

CITY OF LUDINGTON, MICHIGAN

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Photo courtesy of the Ludington Daily News

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FINAL

W I L L I A M S & W O R K S

Table of Contents

	Page
SECTION I. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. SUMMARY	1
SECTION II. COMMUNITY PROFILE.....	7
CHAPTER 2. NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES.....	9
CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL PATTERNS AND COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT	15
CHAPTER 4. HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS.....	21
CHAPTER 5. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	27
CHAPTER 6. LAND USE	33
CHAPTER 7. DOWNTOWN AND THE WATERFRONT	37
CHAPTER 8. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES	41
CHAPTER 9. GUIDING IDEAS	45
CHAPTER 10. COMMUNITY OPINION	49
SECTION III. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN.....	59
CHAPTER 11 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	61
CHAPTER 12. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN	65
CHAPTER 13. ACTION PLAN	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. SUMMARY

This Comprehensive Plan represents the culmination of many months of work by numerous local residents and local officials. It reflects the community's deep concern for the historic character and small town charm in Ludington. The effort that went into this plan illustrates a strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. The plan outlines the preferred future for the community and a comprehensive plan to realize it. The Plan is appropriately general, recognizing that planning for the future is a delicate blend of art and science and that sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to the challenges of the future.

This Plan was developed in response to a desire in the community to rebuild and strengthen existing assets. The earlier Comprehensive Plan was nearly twenty years old and no longer acted as a relevant guide to planning in Ludington. The plan is based on recognition on the part of the Planning Commission to view the potential of the City in the context of long term planning. The fundamental purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to enable the City's Planning Commission to establish a future direction for the City's physical development. Once officially adopted and maintained, this Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and for the development of other areas.

Because of constant change in our social and economic structure and activities, the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long range goals. The Plan will be effective to the degree that it:

- Reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of Ludington;
- Realistically interprets and reflects the conditions, trends and the dynamic economic and social pressures that are brought about by change; and
- Inspires consensus and cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the City toward achieving common goals.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

When the Planning Commission began the plan preparation process it had several objectives. First, it was important to clearly define the priorities of the City with regard to community character and land use. Secondly, the City sought to develop a plan that is tailored to local conditions and yet coordinated with the planning activities of the larger area. Thirdly, the planning process was seen as an opportunity to build and strengthen a community consensus about the future land use patterns in the City. Finally, the Planning Commission sought realistic and effective mechanisms to achieve the plan's objectives.

This Community Comprehensive Plan accomplishes all these objectives. More specifically, this Plan will serve the City in the following ways:

1. It provides a comprehensive means of integrating proposals that look years ahead to meet future needs regarding general and major aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the City.
2. It serves as the official, advisory policy statement for encouraging orderly and efficient use of the land for residences, businesses and industry and for coordinating these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and with other necessary public facilities and services.
3. It creates a logical basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Planning Commission and the City Council as well as other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical conservation and development of the City.
4. It provides a means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects and policies to official City planning policies.
5. It offers a means of relating the plans of the City of Ludington to the plans of other communities in the Northwest Michigan region.

PLAN METHODOLOGY

The planning process involved four inter-related phases:

- Data Analysis - A Current Assessment.
- Goals and Objectives - Creating a Policy Foundation.
- Plan Preparation - Analyzing the Issues and Defining the Preferred Future, and
- Implementation Strategies - Getting There from Here

During the first phase, demographic, economic and land use data was gathered to support the Plan. The purpose of this effort was to develop a comprehensive impression of the patterns of growth and the challenges that will impact the City. The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the City's planning and land use regulations. A visioning workshop was held on May 29, 2003 to gather public input through a nominal group process. Using the output of the futuring workshop, the Planning Commission with the assistance of other Boards and Commission members began the process of defining goals and objectives for the future of the City of Ludington. These are presented in Chapter 11 of this Plan.

The third phase involved drawing together the input from the previous two and preparing a revised Future Land Use Plan, which is reflected in Section III of this Plan. The future land use designations and map (Chapter 12) were developed in a series of interactive meetings of the Planning Commission with the assistance of other Boards and Commission members and City staff.

The final phase of the process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the plan. These are reflected in general terms in Chapter 13. **At the conclusion of the fourth phase, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the entire plan.**

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This Plan is organized into three sections, each consisting of one or more chapters. Section I includes this introductory chapter which outlines the purpose of the plan, the process for its development, and acknowledgements to those involved. Section II is the Community

Profile, which presents an overview description of the City of Ludington from the perspective of:

- ◆ Natural and Cultural Features (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Social Patterns and Community Enrichment (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Housing and Neighborhoods (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Employment and Economic Development (Chapter 5)
- ◆ Land Use (Chapter 6)
- ◆ Downtown and the Waterfront (Chapter 7)
- ◆ Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 8)
- ◆ Community Opinion (Chapter 9)

Section III constitutes the Future Land Use Plan, which includes the City's Goals and Objectives (Chapter 11), the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 12) and the Action Plan (Chapter 13).

The final section of the plan is the Bibliography which outlines all the various resources consulted in the completion of this Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process to prepare this Plan has involved numerous community residents as well as public officials. The following individuals have provided key input and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged:

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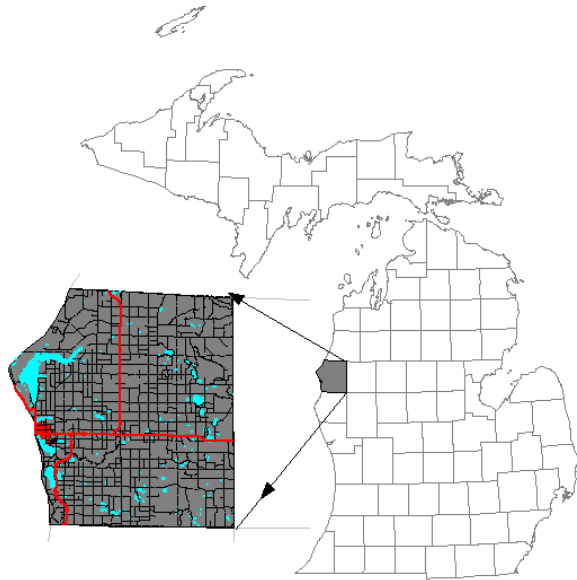
SECTION II. COMMUNITY PROFILE

In this section of the Comprehensive Plan, a general profile description of the City of Ludington is presented. This section is not intended as an exhaustive inventory of all the numerous aspects of the community. Rather, its purpose is to give some general impressions of the natural features, demographics, land use patterns and infrastructure that make up the City.

The material in this section presents a “snapshot” of current conditions within the City and recent trends in population and housing. It sets the stage for the finalization of plan goals and objectives, the future land use plan and map, and implementation strategies. All of those materials form the actual Comprehensive Plan set forth in Section III of this document.

Each of the following chapters includes an overview of its subject matter along with a brief discussion of the planning trends that are relevant. The material presented in the Community Profile has been drawn from existing research and published texts. This approach provides an efficient use of the resources of the City in the completion of the Plan. However, in a few instances, this approach may result in some unanswered questions. Further research or analytical work could be undertaken to find answers to those questions, but extensive refinement of the details at this stage of the process seldom results in large-scale shifts in policy. The City and the consulting team have found that the resources available for the completion of the Plan are best directed at forming the general outlines of land use policy with the intent of refining the details of strategies as implementation proceeds.

CHAPTER 2. NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES.



The City of Ludington is located in northwest lower Michigan in Mason County. Ludington’s beautiful waterfront, abundant natural resources and small town charm have made the area a wonderful place to visit and to live. Although the city is more than 100 years old, a considerable amount of the prime waterfront and picturesque land remains undeveloped. The community has a heritage steeped in the shipping and lumber industry. Tourism has always shared a significant part of the economy in the region, though residents agree they have no desire to be “just another resort town”.¹

This Comprehensive Plan reflects the community’s deep concern for the natural beauty of its surroundings and a strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. This

chapter generally describes the rivers, watersheds, forests, soils, and any other outstanding natural feature in the City and immediate region. Climate, rainfall, groundwater and soils are also topics described in this chapter. Given the rich history of the City of Ludington, this chapter also includes a section on cultural and historical features in the City.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL FEATURES



Preceding European settlement, future Ludington was inhabited by a number of North American Indian tribes. An early explorer and missionary, Jacques Marquette, made the first known European contact in the mid-seventeenth century. Pere Marquette Lake was named after the traveler and a memorial currently marks the alleged location of his death on Buttersville Peninsula.

The Ludington area’s dense hardwood and pine forests and natural harbor made the

¹ Camiros, Ltd. *The Greater Ludington Area Waterfront Comprehensive Plan: A Maritime Community Celebrating the Region’s Heritage*. June 1997.

location ideal for the logging industry. Formerly called Pere Marquette, Ludington was platted in 1867 by Milwaukee lumberman James Ludington. The town served as a shipping center for West Michigan lumber. In 1874 the Flint & Pere Marquette Railway reached Ludington bringing the city into its heyday of the lumber industry. Lumber barons built grandiose mansions that still line Ludington Avenue today. Now many of those homes have been converted to Bed & Breakfasts or office uses.



Ludington became the Mason County seat in 1873, when county offices were moved from the now-vanished village of Lincoln. At that time Ludington was the county's most prosperous settlement. The Mason County Courthouse was erected in 1893-94. Grand Rapids architect Sidney J. Osgood designed the Richardsonian Romanesque structure, which was built of Jacobsville sandstone from the Upper Peninsula. The courthouse is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Today there are several resources and services in or near the City to educate residents and visitors about the history of Ludington. The Rose Hawley Museum and White Pine Village are operated by the Mason County Historical Society. The museum has meeting facilities, a research library and archives and exhibit areas where artifacts illustrating county history are displayed on a rotating basis on such topics as: local maritime history, lumbering, Indian culture, industrial and commercial activities, etc.



White Pine Village, located on South Lakeshore Drive overlooking Lake Michigan, has 16 relocated or specially constructed building surrounding the first county courthouse. First opening in 1976, the Village now includes 23 buildings ranging from a trapper's log cabin built in 1850 to a huge early 20th century barn that houses historic agricultural displays. "Together the buildings offer insight into just about every aspect of a northern Michigan community."²

The Mason County Historical Society (MCHS) has enjoyed remarkable support from county residents. In the past the MCHS was partially funded by millage, which had been reaffirmed several times. Now the Historical Society operates on a volunteer and admissions basis. The

² Hoogterp, Edward. "History, Scenery, Recreation: White Pine Village Gives Visitors a Glimpse of the Past on Lake Michigan Coast." *Grand Rapids Press*, March 23, 2003.

Society is affiliated with Mason County Genealogical Society and with the Old Engine Club.

CLIMATE

The influence of Lake Michigan on the climate of the Ludington area is quite strong throughout most of the year. In fact, at one time Ludington boasted the motto “Ludington: air-conditioned by nature.” Because of the prevailing westerly winds coming across Lake Michigan, spring and early summer temperatures are cooler than normally expected at this latitude while fall and winter temperatures are milder. Ludington experiences few prolonged periods of hot, humid weather or extreme cold. Summers are dominated by moderately warm temperatures with only a few days exceeding the 90 degree mark. Yearly average precipitation is approximately 31.9 inches.

The regional abundance of outdoor recreation is a direct benefit of the natural environment. This uniqueness and quality of the environment substantially influences the decisions made by vacationers when choosing to visit the Ludington area. The natural resources around Ludington will continue to be a major factor in determining Ludington’s future by influencing the quality of life, as well as by providing opportunity for economic development.

In addition, the climate in the region has proven productive for fruit growing. Orchards, some vineyards and other small berry farms operate in the Ludington area and support the fruit packing industry.

TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

The topography of Ludington was determined by glacial action. South of Ludington, surface geology consist of moraines composed of glacial till, a mixture of sand, gravel and boulders in a matrix of clay and silt. Through the middle and majority of Ludington, the soils are draughty windblown, sandy soils without much profile development and subject to wind erosion. Slopes vary from moderate to nearly level. Soils in Ludington and surrounding areas are consequently mainly sandy outwash plains with alluvial sands found adjacent to the Pere Marquette and Lincoln Rivers. Dune sands are predominant in the city. These have moderate to severe limitations for building, depending on slope. The alluvial soils on the other hand can pose severe limitations on development due to flooding, ponding and frost action. The present topography is generally flat, although this is the

result of considerable cutting of hills and filling of gullies since the days of the earliest settlers.

