

HELENA TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

**Approved by Helena Township Board November 11, 2009
Effective Date: January 1, 2010**

The Helena Township Master Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

Helena Township is located in the northwest lower peninsula of Michigan, in Antrim County, on the southeast side of Torch Lake. The township is bordered by Clam Lake and Grass River to the north, Custer Township to the east; Clearwater Township to the south; and Torch Lake to the west. The township is fortunate to have an abundance of over 74,809 linear feet of water resources including 35,321 feet on Torch Lake, 28,189 feet on Clam Lake, and 11,298 feet on Thayer Lake.

The challenge facing the planning commission and all citizens of Helena Township is to carefully plan and direct future growth in a thoughtful and orderly manner while retaining rural character, water quality, dark night skies, beautiful open space, small-scale village quaintness, and open roads.

- A. The Helena Township Planning commission is responsible for developing the master plan for Helena Township. The first Helena Township Master plan was adopted in 1978 with revisions made in 2002.

ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION IN MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The master plan document is designed to present policy, provide supporting documentation and to organize in one document general information regarding Helena Township's history, funding, resources and infrastructure.

The material presented in the master plan is divided in two sections:

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. GOALS

II. Goals

A. VISION STATEMENT

HELENA TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN VISION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Act 184 of 1943, the Township Zoning Act and Act 1682 of 1959, the Township Planning Act, which govern township zoning in the State of Michigan, require the zoning districts, established by the townships, be based on a plan to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare; to encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability, to avoid overcrowding of land and buildings or people; to lessen congestion on public roads and streets; to facilitate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements; and to consider the character of each township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trend in land and population development. In our master plan for Helena Township, individual property rights guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Michigan must not be infringed upon.

BACKGROUND

Helena Township, once known for lumbering and agriculture, is today almost entirely residential in nature. Its character is defined principally by its natural features, including the enormously popular shorelines and vistas of Torch, Clam and Thayer Lakes, an abundance of forests, streams, rolling hills and scenic open spaces and the historic quaintness of the community of Alden.

Slowly at first and then rapidly in the 20th Century, Helena Township became a vacation oriented area with increasing numbers of tourists and resorters. Today the trend continues with the addition of more and more leisure oriented retirees and year-around homeowners.

A small number of commercial establishments and the absence of heavy industry also define the character of Helena Township.

Therefore, growth in Helena Township must be as thoughtfully managed as possible in order to protect that very special residential and scenic character of the township and the quality of life associated with that character. To that end, zoning regulations should be developed that seek broad public input on development issues through public hearings before the planning commission, but reserves to the township board, the final decision-making authority on proposed developments, consistent with state law.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Protection of natural resources, including the forests, open spaces and especially water resources, is of prime importance in growth management. This includes protection of the underground aquifers and wetlands, as well as surface water on lakes and streams.

The use of individual wells and septic systems can continue to service township residences and businesses. However, in regards to septic systems, the township will encourage the appropriate county and/or state officials to enforce health codes, require a schedule of inspection and require replacement of faulty septic systems. The township should encourage the use of new technologies available for improved waste and sewage treatment.

The water-related geographical and natural resource attributes of the township have historically been, and will continue to be, the bedrock for its popularity. Protection of these should be the principal factor in any future development.

Growth will continue to focus on the lakes. As the density of lakefront development, the size

of shoreline residences, the appeal of secondary properties with scenic views and year-around use all continue to grow, environmental pressures and other threats to the township's character will inevitably increase. Thus, it is crucial that the township impose and enforce protective regulations and communicate with residents and business owners about the need for these types of regulations.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative that the following specific policy initiatives be undertaken:

SHORELINE PROTECTION

A primary intent of the Helena Township Master Plan is to maintain an effective greenbelt buffer between human activities on land and the shoreline.

The Master Plan encourages guidelines to protect the shoreline, to protect water quality and to maintain the natural character of our rural lakes, rivers, and streams.

Road end and lake access sites must be protected and maintained.

