

## Chapter 5.0 Land Use and Existing Development Patterns

### 5.1 Introduction

Patterns of land use evolved from economic necessity. Trade routes were established along natural features such as lakes and streams to provide necessary economic linkages. Settlements were at, or close by, active points of commercial activity.

The two major factors that influenced growth and subsequent land use in Marquette County were the mining and lumbering industries. The discovery of iron ore near Teal Lake led to the permanent occupation and development of the Ishpeming -Negaunee area. Republic was also founded on the mining industry. At first wagons and sleighs carried the ore over rough trails and plank roads that led from Negaunee to the Lake Superior shore where the ore was transferred to waiting ships in the harbor. As steam railroads developed, so did the County. Marquette turned into a city, along with Negaunee and Ishpeming. Immigrants came from Europe to work in mines and to harvest the forests. Their diverse national heritage has enriched the region's cultural base.

### 5.2 Factors Affecting Land Use

There are many factors that determine how land is used. Home buyers, developers, land speculators, commercial interests and governmental entities all can affect land use decisions.

Home buyers and commercial interests tend to base decisions on location. Factors such as access, available public and private services, and the qualities of surroundings are often important as well. Speculators may purchase, hold or sell property based on an anticipated future return on investment. Land developers, too, attempt to gauge the demand and supply aspects of the housing, retail, commercial and industrial markets for financial gain. To be successful, speculators must accurately assess the type, size and timing of developments.

Owners of business and industrial concerns decide to start, expand, or close their operations based on economic probability. Many factors may be considered in determining economic feasibility such as supply and demand for the goods or services produced, adequacy and cost of transportation, and site availability. Local decisions have a bearing on these factors.

Generally, the immediate self-interest of the individual or organization making a land use decision supersedes thorough consideration of the potential impact on surrounding lands. Decisions determined in this fashion can potentially result in incongruous or

incompatible development since the community's overall pattern of development is not necessarily among the factors considered.

Local units of government have been granted authority through various laws and regulations to deal with land use issues. These legal tools allow federal, state and local governments to consider the overall compatibility and appropriateness of development and land use.

Overall, the federal government has limited influence on local planning efforts and growth management strategies. However, the federal government does exercise many responsibilities that affect land use through various loan and grant programs for community facilities, water and wastewater systems, housing, economic development, and planning. Federal regulations also address environmental concerns such as air quality, drinking water standards, etc. Although these programs and regulations do not usually directly affect land use and development, they have a significant indirect effect. For example, a community that lacks sufficient sewage disposal capacity to serve industrial uses can possibly obtain federal funding to help with expansion of its sewage treatment facility, which in turn, may lead to industrial development.

The role of the state has traditionally been limited to providing enabling legislation for local units of government to regulate growth and development through planning and zoning. However, with wetlands, floodplains and coastal areas, regulatory authority rests with the state. This can directly affect local land use decisions. The state also enforces standards for municipal water systems and wastewater treatment systems that are at least as strict as federal standards. These regulatory standards influence a community's ability to provide water and wastewater systems, as well as their user rate structures.

Local governments employ zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, and public investment in infrastructures to influence land uses. Infrastructure investments include water and wastewater systems, roads, parks, etc. Local planning efforts that seek to define the most desirable and appropriate uses for the various parts of a community, and anticipate and prepare for growth, can serve to guide future land use decision-making.

Other factors affecting land use include the existing transportation system, taxation, land values, natural features, changing technology, and market conditions. Changes in lifestyles, family size and structure, shopping preferences, and consumer attitudes also affect land use decisions. Mobility is greater than at any previous time, families are smaller, and life expectancies have increased. These changes may be reflected in

shopping habits, housing preferences, employment patterns, and leisure time activities. From a land use standpoint, some pertinent issues include the preference for large homes situated on large land parcels, the apparent willingness of individuals to endure the time and costs associated with lengthy commuting distances to work, and the growing market for housing specifically designed for elderly residents - particularly those residing for only part of the year.

The transportation system that serves a community determines how efficiently raw materials and finished goods can be received and shipped. This is a critical issue for many business enterprises. The expanding network of highways in the nation, with the growing number of private automobiles, has enabled residents of rural areas to commute to larger communities for employment, shopping and services that may not be available in their local area. In addition, the road system has increased the accessibility of many areas to tourists. Developments such as shopping centers, strip commercial areas and suburban residential areas have emerged as individual mobility has increased. Sprawl is frequently the result of such developments as agricultural and open land is converted for more intensive uses.