WATERSHEDS AND HYDROLOGICAL RESOURCES

Ludington and the surrounding area have significant water resources. On the west, Ludington has 1.7 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, with over 40% of the beach accessible to the public.

Lincoln Lake and Lincoln River divide the City on the north from Hamlin Township. The Lincoln River basin is located north and east of the City of Ludington. This river flows east to west into Lincoln Lake and by a channel into Lake Michigan. Pere Marquette Lake divides the City on the south from Pere Marquette Township, aside from a small isthmus within the City's jurisdiction just south of the channel. Pere Marquette Lake provides the sheltered harbor for the Port of Ludington and offers both recreational and commercial facilities. At least eight public and private marinas are located on, or adjacent to the lake. Charter fishing operations are located there as well. The Lake Michigan Carferry Service makes daily use of the commercial port facilities and brings thousands of tourists and visitors to Ludington every year during warm weather.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Ludington region is renowned for its excellent recreational facilities. The biggest draw to the Ludington region is the Ludington State Park, which is widely known as the crown jewel of the Michigan State Park system. This incredible facility is comprised of 5,400 acres of recreation land and 6 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline. It is situated between Hamlin Lake and Lake Michigan providing excellent fishing, swimming and canoeing activities. The park invites users to explore the dune and



Ludington State Park beach and kiosk by Ryan Kilpatrick

jackpine swales, brushy marsh and wetlands, and mature forests through a variety of outdoor pursuits. The park includes 18 miles of forest and dune hiking trails and 16 miles of cross-country ski trails.

The park has nearly 400 campground sites and is open all year, with modern* facilities open April 15th to November 1st. Within the park is the Great Lakes Visitor Center. Natural resource exhibits including geological and human history of the Great Lakes, early state park history, trail information, and educational programming are available to all ages and abilities.

The City has taken the opportunity to develop several parks and recreational facilities throughout Ludington. Working in collaboration with private partners, the City has enhanced recreation amenities for local residents and visitors. The City's facilities include:

- The Community Pool,
- Senior Citizens Center,
- Ludington Municipal Marina,
- Stearns Park,
- Cartier Park,
- Loomis Street Park,
- Peter Copeyon Park,
- Dow Field,
- James St. Playfield,
- Waterfront Park,
- Oriole Field,
- and other small City parks.



Waterfront Park photo by Robert Garrett

The Ludington Cemetery and Parks Department, located at 906 N. Lakeshore Dr., is responsible for maintenance of Lakeview cemetery and City parks. General duties include lawn maintenance, gravesite openings and maintenance of playground equipment and other amenities found throughout the city parks. The department works in conjunction with the Department of Public Works and the Utility Maintenance Department to insure a high level of maintenance at the City parks. The departments all play a role in winterizing and opening the parks as well as performing necessary repairs and upgrades throughout the season.

Ludington Senior Services

The Ludington Senior Citizens Center is located at 308 S. Rowe Street. The building houses a library section, card and game room, offices, a

* Modern facilities refers to campsites that have electricity and access to flush toilets and showers.

lounge and two multi-purpose rooms. The Senior Center is available for use every day with public hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

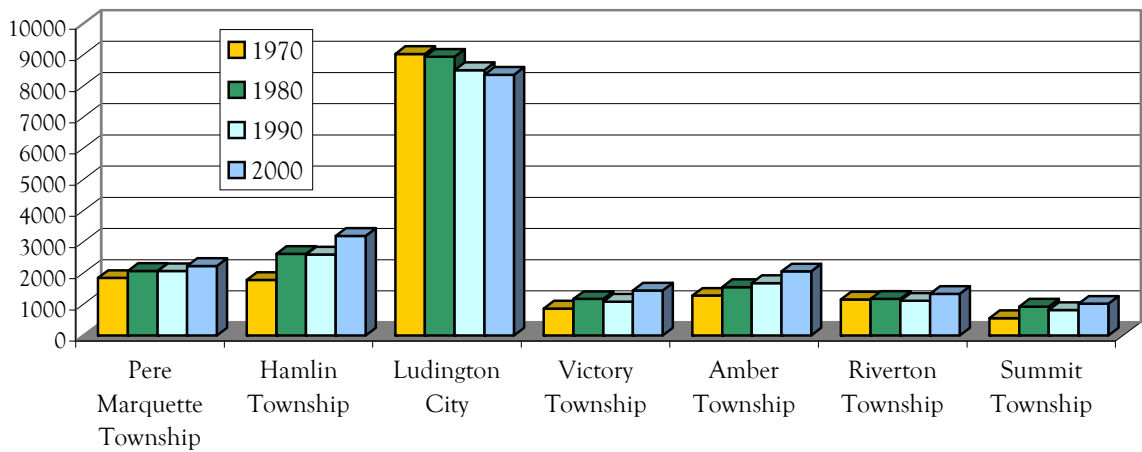
Recreational programs offered by the Center include yoga, aerobics, games, billiards, arts and crafts classes, senior health club, recreation for physically limited, line dancing and several annual cultural and shopping trips. Service programs include health education, medical clinics, insurance counseling, tax and other governmental form assistance, driving refresher courses, Vial of Life, Carrier Watch and case management.

The Center also serves as the designated congregate meals site set up by the Area Agency on Aging. The home delivered meal program for the western half of Mason County is also monitored by the center. Operation of the Center is funded by the City of Ludington, Mason County millage, United Way of Mason County, state and federal agencies

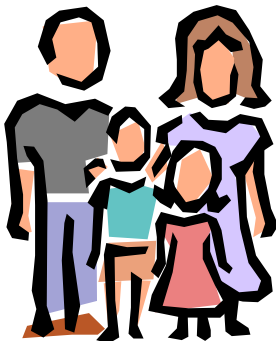
CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL PATTERNS & COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

Population is among the most important measures to express growth and its likely impact on land uses in a community. An understanding of the City’s population and the changes that are occurring is necessary in order to prepare a meaningful and realistic Comprehensive Plan. Ludington peaked in population growth in 1950 and, over the past five decades, the City’s official population count has been slowly declining.

Figure 1: Comparative Rates of Population Growth



To put this declining rate of growth in perspective, it is appropriate to compare the community with its neighbors. Figure 1 compares the 30-year population growth history in Ludington to that of other communities in Mason County. Pere Marquette Township and Riverton Township in the comparison have also struggled to maintain their population base while other communities are experiencing steady growth.

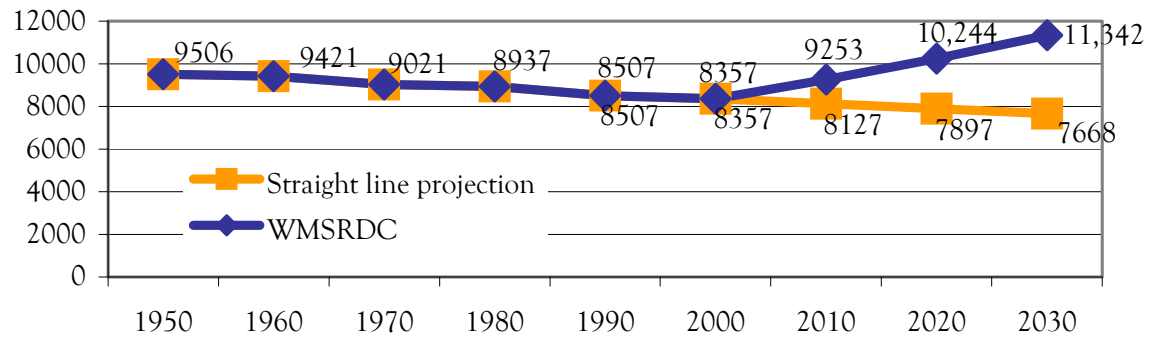


Small cities across the State are experiencing population loss to surrounding townships. Ludington appears to be no exception to the sprawl phenomenon, slight as the population decline may be.

Since Comprehensive Plans are intended to guide land use decisions for a 20 to 30 year period, it is important to estimate probable population patterns to give the community a sense of how to plan for public facilities and City services and gain an understanding of future social dynamics. For the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, statistical averaging techniques were utilized to project the City’s population growth to the year 2030. These approaches are adequate to

give a general sense of growth trends, but they have limitations especially in areas of rapid growth or decline that may run counter to statistical trends. Future trends are based on the past as documented by the United States Bureau of Census. In Figure 2, the population projections of West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) are compared with a straight-line extension of recent trends.

**Figure 2: City of Ludington
Population Trends and Projections**



Source: West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

Comparing the age distribution of a community over time provides another opportunity to measure change. Also, an age breakdown of a community’s residents helps to determine the type of housing demands and recreational facilities that may be needed. The median age represents the mid-point in the range of all ages within the City and County with one-half of the population younger and one-half of the population older than the median. Typically, the median age is viewed as an appropriate measure of the overall age of the population.

In 2000, the median age of Ludington residents was 39 years compared to the median age for the county overall of 40.4 years³. Both of these numbers are quite high compared to Michigan’s overall median age of 35.5. However, this is usual for the Ludington area. In 1980 the median age was 34.6 while Michigan’s median age was 28.8⁴.

The 20 to 54 years age group is important as it represents the prime wage earning population as well as the principal child-rearing group.

³ United States Bureau of the Census 2000

⁴ United States Bureau of the Census 1980

About 44.2% of the population fall in this age group in Ludington compared to 50.1% at the State level. This percentage of the population translates into family formations, the need for single-family housing stock, recreational facilities, future increases in the under 5, and 5 to 19 years age groups, and increases in retail trade.

The “empty nesters” group (55 to 65 years) comprises nearly 11% of the City’s residents compared to 8.7% at the State. Persons in this age group typically have reached their peak earning potential and have higher disposable incomes.

The age group of 65 and older represented nearly 15% of the City’s population in 1990 and it comprised about 13% of the population in the County. By 2000, this segment had increased slightly to 15.4% of the City’s population. The State of Michigan reported 12.3% of the population to be 65 and older in 2000.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The residents of Ludington (25 years and older) rank highly in the percentage of high school completion just behind the County and State as a whole.

Figure 3. Educational Attainment – The City of Ludington, Mason County and the State of Michigan, 2000.

	High School Graduate (%)	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (%)
Ludington	82.1%	18.1%
Mason County	82.7%	15.9%
Michigan	83.4%	21.8%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		



The percentage of the Ludington population with a bachelor’s degree or higher is greater than that of Mason County but a bit below the state average. These levels of educational attainment typically indicate a community of moderately skilled workers that attain jobs in service or manufacturing industries. This is consistent with the information presented below relating to income.

Income

Median household income is commonly used as a fair measure of the comparative economic strength of an area. It is also a helpful indicator

to identify differences among jurisdictions. In 2000 the median household income in the City was \$28,089 compared with \$34,704 in the County and \$44,667 in Michigan. All of the communities that neighbor Ludington reported greater median household incomes.

The United State Census Bureau reported that in 2000 12.9% of families living in Ludington were considered poverty status. In Mason County 8.2% of families live in poverty. Statewide poverty status families comprise 7.4% of the population. In Ludington nearly a quarter of the families with children under 18 live in poverty and of those, 47% are female heads of household with no husband present.

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT



Gus Macker Tournament, photo by Robert Garrett

A chief component of residents and visitors' satisfaction with a place is related to arts, culture, education and social engagement. Many communities organize events and design gathering spaces to facilitate improved quality of life, neighborly interactions and to create or carry on traditions.

The City hosts an exciting number of social and cultural events including Oktoberfest in downtown Ludington, Harbor Festival, the Petunia Parade and concerts at Waterfront Park Amphitheater as well as holiday events and parades. Private organizations join in hosting events like the Bed & Breakfast Association's Murder Mystery Weekends, or the Ludington Boat Club's Annual Art on the Water⁵.

Events and community groups are an excellent indicator of a community's social capital*. Ludington proves to be very strong with a well supported Historical Society, a highly ranked public school system, and fantastic library facilities. Maintaining long-time social organizations like the Ludington

⁵ Ludington Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

* Social capital is defined as the "institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions....social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society - it is the glue that holds them together." The World Bank Group. *Social Capital for Development*.

