

## ***Community Assessment Exercises for Lake County***

***Conducted by the Lake County Planning Commission in 2011***

Planning Commissioners from the Lake County Planning Commission along with Susan Dennis, Area Specialist in Rural Development from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been collecting data from the community that will help the County update its Master Plan. The Master Plan will help the County set its goals and priorities in the near term as well as the future. The content of the Master Plan will be driven and defined by the residents of Lake County. In an effort to find out what the residents think, a number of community outreach meetings are being scheduled to conduct community assessment exercises. We started with the townships at their regular meetings and will move on to other community groups. We ask our audiences to assess Lake County in four categories:

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

This is an ongoing process, and we wanted to share the results as they come in with the public. As we conduct these exercises and analyze the data gathered, trends will emerge that will help to define the direction and content of the Master Plan. As you look through the results from the townships and community groups, we hope you will find it interesting to learn what your neighbors are thinking. You will probably be able to spot several areas of agreement (trends). The community assessment exercises from the townships are listed first, and they are followed by exercises conducted with other community groups.

If you have a group that would like to do a Community Assessment Exercise, please contact Linda Van Dolsen, Chair of the Lake County Planning Commission at (231) 266-5201. You may also contact us at [PlanningCommission@co.lake.mi.us](mailto:PlanningCommission@co.lake.mi.us).

## **Community Assessment Exercises Conducted at Township Hall Meetings**

***(From June 2011 to the Present)***

### ***Dover Township***

Township meeting Monday, August 15, 2011, at 7:00pm

Held the assessment exercise and gathered data that was provided to Colleen Carrington of the Planning Commission for inclusion in the database.

#### **Strengths**

Waterways – streams, rivers, lakes

Beautiful, rural area sparsely populated

Tourism, outdoor recreation activities, trail systems

Wildlife

Lack of sheriff patrols in outlying townships

#### **Weaknesses**

Too much State and Federal land resulting in less property taxes collected for needs of residents

Special rules for State and Federal land like closing of roads

Lack of countywide zoning

Lack of sheriff patrols in outlying townships

Maintenance of roads where snowmobile trails end to bring riders into service areas (need paths on roadsides)

Not enough well paying jobs to keep youth in area – have to leave to find employment

#### **Opportunities**

Better roads

Countywide zoning implemented

High speed internet at affordable rates

Better education – possible satellite location in Lake County for community college or universities

Better support for music programs in schools (music rooms easier to get to for all students)

#### **Threats**

Declining population – fewer taxes collected to provide services

High foreclosure rate

High gas prices

Youth leaving the region

High cost of post-secondary education

## ***Eden Township***

### **Strengths**

Beauty of the woods, clean rivers

Freedoms-more individual control over property rights, decisions made at township level

Trail systems and recreation

Low population

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of high-speed internet at affordable cost

Slum landlords

Overzealous police presence (staff varies) – snowmobilers

Need more cooperation between county and outlying communities

Support from Lake County Chamber of Commerce lacking for this area

Lack of medical care

Nothing for the kids to do

### **Opportunities**

Medical facility closer to Eden Township

Library with a computer lab

Internet – cable options to internet

Job retraining or adult education

More high-tech jobs

Industry-manufacturing

Career tech center-teach trades & community center

### **Threats**

Medical marijuana stores and lack of jobs

## ***Elk Township***

### **Strengths**

Water, beauty  
Transportation system  
Outdoor recreation activities  
Senior housing  
Emergency services and fire department  
Baldwin Promise  
Several libraries

### **Weaknesses**

Failure to protect property along rivers – pollution, over-building, limited regulations  
Not enough jobs that pay a living wage  
No mechanism for enforcing trash removal on private property  
No structured programs to help seniors in need  
Lack of businesses (competitive pharmacies)  
Lack of affordable high-speed internet  
Lack of adult education  
Nothing for children to do – activities  
Few day care centers  
Poor communication of available resources

### **Opportunities**

Property available to build facilities  
Program/land use plan to attract new residents  
Seniors services – health care  
Education services – job training, adult education, computer training  
Day care centers (children and seniors)  
Medical services – 24 hour clinic  
Nursing home – senior living – assisted living  
Teen center  
Mobile services

### **Threats**

County going broke  
No jobs  
Soil contamination  
Failure of septic systems by water  
Closing of camping areas, shut down access to lakes and rivers  
Lack of zoning to protect existing natural resources  
Less migration to the area-less income  
Funding cuts affecting police and quality of law enforcement and timeliness of response  
Lack of boat safety education

**Other Groups to Contact** – Lake associations, LMWCC, Knights of Columbus, Peacock Senior Center, St. Ann's program, DHS, Irons Union church, St. Bernard's, Faith Fellowship Church, Elk Township Historical Society, MTA, Retired Senior Volunteer, Lions Club, IATA, AARP, Garden Club, KND adult education.