Taxation and land values play a part in many land use decisions. Families may move from urban areas because they feel that they are willing to trade off lower taxes and user fees for fewer municipal services and increased distance from employment, shopping and schools. Land may be less expensive in rural areas, thus making such residency decisions even more attractive. Commercial and industrial enterprises are generally less willing to forego municipal services such as water and sewer. They are also more likely to locate in areas of concentrations of population rather than in very rural areas. In any situation, however, tax rates and land values will be very important considerations.

Technological advances such as computer networking, cellular telephones, facsimile machines, voice mail, teleconferencing (including video), and electronic mail gives businesses location options that were previously not practical. Often the quality of life associated with these rural locations is an additional attraction.

Natural features and cultural influences are an important determinant of how land was used. The presence of rugged terrain and swampland, for instance, was not conducive to establishing settlements. Cultural influences are manifested in the types of buildings constructed, local commercial practices and community activities. Understanding the existing land use patterns and recognizing the needs current land use categories meet is a necessary element in planning for the future. Our decisions and projections will be conditioned by what is in existence at present, the needs which have produced present

use patterns and the hopes of the community for its future.

### **5.3 Republic Township Description**

The Township is laid out essentially as a section of the southwest corner of Marquette County, one Township wide and three Townships long consisting of Townships 45N, 46N and 47N of Range 30 W.

The middle of the east side of Republic Township is a strip added on to the eastern middle of the eastern boundary, two sections wide and six sections long which contains both of the population centers, namely the village of Republic and the village of South Republic. There is one transportation artery, M-95 which connects U.S. 41/M-28, six miles north of the Township, with Iron Mountain, about 35 miles to the south. M-95 passes through the eastern bulge of the Township and then grazes the southeastern most corner of the Township. There are no other major transportation routes.

Old Route 601 wanders northward through the eastern part of the two southern Townships then exits before Township 47N, the northernmost of the three Townships. There are four paved roads that extend from the east roadways westward to the west boundary and woodlands. All four of these proceed to become dirt tracks. The southernmost of these is Fence River Road, Co. Rd. LH. Next to the north is Chief Lake Rd. Co. Rd. LD. Third to the North is 18 Rd, Co. Rd. LB. The Northern most is River Rd., Co. Rd. LG. In short, the western boundary of the Township is connected to the eastern side and its two villages by logging roads which severely limits the use of the entire west side of the Township.

### **5.4 Existing Land Use**

Logging represents the dominant land use and is practiced over 70% of the Township's land area (See Maps 4-4 and 5-1). Beginning in the south, Township 45N has 5,020 acres designated CFR, in the middle, Township 46N has 10,035 in CPR and in the north, Township 47N has 14,415 CFR acres which is a total of nearly 30,000 acres. Other parcels are owned by timber companies but are not designated CFR. It appears that nearly half of the Township is CFR.

Farming, though present, is very modest in acreage. Crops are chiefly potatoes with a modest planting of livestock feed. Farming is limited most by short growing season and lack of good soil. With the land available for agriculture, the Township could encourage the expansion of crops that could be used as a fuel source for biofuels. Renewafuel, plans on opening a biofuel plant at the former K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base within the next year.

Although lakes are scattered throughout most of the Township most of them occur in the southern third of the Township. Most of the timberland is found in the northernmost third of the Township. Waterfront property in the south is mostly lakefront, while the northern third of the Township finds parcels on the southern arm of Lake Michigamme and then southward on the Michigamme River as far as South Republic and south to the state rest stop at Erickson Park.

There is also significant land developed for residential housing, including seasonal as well as full time residents. The lakefront properties are experiencing random development throughout the Township, with the exception of Perch Lake where a cluster of large lots is being developed at present. The two greatest growth areas are on the west and east side of the southern arm of Lake Michigamme. The most striking growth is occurring along Holli Blue Road on the east side. The second area shows significant new construction in the area of Brass and Silver roads.

New residents tend to seek property on the small lakes, along the river and on Lake Michigamme. The villages, Republic and South Republic continue to slowly shrink in size. Year around housing is usually dependent upon surfaced roadway. Increasing density, therefore, is happening along the blacktop.

