth application requirements and hearing processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The zoning ordinance describes the decision process in the sections describing Administration and Enforcement and the Board of Appeals.
<i>Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty And Critical Environmental Areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sections of the City code that deal most directly with the preservation of natural beauty and critical environmental areas pertain to the Planned Redevelopment District. The code also contains water setback requirements in most districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peninsula Township has adopted a purchase of development rights ordinance. It also encourages the use of conservation easements in conjunction with clustered development patterns to provide buffers between residential uses and adjacent agricultural lands and to preserve the rural vistas.
<i>Strengthen And Direct Development Towards Existing Communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sections of the City code that deal with directing development into currently urbanized areas pertain to the Planned Redevelopment District. Apart from these areas, no incentives are offered to encourage brownfield or infill development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neither the subdivision ordinance nor the zoning ordinance addresses directing development towards already existing communities.



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Adopt Compact Building Patterns And Efficient Infrastructure Design

- The main mechanisms promoting the use of compact building patterns found in the code are those which allow shared parking and eliminate any parking requirement in the C-4 zone. While a wide range of maximum residential densities are established in various zones, no minimums are established.

- While clustered development is allowed as a planned unit development, the zoning code does not explicitly encourage compact building patterns or efficient infrastructure design.



Consistency Comparison and Recommendations

SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Provide A Variety Of Transportation Options

The GTC Master Plan recognizes the need to provide transportation choices and linkages between the various modes. The *City Plan* is consistent to a degree, in that it contains policies recognizing the need to provide not only public transportation service but to allow development that accommodates enough population density to support transit. The *City Plan* does not address other modes—bicycles in particular.

The City’s codes are inconsistent with both the GTC Master Plan and the *City Plan* as they provide no substantive support for the provision of transportation choices. There are no provisions for transit corridors, and transit facilities are permissible only with special use permits. There is no requirement for the accommodation of bicycle paths or lanes, though bicycle parking is required in all but single-family residential areas.

Recommendations:

- **Identify transit corridors.**
- **Increase allowable density along these corridors and devise incentives to encourage developers to build to the density limits.**
- **Require developers to provide for transit facilities (e.g. bus turnouts and waiting shelters).**
- **Allow transit facilities by right in commercial areas, particularly along identified transit corridors.**
- **Require developers to provide bicycle paths or lanes in new developments.**

The *Peninsula Township Master Plan* is consistent with the GTC Master Plan in that it includes a policy that recognizes the need to provide transportation alternatives including transit and facilities for non-motorized modes but the codes provide no support for that policy. No provisions are made for trails, bike lanes or transit facilities.

Recommendations:

- **Require that transit facilities be accommodated in the commercial district, including park and ride lots.**
- **Make provisions to accommodate bicycle lanes or require dedications for multi-use trails.**
- **Require commercial development to provide bicycle parking.**



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Mix Land Use

The GTC Master Plan does not directly address mixing land uses except to promote in the inclusion of live-work units as a way to reduce congestion. The Traverse City *City Plan* is consistent with its own codes, which provide fairly strong support for this principle. The codes allow mixed-use projects, even at the building level, in all districts except residential and industrial ones. It provides incentive to include residential uses in commercial zones by allowing an additional story to accommodate them. It does not, however, provide for live-work units.

Recommendations:

- **Consider permitting live-work units as a transition between industrial areas and adjacent districts. Live-work units accommodate a wider range of activities than allowed under home occupation, including retail sales.**
- **Revisit home occupancy regulations and consider whether limitations on employees are too restrictive.**

The *Peninsula Township Master Plan* is not consistent with the GTC Master Plan with respect to this principle. Though the GTC Master Plan does not directly address mixing land uses, it does promote in the inclusion of live-work units as a way to reduce congestion. The *Master Plan* contains no provisions for mixing uses except a goal to consider developing villages and to expand the categories eligible for home occupancy. The zoning code is essentially consistent with the *Master Plan*. There are no mixed-use zones. Mixed uses are allowed only by special permit (e.g. wine chateaus) and a restricted range of home occupations are allowed. Live-work units are not allowed.

Recommendations:

- **Allow mixed-use development in commercial areas.**
- **Allow development in commercial areas of live/work units, which allow more intense uses than home occupancy permits. These units are particularly attractive to artists and artisans, as they provide economical living, work and gallery/retail space.**



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Create A Range Of Housing Opportunities And Choices:

The GTC Master Plan adequately addresses creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, and recognizes the need to provide choices for residents of all income levels.

The Traverse City *City Plan* is not entirely consistent with the GTC Master Plan. The *City Plan* calls for a wide range of housing densities but it does not directly address the issues of mixed-income neighborhoods or workforce (or affordable) housing. The circulation element mentions live-work units only in relation to reducing traffic demand and congestion.

The City’s code does fairly good job of supporting the *City Plan*. It provides the wide range of densities called for in the Plan, which allows for the construction of diverse housing products. It does not provide for the live-work units mentioned in the Circulation element, however, and the regulations concerning accessory units are very restrictive.