## ***Ellsworth Township***

### **Strengths**

No traffic-no lights

Library in Luther

911 service – roads

Elementary school in Luther and West Shore Comm. College, Baker College & Ferris State in vicinity

Good people

Quiet – good fishing/hunting

Lower taxes than nearby counties

### **Weaknesses**

Economy

Higher property taxes (increasing over past 40 years)

Not getting return on tax dollars - state tax is leaving the county

Aging population

Lack of affordable high speed internet

Lack of industry locally and in surrounding areas – no jobs

Housing – substandard, few rentals, assisted living and/or retirement facilities

### **Opportunities**

New businesses to support and serve aging population: assisted living/retirement homes

Rental housing/apartments

Timber/wood products

### **Threats**

Increase of issues related to prison

Forestry mismanagement

Difficulties in starting up new businesses

## ***Lake Township***

### **Strengths**

Wildlife  
Lakes and streams, woods  
Great weather  
Clean air  
Small communities – voice in what's done  
Government, community buildings  
Slower pace  
Great Education program – post secondary education  
Intelligent and educated populace available (need to use them)

### **Weaknesses**

Low income housing – lack of landlords, poor quality, poor enforcement inspections/rules  
Animal control – human society (dogs, cats loose, not cared for)  
Reputation – negative perception  
Job opportunity – job training  
Public transportation – financial assistance  
Street lights lacking  
Road/street improvements  
Library is limited  
Gym or exercise building

### **Opportunities**

Housing development  
Promotional efforts that focus on the positive  
Renaissance Zone designation to encourage developers  
Education for life skills, DARE  
More industry – larger scale, provide living wages and OJT  
Job skills training programs  
Baldwin Promise program  
County wide recycling  
Expand Adopt-A-Road program to townships' secondary roads  
Mobile library or exchange program  
Exercise program

### **Threats**

Economy  
Misuse of environment (illegal dumping – who is responsible?)  
Decline in fishing – over fishing  
Drug and alcohol abuse

## ***Newkirk Township***

### **Strengths**

Beautiful natural resources – national and state forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife  
Outdoor recreational activities – hiking, fishing, hunting, trail system, etc.  
Luther Library, services and activities

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of employment  
Need more active participation of residents for volunteering and leadership at the township and county levels  
Lack of county-wide communication between leadership organizations

### **Opportunities**

Increase tourism-based business  
Activate Economic Development Committee and coordinate efforts between Chamber of Commerce, Baldwin DDA, West Michigan Shoreline Group, etc.  
Increased communication between residents, leadership, and activities/services throughout the county

### **Threats**

Medical marijuana, increase in related businesses  
Adult entertainment businesses  
Negative attitude of residents toward development or forward progress  
Depletion of timber and the threat to tourism (concerns over the rate of cut by State/DNR)

### **Other Groups to Contact**

Luther Library, Roger Peel, [roger\\_peel@att.net](mailto:roger_peel@att.net), Pine River Watershed, Dave Smith



## ***Peacock Township***

### **Strengths**

Natural resources-woods and water  
Trails: Multi-use, increased safety, increased use and business  
Excellent snowplow service in winter on county roads  
Sheriff patrol and emergency services, fire department  
Senior center

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of pavement/blacktop  
No place for pedestrians to walk along roads-need regular mowing  
Lack of stores and businesses  
Lack of trash service (affordable)  
Need recycle center I every Township

### **Opportunities**

Affordable clothing/shoes retail  
Casino  
Grocery store-general store  
Medical office

### **Threat**

Not a year-round population to support opportunities

## ***Sauble Township***

### **Strengths**

Nature-natural resources  
No traffic  
Sauble Township  
PROMISE program  
Lake County Prison expansion

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of youth programs  
Lack of law enforcement  
Lack of animal control  
Lack of good low income housing  
Lack of employment opportunities  
Lack of funding for road improvements  
Need more senior programs

### **Opportunities**

Commercial growth (green sector) to create jobs  
Younger forest – reforestation  
More businesses and services for seniors

### **Threats**

Pollution  
Exploitation of natural resources for outside interest  
Economy  
Politicians who don't represent the wishes of the people

**Other Groups to Contact** – VFW, Senior center, Masons, Faith Fellowship Church, Eastern Star, SAR & DAR. Lions Club, NRA, American Legion, AmVets, MTA, Lake County Community Foundation, Home Owners Associations (Bass Lake, Sauble Lakes, Loon Lake, Heritage Bay)

## ***Sweetwater Township***

### **Strengths**

Beautiful natural resources – national forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife  
Outdoor recreational activities – hiking, fishing, hunting, trail use, etc.

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of county-wide zoning ordinance makes it difficult for the Townships to be able to afford enforcement at their level; legal costs to take offenders to court, cost of demolition and proper disposal  
Blight – substandard structures that need removal throughout the county  
Lack of county-level organized economic development; county does not budget for a staff member dedicated to economic development as other successful counties do

### **Opportunities**

Blight removal program – seek funding for the county level to appropriate to the Townships to enforce existing zoning ordinances (legal costs and demolition/disposal)  
Attract businesses that are “green” and will not damage or pollute the natural resources of the county  
Feasibility study for the 7<sup>th</sup> Street shops in Baldwin to see what stores are needed and would be supported locally in the community so the buildings are not standing empty  
Youth Leadership Development program – bring together existing organizations in the county to develop a program for youth that will encourage leadership and dedication to the local area for the next generation  
SCORE Chapter for Lake County – valuable resource in retired persons throughout the county who could provide assistance and guidance to youth and entrepreneurs for business growth  
Conference center & hotel – all major events sponsored by groups from Lake County are held outside of the county due to the lack of a large enough facility. Opportunity to draw in conferences, large meetings, and other large events that would bring additional business to local shops and restaurants and introduce the attendees to Lake County as a destination vacation location