Development practices that funnel or keyhole non-shoreline residences into shoreline property zoned R-1 or Village must be regulated in order to limit the development pressures on water quality and township character.

A greenbelt buffer is the best management practice recommended by both State and Federal natural resource agencies to accomplish the following goals:

- Control erosion
- Trap phosphorus and nutrient runoff
- Protect property values that depend upon high quality water resources

Future development, particularly in area with high water-table soils or close to water will have special needs. Redevelopment with larger homes may change the character of the area. Additions to existing residences may result in crowding or lack of open spaces. Small lots have special problems of sewage disposal and separation of wells from sewage disposal systems.

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Since the lakeshores are becoming increasingly developed with single-family homes and cottages, the "off-lake" properties with easy access and views face heavy development pressure. Over 90 percent of the township is zoned Agriculture, while actual land use in the zone is primarily residential, with only approximately 12.5 percent of the zone dedicated to farming and forestry activities.

New zoning regulations require land owners requesting development of parcels 10 acres or larger to submit site plans based on both the current zoning minimum two acre splits to determine maximum density and an open space conservation design plan.

Incentives could be offered to landowners for selecting the open space conservation design alternative. Geographical Information Survey (GIS) maps, completed as part of the master plan process, will assist the land division committee, planning commission and property owners in implementing the open space preservation process.

The planning commission should also establish a process, using the natural resource inventory, to identify open space within the township that should be given a high priority for preservation and identify land that is more suitable for development. After completing this process, the planning commission should explore implementing programs that would allow the transfer of development rights or the purchase of development rights to encourage the

preservation of high priority open space. In addition, the planning commission should explore implementing programs with the appropriate organizations to encourage property owners to voluntarily place permanent conservation easements on their land.

Housing developments planned on parcels larger than 10 acres are encouraged to use open space planning with possible incentives for cluster development. These incentives allow for smaller lots in exchange for large open space preservation, allowance for pedestrian and non-motorized trail access, and preservation of established wildlife corridors or habitats.

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Commercial areas will be proposed as population and demand increase. In the village zoned area of Alden and Clam River, all contiguous residential areas without commercial use may be rezoned R-1 to protect the historic residential character of the neighborhoods. Areas where current commercial and residential uses are contiguous, will continue to be zoned village. New commercial areas must be rezoned.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Commercial and manufacturing activities, and any other activities which have the potential for air, water, light, noise, scenic pollution or which might otherwise intrude on Helena Township's residential character must be reviewed. Retirement and assisted living center, high-tech and light industry, compatible with the township's character, can be accommodated through an overlay zone.

The township, through the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), should develop a long-term economic development plan consistent with the goals of this master plan. Grants for roads, streetscape improvements and infrastructure development for high-speed data and voice communication to foster township based economic activity, including telecommuting should be a high priority.

ROAD REPAIRS

In August of 2002 a ten-year 0.75 mil property tax was approved in Helena Township. The township must follow the guidelines approved in the Helena Township Master Plan in establishing priorities for maintenance and improvement of roads consistent with road designation and their impact on current and future use.

ROADS & PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The township has established a permanent roads and pedestrian safety committee to address citizens' concerns regarding increased use of the primary county roads and residential secondary roads by commercial traffic. Increased commercial traffic threatens pedestrian safety in Alden and has the potential to alter the township's quiet, residential character. The township will explore alternatives to address these issues.

GAS & OIL DRILLING, EXPLORATION, AND PRODUCTION; INJECTION WELLS

The township will continue to evaluate ways to limit potential health, safety and water quality threats resulting from further gas and oil drilling, exploration, injection wells, and production in Helena Township.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS

The Helena Township Master Plan recognizes the need to accommodate alternative energy systems while protecting the public health, safety and welfare of the community.

PRESERVING ALDEN'S QUIANT VILLAGE CHARM

The township may pursue designation of a section of the "village" zone in Alden as a "local historic district" under provisions of Public Act 169 of 1970 and may establish special design standards to maintain the historic quaint village charm of Alden.