JayCees and growing new organizations like the Ludington Mural Society, illustrates care for the City and consideration for the quality of life of fellow residents.

Community enrichment may not be a measurable element of planning, but it can be the single strongest factor in reversing negative patterns or improving perceptions⁶.

⁶ Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

CHAPTER 4. HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS



New condo photo by Robert Garrett

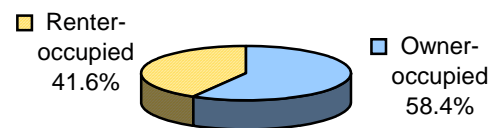
Ludington is characterized by a broad mix of housing types located throughout the City. Multi-family units are mixed in with the single-family units and owner-occupied homes are next to rental properties in many neighborhoods. This provides a good balance in many areas of the City and improves stability. The homes in Ludington have long been the source of pride for local residents. A good deal of the housing stock is older and beautifully maintained. These homes are a good indicator of long term financial and social investment in the community.

There are 4,227 housing units in the City. Ludington has gained a little over 400 housing units in the last 20 years despite the slight decline in population. Of those housing units, 537 (12.7%) were vacant during the 2000 Census count⁷. Of the homes that were vacant almost 50% were identified to be used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Leaving the City overall with a 6.9% vacancy rate. Generally when housing vacancy rates exceed 5%, there is some concern for neighborhood stability. If vacancy rates exceed 10%, the neighborhood may be experiencing blight⁸. However, the City of Ludington has a program for housing demolition and redevelopment program. This program may help to maintain neighborhood stability by renewing or removing blighted units and by continually improving housing opportunities through rehabilitation.

HOUSING TENURE

Another good test of the health of a community is the ratio of owner-occupied to renter-occupied housing. Generally communities strive to achieve a 2:1 or even 3:1 ratio of owner-occupant dominated housing.⁹ Central cities and more urban areas may have higher proportions of renters. This is true in Ludington where the proportion of owner-occupied to renter

Figure 4. 2000 Housing Tenure



⁷ United States Bureau of the Census

⁸ Michigan State Housing Development Authority

⁹ *ibid.*

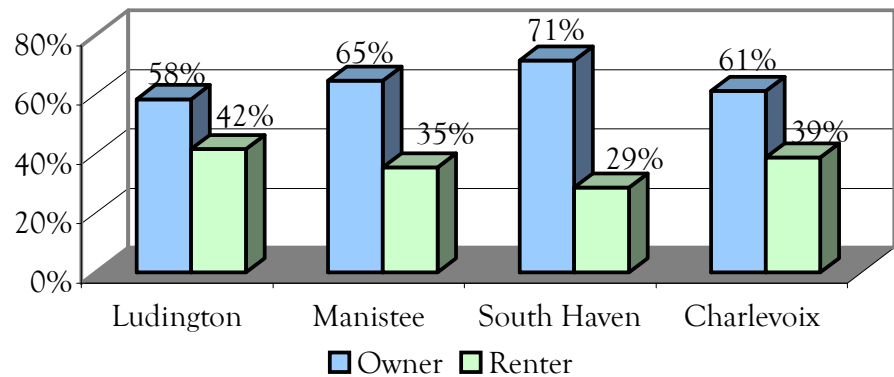
housing stock is about 3 to 2.

It is preferable that the rental units not be heavily concentrated in one area. Instead, rental housing should be well distributed throughout the community. Locating single-family rental housing among owner-occupied housing helps to hold rental property owners to the same standards as surrounding homeowners.

In the 2000 Census, 1,535 rental housing units were reported. While some of those rental properties are part of larger housing complexes or hotels, most are not. According to the code enforcement officer, most of the landlords in the City do a good job maintaining their properties. However, it can often be difficult for a single person to manage multiple properties and maintain them at a high level of quality.

Both the moderate vacancy rate and the high number of rental properties in the City are illustrative of the seasonal tourism economy. Census counts are taken in April. Snowbirds and other second home owners that generally move to Ludington for the summer months, may not have returned to their Ludington homes to be counted by the Census in 2000. This would materialize in a higher than accurate vacancy rate. In addition, vacation rentals account for a large number of the rental properties in the City. Although these homes may increase the challenge of stabilizing neighborhoods, they play a necessary function in the City’s economy.

Figure 5. Owner to Renter Comparison in Ludington and other Lakeshore Communities



To examine this phenomenon a little more closely a comparison was done between other Lakeshore communities that have similar seasonal housing issues. Figure 5 compares housing tenure between Ludington and three other lakeshore towns. Ludington has the highest ratio of owner to renter housing of the communities it was compared to.

South Haven, has the most permanent residents and lowest rental proportions.

Figure 6. Housing Vacancy in Ludington

	Permanent Vacancy	Seasonal Vacancy	Total Vacancy
Ludington	6.9%	5.8%	12.7%
Manistee	3.7%	30.7%	34.4%
South Haven	5.7%	24.0%	29.7%
Charlevoix	9.7%	5.3%	15.0%

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

New residential growth has been limited in recent years. This has been primarily because the City is nearly built-out with less than 5% of its residential land in large, vacant parcels. The newest single-family homes in the area are on the north side of town, and the newer subdivisions are outside the City limits on the north side, primarily in Pere Marquette Township.

New projects that have been proposed and constructed have been multi-family complexes and senior housing that maximize the yield of the limited remaining lands. Infill or development within the urban area is an activity the City has recently been organizing to promote.

A further indicator of growth in the residential land uses in the community is the number of new residences established each year. Between 1995 and 2000, 217 total homes have been constructed in Ludington. Over the last twenty years, 400 new housing units have been developed within the City. It is interesting that despite the increase in housing units, the population is still waning. This illustrates a declining household size, which often happens in an aging community.

HOUSING QUALITY AND VIOLATIONS

Ludington is a mature community. Half of the housing stock is at least sixty years old. Across the State only 16.9% of home structures were built before 1940. Within Mason County around a quarter of the homes are sixty or more years old, most of which are in the City of

Ludington¹⁰. On average, this indicates that Ludington homeowners may be facing more major repairs and upgrades to their homes than other Mason County or Michigan residents.

If there is a perception within Ludington that housing stock is beginning to decline, the City may consider enforcing a housing code through biannual inspections of rental properties and by complaint. Or initially to get a better sense of the actual problem, Ludington may consider a comprehensive housing quality survey to evaluate the impact of its housing code enforcement program. A housing quality survey can be a good tool when there is a marked decline in the quality of housing stock in a particular area. Such a survey targets homes for improvements and seeks funds for the rehabilitation. The survey can evaluate such exterior home elements as foundation, roof, façade conditions, porch structure, paint, and other detailing. This type of evaluation can be an important benchmark to gauge progress in neighborhood improvement.

Many older urban cities have developed neighborhood associations to facilitate housing improvements and other social issues at a neighborhood level. These associations may form under City-sponsorship or spontaneously. Neighborhood association programs can be very effective in building community capacity and improving quality of life in neighborhoods. The City of Ludington has not designated neighborhood boundaries and does not have a neighborhood association system in place at this time. However, the City is laid out in a manner that easily lends itself to the formation of such a neighborhood association system.

Such groups can organize community and neighborhood events such as neighborhood clean-ups, house painting, or assisting elderly and others in housing improvements. In addition, the organizations generally have a social component that organizes educational programs related to employment, childcare or domestic violence. They can set-up neighborhood watch groups and engage citizens in community policing training.

Ludington Neighborhood Preservation Project

In a joint effort to redevelop the Ludington neighborhood situated to the southeast of the downtown, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) awarded the City of Ludington \$609,700 in Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG).

¹⁰ United States Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

This money will be used to complete a neighborhood preservation project after preliminary environmental assessments are complete.

The anticipated project outcome is improved homeowner and rental housing as well as improved infrastructure. The project will be broken down into approximately six homeowner rehab projects, 10 rental rehab projects and public improvements including sidewalk and street repairs. The project area is comprised of five blocks between Loomis Street and Dowland Street from north to south and six blocks between James Street and Washington Avenue from west to east.¹¹

¹¹ Beutell, Mary, Community Development Director. City of Ludington Press Release, Ludington Neighborhood Preservation Project. January 1, 2003.

CHAPTER 5. EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ludington’s economy is largely tied to its natural resources. In its early days, Ludington’s economy was tied almost entirely to the lumber and logging industry. As time went by, the chemical industry developed from the brine deposits and transportation companies grew from the natural harbor.



Ludington Daily News

More recently tourism has played an important role in Ludington’s shift from a manufacturing based economy to a more diversified economy. Ludington’s popularity as a tourist destination is attributable to its wealth of natural amenities and the many opportunities that these natural assets provide for outdoor recreation. However, this diversification has also led to a more seasonal economy.

Communities with seasonal economies such as Ludington are uniquely challenged to maintain a healthy local market. Economies based on tourism are highly susceptible to fluctuations in the broader national market. The unemployment rate during the down season is high, and even during peak season, the tourism industry generally results in low wage jobs. Ludington’s tourism industry is largely based on the areas natural features. These natural features therefore require protection and appropriate maintenance to sustain visitor interest. This kind of protection and enhancement requires broad public investment and planning. This is apparent in Ludington by the new Harbor View Marina, Ludington’s Stearns Beach Park and the Ludington State Park just north of the City.

EMPLOYMENT

Relative to the County and State, employment in the City tends to fall more heavily in the “production” and “service” categories than into the administrative and construction trades. These occupations can be characterized by lower wage rates than the professional/administrative or the sales or construction categories. This is consistent with the income information reported in Chapter 3, which shows both per capita and household incomes in the City tend to be somewhat lower than in surrounding areas.

The deep-water harbor in Pere Marquette Lake has been an asset for shipping, the car ferry and other cruise ships.



A frosty morning view of DOW Chemical Company on Pere Marquette Lake, by Robert Garrett

The majority of the area businesses are holding steady in production output and income revenue. Service sector businesses such as Mason County, the Ludington Memorial Hospital, and Ludington Area Schools have all expanded in physical size, although employment in these areas has not necessarily increased.

The major businesses that impact the City of Ludington and its surrounding region, their products, and the number of current employees are illustrated below.

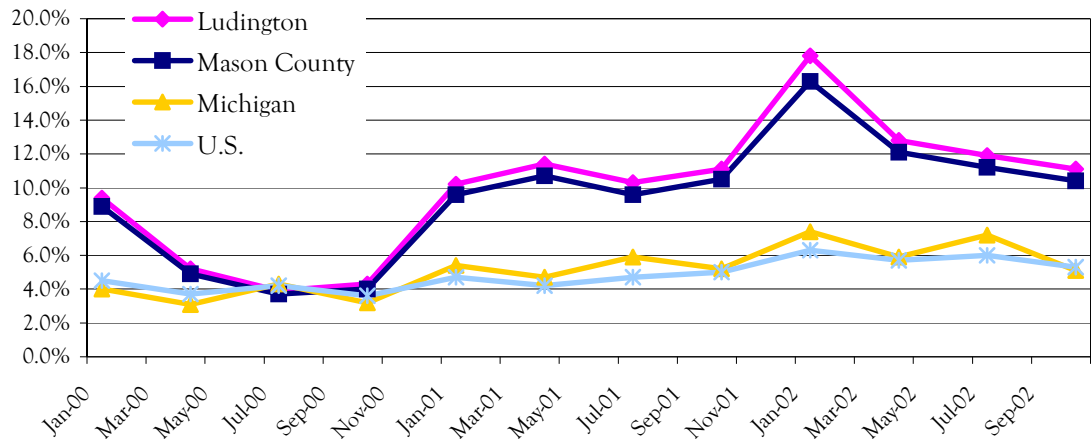
Major employers in Mason County
as of February 2003¹²

Employer	Approx. No. of Fulltime Equivalent Employees
Memorial Medical Center	418
Ludington Area Schools	335
Mason Co. Central School District	250
Lake Michigan Carferry	250
Harsco Track Technologies	234
Whitehall Industries	223
Metalworks	221
Dow Chemical Company	220
Great Lakes Casting	220
Wal-Mart	210

¹² Mason County Economic Development Office

Meijer	155
Mason County Fruit Packers	150
FloraCraft	143
House of Flavors Manufacturing	135
AMPTECH	135
Ludington Components/Haworth	123
West Shore Community College	108
Mason Lake ISD	104

Figure 7. Comparative Unemployment Patterns over the last 3 Years



Source: State of Michigan Office of Economic Development

There have also been reports of downsizing in several of the manufacturing companies listed. The downsizing has reportedly been the result of the downturn in the national economy and the consequential decrease in workload. The resulting increase of unemployment is not strictly localized to the City of Ludington. Surrounding townships have also been affected by the current economic slowdown. Companies being affected by the slowdown in production are hoping to recover within the next few years.