Recommendations:

- **Reduce restrictions on accessory units.**
- **Make provisions for live-work units.**
- **Consider adding incentives to develop projects of varied parcel and dwelling unit sizes.**
- **Consider adding incentives to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing in developments.**

The Peninsula Township documents reviewed are not consistent with the GTC Master Plan, which adequately addresses creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, and recognizes the need to provide choices for residents of all income levels. Few goals in the *Master Plan* address housing issues. The main thrust of the document is to minimize environmental impacts; however, the Plan does anticipate the need for housing in a village setting near commercial uses. The zoning code limits the ability to provide a range of housing that might accommodate families and individuals as their residential needs change over time.

Provisions are made for single- and two-family dwelling units. All other housing types presumably are confined to Planned Unit Developments, if allowed at all. Codes governing accessory dwelling units are very restrictive and essentially require accessory units to meet all the lot size and set back requirements for single-family residences.

Recommendations:

- **Follow through on planning “village” housing making allowances for attached units and elder care residential facilities.**
- **Relax restrictions on accessory dwelling units to allow traditional “granny-flats” or guest quarters to be built even when they do not meet the stand-alone requirements for a single-family residence.**
- **Consider allowing live-work units in commercial areas as they provide affordable housing for artisans and entrepreneurs.**



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Create Walkable Neighborhoods

The GTC Master Plan addresses non-motorized travel in general and contains policies calling for links between modes of transportation—pedestrian, non-motorized, public, and automotive. As a regional document, does not consider the issue of walkability at the local level.

The GTC Master Plan addresses non-motorized travel in general and contains policies calling for links between modes of transportation—pedestrian, non-motorized, public, and automotive. Given the rural setting of Peninsula Township, the goals in the *Master Plan* that deal with pedestrian facilities seem adequate and consistent with the GTC Master Plan. They call for facilities in areas with higher densities and connections between subdivisions and condominiums. The code is fairly weak in this regard, however. It leaves walkways to the discretion of the planning department. On the positive side, the limits on block lengths and cul-de-sacs are good.

The Traverse City *City Plan* provides ample support for creating walkable neighborhoods. The codes, on the other hand, are not as strong as they could be, so are deemed inconsistent. While sidewalks are required in commercial areas, they are not required in new residential development. Alleys, which limit pedestrian-vehicle conflict, exist in the older sections of town but are prohibited in new residential development. Cul-de-sacs, which discourage pedestrian activity by limiting connectivity and increasing walking distance, are allowed. Street standards set fairly wide rights-of-ways. In older neighborhoods traffic calming devices have been retrofitted, but they are not addressed in the code.

Recommendations:

Recommendations:

- **Require sidewalks in all districts except where walking trails will serve the same purpose.**
- **Prohibit cul-de-sac construction except in those instances where there is no feasible or logical way to connect the street to others existing or planned for the area.**
- **Consider revising street standards to base design on the desired speed limit (rather than providing a wide street and attempting to limit speed by signage) and to include traffic calming features at the time of construction (rather than as ad hoc corrective measures at a later date).**

- **Strengthen the code so that pedestrian facilities are required (not discretionary) in higher density areas and add language to require connections between subdivisions unless their provision is infeasible.**
- **Consider drafting a plan for non-motorized transportation and add language to the code that advances the goal already articulated in the Master Plan of providing a trail for non-motorized transportation.**



SG Principle	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
Encourage Community Stakeholder Collaboration	<p>The <i>City Plan</i> provides for an annual review of the plan at an open forum, which is consistent with Smart Growth principles. It also recognizes the importance of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation. The codes do not address this issue explicitly but do provide for public review of development proposals.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No recommendations are made.	<p>This topic is not addressed by the <i>Master Plan</i>. The codes do provide for public review of development projects.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider adding a section to the <i>Master Plan</i> that explicitly lays out the review and adoption processes that include ample opportunity for public participation in shaping this policy document.
Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities With A Strong Sense Of Place	<p>Since the majority of the city is already developed, the emphasis in the <i>City Plan</i> is retaining the character that has already been established. The most detailed treatment of this topic is found in the section on the Regional Center. The code does not explicitly address this issue for any neighborhood but sets building heights and setbacks intended to encourage new development that is compatible with existing structures. The <i>New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook</i> is intended to encourage new building that compliments the existing character of its surrounds, but it is not a City document and is therefore only advisory.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen the code support for this principle by requiring new development to meet specific design standards similar to those evident in established neighborhoods. These standards can be established on a neighborhood basis so that districts have their own distinct characters that compliment each other and the city as a whole.	<p>Community identity is strongly associated with the natural assets of Peninsula Township in the <i>Master Plan</i>. Heavy emphasis is placed on protecting natural beauty and preserving historic structures. The zoning ordinance does not address this topic.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Though the <i>New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook</i> is a valuable design tool, Peninsula Township might consider drafting specific design guidelines if the village concept is pursued. These guidelines might be based on or complementary to the distinctive architectural elements found in the historic buildings on the peninsula.