PARKS & RECREATION

The Helena Township Parks & Recreation Committee shall establish a regular meeting schedule that is published annually and posed at the community center to encourage public input into decision-making. The planning commission shall appoint one of its members to the parks and recreation committee.

The township shall maintain drawings of each of the parks showing all the current structures, equipment, fences, plantings, etc. for use as a planning and communication tool. The parks and recreation committee should maintain a current five-year plan, based on the information gathered in the 2001 Helena Township Opinion Survey and from subsequent public input.

A high priority may be given to unifying the visual statement made by signage, landscaping, paint colors, and style of any modifications, or other new buildings at the parks.

The parks and recreation committee must develop maintenance and capital improvements budgets to be presented to the township two months prior to the date the annual township budget is adopted. The parks and recreation committee and the township board must identify the sources of funds from grants, township funds, contributions of labor and materials and private fund raising campaigns to fully implement the current 5-Year Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The planning commission and township board will give the highest priority to amending the current zoning ordinance to reflect the master plan. The zoning ordinance serves as the township's major regulatory tool. It will continue to be a flexible document, amended as needed to direct growth in an orderly and thoughtful manner, in order to protect Helena Township's unique quality of life.

In order to understand the issues and develop policies, goals and objectives, the planning commission organized the information in this section into nine categories as listed below:

1. Commercial/Village Areas
 - a. Alden
 - b. Clam River
 - c. South End
2. Mancelona School Sites
3. Conservation Areas
4. Farmland
5. Residential Development
6. Shoreline Residential
7. Economic Development
8. Parks and Recreation
9. Roads, Access Management and Road Designations

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Three areas within the township permit commercial activity: the Village zoned areas of Alden and Clam River, and the Commercial zone on the county highway at the south end of the township. These districts are the historic backbone of Helena Township's commercial activity.

It is also recognized there are successful income producing activities that are occurring in the township that have been and can be accommodated through the Special Use Permit process.

Near future – Create a plan for the township that identifies separate business zones.

Density of Development

Higher density uses and specific uses such as food service and car washes will need plans for:

- A. sewage disposal systems,
- B. water supply.

ALDEN VILLAGE

Description

The (unincorporated) village of Alden is the heart and activity center of the community and the township. Its environmental setting along the shores of Torch Lake and Spencer Creek make it exceptionally unique.

Alden is seen as important for the following activities according to the responses from the opinion survey questionnaire. (not in priority order)

- Recreation center
- Shopping
- Township library
- Alden Harbor docks
- Alden Harbor boat launch site
- Youth activities
- Tennis courts
- Alden Depot
- Coy Mountain Trails

Traffic and Parking

Traffic Goals and Objectives

- Keep right-of-ways the same width – do not widen
- Keep parking on both sides of the street
- Keep sidewalks where they currently exist
- Future – Add sidewalks where appropriate
- Future – Consider a plan for alternate truck traffic around Alden.

Parking

Encourage a plan for off-street public parking for commercial use.

Pedestrian Circulation

Establish walkways for people and bicycles beyond commercial buildings and road traffic. These walkways add value to adjacent properties, enhance village character and increase access to businesses.

- It is in the best interest of residents and businesses that safe and convenient pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access be provided to residential recreational and business destinations in Alden.
- Identify and show current pedestrian routes on both public and private land on a map.

- Create a map showing desirable future pedestrian and bicycle connections between residences and destinations such as retail businesses, harbor, beaches and parks.
 - A. Obtain trail or sidewalk easements across private property.
 - B. Consider private property issues of trespass and privacy
 - C. Require pedestrian/bicycle connections as development of new business, parking, subdivisions, etc. takes place.
 - D. Consider an application for a Transportation Enhancement Grant through Antrim County Road Commission for off-road improvements.

