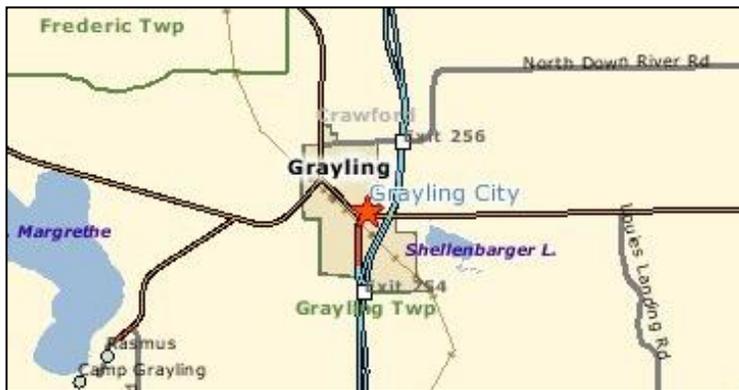


Executive Summary

The following summarizes the content and recommendations offered in the Master Plan for the City of Grayling. It is not intended to provide the level of detail found in the plan, but it provides a brief guide to citizens seeking basic details about the plan. Anyone using the executive summary must consider that much more information, analysis and descriptions of recommendations and future land uses are provided in the full text of the Plan.

Introduction to the City of Grayling



The City of Grayling is a small community located in northern Lower Michigan, in Crawford County. Grayling draws on its accessibility, natural features and strong community spirit as it continues to grow. With direct access from I-75 and M-72, Grayling proclaims to be the “Gateway to the North,” providing convenient services and activities for residents, travelers and tourists.

As with many communities in northern Lower Michigan, Grayling began as a logging town. Early settlers were drawn to the towering pine trees and river access provided by the Au Sable and Manistee Rivers. Today, much of this history is celebrated through annual events and local attractions that honor the traditions of the past.

This plan directs the intensity and arrangement of various types of land uses and promotes design that complements the character of the City. The plan strives to provide a complementary mix of land uses intermingled with natural features to create an attractive, sustainable community that offers a high quality of life for residents.

The master plan represents a year long effort by the Planning Commission, City officials and residents. Development of the plan involved collection and analysis of data on population, land use, environmental, transportation, infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions. The recommendations of the plan are based upon this information and input from the public.

Community Profile

The first step in the planning process was to review the community demographics to identify trends in housing, population and the economy. This information was then considered by the Planning Commission during development of this plan. Some key findings are listed below:

- **Population.** According to Grayling city Census 2010 results, the population of the area was approximately 1,884 people. From 2000 to 2010, the Grayling population growth percentage was -3.6% (or from 1,952 people to 1,884 people.)
- **Education.** The overall education level in the City increased between 2000 and 2010. Furthermore, the proportion of City residents that had at least some college education slightly increased from 41% in 2000 to 42% in 2010, and the proportion that had college degrees remained the same at 18%.
- **Age Distribution.** 2010 Census, 27% of the population is 19 years of age or younger, 52.3% is 20 to 64 years of age and 20.7% is 65 years or older.
- **Employment.** Retail Trade and Service jobs have historically been the predominant employers. In 2010, the leading job class in the City was Services, employing 58.8% of residents.
- **Unemployment.** In 2010, unemployment rates for the City were consistent with the County average of 13.0%, which was higher than the State average of 12.7%.
- **Income.** In 2010, income levels fell below the State average of \$48,869, the lowest of all communities examined (see Chapter 3 for complete analysis), with 33% of individuals and 29.6% of families in Grayling reporting income levels below the poverty level.
- **Household Size.** The City's average household size is greater than in previous years. The average household size increased from 2.24 in 2000 to 2.27 in 2010. Grayling's average household size was lower than State and County averages, 2.49 and 2.31 respectively.
- **Housing.** The City has a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes at 51.3% than renter occupied homes at 48.7%.
- **Housing Values.** Housing values for the City have decreased since 2000 from \$62,400.00 to \$55,982.00 in 2012.
- **Age of Housing.** Over half of the housing units in the City were built before 1959.

Existing Land Use

The existing land uses in the City were identified from physical surveys conducted by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, and were verified by the City of Grayling. This information shows how land is being used in Grayling today. Existing Land Uses in Grayling are shown graphically on **Map Two: Existing Land Use**, and include the following categories, described further in Chapter Five.

- Single Family Residential.
- Multiple Family Residential.
- Commercial.
- Central Business District.
- Industrial.
- Institutional.
- Recreation.
- Wetlands, Lakes and Rivers.
- Undeveloped.

