

## **A VISION FOR ADA TOWNSHIP**

### **January 5, 2006 Draft**

The Ada Township Master Plan expresses the desires of the Township regarding its future character and development pattern. The Plan is intended to guide the formation of local government growth and development policies as well as private sector decisions regarding land use and development. This statement of a future vision for Ada Township expresses the key components of the community's desired future. The vision expressed for the future is based on consideration of public opinion as expressed in the citizen opinion survey conducted in 2004, views expressed in public forums held during the planning process, and consideration of sound planning principles. In addition, the vision expressed in this Plan and the policy directions and implementing strategies developed seek to carry out the following principles for "smart growth" that are set forth in "Michigan's Land, Michigan's Future," the August, 2003 final report of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council:

1. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
2. Create walkable neighborhoods.
3. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
5. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
6. Mix land uses.
7. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
10. Take advantage of compact development design.

#### **COMMUNITY CHARACTER:**

- Ada Township will maintain and strengthen its distinct identity as an individual community within the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area, known and valued for its attractive residential neighborhoods, opportunities for rural living in a natural setting, its compact traditional Village neighborhood and business district, its high quality recreational facilities, its accessible and high quality natural features, its scenic Grand River Valley, its economically viable agricultural lands and its generous open spaces.
- Ada Township will grow in a compact form, with the majority of the Township's new development occurring in areas served by the Township's public water and sewer systems. There will be a distinct difference in character between areas of the Township that are more suburban in character (largely south of M-21 and west of the Grand River), and areas that are rural in character (largely north of M-21 and east of the Grand River).
- The Fulton Street corridor through the Township will retain its distinct natural, scenic and uncluttered appearance.
- Rural areas of the township will retain their character, comprised of many elements, including the following:
  - views along major public road corridors that are largely natural in appearance and free from development.
  - gravel roads, including many miles of gravel road that are designated as "Natural Beauty Roads" by the Kent County Road Commission. (added 1/5/06).
  - less emphasis on use of manicured lawns, in favor of homes sites in a natural setting that are set back a considerable distance from the road.
  - large expanses of open land in the Grand River valley.
  - prominent wooded ridgelines along the edges of the Grand River valley.

- scattered agricultural uses throughout the northern two-thirds of the township, with a concentration of agricultural lands in the northeastern quadrant of the township.
- Ada Township will retain a sense of its history. New development will be visually compatible and consistent with existing historically significant structures in the Township, which will be preserved and enhanced.

**Supporting Policies:**

1. The Township's growth management regulations should ensure that new development preserves the Township's outstanding natural features and character.
2. Ada Township supports measures to encourage continued viability of agricultural land use in the Township, particularly in the northeast quadrant of the Township, where the majority of the Township's agricultural lands are located.
3. Low development densities should be maintained in the rural portions of the Township, which are not likely to be serviced by public water and sewer facilities, and where the road network and limited road crossings of the Grand River do not support high traffic volumes.
4. New development design should incorporate landscape features that screen objectionable site features from view, enhance the overall appearance of the site, preserve existing natural features and contribute to the natural character of the Township.
5. Creation of residential parcels in a linear, shallow-depth pattern along public roads is discouraged, in order to retain a natural appearance along road frontages.
6. Paving and/or widening of the gravel roads in the Township is discouraged, in the absence of a demonstrated safety hazard. (Added 1/5/06).

**NATURAL FEATURES AND ENVIRONMENT:**

- Ada Township will be a community noted and envied for its outstanding natural surroundings, including its striking wooded hillsides, its expansive Grand River floodplain corridor, its clear-flowing creeks and its high quality wetlands.
- Long-term sustainability of the area's natural systems will be a primary consideration in all development proposals and public investment decisions.