Maintain Commercial Viability

- The central area of Alden shall be devoted to retail stores, restaurants and similar uses that cater to high pedestrian traffic. “Big Box” stores and drive-through restaurants, available in nearby communities, are incompatible with the small scale commercial activities, rural character, and quaint village charm of Helena Township.
- Create a plan that identifies:
 - A. An area where only retail stores, restaurants and similar uses that cater to high pedestrian traffic are allowed on the first floor, and office and residential uses are allowed on upper floors.
 - B. An area, where office and lower pedestrian traffic uses are allowed such as real estate, attorney, physicians and banks.
 - C. These zones should consider existing uses and also consider long range plans.
- Work with the Downtown Development Authority to plan for and implement a program of improving the infrastructure.

Maintain Village Character

- The village should have identifiable borders so that the current small town pedestrian scale character can be maintained as growth in the surrounding area continues.
- Show on the Future Land Use Map the current developed village boundaries and projected future growth areas, taking into account existing development, natural features, and natural maximum walking distances of about one quarter mile.
- Show features such as forested hills, wetlands property ownership patterns etc. that indicate natural village borders.
- Approach adjacent townships and Antrim County to encourage neighborhood-sized commercial services.
- Future – Develop a plan, such as acquiring conservation easements on natural boundary areas, to insure that the boundaries are maintained.

Coy Mountain due to its proximity to the (unincorporated) village of Alden, its beautiful forest cover, and scenic views of the lake that are available from the top of the hill, is a major community asset. Properties adjacent to Coy Mountain are privately owned and therefore prime parcels for a future public acquisition to preserve and protect this self sustaining climax forest and community trail.

Future Zoning

Create Village Zoning Districts with the following uses allowed in a number of separate zones so that specific land use objectives can be achieved through the rezoning process.

- I. mixed uses with Special Use Permit review approval procedures,
- II. commercial retail center,
- III. office and tower-volume pedestrian traffic uses,
- IV. residential with auxiliary apartments,
- V. allow home occupations,
- VI. shoreline residential standards,

- VII. residential rental,
- VIII. waterfront district.

CLAM RIVER

It is recommended the zoned village of Clam river be reduced as follows:

- North – by Clam River and Clam Lake
- East – by Dewitt Marina and the Rock Shop
- South – by the Rock Shop and the “island” formed by River Street and East Torch Lake Drive
- West – by the center of River Street east

The remaining “Village” zoned property at Clam River be rezoned “R-1”

Commercial businesses

Plans and zoning regulations for the commercial businesses in the Clam River area should address the following:

- A. expansion of businesses,
- B. redevelopment of businesses,
- C. business-residential needs.

SOUTH END COMMERCIAL AREA

The planning commission has identified the following issues in the South End Commercial Area.

The South End Commercial Area currently extends from Crystal Beach Road to the north 800 feet on the east side and 700 feet on the west side of South East Torch Lake Drive. There are five properties on the east side about 400 feet deep and four properties on the west side about 300 feet deep.

Suggestions

- A. Rezone for more restrictive commercial zone.
- B. Insufficient land for large commercial uses. More appropriate uses would be those that could use smaller buildings with parking in the rear.
- C. Suggest landscaping between the road and buildings.
- D. Manage access to South East Torch Lake Drive.
- E. Provide for a north-south, non-motorized trail through the area.

MANCELONA SCHOOLS & SCHOOL SITES

- A. School Location -- School location has a major impact on future development patterns. Families base location decisions on school accessibility.
- B. Relationship to Recreation -- Schools can contribute to the recreational needs of the township by joint use of recreational facilities and also for summer recreation.
- C. The township and the school district need to plan future school locations consistent with the township plan.
- D. Locate future schools in existing developed areas where easy access by student sis available. Keep schools away from low density and non-development areas.
- E. Schools should be located and planned for pedestrian and bicycle access for both school use and summer recreation activities.

HELENA TOWNSHIP LANDS

There is a total of 10,391 acres in the township. Vacant land (4,984 acres – 48.00 percent), and forests (2,322 acres – 22.00 percent) makes up 70 percent of the land area of the township. Agricultural zoning makes up over 90 percent of the total land area of the township.