The West Shore Community College (WSCC) can be a good resource to new and existing employers or those seeking employment. WSCC hosts the Manistee-Mason County Community Growth Alliance, an area-wide economic development clearinghouse. The college’s Business and Industrial Institute provides local services such as developing business plans and marketing studies, and coordinates business research. The Institute receives technical support from Michigan State University.

Presently, unemployment in the Ludington region is extremely high. While there is clearly some seasonal fluctuation, even in the summer

months Ludington has maintained at least a 4% higher unemployment rate than the rest of the State. That comparative rate spiked to 18% (a 10% higher rate than the State) in January of 2002. Job creation and retention will be a critical issue for the City of Ludington over the next twenty years.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The tax base for the City of Ludington is approximately proportional to that of the County. That is, residential properties account for about 70% of the tax base in both the City and the County. However, commercial and industrial property are more prevalent in the City while the County overall also includes significant lands in agricultural uses and the City has no such property. This is reflective of the relatively “built-out” nature of the City compared to its rural neighbors and the County overall.

This balance (or lack of balance) in the local tax base will be important in future land use decisions and municipal revenue-expense projections for both the City and local school districts. Residential properties tend to require government and school services valued in excess of the property tax revenues they generate. Typically, residential uses require

between \$1.10 and \$1.30 in municipal services (i.e., schools, police, fire, roads, parks, etc.) for every \$1.00 contributed in tax base.¹³



Brownfield site in downtown Ludington, by Robert Garrett

There are areas within the City that are ripe for redevelopment. New office, commercial or industrial uses could bring jobs and tax base to the City and if located close to downtown help to create a vibrant and well supported Central Business District.

¹³ Thomas, Holly L. *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, Planning & Zoning News, January, 1993.

CHAPTER 6. LAND USE

The total land area of the City of Ludington is about 6.9 square miles or 4,416 acres. Ludington has developed as an urban area surrounded by agricultural uses and forest lands. The City has a well-defined downtown located in the center of the town and surrounded by fairly dense residential uses with commercial and industrial uses following transportation corridors and Pere Marquette Lake.

This chapter discusses the land use trends in the City. For many communities this is the most revealing of all the chapters. However, since Ludington has been nearly built-out for quite some time, the changes in land use have been minor in relation to the City’s more rural neighbors. This chapter compares the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) Map with an existing land use map. The MIRIS was completed in 1978 and updated in 1996 and defines land cover based on aerial survey, while the existing land use map is more reflective of the community current zoning map.

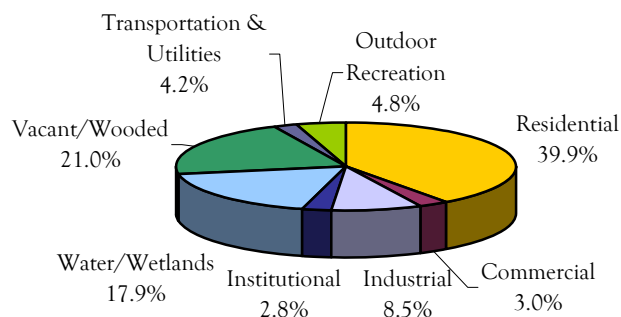
MIRIS data depicts some 52 categories of urban, agricultural, wooded, wetland, and other land cover types for the entire State of Michigan. Since the City of Ludington has maintained an urban development pattern for many years, the 1978 MIRIS map is still fairly accurate in comparison to other communities. The 1996 update reflects only minor changes including slight expansions of residential areas and a shift of some expansions of industrial development in formerly vacant areas.

Figure 7: 1996 MIRIS Land Cover for the City of Ludington

<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	<u>LAND COVER DESCRIPTION</u>
Residential (1750.0 acres)	Including single- and multi-family dwellings
Commercial (132.9 acres)	Neighborhood scale and regional commercial areas
Industrial (374.4 acres)	Industrial, utilities, assembly manufacturing
Institutional (122.2 acres)	Schools, courthouse, police and fire
Water/Wetlands (784.9 acres)	Lakes and streams, wetlands
Open/Wooded (921.4 acres)	Fallow fields, woods, camps and beaches
Transportation (93.2 acres)	Transportation right-of-way
Outdoor Recreation (210.9 acres)	Park lands, and playgrounds

To verify the MIRIS database, an existing land use survey was completed as a part of the preparation of this report. This also confirmed that the City's official zoning map serves as an adequate representation of existing land uses and land cover within the City.¹⁴

Figure 9. Ludington Land Cover 1996



The 52 land cover categories of the MIRIS system have been consolidated into eight categories which are more descriptive and useful for the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan. The land acreage for each category is estimated in Figure 6. It is useful to note that the MIRIS survey does not follow parcel or property lines, but reviews the usage of the landscape in acreage increments regardless of ownership.

LAND USE AND ZONING

It is also important to evaluate the development patterns in a community as reflected by existing land use and zoning. As a nearly built-out community, Ludington's zoning and land use maps are reasonably consistent. In addition, a zoning map typically follows property lines and rights-of-way, so it results in a more recognizable pattern in the community. It does have the limitation, however, of characterizing an entire parcel by its principal use, even though some of the site may be vacant land.

Ludington's urban neighborhoods make-up the majority of the land uses in the City. Some neighborhood business and civic uses are interspersed throughout residential areas making the Ludington community more viable and interesting.

Small multiple-family residential developments have been located within single family residential neighborhoods over time. More recently, larger multiple-family projects have been constructed around Pere Marquette Lake and within walking distance from the downtown. These projects both serve to add necessary density to keep business vibrant, and create attractive alternatives for the empty nester population in the city.

¹⁴ City of Ludington Existing Land Use Survey, performed September 16, 2002.

Commercial and retail uses are generally concentrated within the Central Business District and along Ludington Avenue. The Central Business District is developed in a very walkable nature with compact design and some on street parking. Small hotels and bed & breakfasts are included in the neighborhood commercial uses along Ludington Avenue. Just outside the City, along U.S.-10, Pere Marquette Township has allowed more regional commercial uses to develop. These uses are far more automobile oriented and generate a totally different shopping experience from downtown Ludington.

Industrial types of uses have traditionally been located along Pere Marquette Lake. In the past this has been appropriate, as industry has required access to the water either for outflow purposes or for the use of the harbor. As harbor becomes less important for industry, some of the land area surrounding the lake may have greater potential for other uses. Ludington's industrial park contains sufficient land area to serve most small to medium scale industrial uses.

The community is well served by parks, schools, the hospital, and government service providers. This is result of past planning efforts of setting aside land and acquiring new acreage to develop recreational and civic spaces.

CHAPTER 7. DOWNTOWN AND THE WATERFRONT

One of Ludington's greatest assets is its unique and beautiful waterfront. Waterfront usage has changed significantly over the years; first as a fishing area for native Americans, then as a major lumber milling and shipping center. As lumbering declined it became an industrial and transportation harbor, and now has evolved into a recreational port.



The waterfront area of Ludington is the City's competitive advantage. In 1997 Ludington and several partners including area Chamber of Commerce, business executives, planning commissioners and citizens worked together to develop *The Greater Ludington Area Waterfront Comprehensive Plan*. The group identified the waterfront as, "a diverse environment with assets capable of capturing a greater share of the growing regional

tourism market and re-establishing its role as a primary regional commercial center serving the residents of Mason County trade area."¹⁵ Citizens agreed that the Greater Ludington area is a lightly-tapped recreational resource. Although the City is more than 100 years old, much of the prime waterfront and amenity-laden land remains undeveloped. "The resort development occurring in the region, in places like Traverse City, Petoskey and Charlevoix, seems to have bypassed Ludington," the report notes. However, people also agree that they do not want to be "just another resort town".

"The area has the unique history as a working port with an industrial base which is not wholly dependent on the tourist trade. This is a heritage worth protecting and building upon".
Bill Kratz, Executive Director of the Mason County Economic Development Corporation

The Greater Ludington Area Waterfront Comprehensive Plan is an ambitious plan that creates a vision for the waterfront areas. The purpose of this plan was to be bold about the potential of the City's greatest resource. To support the plan the City has amended the zoning ordinance to allow a broad base of ideas to be implemented in the downtown and waterfront areas. The City has provided these

¹⁵ The Greater Ludington Area Waterfront Comprehensive Plan: Maritime Community Celebrating the Regions Heritage. June 1997

mechanisms to promote economic development and to facilitate a more organic redevelopment movement.

REDEVELOPMENT

Mason County Economic Development (MCED) reports that several changes in the waterfront area are underway. MCED is a county-wide economic delivery system that assists county entities with two key areas; 1) job creation and retention, and 2) capital investment. The organization works to develop incentives and eliminate barriers to improving economic development. One of the tools MCED uses is Brownfield redevelopment.

MCED has applied for a \$200,000 grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to assist in funding for baseline environmental assessments of brownfield properties throughout the county. This is a valuable tool since it eliminates the uncertainty regarding contamination for potential brownfield site developers.

If awarded, the MCED will facilitate a public process to determine which sites within the county citizens could most critically use this tool. The Ludington waterfront area has several brownfield sites that are ripe for redevelopment. This kind of assistance could greatly encourage local economic vitality along the water.

MARINA AND HARBOR

The Ludington Municipal Marina is located on the north side of the channel that connects Lake Michigan to Pere Marquette Lake. It is within a few blocks of the central business district. The marina has a capacity of 150 slips and contains a service building with fish cleaning facilities, gas docks, pumpout station, restrooms and showers, a picnic shelter and playground area. The facilities were constructed in 1979, improvements completed in 1994 and ongoing.



Washington Ave bridge view of boat docks, by Bob Garrett

Aside from municipal marinas and Waterfront Park, most of the uses within Pere Marquette Lake are industrial in nature. This includes the Carferry yard. The passenger steam ship brings approximately 140,000 passengers into the Ludington area annually, however as the

Waterfront Plan criticizes, Ludington greets visitors with a shipping yard atmosphere.

The Waterfront Comprehensive Plan envisions a walkway development that connects the downtown to the Lake Michigan Car Ferry. The City of Ludington has revised their zoning ordinance to facilitate such a development. Intended as a mix of small-scale retail/commercial shops as well as small trade and craft stores, this area would welcome visitors and act as a social and recreational area for residents.

DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON



Ludington Historical Society

Ludington has a relatively attractive and compact downtown with many established businesses. Ludington’s downtown business district has long been the retail and commercial center of the region. In recent years “big box” development has been locating just outside the City’s boundaries and presenting taxing competition to downtown retailers.

In an effort to pull together the downtown area merchants and business owners, the Mayor developed a Downtown Task Force. The group was established under the premise that the potential of the downtown central business district is far greater than demonstrated in the current uses, employment and amenities. In addition, the underutilized upper floors of many structures offer an opportunity to further stabilize and strengthen the area.

The downtown is also served by a Downtown Business Association, the City Council’s Committee on Downtown and the Waterfront and the Downtown Development Authority. The Downtown Development Authority has the unique financing powers specifically intended to

revitalize aging downtown areas*. In 2003, the City hired a consultant to develop a plan for the downtown.

* Act 197 of Public Acts of 1975 of the State of Michigan, as amended, also known as the Downtown Development Authority Act (Act). The Act was developed to assist units of Government in their encouragement of historic preservation; in the correction elimination and prevention of blight and deterioration in the business districts; to encourage and promote economic development, growth and revitalization; to make provision for the acquisition and disposition of personal and real property; to authorize the creation of an authority; to authorize the levy and collection of taxes; to authorize the issuance of bonds and the use of tax increment financing (TIF); to provide for a development plan that sets forth specific Downtown Development Objectives/Activities, as described in a locally adopted development plan for older or traditional central business districts of Michigan municipalities.