**Supporting Policies:**

1. Encourage provision of undisturbed natural vegetation adjacent to riparian features in the Township, including rivers, streams and wetlands.
2. Ada Township will monitor the administration and effectiveness of recently-enacted riparian protection regulations, to evaluate whether the exemptions contained within the regulations should be more narrowly drawn.
3. Ensure that new development incorporates effective erosion and sediment control measures, both during construction and after development is complete. The Township will consider the adoption of a Township-based erosion and sediment control permitting program, in lieu of the current County-administered program.

4. Develop regulations to discourage development on steep slopes in proximity to riparian features.
5. Low development densities should be maintained in areas not served or expected to be served by public sewer and water, to discourage over-concentration of on-site disposal systems and resulting pollution of groundwater supplies, and depletion of groundwater.
6. Commercial and industrial uses which are likely to involve use or production of hazardous materials should be prohibited in areas not served by public sewer service.
7. Site plan review standards should be developed to ensure that groundwater protection measures are included in new development design, such as secondary containment of hazardous materials and prohibition on floor drains not connected to sanitary sewers.
8. Placement of sensitive environmental areas into common open space and appropriate clustering of home sites in new development is encouraged to provide long-term protection of these areas and greater accessibility of natural areas to residents.
9. Long-term protection of sensitive environmental areas through acquisition of land or development rights by non-profit conservation organizations or land trusts is encouraged.
10. Filling and development within the 100-year floodplain areas is discouraged.

#### **AGRICULTURAL LAND USE:**

- Agricultural land use in the northeastern quadrant of Ada Township and extending into the adjacent townships will continue to be an economically viable use of land, and will be largely free of scattered residential land uses that potentially hinder agricultural operations.

#### **Supporting Policies:**

1. Ada Township supports measures to encourage continued viability of agricultural land use in the Township, particularly in the northeast quadrant of the Township, where the majority of the Township's agricultural lands are located.
2. Ada Township will consider the enactment of agricultural protection zoning standards, to limit the division of large parcels in agricultural areas into small lots for non-farm dwellings.
3. Ada Township supports the use of the Township's "parks and land preservation" millage revenues as local government matching funds toward the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

#### **RESIDENTIAL LAND USE:**

- Ada Township will have a variety of housing styles and levels of affordability, to accommodate the needs of varying incomes, stages in life and housing preferences, in neighborhoods that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, pedestrian-friendly and conducive to neighborliness and social interaction.
- New compact residential neighborhoods will be developed along the Cascade Rd. and Fulton St. corridors, within walking distance of potential transit routes serving these corridors.
- Former mining and resource processing sites along the Pettis Ave. corridor will be redeveloped for residential use and/or other uses compatible with the rural character of the area.

### **Supporting Policies:**

1. Inclusion of elements of traditional neighborhood design (TND) in new development is encouraged, including a greater emphasis on compactness, orientation of homes toward the street, pedestrian accessibility and linkages, continuity of the local street network and less segregation of types of uses.
2. A new residential zoning district classification which allows single-family residential lots smaller and narrower than current standards allow should be applied in selected areas of the Township, where public utilities and other supporting infrastructure are provided.
3. Compact residential development should be encouraged along and near potential public transit corridors, such as Cascade Rd. and Fulton St.
4. Land should be provided in appropriate locations for high density residential uses, such as multiple-family apartments and condominiums, in locations which are adequately served by public utilities, roads and other infrastructure, and which are compatible with the surrounding area.
5. Compact residential development should be encouraged in and near the Ada Village neighborhood.
6. Residential neighborhoods should be free of adverse influences from incompatible land uses and high traffic volumes.
7. Redevelopment of lands along the Pettis Ave. corridor currently used for resource processing and manufacturing is encouraged, for residential use or other uses compatible with a rural residential area.
8. Integration of open space, mini-parks and natural areas into residential neighborhoods is encouraged.
9. Residential neighborhoods should be connected by non-motorized trails to parks, schools, churches, shopping and other activity centers.