These lands include farmlands, vacant lands, wetlands, steep slopes, scenic view lands, lakes and streams, wildlife habitat, etc. These lands contain significant natural resources and

contribute greatly to the character of the township. Each of these areas has unique characteristics and special planning issues. Development can occur in these areas if care is taken to include consideration of the natural resource base.

Land use planning is one of the best tools available to protect resources while allowing development to occur. Resources are inventoried and protected on a site-by-site basis. This includes, wetlands, steep slopes, scenic views, and wildlife habitats, etc. Development of the land is directed away for these resources.

Land use areas also include such areas as shoreline buffer zones, public access sites and township, county, tribal, and school district public owned lands.

Potential Conservation Areas

The Potential Conservation Areas Map found in section IV illustrates features that comprise elements that may be considered as potential conservation areas. The map also identifies the resource areas that could be protected, the areas that are most appropriate for development, as well as the areas that have already been developed. These maps show the interconnected pattern of resources that need protection and where development should be carefully managed, or in some cases, discouraged.

Active Farmlands

Active farms contribute to the economy and to the rural character of the township and preserve scenic views. Farmlands also provide wildlife habitat and act as wildlife corridors between other wildlife habitats.

- I. The long-term economic viability of farmland in Helena Township is being challenged by rising land values.
- II. Farmland will be split into small development units unless other economically viable development or preservation options are available.
 - III. Conservation easements, rural clustering or transfer of development rights are possible means to preserve the rural character and open space values of these farmlands.

Wetlands

Extra care should be taken in development of wetland areas for many reasons.

Wetlands are home to many plant and animal species. They help prevent flooding and recharge our aquifers.

- I. Loss of wetlands due to development activities such as access roads and filling.
- II. Splitting into small parcels that may disrupt their function as wildlife corridors.
- III. Wetland areas should be protected.
- IV. The rivers and their adjacent wetlands need buffer areas.

Protection of certain resources (such as wetlands) by ordinance is desirable. Development of wetlands is undesirable. Planned Unit Developments that allow reasonable residential development with appropriate setbacks from wetlands are reasonable where it is possible to maintain wildlife corridors. Maps of these wetland wildlife corridors should be created and an Overlay Zone of the wetlands and their adjacent steep slopes with allowable uses should be addressed.

Steep Slopes

- I. Steep slopes are associated with some areas near each creek.
 - II. Erosion takes place if development occurs and siltation of adjacent streams or wetlands is likely.
- III. Grading changes the character of steep slopes.
- IV. Construction along steep slopes could cause soils to erode.

- V. Areas of forested slopes provide a border along wetlands.
- VI. Conservation Easements, public purchase or Cluster Development are options to consider.

Scenic Views

Scenic views are an important part of Helena Township. A substantial part of the attractiveness of the township is due to the views of forested hills, farmland, and panoramic views of water from public roads.

Current development patterns indicate that these scenic views will gradually change. Development can occur in these areas if care is taken to include a consideration of the natural resource base.

Environmental zones

Environmental zones and their adjacent areas provide valuable ecological functions.

A better understanding of the issues relating to these areas is necessary in order to make zoning ordinance requirements more meaningful and to help the public become more informed of development options to protect these areas.

Public Access Sites

Helena Township owns 19 public access sites on Torch Lake and Clam Lake and Thayer Lake.

- I. Possible improvement or expansion of one or more of the most popular road end parks may be considered and perhaps relieve use pressures from the Harbor.
- II. There may be a desire to establish a larger park on Torch Lake.
- III. Depot Park provides swimming but no boat access.
- IV. Baseball Diamond Park is deed restricted.

Public-Owned Lands

The Public Owned Lands Map illustrates Helena Township, Antrim County, Mancelona Schools and Helena Township public lands, and township owned public access sites on Torch Lake, Clam Lake, and Thayer Lake.

There may be the opportunity to acquire properties with frontage on Torch Lake to provide parks, open space or to preserve the historic character of the sites.