CHAPTER 8. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

This chapter provides an inventory of all public facilities in the City. Police protection, fire protection, and public schools are all discussed. This includes a discussion of the current transportation system in Ludington and demands placed on other infrastructure and services.

TRANSPORTATION



M-116/Lakeshore Drive in the summer of 2003.

The City has made a strong effort to locate sidewalks within neighborhoods and throughout the downtown.

U.S.-10 is the primary entrance to the City from the junction with U.S.-31 freeway just east of the City in Pere Marquette Township. M-116 extends north from Ludington Avenue along Lakeshore Drive and terminates at Ludington State Park about eight miles north. The steamship Badger provides entrance and exit from Ludington across Lake Michigan.

Currently, Ludington is slightly disadvantaged by its location near the termination of U.S.-31 freeway. The lack of through traffic makes Ludington a challenging location for industry whose raw materials are not in the immediate region.

Within the City, Ludington maintains a grid street pattern with public alleys. In the late 1980's the City completed a major \$1 million-plus reconstruction/paving project which brought almost the entire street system up to current paving standards. A few segments of roadway remain unpaved.

The City has made a strong effort to locate sidewalks within neighborhoods and throughout the downtown. The City has the opportunity to expand its bike route along Lake Shore Drive to the State Park, into the City to make additional connections.

Ludington and Scottville are currently served by a Dial-A-Ride service that operates on an as-needed basis. However, as more regional resources are being developed throughout Lake, Mason and Oceana counties, there is a growing need for a more comprehensive public transportation system. The West Michigan Child and Family Resource

Center is a three-county work group that has been awarded an MDOT grant to prepare a public transit needs assessment. The group is looking for ways to connect education, employment, medical, recreation and housing uses throughout the region to best serve residents.

In a waterfront city such as Ludington, there are many transportation demands – local residents concerned about parking, and congestion, those who are dependent on others for rides, boat visitors who bring bicycles, and those who walk, use skateboards and skates. These differing interests are respected and need to be addressed for the benefit of all.

POLICE & FIRE

The Ludington Police Department, located at 408 S. Harrison St., provides 24-hour service with manned patrols within the city limits. The office is open for walk-in service from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Calls for service or after normal business hours are routed through Mason-Oceana 911 (Dispatch Center).

The full time employees include the Chief of Police, one captain, one detective and two administrative staff in addition to road patrol officers. Seasonal employees are utilized in the summertime to patrol the downtown and beach areas.

The Police Department provides primary road and traffic patrol, response to and investigation of criminal complaints, assistance with crowd control, fire calls, special event activities, narcotics investigation, response to critical incidents and downtown and park patrol.

As a “Community Policing” agency, officers are assigned to particular council wards and work with the Target Area Problem Solving (TAPS) Committee, a group of citizens representing the various wards, as well as businesses within the City. Together, their goal is to “target” three issues per month on which to work toward a solution. This strategy allows the Department to provide the service the community desires.

Ludington has an on-call Fire Department. The department is fully equipped, and water is available on a grid system, with hydrants about 300 feet apart throughout the City. On the average, response time for the 21-person department is 2.5 to 5 minutes to get the trucks rolling.

The number of fire calls has decreased over the past several years, attributed to an expansion of public education and prevention activities. All commercial buildings are inspected annually. The fire department has a medical first responder and an extrication rescue squad.

PUBLIC SEWER SERVICES

The Ludington Sewage Treatment Plant, constructed in 1974 and 1975, is located on Sixth Street one half mile east of old U.S. 31. The plant provides wastewater treatment services for the City of Ludington, Pere Marquette and Amber Township, Tamarac Village and Riviera Mobile Home Park, Epworth Heights, Crosswinds, Cartier Park, Vacation Station and Poncho's Pond Campgrounds.

There are three major components to the sewer service, 65 miles of sanitary sewer line, 12 pumping (lift) stations and the treatment plant. The system is a separated sewer system with storm water diverted to Lincoln Lake, Pere Marquette Lake, Lake Michigan and the Pere Marquette River.

The plant has a designed capacity of 7.5 million gallons a day (MGD), a treatment capacity of 6+ MGD and a current average flow rate of 2.2 to 2.8 MGD. Potential future users include the City of Scottville, businesses along the Ludington to Scottville corridor and West Shore College.

WATER

The Ludington Water Plant, located at 501 N. Lakeshore Dr, intakes, treats and distributes water from Lake Michigan to city residents and businesses as well as the City of Scottville, Epworth Heights and portions of Amber and Pere Marquette Township with water service. Preliminary plans are to extend water north from U.S.-10 along Stiles Rd. to West Shore Community College. The plants capacity is 6.4 million gallons per day.

There are two intakes at the water plant. One is a 24" diameter crib intake that reaches approximately 3,300 ft. into Lake Michigan. The intake is treated with chlorine to prevent zebra mussel buildup. The second intake is a 36" diameter submerged intake that reaches approximately 800 ft. into Lake Michigan. No treatment is required in

this case because water is drawn through sand below the bottom of the lake.

There is adequate intake, treatment and distribution capacity for the foreseeable future. However, an additional storage reservoir may be needed in the future depending on population and business growth.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Ludington Department of Public Works, currently located at 201 S. William St., is responsible for maintaining the streets, public property and right-of-ways in the City of Ludington. Duties that fall under these categories include snow plowing, tree planting, trimming and removal, street patching, sign installation and maintenance, parking lot maintenance and maintenance of portions of the city parks in conjunction with the City of Ludington Cemetery and Parks crew.

The supervisor of the DPW also oversees the three fulltime employees of the Motor Pool Department who are responsible for maintenance of all city vehicles and the six fulltime and two seasonal employees who comprise the Utility Maintenance Department. The Utility Maintenance Department's responsibilities include maintenance of the city water and sewer lines as well as reading the water meters and troubleshooting water leaks for area residents.

LUDINGTON AREA SCHOOLS

Ludington Area Public School District covers 75 square miles, and includes in addition to the City, all or portions of Pere Marquette, Amber and Hamlin Townships. The district operates five elementary schools, one junior high and one high school on 19 mills. In 2002, the school district reported a total enrollment of 2,652 students. The school district gets consistently high marks on all State-wide testing. The school system has a fantastic reputation and many believe it is one of the biggest assets of the City.

CHAPTER 9. GUIDING IDEAS

The portions of the Comprehensive Plan presents a broad range of summary information related to current conditions and the planning trends that are apparent and emerging in the City of Ludington. In the context of the Comprehensive Plan, it is important to ask and answer the question: What does it all mean? The following section begins this discussion. Later phases of the planning process help to further focus and refine the City's response to its challenges and to suggest alternative responses to these challenges.

The following paragraphs form only the initial impression and guiding ideas for the following phases of the planning process.

1. **Raise the level of education in the community.** Census numbers indicate that Ludington has a lower percentage of high school graduates and people with a bachelor's degree than the Michigan average. Educational attainment limits the types and quality of job creation in a community. High school retention programs and better access to colleges with a four-year degree program will serve the Ludington workforce well.
2. **Ludington's population is aging and growth remains stagnant.** Clearly the population growth of the Ludington area is stagnating. It will be vital for the community to isolate the causes of this more than 50-year trend and begin to reverse it. A combined effort of job creation, housing development, marketing and community revitalization will certainly be needed. The community must develop amenities to attract new growth. The addition of the new marina is an example of a step towards creating such facilities. Critically, the community should find ways to retain the young professionals local to Ludington and attract new members of the creative class.
3. **Downtown retail could be improved.** Ludington has a relatively attractive and compact downtown with many established businesses. However, the potential of the central core is far greater than demonstrated in the current uses, employment and amenities. In addition, the underutilized upper floors of many structures offer an opportunity to further stabilize and strengthen the area.

Creating additional housing in the downtown would develop a larger market for downtown shops.

3. **Neighborhoods lack capacity.** The City lacks active neighborhood associations and without these important grassroots structures, the effort to stabilize and strengthen residential and commercial areas is significantly more difficult. This problem is exacerbated by the relative imbalance in the City's housing stock. High numbers of vacation rentals and seasonal homes mean people are not around to invest in their neighborhoods. The Police Department has had success with meetings and other community action efforts. While the focus of these efforts may be crime prevention, and as a result they may seem to create a negative impression of some neighborhoods, they do form a basis upon which to form effective neighborhood associations.
4. **Infill and redevelopment opportunity.** There are very attractive areas within the City for infill or redevelopment. Areas around Pere Marquette Lake, particularly near the marina, are ripe for reinvestment and have the potential to bring vitality back to the waterfront. Since the population of Mason County overall is growing slightly, the City has the opportunity to reverse any out-migration and capture additional population within the City limits.
5. **Job creation and retention will be the primary challenge for the next 20-year period.** Population growth and additional investment can not occur in the City unless existing jobs are retained and new jobs are created. Decreasing the poverty rate and the rate of unemployment will be central to success of the City. This will almost certainly require diversifying the economy to focus on expanding tourism and the recreation visitor industry.
6. **Improve regional coordination with Pere Marquette Township and Mason County.** Several of the major attractions within the Ludington area that drive the City's tourism industry are outside of the City limits. Additionally important public resources like the community college, the airport and the City's access to US-31 are not within Ludington's jurisdiction. In order to maximize utilization of these facilities and efficiently allocate time and resources, it will be critical to maintain open communication and a collaborative spirit with the region.
7. **Community attitudes and politics.** Given the range and scope of problems the community is facing, it will be vitally important to

have a population base that is committed to the Plan. This will take dedication and a high degree of trust. This is not a project that can be effectively accomplished by a handful of loyal volunteers. Reversing some of the aforementioned implications will take a comprehensive movement and a broad-based campaign of support.

CHAPTER 10. COMMUNITY INPUT

COMMUNITY OPINION SURVEY

The City distributed a community opinion survey to over 1,200 City residents in the late summer of 2001. The response rate was calculated at 36% return. A copy of the survey is in the appendix. In general, one of the most significant statistics was that 96.2% of respondents feel growth should be encouraged in a planned and controlled manner.

When conducting a survey of this type, it is important to evaluate demographic and lifestyle information to assure responses reflect a broad mix of City residents. In addition, this information can better clarify the “market”, and can help City staff and officials better predict relationships of supply and demand relating to City services in the future.

Demographics of respondents:

- 98.2 % of the respondents are residents of the City.
- Nearly 1/2 (48%) of those responding have lived in Ludington for more than 30 years.
- 42.8% of respondents were between 41 and 60 years of age.

Employment

- 80.6% of respondents reported that they were employed. 26.2% of those are self-employed.
- 16.7% of respondents are retired and 0.7% are students
- 2% of respondents are unemployed

Aside from the unemployed segment of the population, these numbers are fairly representative of the statistical characterization the 2000 Census revealed of Ludington. This shows the sample size of respondents is relatively reflective of the Ludington population as a whole.

Natural and Cultural Features

- 98.3% of respondents feel clean air and water are important. People feel it is important for the City to be involved in protecting groundwater resources (97.7%) and lakefront water quality (92.8%).
- 58% of respondents are concerned about over development of the waterfront and the height of buildings

- 97% feel scenic views of the water are important and 82.5% of those feel it was very important. 96.8% feel it is important to the City to be involved in protecting scenic views.
- 94.7% feel maintaining recreation opportunities is important.
- Overall, people are happy with the amount of open space and beaches available to the public. Respondents (65.1%) would like to see more parklands.
- By and large, people are very satisfied with the current opportunities for recreation. 55.6% would like more swimming areas and 75.4% would like more boat launches.
- 97% of respondents feel it is important for the City to be involved in protecting public access to the waterfront.

To protect the environment, respondents indicated that they agreed with requiring open space for new development, stricter shoreline zoning, stricter groundwater protection measures, and comprehensive noise, light and junk ordinances.

Social Patterns and Community Enrichment

- Respondents feel it is important to maintain the slower pace of life (67.9%) and an informal lifestyle (84.2%).
- 96.3% feel it is important to maintain the low levels of crime; of those 86.1% feel it is very important.
- 64.9% of respondents feel it is important to maintain a small population, while 35.1% either have no opinion or feel it is unimportant.
- 93.6% feel it is important to maintain a sense of community; of those 66.4% feel it is very important.