### **ADA VILLAGE AREA:**

- The Ada Village area will be recognized as the hub of the community, with attractive residences providing housing for a diverse range of residents, a vibrant business community providing goods and services for residents as well as visitors, and a variety of civic uses providing cultural amenities to residents.
- The Ada Village area will provide an inviting and pleasant environment for pedestrians, with outdoor spaces, both public and private, for relaxation, and a sidewalk network to provide separation from vehicles.
- The Ada Village area will be accessible to all residents of the community by a network of non-motorized trails.
- “Streetscape” improvements including sidewalks, landscaped parkway, street trees and period lighting, as provided for in the Ada Village Restoration Plan, will be extended to those portions of the Ada Village area where they have not already been completed (Bronson St. and Headley St.).

- The Ada Village area will retain a sense of history in its mix of the old and new, with new buildings that complement the old through use of traditional architectural design elements. New development will avoid the use of non-descript “franchise” architectural designs.
- Existing buildings of historic significance in the Village will be preserved and enhanced, and will remain viable for residential and commercial uses.
- Development of major remaining vacant commercially-zoned lands in the Village will incorporate a mix of commercial and residential use, to provide opportunities for new housing within the Village area, to encourage a compact development pattern within the community, and to encourage the maintenance of a Village residential population that supports and sustains Village businesses and services.
- Development and redevelopment in the Village commercial area will capitalize on the adjacent Thornapple River, through the creation of a riverfront pedestrian plaza.

**Supporting Policies:**

1. The Township will conduct an “Ada Village Design Charrette” process, to generate a public consensus and common vision regarding the future development and redevelopment of land within the Village.
2. The majority of the Township’s retail and personal service needs are encouraged to be located within or adjacent to the existing Ada Village area.
3. New development within the Village area should be of a size and scale that complements existing development, and that does not visually overpower or dominate its surroundings.

**COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE/SERVICE LAND USE:**

- Ada Township’s commercial land use base will provide local residents with a variety of “convenience-type” goods and services, in convenient locations which minimize driving distances, and which are accessible on the Township’s non-motorized trail system. Ada Township will not be home to large-scale regional shopping facilities, due to a lack of suitable land.
- The Ada Village area will provide convenience goods and services serving local residents as well as specialty goods and services tailored to destination visitors.
- Retail businesses, restaurants and other high traffic generating commercial uses will not be located along Fulton St. (M-21) beyond those areas which are already located in the C-1 or C-2 commercial zoning districts.

**Supporting Policies:**

1. Land should be designated for a small (3-5 acres) neighborhood commercial center at the Knapp St./Egypt Valley Ave. intersection.
2. Retail uses, restaurant uses and other high traffic-generating uses are discouraged along the Cascade Rd. and Spaulding Ave. corridors. Retail and food service needs of this part of the Township are sufficiently met in the Forest Hills business district at the intersection of Cascade Rd. and Forest Hills Ave. Professional office, business services, and personal service uses are encouraged in the Spaulding Ave. corridor south of Ada Drive, and along Cascade Rd.

3. Development along the Cascade Rd. corridor should be carefully designed to be compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods located to the north and south of the properties fronting Cascade Rd.
4. Discourage expansion of commercial land use east of the Grand River beyond the limits of existing commercial uses.
5. Development of commercial uses in the M-21 corridor in a "strip" pattern is discouraged. Commercial development should be encouraged to occur in planned centers, characterized by unified architectural character, coordinated driveways, circulation and parking, signage and landscaping.

#### **INDUSTRIAL LAND USE:**

- Ada Township will retain its existing base of both large and small manufacturing, distribution and construction businesses.
- New industrial development that is non-polluting and consistent with the long-term sustainability of the community will be located in areas which are free of potential conflicts with adjoining residential land uses, and which are easily accessible from Fulton Street (M-21).
- The existing industrially-zoned corridor on the south side of Fulton Street from Kulross Ave. west to Alta Dale Ave. will be largely free of industrial uses, in favor of a variety of non-retail, low-traffic generating service and office uses.
- Sand and gravel processing, asphalt manufacturing, concrete recycling and other uses incompatible with a rural/residential environment will no longer be located along the Pettis Ave. corridor.