Farmland

The conversion of farmland into non-agricultural uses is a noteworthy problem that is experienced statewide and will be faced in Helena Township as well. The general public recognized the importance of retaining farmland for food and tree production, as well as for its contribution to open space that comprises what people think of as rural character. Tools available to protect farmland include: purchase of development rights and deed restrictions.

- I. A large portion of Helena Township is zoned Agriculture.
- II. A number of uses are allowed in the Agriculture zone.
- III. There is a need to allow clustering, purchase or transfer of development or other methods to retain the rural character of the township.

Residential Development

Residential development and rural character are important issues. As rural areas are developed for residential uses concern for their affect on township character and quality of life should be considered

The Environmental zone should be expanded to cover these streams and adjacent lands where rural clustering is required for all development and houses are located in clusters respecting streambanks, steep slopes, and wildlife corridors.

Encourage conservation planning language for use in all residential zoning districts in the zoning ordinance. Conservation planning is one of the best tools available to protect resources while allowing development to occur. Resources are inventoried and protected on a site-by-site basis. This includes wetlands, steep slopes, scenic views, and wildlife habitats, etc.

Development of the land is directed outside these resources. Example of ordinance language that can be written implement conservation planning may include:

- A. mandatory protection of certain resources (such as wetlands) by ordinance,
- B. voluntary conservation planning, written with built-in incentives such as bonus density points,
- C. open space planning, cluster housing, and/or planned unit development,
- D. requirements for special use permits in environmental resource areas,
- E. overlay zoning districts to provide buffers areas along lakes, streams, or other resources,
- F. conservation easements and preserves in cooperation with a land conservancy,
- G. require a pre-application conference between the zoning administrator (or other designated township representative) and developers so the township's resource protection goals can be articulated,
- H. require a resource inventory map, existing conditions (both natural and human made), and/or a site analysis map for every development.
- I. Purchase of development rights, rural clustering, and transfer of development right should be considered as methods of retaining the rural character of the township.:-

MOBILE HOMES IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

- A. Mobile homes should be permitted in residential districts subject to current standards.

B. Mobile Home Park Developments

Statement of Intent

Mobile home park developments have special characteristics which require full consideration of their location, including their site layout and design, their demand upon community services and the relationship to, and effect upon, surrounding uses of land. This is not intended to include recreational vehicle parks.

Location Standards

- I. Area with good road access to schools, shopping and other services.
- II. Area with soils suitable for community sewage disposal area or connection to a central sewage disposal system – not including a sewage lagoon.
- III. Parcel that is large enough for appropriate screening and buffering from adjacent uses.

Access to the park development site should be from a public thoroughfare only. Access should be designed with a capacity to safely and effectively handle any increased traffic which may be generated by the mobile home park development.

- I. Individual site access standards such as:
 - A. minimum average size per mobile home site;
 - B. minimum individual site size;
 - C. provision for minimum dedicated open space;
 - D. yard requirements such as setbacks from any private street or roadway, side site lines and rear site lines,
- II. park road standards.
- III. unit lot improvement standards such as:
 - A. each mobile home unit shall occupy at least a single lot;
 - B. all parking areas should be hard surfaced;
 - C. skirting or equivalent treatment which shall be fire resistant, vented, and have access panels.
- IV. building height limits
- V. lighting standards that keep light on the parcel and do not allow glare off site.

- VI. regulation or limitations on mobile home unit sales so that the mobile home park is not a retail sales area

Shoreline Residential

The highest value, most densely developed land is located along the township's 12.95 miles of shoreline on Torch, Clam and Thayer Lakes.

(Update percentages if available) Approximately 34 percent of the township's residential property is on waterfront lots averaging approximately 135 feet in lake frontage per lot. These highly developed shoreline property parcels account for approximately 72 percent of the total assessed taxable value of the township.

As shoreline property values have increased owners have expanded the size and winterized their seasonal cottages, increased the frequency of their use, and torn down old seasonal cottages and replaced them with larger year-round homes.”

Home sizes

There are areas where development has resulted in small homes on small lots. New homes or additions to homes is resulting in larger homes that change the character of the area, use up more of the land area, remove existing vegetation and require larger sewage disposal systems.