Services and Infrastructure

- Summer traffic congestion is viewed as a problem by 69.4% of respondents
- Year-round traffic congestion seems to be negligible. According to the survey 70.6% feel it is not a problem.
- 52.5% are concerned about excessive speeds on City streets

Respondents were asked to rate city services. People overwhelmingly responded that city services were good or excellent. Zoning enforcement and street maintenance were the only two services that survey respondents indicated could be improved.

Housing and Neighborhoods

The survey asked whether or not respondents feel residential zoning was too restrictive or not restrictive enough. Responses were pretty

evenly distributed, but leaned more toward people indicating residential zoning could be more restrictive. Generally people would like to see more single family homes (67.2%) and more senior housing (55.4%). Respondents seem to be happy with the current amount of duplexes, apartments and seasonal or vacation homes.

Economic Development and Employment

This category illustrated the most consistent and highest levels of concern on the survey.

- 81.8% of respondents feel the lack of job opportunities is a problem.
- 78.4% are concerned about the lack of skilled jobs
- 77.1% feel the economy is too seasonal
- 79.2% are concerned that household incomes are too low

Land Use

- 56.3% of respondents are concerned that junk and nuisances hurt Ludington's image
- Overall people seemed to feel commercial growth is a problem (44.9%) and residential growth is not (47.9%). Although when asked if they would like more, less or the same amount of different types of commercial, respondents indicated that they are happy with current commercial but would be amenable to more small shopping centers.
- People do approximately 50% of their shopping on U.S. 10 between Ludington and Scottville and 32% of their shopping in Ludington.
- 31% would like to see growth encouraged and 65.2% prefer planned and controlled growth
- 64.7% are pleased with the existing number of hotels and motels. Nearly equal numbers would support (17%) or oppose (18.2%) more visitor accommodations.
- Generally people like the amount of industrial development in the City or would encourage more. In particular, respondents (63.8%) are interested in more light industrial development.
- 79.6% feel maintaining industrial development is important.

Downtown and the Waterfront

- 31% would like to see growth encouraged and 65.2% prefer planned and controlled growth
- 64.7% are pleased with the existing number of hotels and motels. Nearly equal numbers would support (17%) or oppose (18.2%) more visitor accommodations.

- Survey respondents were asked to rate several issues related to shopping in downtown Ludington. A majority of respondents feel parking (54.5%), lighting (78.6%), and pedestrian traffic (66.9%) were good or excellent. On the same question a majority of respondents feel the choice of merchandise (73.3%), the appearance of the downtown area (53.7%), and store hours (58.5%) were fair to poor.
- 92% indicated that downtown shopping opportunities were important and of those 59.7% feel it was very important. 87.3% feel locally owned family businesses were important. 91.9% feel it is important for the City to be involved in protecting downtown shopping opportunities.
- 85.1% of respondents feel downtown landscaping is important.

THE VISIONING FOCUS GROUP

In May 2003 the Ludington Planning Commission hosted a Visioning Focus group. A focus group of elected officials, members of boards and commissions, regional entities and coordinating agencies was invited to participate. Given the existing input about Ludington's current condition, the purpose of this session was to articulate specific goals for the future and identify the means to achieve them.

The Visioning Process. The Visioning Focus group was held at City Hall. Invitations to participate in the session were provided to numerous members of the community. In addition, news stories were provided to the media inviting participation.

For the visioning activity, the total group was broken into three smaller Vision Teams. Each team was given three goals statements to evaluate and provide background information to support. The goal topics included:

1. Natural and Cultural Features
2. Social Patterns and Community Enrichment
3. Services and Infrastructure
4. Housing and Neighborhoods
5. Economic Development and Employment
6. Land Use
7. Downtown and the Waterfront

The Vision Teams all worked on the Downtown and the Waterfront goal and two other goals. The teams were given copies of the Community Profile chapters and land use maps of the City to inform their discussions.

Specifically, each of the groups were asked to first evaluate the goals based on whether or not the goal met the following four criteria?

- ◆ Expresses a desired end result (would you be happy if this were true?).
- ◆ Communicated in positive terms.
- ◆ Represents a consensus view of the community (does your group agree upon the way the goal is stated and its intent?).
- ◆ Is a stretch, but attainable.

Visioning Output The quality of the discussion and the energy contributed by all participants was excellent.

The following pages include the “Opportunities and Challenges” input from the focus group. Adjusted goal statements are reflected in the goals and objectives chapter.

The quality of the discussion and the energy contributed by all participants was excellent

NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

- Produce a monthly publication promoting events in the region and get local business support
- West Shore Community College is a hugely underutilized asset
- A small theater in town would be nice
- Develop bike trails and waterfront walkway
- Money is a challenge
- Lack of youth involvement is troubling
- Building on public transportation is a great opportunity
- Use the library for more programs
- Vacant property and buildings can be seen as an opportunity; Kmart; Washington Ave. Baptist Church; Lyric Building.
- Skate park
- Recreational team sports
- Keep viewsheds to the lake
- Long winters limit possibilities
- State park, Stearns Park, updating Cartier Park and Schools are great assets
- Public beach and playgrounds are wonderful

- MDOT regulations are too strict
- Lakeshore drive should be a designated Scenic Highway
- Limited resources are a challenge
- Use the Coast Guard Station for a historical museum

SOCIAL PATTERNS AND COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

- Develop themes of lumber and maritime history; maritime museum, waterfront plaza by old city hall
- Build upon strong art community with more events
- Bring back Rainbow Gardens concept with a venue downtown
- Implement waterfront walkway
- Improve attractions from Badger to downtown
- Its difficult to get around if you don't have a car
- Youth center
- Homelessness and teen pregnancy is a problem
- Encourage churches to stay in town
- Social planning organizations need more coordination of their activities and services in town

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

- Fourth Ward is a good example
- Pride of Ownership
- Excellent values
- Targeted improvements
- N. James & N. Rowe has industrial, there are conflicts nearby, but it's a solid area.
- Landlord apathy is a problem
- People are unwilling to do P.I.L.O.T.S. (payment in lieu of taxes)
- There is a lack of funding for land assembly
- Encourage 2nd floor high end units downtown
- Identify points of blight

- Seasonal housing offers no social commitment
- Obsolete property redevelopment act assistance
- Atkinson Building

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT

- Mass Transit is an important improvement
- Intergovernmental cooperation is critical
- The isolated location of Ludington makes transportation challenging
- There is a lack of land in the City to add industry
- The deep water port is an asset
- Lake Michigan is an enormous attraction
- The lack of funding for land assembly causes challenges to new investment
- The car ferry is an opportunity
- A growing tourist economy will help Ludington's future; Ludington should strive to be the "best" tourism location on the lakeshore
- State park traffic means business for Ludington shops
- Business owners live outside the City and are not involved
- Educated youngsters leave town
- Ludington is a desirable retirement location

LAND USE

- Hire a planner and full time code enforcement officer
- Work with landlords and develop incentives to improve properties
- Build public support for code enforcement
- Establish a tenant advocate association; adopt an ordinance to require landlords to distribute a tenants rights booklet upon lease agreement
- The new more flexible zoning ordinance will help in implementation
- Host more public relations events; ex: "Habitat for Ludington" similar to Habitat for Humanity but focused in Ludington

- Work with a group from the Community College to do a study on neighborhoods

SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Expand public transit
- The City has a good grid system road network
- The lack of major air transit is a drawback; length of runway
- Improved communication throughout the community
- Urban sprawl mentality is a challenge to Ludington
- There is no taxi service
- There is very little competition for utilities
- Part-time population

DOWNTOWN & THE WATERFRONT

Since all three groups were given the Downtown and the Waterfront goal to work on, three different goals statements came out of the session. The final goal statement is a combination for the three goals.

- Public access and views of the water are an amenity; Keep waterfront viewsheds clear and unobstructed; Preserve public's ability to use the waterfront
- Could work to connect the downtown to the waterfront a little better
- Free kite lending at the beach
- Designate a location for boat servicing on the waterfront
- Promote windsurfing and small sail boat events
- Utilize coast guard property
- There is a lack of critical mass for redevelopment
- Realtors and property owners are driving prices up
- Parking is now located on prime beach areas and roads, when those spaces should be people places and landscaped
- There is plenty of retail space to take advantage of
- Increased tax base would be helpful

- Further develop Pere Marquette Lake with more housing and uses other than industrial on the waterfront areas
- Encourage a mix of uses around the lake and in the downtown
- Lovely parks with beautiful views
- New zoning will help to encourage new investment
- Marketing of the Ludington area could be improved
- Traffic speed on Ludington Avenue is a problem
- Tourists can't find parking lots
- Bikes need their own facilities so they don't ride on the sidewalks
- The downtown needs the right mix of retail; would like to see a drug store with an old fashion soda fountain
- More housing would improve the downtown; housing above shops is good
- More outdoor cafes would add interest to the street; more dining variety
- More downtown events would help market the stores

SECTION III. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This section of the Plan builds on the Community Profile presented in Section II and extends the Community's vision into the future. The Future Land Use Plan begins with the broad policy foundation upon which the Plan is formed. This foundation is found in Chapter 11 which includes the goals of the City and the objectives or milestones that support them.

Based on the goals and objectives of the City, the future land use plan is presented in Section III. That section includes the Future Land Use Map (page 65), and a description of the general land uses planned for the City. Finally, this section concludes with the Action Plan. This is a series of implementation strategies that outline a course of action to realize the vision of this Plan.

CHAPTER 11. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Comprehensive Plan will be founded on the following goal statements, each supported by more specific objectives. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or conditions of the City about twenty-five years into the future. They are intentionally general but all are felt to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

With these standards in mind, we have gathered the comments from the surveys and community involvement workshops to develop the following goals and objectives statements for review. They suggest things that must be accomplished if the broader goal statements are to become reality. Most are specific activities or programs that will require the active effort of the City or other agencies in the area. All should be regarded as “first drafts” and subject to revision, adjustment, expansion or elimination, before the final plan is completed.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

Goal: Residents of Ludington will enjoy clean air and water resources. The City will collaborate with surrounding areas to ensure that current and future generations will enjoy the benefits of the natural features of the region. Recreational opportunities in Ludington will be interconnected by a non-motorized network and include a diverse range of outdoor and indoor activities that further the physical and mental well-being of residents and visitors.

Objective A: Develop and implement a plan to establish a system of bike and pedestrian paths, public access points to the area’s natural features and a community-wide network of parks and open spaces.

Objective B: Establish and strengthen cooperative and supportive relationships with neighboring communities to protect natural features.

Objective C: Build and strengthen relationships with State and Federal agencies to further the community’s goals for the protection of air and water quality and to ensure longevity for the State and Federal lands surrounding the City.

Objective D: Maintain and continually update the City’s Recreation Plan to prioritize needs, mark progress toward full implementation and to position the City for available financial support.

Objective E: Identify, map and document existing natural resource areas in the City for preservation or enhancement.

SOCIAL PATTERNS AND COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

Goal: The City of Ludington will be known for its unique historic character, a relaxed and casual pace of life, a commitment to strengthen families and a willingness to cooperate to achieve the continual improvement of the community.

Objective A: Collaborate with local organizations to host community activities and cultural events year-round.

Objective B: Develop and implement a program of community involvement in public safety and service activities to strengthen neighborhoods and communication channels.

Objective C: Provide areas that encourage social interaction and high use in parks and other public spaces.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Goal: The City will provide for a variety of residential settings to serve all citizens with attractive, efficient and affordable homes located in safe and attractive neighborhoods.

Objective A: Develop tools to foster a range of housing types for residents of varying ages and income levels.

Objective B: Expand programs to renew and improve existing housing and pursue funding to renew areas that require attention.

Objective C: Strengthen code enforcement measures to assure safe, clean and pleasing neighborhoods.

Objective D: Implement a process to celebrate successful neighborhood building efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT

Goal: The City of Ludington will continue to attract and encourage industries that provide employment now and in the future. The City will feature attractive development sites and complete services to accommodate future economic development.

Objective A: Develop and implement mechanisms to attract new industry and relocate existing industry to the industrial park as necessary to create redevelopment/reuse opportunities.

Objective B: Evaluate existing zoning for its impact on economic development and create appropriate amendments to encourage desired investment.