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair And Cost Effective

This principle is not addressed by the *City Plan* and only in the codes to the extent that the review and approval processes are delineated. There are provisions for Planned Unit Development and Special Land Use Permit processes, both of which may appear arbitrary, depending as they do on the judgment of individual decision makers involved at any given time. These processes can also increase development costs if they generally increase the time from application to approval. The uncertainty of PUD and SLUP processes, and the perception that they increase costs may dissuade developers from pursuing desirable projects and inadvertently encourage them to do what is less desirable but expedient.

Recommendations:

- **Consider whether some uses now subject to PUD or SLUP review might be treated as “by right” uses if they adhere to specific standards. This change might be made in conjunction with the development of codified design standards. Make desirable development the easiest development to do.**

This principle is not addressed by the *Master Plan*. The zoning code lays out the application, hearing and appeal processes for development. Many uses must be permitted as Planned Unit Developments or Special Uses. Both of these processes can be viewed as arbitrary because the specific requirements are left to the discretion of whoever is in office when the application is made. They can also dissuade developers from proposing what might be highly desirable projects because of the uncertainty and increased time generally associated with negotiating a PUD or SUP.

Recommendations:

- **Consider whether some uses now subject to PUD or SUP review might be treated as “by right” uses if they adhere to specific standards. This change might be made in conjunction with the development of codified design standards. Make desirable development the easiest development to do.**



SG Principle

Traverse City

Peninsula Township

Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty And Critical Environmental Areas

The *City Plan* strongly supports environmental conservation and suggests that the *New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook* be followed to minimize environmental impacts. In this respect it is consistent with Smart Growth principles. But there is little explicit zoning code support for this principle except in the requirements that natural features be preserved to the extent possible and that development be set back from waters’ edge.

Recommendations:

- **Consider incorporating “green building” standards into the ordinance.**
- **Consider requiring developers to take solar orientation into consideration when drawing up site plans.**
- **Consider adopting an ordinance aimed at preserving mature trees and enhancing the urban canopy.**

Peninsula Township has done a good job of addressing this principle both in its *Master Plan* and in its conservations ordinance. Both are generally consistent with the GTC Master Plan and Smart Growth principles. Still, there is room for improvement.

Recommendations:

- **Consider adopting a “green building” ordinance.**
- **Consider requiring developers to take solar orientation into consideration when drawing up site plans.**

Strengthen And Direct Development Towards Existing Communities

The *City Plan* provides good policy support for this principle by encouraging revitalization, redevelopment and adaptive reuse, and is generally consistent with the GTC Master Plan in this regard though the *City Plan* does not specifically address the issue of infill. Code support, on the other hand, is not strong except with respect to Planned Redevelopment Districts, so is deemed inconsistent.

Recommendations:

- **Consider adding incentives (e.g. density bonuses, fast-track permitting) for infill and brownfield development to direct development into the city and away from greenfields in the surrounding townships.**

The *Master Plan* addresses this principle to the extent that it limits commercial zone expansion to Bowers Harbor, Mapleton and Old Mission. The ordinances do not work to direct development towards already existing communities, therefore they are deemed inconsistent..

Recommendations:

- **Focus development in proposed villages, perhaps using a transfer-of-development rights mechanism to allow increased density in these areas.**



SG Principle	Traverse City	Peninsula Township
Adopt Compact Building Patterns And Efficient Infrastructure Design	<p>The City Plan is somewhat consistent with both the GTC Master Plan and Smart Growth principles on this score. It does suggest using high densities as an incentive to direct development, and does connect land use decisions to infrastructure planning in so far as parking place provision policies are concerned, but there is no policy in the <i>City Plan</i> which directly supports the full utilization of development potential. Except for ordinances pertaining to the Regional Center (parking) and the allowance for clustering in various zones, there is little attention paid in the zoning code to efficient infrastructure design.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish minimum density requirements to ensure the full utilization of development potential.• Add incentives to encourage development where excess infrastructure capacity exists.	<p>The <i>Master Plan</i> calls for density decisions to be based on carrying capacity and the ability/desire to provide sufficient infrastructure. It also calls for clustering of residences, but the code provides little support for the first policy and requires a PUD for clustering. While the <i>Master Plan</i> is consistent with the GTC Master Plan on this count, the <i>Master Plan</i> and its supporting codes are inconsistent.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amend the code to explicitly require sufficient infrastructure capacity to support proposed development.• Consider whether codes might be rewritten to allow clustering of structures without requiring a planned unit development.

-end of executive summary-

Report prepared by:

Susan Weaver
President
Weaver Consulting & Research

Benjamin de la Pena
Associate Director for Implementation
Smart Growth Leadership Institute

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