Goals and Recommendations

The primary purpose of this Master Plan is to give direction about the future use of land in Grayling. For the Plan to work effectively, it must reflect the views of the people who live, work and own property in the City. This involves obtaining a consensus on a wide variety of issues through a citizen participation process. The goals listed below reflect public feedback gathered through a community-wide survey. Recommendations to support these goals are listed in Chapter Two.

Overall Land Use:

- Create a diversified and balanced mixture of land uses that will support the economic vitality, tax base, and livability of the City.
- Promote redevelopment of vacant lots and dilapidated sites that would not otherwise be used into new buildings and uses, to maximize the desirability and tax base of the City.

Residential:

- Encourage in-fill development within existing neighborhoods that is consistent with the established character of the City.
- Provide high quality residential opportunities for current and future residents of Grayling, regardless of age, income, lifestyle, physical capability or household type.
- Promote the preservation of existing residential structures rather than complete reconstruction.
- Ensure that rental housing units are maintained and remain an asset to the community.

Commercial:

- Create vibrant, visually attractive commercial development that is consistent with the City's established character and that provides a wide range of goods and services.
- Promote commercial development, redevelopment and business expansion that supports full employment of all residents and that provides income opportunities above the poverty level.
- Coordinate economic development efforts with other communities, the County and State, and enlist the resources and assistance from local and state agencies, organizations and advocacy groups to promote a positive and strong image for the Grayling area.
- Create a lively downtown environment that has a good variety of businesses and maintains historical character and aesthetics of the City.

Industrial:

- Locate industrial land uses within existing industrial parks, where they can best be served by existing infrastructure.

Medical Cottage Industry:

- Encourage continued growth in the medical industry, while maintaining the integrity of local neighborhoods, in order to sustain the local economy by providing valuable jobs and services to the community.

Environmental:

- Provide local services that encourage environmental stewardship and engages local citizens in preservation efforts.
- Protect and improve the quality of existing natural resources and protect Historical areas.
- Encourage integration of natural features into site development as aesthetic and functional features, while protecting and improving their quality.

Transportation:

- Create a safe and coordinated transportation system adequate to support existing and future land uses, and economic vitality that balances traffic needs with actions to ensure the City remains an attractive place to live.
- Improve the visual appearance of the City through street and related improvements.

Community Facilities:

- Promote the Grayling area as an attractive place to live and visit that provides a wide range of recreation opportunities to its residents, vacationers and tourists alike.

Natural Features Protection Plan

Protection of City resources requires the adoption of policies directed toward the specific resource issue including drainage, groundwater quality, natural topography, and vegetation. Resource protection regulations can be incorporated in subdivision, zoning, and other special purpose regulations. Some of the options for protecting natural features during the development process are described below:

- **Natural Feature Setback.** The City should ensure local zoning standards require an appropriate building setback from the Au Sable River, other water bodies, and wetlands. Though the majority of land in Grayling is developed, the City should apply this mechanism to any redevelopment of land.
- **Storm Water Management.** Storm water drainage can be managed by the installation and improvement of storm water drainage systems through preservation of natural drainage ways, and by onsite storm water detention with controlled discharge. A comprehensive approach to storm water management should encourage the preservation of existing natural features that perform storm water management functions, minimization of impervious surface, direction of storm water discharge to open grassed or natural areas and careful design of erosion control mechanisms.
- **Overlay Zoning District.** Within areas identified as having significant and fragile natural resources, lower impact/density development is recommended. Impacts to natural areas can be minimized through overlay zoning districts that limit the intensity of development and/or require clustered development to preserve these critical natural areas. Other requirements, such as protection of significant woodlots, vegetative corridors, or other significant environmental areas can also be incorporated into the overlay district, or may become part of a general natural resource ordinance.

Community Facilities Plan

Parks and Recreation. Grayling is committed to providing enhanced recreation to all residents. During development of this plan, the following priorities were established for recreation:

- Consider providing additional non-motorized paths and trails, including connections between existing regional trails.
- Study local roads and needed connections with regional trail systems to identify areas where the City can improve the trail network and bring traffic into the City. Seasonal parking areas could also be established to help accommodate the large number of snowmobiles that often gather at various locations.

- Consider ways to provide indoor recreation. Due to the high costs associated with indoor recreational facilities, the City should consider participating in regional efforts and partnerships aimed at providing indoor recreation, and should consider this a long-term goal.
- Promote the recommendations of the Community Recreation Plan, especially as it relates to improvements to the Au Sable River City Park, and establishment of a North Town Recreation Nature Park and Central Residential City Youth Park.

Utilities. Because the City is mostly developed, Grayling’s water and sewer systems are currently adequate. This plan recommends the City position itself to provide additional system capacity in the event any larger-scale redevelopment, or land annexation occurs.