Objective C: Capture a greater share of Michigan's tourism by enhancing facilities and expanding promotional activities and events.

LAND USE

Goal: Residential and commercial property in Ludington will consistently exceed minimum Code standards through the cooperative efforts of the City and property owners. Land use decisions will be made in accord with a living Comprehensive Plan and will be reached with broad community involvement and support.

Objective A: Evaluate the Zoning ordinance and develop amendments to further the goals of the Plan.

Objective B: Identify and develop an inventory of infill opportunities and tools to encourage investment and reuse of underutilized properties.

Objective C: Develop a uniform city sign design for public and informational signs.

Objective D: Develop and maintain a community commitment to continuously improve and re-energize the Plan.

DOWNTOWN & THE WATERFRONT

Goal: Downtown Ludington will serve as the area's economic and commercial core, characterized by successful retail and service businesses and entertainment venues to meet the needs of residents and visitors. Development in downtown Ludington and along the waterfront will be sensitive to the community's heritage and valuable views, while incorporating attractive and inviting design elements to promote human scale patterns of growth.

Objective A: Evaluate the Zoning Ordinance and develop amendments to improve opportunities for commercial development that will support marina activities.

Objective B: Assist the DDA in regularly updating its Tax Increment Financing Plan.

Objective C: Improve the connection from the Carferry dock to downtown.

Objective D: Develop additional marketing tools for Ludington's downtown and waterfront areas.

Goal: Ludington will be served with abundant clean water, power, fuel and modern communication linkages to support the requirements of a vibrant and active community. A safe and efficient system of roadways and public transportation will serve the citizens of the City, providing effective linkages with non-motorized facilities and between and among neighborhoods, shopping and employment areas.

Objective A: Expand transportation facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and other modes of non-motorized transit to enable residents to commute to jobs, shopping and for recreation in a safe and convenient manner.

Objective B: Develop a neighborhood traffic calming program to control traffic flow and parking in residential areas.

Objective C: Develop a schedule to bring all streets, curbs, and sidewalks up to good condition.

CHAPTER 12. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The primary purpose of this plan is to encourage the enrichment of already existing development patterns that preserve the City's picturesque location, neighborhood enhancement, downtown investment opportunities, and industrial potential.

The City of Ludington Future Land Use Plan establishes a general blueprint of land usage to guide growth, development, and redevelopment for the next twenty years. Since the City of Ludington is fully developed, the primary purpose of this plan is to encourage the enrichment of already existing development patterns that preserve the City's picturesque location, strengthen neighborhood development, and enhance downtown investment opportunities, and industrial potential. The Plan also intends to pilot improvements to the present aging housing stock and set the stage for future growth.

By encouraging a Plan for the future, Ludington is realizing objectives and setting the pace for continued progress. The Future Land Use Plan is inevitably linked to the zoning districts in the City of Ludington. Zoning is the act of regulating the use of lands, while planning is essentially scheduling in advance land within a community for a general usage. To this end, the Future Land Use Plan uses a map to visually express the intended conditions of land uses in the City. Even though Ludington is a fully established community, these uses are illustrative of how the City is recommended to grow in an effort to boost positive characteristics and to reverse impending disinvestment in the City. The following describes the future land use designations as illustrated on Map 1 on the following page.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

By continuing to strengthen the Central Business District, Ludington will champion efforts to redevelop downtown as a regional destination and an attractive spot for entertainment, dining, shopping, and living

The Central Business District (CBD) is intended to promote efficient, and inviting forms of development in the downtown core of the City. With attractive and walkable patterns of development along and off of Ludington Avenue, higher density residential and commercial uses here will allow for a secure and exciting living and shopping environment. This land use designation is meant to serve the entire Ludington region and its visitors with goods and services while developing in accord with the surrounding residential and residentially mixed neighborhoods. Finally, this district is meant to serve as a social gathering place for area residents, as several community facilities located here.

As the downtown area of Ludington, the Central Business District is located generally north and south of Ludington Avenue and stretches from Lewis Street to Rowe Street. This district also extends to the south along James Street towards Pere Marquette Lake between Harrison and Robert down to Foster Street.

The key to distinguishing the Central Business District from the other land use classifications in the City of Ludington is high-density mixed uses. For example, buildings along Ludington Avenue are in the process of being redeveloped to encourage a mixture of commercial and residential apartment uses. Planned uses in this district include, but are not limited to, commercial, office, entertainment, civic, high-density residential, and pocket parks. Maintaining a compact downtown core allows public investment to have a greater impact on a smaller area and makes strolling the downtown a pleasurable experience for shoppers and residents.

CIVIC

Uses in the Civic land use districts are intended for the public good.

The Civic land use designation includes government buildings, public institutions and schools. For example, City Hall, the Ludington Post Office, the Mason County Courthouse, Ludington Memorial Hospital, Ludington High School, the elementary schools, and the Ludington Library all are Civic land uses. A primary purpose of this usage is to facilitate public meetings, education, and culture for the City of Ludington. Uses in the Civic land use districts should be in harmony with governmental and educational purposes, and intended for the public good.

INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial land use classification is meant for manufacturing, shipping and heavy commercial employment opportunities to serve the greater Ludington area. Facilities ought to be developed with suitable utility and transport links and with respect for the City's environmental features.

The future Industrial uses cluster in two sections of the City: along the City's shoreline of the Pere Marquette deep water port, and, the Ludington Industrial Park. This area actually extends eastward into Pere Marquette Township which compliments the park with additional industrial uses.

Traditionally, the Industrial designation has the following purposes:

- To shield residential areas against potentially undesirable effects of manufacturing, such as noise, odors, fumes, and truck traffic;

Future Land Use Map

- To provide sufficient lands for base industry employment and investment; and,
- To establish appropriate land use controls intended to protect manufacturing and neighboring residential developments from congestion and pollution

PARKS

Parks are a vital part of the community's identity and health. Maintaining and promoting more green-space and safe public meeting places is essential to quality of life in Ludington.

Recreational activities in the Ludington area abound. The immediate region contains some of the best beaches, hiking trails, camping facilities, and fishing streams, in the state. The City contributes opportunities for sports events, socializing, children's play activity, and passive recreation. With careful planning, these common areas can be enhanced and connected. These lands are a vital part of the community's identity and health. The Parks land use designation is intended for community parkland, public beaches, trails, pocket parks and community plazas.

The largest concentrations of "parkland" in Ludington are the Cartier Park and Lakeview Cemetery and Stearns Park. The areas falling under the Parks land use designation are intended for public ownership and use. Maintaining and promoting more green-space and safe public meeting places is essential to quality of life in Ludington.

RESIDENTIAL MIX

...establish walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to commercial and recreational services with amenities and design.

A primary goal of this Comprehensive Plan is the development of high quality and aesthetic forms of development that increase residential density while creating a very attractive living environment for residents. The Residential Mix designation is key to this goal. The primary purpose of this designation is to establish walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to commercial and recreational services with amenities and design that work with respect to views of the waterfront. These neighborhoods are scaled for public transit or for passenger car travel with good pedestrian connections to commercial and institutional land uses nearby.

The primary land use within this area will be attached homes developed in clusters, in multi-unit buildings or in buildings mixed with commercial uses where land is available or redevelopment is desired. This may also include garden cottages and other senior living opportunities. Design techniques will be encouraged, to establish small pockets of public green space within this relatively intense development form. Innovative design techniques will be considered to accommodate

mixed uses that complement one another. Overall residential densities from five to twelve dwelling units per acre will be achieved.

Increasing existing densities around the Central Business District will preserve the more stable single-family residential areas while utilizing the locations in close proximity to goods and services. It is understood that today, much of this area has development of one kind or another on the existing property. Recent condominium projects have demonstrated that there is a market for mixes in residential housing. Since this plan is intended to be the vision for 20 to 25 years into the future, developing a residential mix in this area should be the goal of the Ludington Planning Commission and City Council when reviewing site plans and rezoning requests. This suggestion simply guides the market to take action preferred by the City.

PERFORMANCE COMMERCIAL

Performance commercial areas are defined in portions of the City where a mix of commercial and industrial activities exist in close proximity to residential neighborhoods. These areas provide local jobs as well and goods and services to the community. In many cases these types of uses may coexisting without conflict. Since these areas are well established and cause little nuisance they will be preserved in the future land use plan. However, in the event new businesses locate in these areas or existing businesses apply to expand or change their facilities and operation, performance standards will be applied to ensure continued compatibility. Developments should, to the greatest extent possible, be designed and built to preserve unique natural features and to support smooth traffic movements.

...minimize the appearance of the oppressive, asphalt dominated look, while respecting the need for easy access.

Facilities in the Performance Commercial district are likely to include wholesale retailing, automobile-related services, mini-storage, harbor related services and some office. It is desirable for such facilities to be designed in architectural good taste and for parking areas to include adequate landscaping to minimize the appearance of the oppressive, asphalt dominated look, while respecting the need for easy access and loading.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

A primary goal of the City of Ludington is the preservation of family living environments by encouraging attractive residential neighborhoods. The main focus of this district is to establish, preserve and enhance

inviting and walkable neighborhoods at suitable densities with less than five units per acre to accommodate empty-nesters, families with children, and single residents. This designation is meant for single-family houses on individual lots, typically in subdivisions and traditional grid street neighborhoods.

Most of the City is classified as Single Family Residential. The principal land use in this district will be single-family detached housing. On a restricted basis, higher densities might be considered where the effects of that density on natural features can be mitigated, and where impacts on neighboring residences can be effectively buffered.

HISTORIC MARITIME DISTRICT

The Historic Maritime District will encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic buildings for maritime related business, residential uses and the arts.

The Historic Maritime District is intended to preserve the historic character of the area while cultivating the fisherman’s village theme. Currently south Washington Avenue is an eclectic mix of turn of the century buildings and charter fishing operations with supporting facilities. While the five-block area has experienced some deterioration, the authentic, raw character of south Washington makes it prime for young professionals and the “creative class”¹⁶.

The goal of the Historic Maritime District is to encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic buildings for maritime related business, residential uses and the arts. Along with the existing charter fishing business, uses in this district may include graphic design, entertainment, working art studios, culinary arts, interior design and those in the business of other creative thought industries. This land use classification will provide commercial and studio options with additional associated residential forms to create a village-like atmosphere. Residential uses are envisioned as flats or loft-style apartments above business spaces.

VISITOR ACCOMMODATIONS

Ludington is growing as a tourism destination in Michigan. Providing excellent visitor accommodations is a critical component to building that portion of Ludington’s economy. Within and surrounding these areas it will be critical to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the Visitor

¹⁶ “The Rise of the Creative Class” by Richard Florida; Basic Books, June 2002. “The key to economic growth lies not just in the ability to attract the creative class, but to translate that underlying advantage in the form of new ideas, new tech business and regional growth.”

Providing excellent visitor accommodations is a critical component to building Ludington's tourism economy.

Accommodations district and expand the current area designated for hotels and motels to include more resort options. This area may also include some small retail, dining establishments and other entertainment venues.

The Visitor Accommodation District is located at the entrance to the City on Ludington Avenue and at the very westerly end of Ludington Avenue. It is intended to portray a sense of welcome and hospitality. As bookends to the City, the district will encourage development concepts that illustrate attention to detail, pride in community, and visually separate Ludington from Pere Marquette Township. The area within this district south of the hospital will serve out-of-town guests attending to hospital patients and those visiting Ludington for vacation and respite. The area at the west end of Ludington Avenue will pull together as a Ludington-style resort area.

WATERFRONT VISITOR ARRIVAL

The deep-water harbor in Ludington has long been an asset to the community. The Lake Michigan Carferry and other cruise ships, and charter fishing boats use Ludington's waterfront to dock. The Waterfront Visitor Arrival area is intended to preserve the location of the Carferry and continue that area for additional harbor use while improving both its appearance and connectivity to the downtown.

CHAPTER 13. ACTION PLAN

A “liveable community” is created by making one improvement at a time.