#### **Supporting Policies:**

1. Location of land uses which are likely to generate adverse noise, odor, dust and other objectionable impacts on the adjoining residential neighborhood are discouraged within the Fulton St. corridor from Kulross Ave. west to Alta Dale Ave.
2. Lands along the Pettis Ave. corridor should be designated for future residential use or other uses compatible with a rural residential area.

#### **MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION:**

- Ada Township will be served by some form of mass transit, most likely along the Fulton St. (M-21) and/or Cascade Road corridors, or light rail service on the existing rail corridor.
- A Township-wide system of non-motorized trails will provide safe, convenient and pleasant facilities for non-motorized travel and recreation in the Township. Trails will link neighborhoods to major activity centers in the Township, including the Ada Village, schools, churches, parks and other major recreation facilities.
- The Township's road network will provide for safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic, while protecting residential neighborhoods from the negative impacts of high traffic volumes and speeds.

### **Supporting Policies:**

1. Ada Township encourages a development pattern that will be conducive to the feasibility and usage of public transit between population centers in the Township and employment centers in other parts of the Metropolitan Area.
2. Compact residential development is encouraged to occur along likely future public transit corridors.
3. Consideration should be given to permitting higher residential densities than currently are permitted in the residential areas west of Spaulding Ave. and south of Ada Drive. Re-development of large blocks of land in this area could include attached condominiums or townhomes.
4. Ada Township will continue expansion of the Township's non-motorized trail system, as funding availability permits.
5. Provision of publicly-accessible non-motorized trails as part of new development is encouraged, when development is proposed adjacent to planned routes on the Township's non-motorized trail network.
6. Planned development densities in various parts of the Township should take into consideration the capacity limitations of the existing transportation infrastructure, in particular the limit number (2) of road crossings of the Grand River in the Township.
7. Principles of "context sensitive design" should be employed in the design of new and improved roads in the Township. Context sensitive design takes into consideration the neighborhood and community context of the street, including such factors as the building types along the street, their spacing, their proximity and orientation to the street, and the extent of pedestrian and bicyclist use of the street corridor, in addition to considering the intended function of the street in the overall street network. The use of such an approach in many cases results in a street design with a narrow pavement width and slower traffic speeds than that which would result from strict adherence to typical traffic engineering standards, and a design better meets the goals of all parties concerned, particularly the neighborhood that would be served by the street.
8. Access management standards should be developed for application to major roads in the Township, to control the number, spacing, design and location of driveway accesses, in order to maintain the traffic-carrying capacity and safety of major roads in the Township. To this end, improved standards for controlling the number, design and location of driveway accesses to major roads should be developed.
9. Measures should be implemented to limit and control the proliferation of parcel splits and individual driveway accesses along major rural roads in the Township, through land division and access control regulations.
10. The design of local streets should be based on the following principles:
  - a. Through traffic on local streets should be discouraged by appropriate design measures, to maximize pedestrian safety and protect the residential living environment.
  - b. The layout of local streets should contribute to and enhance the quality of the residential living environment.

- c. The layout of local streets should not result in excessive travel distances and times. To provide for efficient service by school buses, delivery and maintenance/service vehicles, excessively long dead-end local street systems should be avoided.
- d. Street system design should provide for adequate emergency access. To the extent practicable, areas of concentrated development should be accessible by more than one route, due to the possibility of blockage of a single access point.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES:**

- Ada Township will provide high quality, efficient public water and sewer services to areas that are planned for land uses of an urban intensity.

**Supporting Policies:**

1. Provision of public utility services will be coordinated with land use policies, so that utility service availability supports and reinforces the desired land use pattern in the Township.
2. Infill development of areas already serviceable by existing utility infrastructure is encouraged, prior to extension of utility infrastructure to new areas.
3. If public utilities are extended beyond current service area boundaries, the costs of extending services should be borne by the properties receiving the new services, and not by existing utility users or Township residents at-large, unless there are overriding benefits to the general public.