Transportation Plan

Roadway Improvements. The City of Grayling has identified the following road improvement projects that should be considered:

- **I-75 Interchanges.** Seek to expand access options into the City from the I-75 freeway through expanded interchange designs at N. Down River Road and at the south end of the I-75 Business Loop.
- **Norway Street.** The City envisions a streetscape along Norway that is similar to the recent improvements along Michigan Avenue, to connect the two areas, while providing a catalyst for redevelopment.

Residential Roads. Construct new residential roads to a width that is adequate for safe travel, but not unnecessarily wide. Existing roads that experience excessive speeding and safety concerns can be retrofitted with traffic calming elements. For example, a road can be restriped to help narrow the driver’s focus and instinctively slow their speed of travel.

Transportation Management. Transportation management can help relieve congestion of the street system by giving people other travel choices, such as transit or walking. Access management, intelligent transportation systems such as coordinated traffic signals or integrated highway signage, street connectivity, and even coordinated work hours can all contribute to a more efficient system if applied properly.

Traffic Calming. Where high volumes and speeds exist, traffic calming measures may help keep driver speeds at an appropriate level. Physical changes in the road design can affect the driver’s psychological frame of mind, causing them to intuitively reduce their speed of travel. Some of the common traffic calming measures, more specifically described in Chapter Seven, include street narrowing, slow points, or chokers, medians and boulevards and perimeter treatments.

Access Management. Access management guidelines have two primary functions, to protect the public investment in the roadway by minimizing congestion and crash potential and to provide property owners with reasonable access to property. Access management looks at the number of access points, sight distances and driveway spacing and seeks to provide reasonable and safe access. This can sometimes require use of side streets or service drives for access, and may limit the number and location of driveways if a proposed location will present conflicts with the existing road system.

Traffic Impact Analysis. Traffic impact studies allow for the evaluation of a development's potential impact on the local road system and the identification of roadway improvements needed to mitigate the traffic impact, such as adding additional turn lanes or re-timing a traffic signal. A detailed traffic impact statement should be required for larger developments that will generate higher volumes of traffic, such as more than 100 peak hour directional trips or 750 or more trips on an average day.

Streetscape. Significant road corridors in the City must be treated as design elements that represent the quality and character of the City. Elements such as landscaping, ornamental lighting, community signage and entrance design should be incorporated into any road reconstruction project.

Critical Issues Analysis

During the development of this plan, the Planning Commission discussed various issues that required a detailed review to identify recommendations for addressing them. The critical issues identified for additional discussion include:

City-Wide Issues.

- **Identity.** Coordinated entry signs and associated landscaping should be implemented.
- **Economic Development.** Chapter Eight identifies several State and Federal assistance programs that can be used to attract new economic growth and strengthen the housing stock in the City.

DDA District.

- **Build Upon Previous Efforts.** A baseline for any downtown redevelopment efforts should follow the Downtown Market Study for the DDA, developed by the Anderson Economic Group and Gosling Czubak Engineering Sciences in 2004. This study is described in Chapter Eight.
- **Municipal Parking.** To address the need for additional parking near the central business district, the City is continuing working towards providing permanent municipal parking options in and around the downtown area.
- **Signage.** A coordinated signage program for the City should draw upon Grayling's history, as well as the historic character of downtown buildings.
- **Agency Coordination.** There are at least seven agencies and organizations in the region that seek to improve the business community in Grayling. Local organizations and agencies should be coordinated to provide the most cost effective service to the community and to prevent duplicative efforts.
- **Retention of Anchor Tenants.** As the catalyst for additional business, the City must recognize and seek to maintain existing downtown anchors, including the Crawford County Building/Jail and U.S. Post Office, both of which bring daily traffic to the CBD that often benefits other shops and destinations downtown.
- **Regulatory Change.** The City should review its zoning ordinance and other regulations to ensure they are suitable to the downtown. Recommended changes include development of more specific regulations that address the unique needs of the CBD, including specific parking regulations that consider shared or municipal parking and on street parking.
- **Promote Downtown Activities.** The Grayling region could benefit from additional festivals and other activities related to the Independence Day holiday. Grayling should draw upon current

success of the Au Sable River Festival to increase tourist activity in the City by either increasing the magnitude of events to showcase the City's downtown, or by extending the number of events to include Independence Day celebrations.

- **Economic Development.** Though an overall goal for the City, the downtown is also in need of economic development attention. The State of Michigan has identified Grayling as both a "Core Community" and an "Eligible Distressed Area" which qualifies it for additional financial and program assistance. The City should capitalize on these programs as much as possible to improve the central business district. In 2014 the City of Grayling became a Select Level Main Street Community through the Michigan Main Street program. The Michigan Main Street program offers many opportunities for assistance with economic development and revitalization.