Impervious structure to lot size ratios and setbacks may need to be considered in future for new development or additions to existing structures.

Short-term Rental in R-1 Zone

The intent of the R-1 zone is to provide an area for single-family homes and a quiet residential neighborhood setting. Seasonal rental of homes can change the single-family residential character of a neighborhood. While historically short-term rentals have occurred in Helena Township on a neighbor friendly basis, if there is an increase in the commercial nature, scale and frequency of short-term rentals, regulation may become necessary to retain the single-family residential character of neighborhoods.

The zoning administrator must carefully review development plans in the R-1 zone to assure plans are consistent with the intent and character of single-family residential use.

Economics/Development

The commercial areas of the township are located in Calm River, Alden and a small area at the south end of the township.

The economic base of Helena Township rests with resort and tourist business, high quality residential, and service businesses. The following goals apply.

- I. Maintain the economic viability of the existing businesses.
- II. Retain or improve the character of the commercial areas as redevelopment or new development takes place.
- III. Identify a space in the Township where businesses can expand or relocate.
- IV. The Community Wide Opinion Survey indicates the following:
 - A. resort and tourist business is acceptable,
 - B. some industry is allowable,
 - C. farming is an important business (high – 85 percent)
 - D. High-tech business is acceptable if it is environmentally compatible with natural resource protections,
 - E. Limited clustered commercial with special use permit review process is acceptable,
 - F. Require development plans to conserve open space while not denying economic rights.

Parks and Recreation

Biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing are recreational pursuits northern Michigan residents of all ages enjoy. The recreation plan should provide the ability of resident to enjoy these resource-based activities.

- I. Non-motorized pathways for hiking and cross-country skiing. The township may consider developing pathways along one side of Spencer Creek that could eventually extend the entire length of the township and/or a pathway along Finch Creek into the Grass River Natural Area.
- II. The pattern of land ownership along creeks is such that they are still in fairly large tracts. The ability to obtain easements and/or purchase land for trails is easier when land is in large tracts.
- III. Coy Mountain
- IV. Baseball Diamond
There is no public land large enough to establish a park of any size on Torch Lake, except at the baseball diamond.
- V. Harbor expansion
 - A. New location for parking of boat trailers
 - B. Long Term – Relocate Alden Harbor boat launch to new site with good access and adequate trailer parking
- VI. The Community Wide Opinion Survey indicates as prime recreations use sites:
 - A. shopping in Alden;
 - B. township library;
 - C. Alden Harbor docks;
 - D. Public access sites/road ends and;
 - E. Alden Harbor boat launch site.
 - F. Alden Depot
- VI. The Community Wide Opinion Survey indicates support to fund:
 - A. picnic tables;
 - B. youth activities; and
 - C. non-motorized trails.
 - D. Look for opportunities to acquire key properties that would provide destination points for recreational uses.

ROADS, ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND ROAD DESIGNATIONS

Roads

There are both public and private roads in Helena Township that provide a variety of functions ranging from providing access to individual parcels to carrying an increasing amount of vehicular traffic. They also provide recreations opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian use as well as us by vehicles. Zoning Regulations should including the following:

- A. Private Road Standards
- B. Erosion Control Standards
- C. Driveway numbers, separation and location
- D. Road Capacities should be maintained according to classification.
- E. Safety
 1. Sight distances for driveways
 2. Number of private accesses to public roads.
- F. Road Maintenance requirements for all new developments including private roads
- G. Premature Development – splitting narrow lots off public roads, also splitting parcels with limited or no provisions for future interior roads should not be allowed.
- H. Plans for future public roads should b e shown on the Township Plan.
- I. Unpaved roads that have potential for future traffic should be planned for paving, and development should be minimized until the roads are upgraded.
- J. Provide for smooth entry and egress of fire and emergency vehicles.