Land use for commercial development paints a picture of a community in which businesses are leaving the two villages. South Republic is not zoned for business and at present has only one, a printing company. The grocery store, which had served both communities, closed several years ago. In Republic, there is no pressure for business space, although the plan has been to develop for service businesses to provide for activities which presently use the community or exist in the community. Several snow mobile trails pass through, fishing is popular, hunting brings fall hunters, and the community is actively involved in promoting the development of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail.

Business has been developing along the M-95 corridor making use of the traffic volume. Presently there is a bait shop/ sharpening shop, an automotive repair shop, a small unit self storage facility, a granite memorial business and several other small business ventures. Healthy and diverse commercial development is a great need in Republic Township but great care will be required in managing development along M-95. Similar developments in the past have resulted in too many access points opening on the highway, which can lead to sprawling development and cause safety issues. Following access management standards can help alleviate problems associated with too many curb cuts.

### Land Use Conflicts

Incompatible land uses occur when neighboring land uses negatively affect normal enjoyment or operation of one or more adjacent properties. An obvious example would be a residence located adjacent to an industrial operation without any buffering. Another type is when there is a preponderance of nonconforming uses (those uses not permitted in the zoning district in which they are located); an example may be a large number of businesses in a residential district.

Two examples of incompatible land uses can be found in South Republic: the County Road Commission sand/salt barns and the present use of the old Shell gas station which is now gathering scrap materials. Although that portion of South Republic is zoned commercial these incompatible land uses may contribute to a deterioration of values around them.

### Poor Parceling and Land Fragmentation

As parcel size decreases, forest and agricultural land may become less productive or could fall out of production entirely. Frequent divisions of properties along lake and river fronts have the potential to damage wildlife habitat and create drainage and erosion problems. Poor parceling can result in parcels which are so irregular as to be nearly useless. Poor parceling may also result in having parcels that are cut off without road access.

Future land divisions will have a great impact on the aesthetic and environmental character of Republic Township. Land divisions should be carefully reviewed to assure the efficient division of land and its accessibility by public safety and service vehicles.

### Sensitive Areas

Leif Erickson Park, Trout Falls Creek area and the Republic Wetlands need to be carefully protected, as overuse or development could destroy their unique attraction. The Republic Basin and its beaches created by the old dam are also in need of protection to maintain a constant water level and water quality. The basin also needs to be monitored for overdevelopment and inappropriate uses.

The Marquette County Road Commission garage is listed on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's leaking underground storage tank website. The site of the old Shell gas station and directly across the street, the Marquette County Sand and Salt Depot may both require remediation.

## **5.5 Issues and Opportunities**

The vast majority of the Township is rural and wooded. Residential development is

concentrated in Republic and Republic-south. Significant residential development is also occurring along the waterfronts. Single-family homes represent the largest percentage of residential land use.

As demographics change and the population continues to disperse, public buildings such as schools and churches are closed or abandoned. There is a tremendous investment to be lost if no reuse plan has been developed. If the buildings are left abandoned, the potential for blight is likely.

As private forestland ownership changes, public access and commercial timber reserves may become less available. The Township will benefit from the maintenance of a sustainable forest industry.

Logging will continue to be a primary economic force in the Township. It is important, therefore, that planning to ensure sustainable yield be implemented. Since there is already a bio-fuel production facility in the works at K.I. Sawyer, farming where it exists in the Township can be broadened to include a greater number of climate appropriate crops such as bio-fuel components like hemp or switchgrass, etc.

Creating new public parks and improving existing parks may be a way to attract tourists; particularly if fuel, food, lodging, and recreational gear are also made available. Winter parks and summer parks could take advantage of the four season emphasis in Township planning.

Mining will continue to be a part of the Township's landscape and the potential exists for mining in the future. Future mining endeavors will require careful planning by the Township. Site remediation and transport routing will need to be carefully planned and negotiated. Certain aspects of community remediation where the community and its land plan have been impacted need to be negotiated.

Township meetings brought forth a strong interest in community activities, community spirit, and the desire to preserve the rural and forest quality of life which draws people here. Resolving the issues of building a strong economy, maintaining the values of a natural wild environment and strengthening the small town community spirit will require considerable planning.