### **Threats**

Closure (or financial failure) of the prison in Baldwin  
Unfunded mandates from the State

**Other Groups to Contact** – Lake County Riverside Property Association & Pere Marquette Watershed Council

## ***Webber Township***

### **Strengths**

Rivers, lakes, trails – flora and fauna  
Rural feeling  
Residents  
Diversity

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of employment  
Lack of affordable (livable) housing  
Corruption  
Animal care and rescue  
Land Use permits – limits  
Quality of unpaved roads and staff training  
Need more quality education and recreation for youth  
Lack of local business support  
Lack of communication

### **Opportunities**

Government leadership  
More industry – more support for local businesses  
Youth leadership development – youth activities  
Clean-up – blight reduction/elimination  
Advertising/catering to tourists  
Stop lights  
Designated horse trails  
Lower speed limits in commercial districts

## **Community Assessment Exercises Conducted with Community Groups**

### **Northwest Lake County Senior Center (Peacock Township)**

Serving seniors in Elk, Eden, Peacock and Sauble townships.

#### **Strengths**

Woods, water, recreation, fresh air

Public land

Good police and fire protection services, ambulance

Good Road Commission

Good schools

Senior centers – Luther, St. Ann, Idlewild, NW Lake County (Peacock), Hollister Senior Center (Baldwin)

Small community closeness

Family health care, eye and dental – Baldwin

Airport

Trails-snowmobiling-ski-hike

Active churches

Restaurants and bars, local music

Racial integration and harmony

Active veteran's organizations

#### **Weaknesses**

No grocery shopping – limited

Nothing for young people to do – no jobs after high school or college

No walk-in movie theater

No affordable high speed internet

No affordable prescription drug outlets

No place for physical therapy/rehab – need more with a pool (1 therapy/rehab in Baldwin)

Need clothing stores

No pizza delivery

Need more local first responders – training program

Need industry, franchised food locations

Need more job training programs – youth programs

#### **Opportunities**

Recreation building w/pool

Industry

Retirement destination

Retain natural resources

Clean up blight – partnership between County/Townships for funding

Improving appearance

Area marketing emphasis on camping/all natural resources

#### **Threats**

Need stable and improved police force

Increase in crime due to economic problems

Adult entertainment/stores

Oak wilt

Closure of small camping areas and roads (2-tracks)

Government intervention

## ***Rotary Club***

### **Strengths**

Natural resources  
Baldwin promise  
Lake County Community Foundation, Rotary  
Federal quality health center  
Senior services and organizations  
Poverty services  
People-volunteerism-compassion/caring  
Open to new residents  
Collaborative efforts  
Yates – transportation

### **Weaknesses**

Employment lacking  
Not quality housing – lack of down payment – gaps in funding  
Investment in human capital  
Lack of quality rental homes  
Lack of broadband coverage for most rural areas  
Repetitive efforts without results  
Lack of vision among youth – low self-esteem  
Lack of community center  
Lack of communication through the county

### **Opportunities**

County wide high speed internet AFFORDABLE  
Blend of nonpolluting industries, manufacturing and tourist businesses  
Market Lake County for hunting/fishing/etc. – promote as a destination  
Airport expansion to bring more air travel  
Build sense of community for young adults  
Community center

### **Threats**

Public education funding – consolidation of systems  
U.S. Forest and Michigan DNR not assigning posts to families w/children  
Lack of county wide solid waste/recycling  
Michigan economy  
Lack of future volunteers  
No broadband – left behind  
Danger to fishing industry

## ***1<sup>st</sup> Annual Lake County Triad Day of Enrichment, August 13, 2011***

### **Strengths**

Cohesiveness  
Dial-A-Ride  
Networking  
Law enforcement  
Schools  
Fire department  
911 and 211  
Political activities  
Volunteers  
Natural resources/lakes  
Family health care, community health center  
Churches  
Community pride  
Food pantry  
Compassion

### **Weaknesses**

Employment  
Adult education  
Lack of information  
Lack of involvement  
Lack of adequate/affordable housing  
Transportation  
Recreational opportunity for youth  
Development  
Police department  
Lack of doctors taking new patients  
Apathy  
Health clinics  
Lack of medical facilities  
Lack of child care  
Lack of special education  
Passenger train  
Out of county transportation  
Volunteer resource bank

### **Opportunities**

Commercial development  
Economic development  
Recreational tax  
Hiring from within/utilizing community folk  
Small business/extension  
Youth center  
Adult education



Community college center  
Community pool  
Equal pay/gender bias  
Communication system

**Threats**

Funding  
Lack of communication  
County perception  
Business stopping other businesses/local opposition  
Local bank blocking other lending institutions from coming into county  
Scams  
Drugs  
Sex offenders in community