Access Management

Defining and preserving the function of roads is an essential part of the Master plan. The concept of Access Management is to insure that the road system provides access to properties or moves traffic quickly and efficiently depending on the classification of the road. For example, Alden Highway provides a means for vehicles to travel at speeds up to 55 miles per hour with few conflicts with multiple driveways or vehicles entering and leaving the roadway, in contrast other roads serve primarily adjacent properties, with a number of driveways and at speeds of 35 & 45 miles per hour or less.

- A. Standards of road design and maintenance should be based on the planned function of public or private roads.
- B. Preserving the function of roads will result in lower overall costs and safer roads.
- C. Coordination with Antrim County Road Commission is needed to insure proper design and maintenance of public roads.
- D. Roads in the Township need to be shown on maps according to the desired function.
- E. Coordinating land use regulations with the desired function of the adjacent roads.

Helena Township must implement the principles of access management included in the Access Management Guidebook published by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in October 2001 when considering access to public or private roads. A Plan for Access Management is necessary to assure that the function of roads is maintained; costs are controlled as much as possible and the goals for the Master plan are achieved as the Township continues to grow.

Planned orderly land development that is coordinated with road improvements result in less traffic congestion, safer operation and a more efficient use of limited infrastructure resources. The Plan will contain recommendations for appropriate additions to existing land use regulations for the corridor such as:

- A. adjustments to land use density and permitted land uses,
- B. frontage requirements,
- C. setback requirements,
- D. shared and joint access requirements,
- E. driveway spacing standards,
- F. corner clearance standards,
- G. improved internal site circulation, and
- H. condominium and subdivision regulations that support the development of local roads and service drives.

Following adoption of the Access Management Plan, coordinated access management standards and other land use regulations consistent with the Access Management Plan will be prepared for the corridor, and processes will be put into place to ensure subsequent land use and driveway permit decisions are made consistent with the Access Management Plan and adopted regulatory standards.

The goal of the Access Management Plan is to regulate the number of driveways on Primary, Connector and Natural Beauty Roads while permitting reasonable access to newly developed parcels.

Adopt a Memorandum of Understanding with other approval agencies such as County Road Commission, County Drain Commissioner, DNR, and DEQ that they will cooperate, insofar as authorized by law and local ordinance, in review of specific applications for a development or driveway permit that coordinates the decision so there is assurance the standards and requirements are met prior to permit issuance by any one entity, including methods for conditioning approval of one permit upon receipt of a permit from another entity.

FUNCTIONAL ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

The following functional classification of roads is consistent with the various development zones of the future land use map.

- A. Primary
 - 1. Purpose is to handle traffic needs into the future
 - 2. Driveways are limited in number
 - 3. Provides safe intersections with Collector Roads and a limited number of Local Roads.
 - 4. Designed for speed of 55 miles per hour.
- B. Connector
 - 1. Purpose is to provide vehicular access to Primary Roads from local roads with a minimum of direct access to individual properties.
 - 2. Provides safe intersections with Local Roads and Natural Beauty Roads.
- C. Local Roads
 - 1. Purpose is to provide direct access to individual properties.
 - 2. Provide safe driveway intersections.

TOWNSHIP ROAD DESIGNATIONS

The following roads have been classified according to their long-term function.

- I. PRIMARY ROAD
 - A. Alden Hwy (reduce speed through Alden) (**1578 vehicles)
 - B. S. E. Torch Lake Drive (**3160 vehicles)
 - C. S. E. Torch Lake Drive (reduce speed in Alden commercial area) (**4500 vehicles)
- II. CONNECTOR ROADS
 - A. Helena (**938 vehicles)
 - B. McPherson – Consider as possible alternative route around Alden and improve to Alden Hwy. (**187 vehicles)
 - C. North Lake (speed is a big issue and is connector appropriate use)
 - D. Crystal Springs Road (reduce Commercial Truck traffic and speed)
 - 1. (East of Torch Lake Drive – **853 vehicles)
 - 2. (North of Alden Hwy – **507 vehicles)
 - E. Chapman Road (**317 vehicles)
- III. LOCAL
 - All Other Township Roads

**NOTE: Road count references from study conducted in July of 2001.