Hospital Complex

- **Review Land Consolidation Laws.** The City should consider adopting a specific land consolidation ordinance to regulate the anticipated need to combine platted lots and consolidate land for redevelopment.

Commercial

- **Promote Regional Economic Strengths.** The strengths of the Grayling economy lay in the medical and tourist industries, and the area is ripe to receive up to 1,000 additional jobs in professional/white-collar positions. The City also boasts a strong lumbering industry and is the County seat. These attributes should be sold to attract large employers or educational facilities that will further boost the local economy.
- **Recruit Large-Scale National Retailers.** The City recognizes citizen support for large-scale commercial uses, and seeks to provide for their development, in locations that do not detract from the downtown or the overall character of Grayling.
- **Consider Annexation to Industrial Park.** Expansions of the commercial economy in Grayling will lead to a need for additional land. Grayling should continue to explore the possibility of land annexation into the City. While annexation is not a current priority, the need for additional land is likely to arise in the future.
- **Explore Wireless Cable Access.** As cable franchise agreements near the expiration of their term, City officials should make a priority to negotiate new wireless access to the area.

Neighborhoods/Residential Needs.

- **Increase Density.** The City should review their current ordinance regulations to ensure they permit expansion of residences to allow for above-garage units or mother-in-law apartments which could serve future residents.
- **Encourage Improvements to Multiple-Family Structures.** The City should continue to encourage proper maintenance of residential buildings through code and ordinance enforcement. Establishment of a low interest loan program for rental properties should also be investigated.
- **New Residential Development.** Any new single-family residential development should incorporate open space areas, a interconnected street pattern, and attractive landscaping and buffers.
- **Infill Development.** Design guidelines and zoning standards should be established for new construction and renovation of existing structures within the City’s central neighborhood. These standards can address issues such as scale, proportion, window openings, exterior materials, etc. and respect for the architecture of surrounding buildings.
- **Neighborhood Revitalization.** As with economic development, there are a number of State and Federal programs, described in Chapter Eight, aimed at improving the quality and affordability of housing. The City should continually seek funding sources and programs that will further its goals toward improved residential housing in Grayling.
- **Continuum of Housing.** The City must ensure a proper continuum of housing opportunities are offered that provide a range of services and assistance to address the needs of an aging population. The various housing types typically in demand are detailed in Chapter Eight.
- **Establishment of Rental Property Regulations.**

Future Land Use

The future land use plan establishes land use categories, identifies the location of planned land uses and provides strategies for implementation. This section also provides a rationale for the placement of preferred land uses and the intensity of those uses. The future land use plan serves as the primary policy guide for future land use decisions, investment in public improvements and coordination of public improvements and private development.

The future land use plan for Grayling has been developed to accommodate the range of housing and commercial services needed to serve residents, and to preserve the values held closely by City residents. Future Land Use categories are briefly described below (with more detail offered in Chapter Nine), and illustrated in **Map Seven: Future Land Use Map**.

Low Density Residential. This category is intended for large-lot residential land uses that contain natural features, and correlates to the proposed R1-A zoning district.

Moderate Density Residential. The predominant land use in the City falls within this category. This category correlates to the City's R1-B zoning district and includes most of the residential land located in the City's central neighborhood.

High Density Residential. This designation includes high density single-family as well as attached condominiums and apartments, and coincides with the proposed R-2 zoning district. This category includes existing residential uses on the smallest allowable lots. Some existing buildings have also been converted to multiple-family buildings, which is encouraged to continue, provided the homes retain their existing character.

Central Business District. This category relates to Grayling's downtown area, generally described as the area along Michigan Avenue between Spruce Street and the railroad tracks.

Medical Cottage Industry. This area is located near the existing hospital and medical complex located on Michigan Avenue. Future development in this area will be subject to the C-2 zoning district.

Neighborhood Commercial. Areas categorized as Neighborhood Commercial relate to the City's C-1 zoning district, and are intended to accommodate small-scale commercial uses that serve the residents of Grayling.

General Commercial. The City's General Commercial areas are intended to serve larger tenants, or those drawing from a more regional market. This category relates to the City's C3-A and C3-B zoning districts.

Industrial. Industrial uses in Grayling will generally be directed to the City Industrial Park, located at the south end of the City.

Institutional. Areas designated as Institutional are scattered throughout the City and generally include established civic uses, such as churches, schools and other public buildings.

Recreation. This category includes locations designated for recreation facilities and neighborhood parks. This includes the Au Sable River City Park, open spaces such as those on Industrial Street and in North Town Recreation Nature Park, near the fish hatchery, as well as the Grayling Country Club.