In order for the Future Land Use Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued growth in Ludington, it must be implemented. A “liveable community” is created by making one improvement at a time. Sidewalks, street trees and other amenities are installed intersection by intersection, block by block. Individually, they do not create a livable community. Collectively, they can develop the environment needed to create a great place to live, visit, work, play and do business. In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

It is very important to build short-term projects that people can see. For example, a new section of sidewalk or a freshly painted crosswalk is visible while a transportation plan is a paper document that may never be seen or appreciated by the public. The point is that a program, to keep its momentum, needs some quick wins. They show that something is happening, and that government is responsive.

Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Ludington City Council, the Planning Commission, and the City staff. This is done through a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures which are described in this chapter. Most of the action strategies require significant public and private investment. Some are small enough to be implemented immediately. Others will take time. All are important, as they contribute individual elements that will help build the overall vision expressed by the planning participants.

5-Year Plan

EXPAND AND ENCOURAGE FRANCHISE BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

The ordinance is intended to encourage local businesses to expand as well as to create interactive attractions .

To create more activity and attractions on Ludington’s waterfront, the City has designed and adopted a local ordinance to develop franchise business arrangements for limited numbers of concessions and vendors. The City should work through the DDA to expand activities such as kayak rental, free kite lending, hot dog stands or ice cream carts. The ordinance is intended to encourage local businesses to expand as well as to create interactive attractions for people at the waterfront and in the Visitor Accommodations area.

Responsibilities: The lead responsibility for this policy may be placed with City staff in conjunction with the City Council.

DEVELOP SUB-AREA PLAN FOR LUDINGTON AVENUE TERMINUS

The clear line of sight down Ludington Avenue creates a wonderful panoramic view of the lakeshore and the westerly skies.

The beautiful views of Lake Michigan and Pere Marquette Lake are among the greatest assets of the City. The clear line of sight down Ludington Avenue creates a wonderful panoramic view of the lakeshore and the westerly skies. However, at this time, the terminus of Ludington Avenue leaves something to be desired. Elements that should be considered in the redesign of the space include landscaping, elimination of asphalt and guard rails, and improving the space to inspire people to congregate and enjoy the fantastic views. A sub-area plan for the terminus will be a central strategy in achieving the goals of this plan.

Responsibilities: The Planning Commission will take the lead in implementing this effort. MDOT and surrounding property owners should participate. To maintain the momentum of the effort, outside consulting support should be considered.

WATERFRONT OVERLAY DISTRICT

To achieve the City's goals of developing consistent pedestrian access to the waterfront, the City should develop an overlay district to facilitate the development of a waterfront pathway system. The overlay district would contain specific design standards for pedestrian access including appearance, surface type, width, safety standards and access requirements. This is extremely important since the waterfront trail will be developed in segments as site plans are improved. It is critical that each trail segment matches up with the trail on an adjacent property for it to be a useable amenity.

Having clear waterfront guidelines will ensure the trail will serve as a well designed public amenity.

Standards should be developed with sensitivity to privacy and property rights. Having clear guidelines for path development will ensure that the conditions placed upon site plans as they are reviewed are not arbitrary, and will build confidence that the trail will serve as a well designed public amenity. It should be understood that there will be circumstances where the pathway can not be developed directly adjacent to the waterfront, but that property owners will cooperate to develop a continuous trailway system.

Responsibilities: This action strategy may be implemented by the City staff and the Planning Commission with potential help from outside

support. Any resulting amendments to the Ordinance will require the review of the City's legal staff and ultimately the adoption of the City Council.

EXPAND AND ENCOURAGE PARK USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Maintaining, developing and improving parks are some of the most publicly visible and widely celebrated activities in any community.

Currently the City of Ludington has a Cemetery, Parks and Recreation Committee, which acts as a sub-committee of the City Council, and the City maintains a Parks and Recreation Plan through the Community Development Director. Maintaining, developing and improving parks are some of the most publicly visible and widely celebrated activities in any community and therefore, a responsive and inclusive decision making process is very important. To build leadership and ownership of the City's parks, it would be advantageous for the City to involve more people in the parks planning and development process. This group would complete activities such as:

1. Preparation, recommendation to the City Council for adoption, and continual evaluation of a Parks Plan for the development of the City parks system;
2. Recommending to the City Manager, annually, a budget covering the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of the City parks system;
3. Recommending to the City Council capital improvement projects and grants for the City parks system;
4. Recommending to the City Council policies, rules and regulations related to the use, operation, and maintenance of the parks system;

In addition this group could coordinate small community projects such as "adopt a park", planting programs, community gardening events and organize local groups to take action in improving the City's parks system. It is to the City's advantage to create an additional mechanism of public participation in the development of the City's parks. The Recreation programming would not be part of the group's responsibility, although the group should coordinate with the programming groups to plan for future facilities needs within the community. Sharing in this responsibility can ensure a more efficient and comprehensive parks planning process.

Responsibilities: The City Council should work with the Planning Commission to define a structure for additional public involvement in the Park development.

EXPAND TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

A good network of street trees is part of a balanced urban infrastructure.

Ludington has beautiful and mature street trees which greatly add to the pleasant atmosphere in its urban neighborhoods. A good network of street trees is part of a balanced urban infrastructure and connects urban neighborhoods to the natural forests that surround the region. The urban forest is reaching an age where a percentage of the street trees are aging, diseased or dying. The City should continue to develop and increase funding for a street tree removal and replacement program to ensure the perpetuation of beautiful, cool, and inviting neighborhood streets and preserve the value of the properties they grace.

Ludington will strive to become one of over eighty nationally recognized Tree Cities in Michigan through the Tree City USA program¹⁷. The Tree City Program will provide a structure for the systematic management of the cities resources.

Responsibilities: The Public Works Department, potentially in conjunction with the Parks Group should implement this task. To include the program in the City's budget will require the support of the City Council.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION PILOT PROJECT

Neighborhood association programs can be very effective in building community capacity and improving quality of life in neighborhoods.

Many aging small cities have developed neighborhood associations to facilitate housing improvements and respond to social issues at a neighborhood level. These associations may form under City-sponsorship or spontaneously. Neighborhood association programs can be very effective in building community capacity and improving quality of life in neighborhoods.

The City of Ludington has not designated neighborhood boundaries and does not have a neighborhood association system in place at this time. However, the City is laid out in a manner that easily lends itself to the formation of such a neighborhood association system. Such groups can organize community and neighborhood events such as neighborhood clean-ups, house painting, or assisting elderly and others in housing improvements. In addition, these organizations generally have a social component that organizes educational programs related to

¹⁷ In order to qualify to be a designated city for Tree City USA, the community must meet four standards. The City must have: 1) A Tree Board or Department, 2) A Tree Care Ordinance, 3) A community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita, and 4) An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation.

employment, child care or domestic violence. Often these organizations begin with the establishment of a neighborhood watch group or by engaging citizens in community policing training.

Neighborhood associations are difficult for a government body to initiate because to be successful they must have the broad support and buy-in from neighborhood leaders and residents. However, in communities where no neighborhood associations exist it is helpful to develop an example program in a neighborhood that might be particularly receptive to such an association. The City should work with neighborhood leaders in a specific area or ward of the City to develop a pilot neighborhood association.

Responsibilities: This may be a project for a sub-committee of the City Council with the coordination of neighborhood leaders.

UPDATE PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan envisions several new parks, additional facilities and dedicated areas within the City for park use. These new facilities, including the trails network expansion ideas, should be incorporated into the parks plan in order to take advantage of grants and other funding opportunities.

Responsibilities: The Parks Group, potentially in conjunction with the Public Works Department should implement this task. To include the park plans in the City's budget will require the support of the City Council.

IMPROVE NON-MOTORIZED NETWORK

Identifying bike routes and adding bike lanes to some of the major roadways would encourage bicyclists to travel in an appropriate and safe manner, and bring more State Park traffic into town.

As a fairly dense community, it will be important to develop safe and effective pedestrian connections throughout Ludington, but particularly between parks and public amenities. Pedestrian linkages are important to provide residents with options other than private automobiles, to encourage healthy lifestyles and to reduce the number of traffic-pedestrian conflicts. The City may explore options to improve pedestrian connections through publicly supported loan and grant assistance for sidewalks or as a long-term measure as redevelopment occurs.

During the summer months bicycling throughout Ludington is extremely popular. Identifying bike routes and adding bike lanes to

some of the major road ways would encourage bicyclists to travel in an appropriate and safe manner, and bring more of the State Park traffic into town. In addition there are a growing number of day trips made in Michigan to take advantage of beautiful, easy to moderate bike routes. To plan for bicycle traffic, the City should designate bike routes, paint bike lanes and add bicycle parking where feasible and warranted.

Responsibilities: The Public Works Department, potentially in conjunction with the Parks Group should implement this task. To include the program in the City's budget will require the support of the City Council.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY COORDINATION AND SITE TESTING

Several former industrial sites within the City are ripe for redevelopment.

Several former industrial sites within the City are ripe for redevelopment and will need to be evaluated for environmental contamination before some portions of the Future Land Use Plan are feasible. Working in coordination with the Mason County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, the City should identify and prioritize key areas for new investment and apply for funding for baseline assessments of the property.

Responsibilities: This may be a project for a sub-committee of the City Council with an economic development focus with the coordination of Mason County and the Economic Development Corporation.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ON LUDINGTON AVE NEAR HOSPITAL

Access management controls and expanded site plan review requirements are warranted to address future traffic considerations for any changes or new development on Ludington Avenue near the hospital. As the hospital expands, more out-buildings and businesses associated with the medical industry are anticipated along the Ludington Avenue. To preserve the campus-like feel of the hospital area, site plan reviews should consider consolidating driveway access and defining turning movements to reduce traffic conflicts.

Responsibilities: This action strategy may be implemented by the City staff and the Planning Commission with potential help from outside support. Any resulting amendments to the Ordinance will require the review of the City's legal staff and ultimately the adoption of the City Council.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

Creating a safe a pleasant shopping and entertainment district in a community adds to the appeal of a downtown.

Creating a safe and pleasant shopping and entertainment district in a community adds to the appeal of a downtown for tourism and improves sales within the Central Business District. To ensure that the aesthetic objectives are achieved, and to assist the City in meeting its goal for new jobs and residents in the downtown, design standards for the CBD should be developed and implemented. These standards should aim to maintain a consistent aesthetic within the downtown. Some of the standards might include requiring a percentage of glass windows on the first floor, building materials on the façade, awnings, outdoor seating areas, or parking location.

Responsibilities: The City staff and the Planning Commission may implement this action strategy with help from Central Business organizations. Any resulting amendments to the Ordinance will require the review of the City’s legal staff and ultimately the adoption of the City Council.

COMMUNITY SIGN PROGRAM

Throughout the planning process it has been suggested that the directional signs in Ludington could be improved. This action strategy recommends that the City work with a Landscape Architect to develop a consistent directional sign program to advise people of how to get to attractions within the community.

Responsibilities: This project should be coordinated by the Planning Commission in conjunction with the Downtown Task Force, the DDA and business associations.

5 TO 10-YEAR PLAN

COAST GUARD PROPERTY SUB-AREA PLAN

The transfer of ownership of the property near the mouth of Pere Marquette Lake will open the land to new possibilities. This location represents the junction of the Lake Michigan and Pere Marquette Lake waterfront pathways. The site should be evaluated for options including visitor accommodations, museum, convenience commercial, restaurant

viability, and various outdoor amenities. This may be considered the second phase of the Ludington Avenue Terminus sub-area plan.

Responsibilities: The Planning Commission should work with the Coast Guard and the Department of Natural Resources to define new uses within the area surrounding the transferred property. Once the Planning Commission has prioritized potential uses for the site, the Committee of the Planning Commission should retain the services of a landscape architect for additional ideas and final design products.

LUDINGTON AVENUE HISTORIC DESIGNATION

The historic integrity of the east end of Ludington Avenue welcomes visitors and defines the unique charm of the City. To preserve the historic character and preserve the architectural style of the lumber

lanes. Several communities in Michigan have successfully completed road diets on state roads that facilitate less than 30,000 cars/day. Working with MDOT to enhance Ludington Avenue and Lakeshore Drive will improve accessibility for all residents and visitors, beautify two major roads in the City, and enhance the shopping experience in the downtown.

Responsibilities: This project should be coordinated and researched by the Planning Commission. It should be understood that projects requiring MDOT approval also require more time. Any improvements to Ludington Avenue should be done in conjunction with the Downtown Task Force, the DDA and business associations.

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