

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND REGIONAL SETTING



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This chapter presents introductory information on the location of Glen Arbor Township, on its highly valued physical character, on the relationship of this Plan to Zoning and on the process used to create this Plan. This Plan updates and replaces the Township Plan prepared March 17, 1984 and last updated July 26, 1988.

Introduction

Glen Arbor Township is one of eleven townships in Leelanau County in the northwestern most corner of the Lower Peninsula. It is accessed primarily by M-72 from Traverse City and M-22 from Frankfort. It is not on the road to any other major community (see Map 1-1). There is no long distance bus or rail service, no trucklines nor deep water ports. The closest commercial airport is in Traverse City about 40 minutes away. No one comes to Glen Arbor Township by accident. Yet it is a prime destination location for over a million visitors a year, the permanent home of about eight hundred persons and the seasonal home of another two thousand or so. Nearly half of the acreage of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (a national park) is located within the Township. The small settlement of Glen Arbor, an unincorporated village within the Township, is nestled between the National Park, Lake Michigan and Big Glen Lake. The local economy is largely driven by summer tourist trade, and tourists provide revenue for a wider range of restaurants and stores than would normally be found in a settlement this size.

**Map 1-1
Regional Location Map**



The Township is a tourist attraction largely because of its spectacular beauty and recreational opportunities. The first time that a visitor enjoys this beauty is often an unforgettable experience. For example, when one drives north across the Narrows Bridge on a clear sunny day in the spring, summer or fall, and sees the Sleeping Bear sand dune at the west end of Little Glen Lake and the shades of aquamarine blue of the waters of both Big and Little Glen Lakes, a variety of thoughts are common. (See Photo 1-1).

“I’m in paradise.”

“This must be what heaven looks like.”

“How did a piece of the Caribbean get so far north?”

There are abundant opportunities for swimming, boating, sailing, waterskiing, tubing, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and bicycling. Fall adds hunting as deer are abundant, and winter brings new opportunities for cross country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing, and ice fishing. But what brings visitors back year after year is the opportunity to enjoy nearly unparalleled scenes of incredible beauty.

Photo 1-1
Sleeping Bear Sand Dune



Photo by Terry Gretzema

The unique combination of geology, forests, dunes, rivers, lakes, streams, islands and Lake Michigan make up the natural character of Glen Arbor Township. But it is the homes, businesses, rural quaintness of the village, and tree lined public roads on the one hand, and the National Park land and facilities on the other that gives the area its unique appeal and character. One without the other would indeed be only half a loaf. Both share the common goal of protecting the natural quality of the environment and the visual splendor of the area for the benefit of both present and future generations. The challenge for the future is how to accommodate change in a manner that preserves the special character of the area. While the quality of life in the Township and of visitor experiences in the Township are both very high at the present, there is a strong tendency to want everything to stay the same and for no change to occur. However, it is unrealistic to expect there will be no change. New homes and businesses will be built. Some Township facilities need to be relocated and there is a need for others to be created. This Plan identifies current trends and needs, and presents preferred options for meeting those needs. It is one tool the Township will use to guide future changes in a manner that preserves all that is highly valued by those that live and visit here.

The National Park Service manages the lands under its control via a General Management Plan adopted in October 1979. The Park Service attempted to update their Plan two years ago but met stiff resistance on several of their main proposals. The Park Service recently began holding meetings with citizens and local government officials for input on the direction and content of updates to its General Management Plan. Glen Arbor Township is looking forward to the opportunity to work with the National Park Service on an updated Plan that adequately reflects the needs of all users of the Park. Of course that means special attention must be given to meeting the needs of those who live in the shadow of the Park. Working cooperatively together, the needs of local citizens and the interests of citizens throughout the nation can best be met.

Plan and Relationship to Zoning

The Glen Arbor Township Future Land Use Plan is a document to guide Township officials and citizens in making decisions about use of the land and public facilities. It defines the existing character of the area and sets forth the Township's objectives and guidelines for change on the privately owned lands and Township owned lands in Glen Arbor Township.

The Glen Arbor Township Future Land Use Plan has been prepared under the provisions of the Township Planning Act 168 of 1959. The Future Land Use Plan is a long-range guide for use of land in the Township and is comprised of text and supporting maps. The most significant map is the Future Land Use Map which shows the location and relationship of land in the Township for the next twenty years. By law, this Plan will be reviewed by the Township Planning Commission every five years, and if necessary, updated. If circumstances

warranting a change to the Plan come up before the five year review, then this Plan would be changed. Changes may be necessary because the Plan is based upon present goals, knowledge and technology and these do change through time.

The Township Zoning Act, Public Act 184 of 1943 provides that "the provisions of the zoning ordinance should be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability and to limit the improper use of lands." This Plan is adopted to help provide a stronger legal basis for the Township Zoning Ordinance and it contains a Zoning Plan element in Chapter 8 which sets forth the principal district and use regulations of the Ordinance.

However, adoption of this Plan does not directly control land use. Such control is left to the Zoning Ordinance (including the zoning map), to land division and subdivision regulations, and to other local ordinances. Plan implementation is made with final decisions on rezonings, special use permits, site plan and plat approvals as well as by the expenditure of Township funds on various capital improvements.

Public Input

This Plan was prepared as the result of a public process which examined existing conditions, public input on a vision of what the community should be like in twenty years, analysis of key issues identified by the public, consultation with adjoining units of local government and other governmental agencies and consensus among the Planning Commission and Township Board on specific elements in the Plan. A leadership survey was conducted in the late Spring of 2003 and public input was solicited at a Visioning Town Meeting on August 14, 2003, at a Key Issues Town Meeting on June 23, 2004, and at a Town Meeting to receive comments on the draft Plan on August 18, 2004. A public hearing was also held prior to Plan adoption.

Overview of Chapters

This Future Land Use Plan has nine chapters. The first five chapters are background information. The last four chapters provide a planning framework for future decisions on land use, zoning and infrastructure investments. More specifically, the second chapter summarizes recent demographic and economic characteristics. The third chapter presents data and maps describing current conditions related to the land and buildings in the Township. The fourth chapter summarizes the basic characteristics of the infrastructure and public services available in the Township. The fifth chapter discusses sixteen key issues facing the Township in 2004 and describes options for addressing them. The sixth chapter presents a vision statement, goals, objectives and policies for guiding future land use and infrastructure change in the Township. The seventh chapter presents a future land use map and text describing the existing character of various parts of the Township and proposed land use in each area. The eighth

chapter describes the essential parts of the strategy behind the districts in the Zoning Ordinance and sets forth a series of proposed Ordinance changes to be consistent with this Plan. The last chapter lists a set of actions that should be taken to implement this Plan. A brief bibliography completes this Plan.

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