

# **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

This Master Plan for Leland Township takes into account and expands upon the Comprehensive Development Plan of 1994 which it replaces. It is prepared according to the provisions of the Township Planning Act, Act 168 of 1959, as amended.

This plan describes in a comprehensive and careful manner, the current land use patterns of Leland Township, the changes that are taking place, and the means to manage these patterns of change so that the future of Leland Township reflects the desires and goals of the residents of the Township. The plan provides long range comprehensive guidelines for public and private decision making.

This plan provides the basis for the adoption of Zoning Ordinances to implement the plan and may also provide the basis for capital improvement expenditures and other governmental decisions as well as decisions by private citizens. Existing ordinances will be revised as required to reflect the guidelines of this plan.

Leland Township participated in the county-wide process to create and more recently update the *Leelanau General Plan*. This process is aimed at maximum public participation in developing growth management policy guidelines and to assist local governments in their planning efforts. Thus the information gathered and compiled for the county-wide process was considered and utilized as appropriate in the development of this Leland Township Master Plan.

### **1.1 Plan Development Process**

The Leland Township Planning Commission prepared this Master Plan, with assistance from an ad hoc steering committee and a planning consultant. Public input was sought throughout the process, through a photo tour, citizen survey, a build-out study, steering committee meetings and a series of public information sessions. The public input efforts aided in establishing the land use goals and objectives of citizens and property owners in the Township. Additional public meetings were held to identify and review proposed land use policies promoted in this plan before the adoption process began.

Many of the data and technical concepts in this plan are derived from county and state sources. While care has been taken to honor Township prerogatives, the consideration of the county planning umbrella has the added advantage of linking all local governments in coordinated planning for the Leelanau Peninsula.

After describing the Township as it is today, the plan covers trends and citizen inputs providing the basis for revised development policies, new goals and objectives, and growth management techniques. This plan is intended to be a guide for years to come; however, it will be reviewed at least every five years and updated as necessary.

## 1.2 Regional Context

The Leelanau Peninsula is located in northwestern lower Michigan and is sometimes referred to as the "little finger" of the state. It is bordered on the north and west by Lake Michigan and on the east by Grand Traverse Bay.

Leelanau County is formed by the Leelanau Peninsula and is bordered on the south by Benzie County and Grand Traverse County. Leland Township is located in the west central area of the Leelanau Peninsula. Leland Township consists of the mainland area and North Manitou Island which is federally owned and part of the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. Due to the protected status of the North Manitou Island portion of the Township, this Master Plan primarily focuses on the Mainland portion of the Township. Leland village, located in Leland Township, is expected to continue serving as the county seat until early 2008 and is 235 miles from Detroit, 145 miles from Grand Rapids, 170 miles from Lansing, and 125 miles from Sault Ste. Marie. Traverse City, adjacent to the southeastern corner of Leelanau County, is the nearest urban area approximately 25 miles from the Township border. The county is about three-fourths open land or woodland with agricultural and low density rural residential areas. Over ten percent of the county is occupied by the Sleeping Bear Dune National Lakeshore. Figure 1-1 provides a location map of Leelanau County and Leland Township.

## 1.3 General Character

Leland Township surrounds north Lake Leelanau and borders the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, while many townships surround south Lake Leelanau. The topography consists of rolling hills, orchards, and woodlands with spectacular views of lakes and islands.

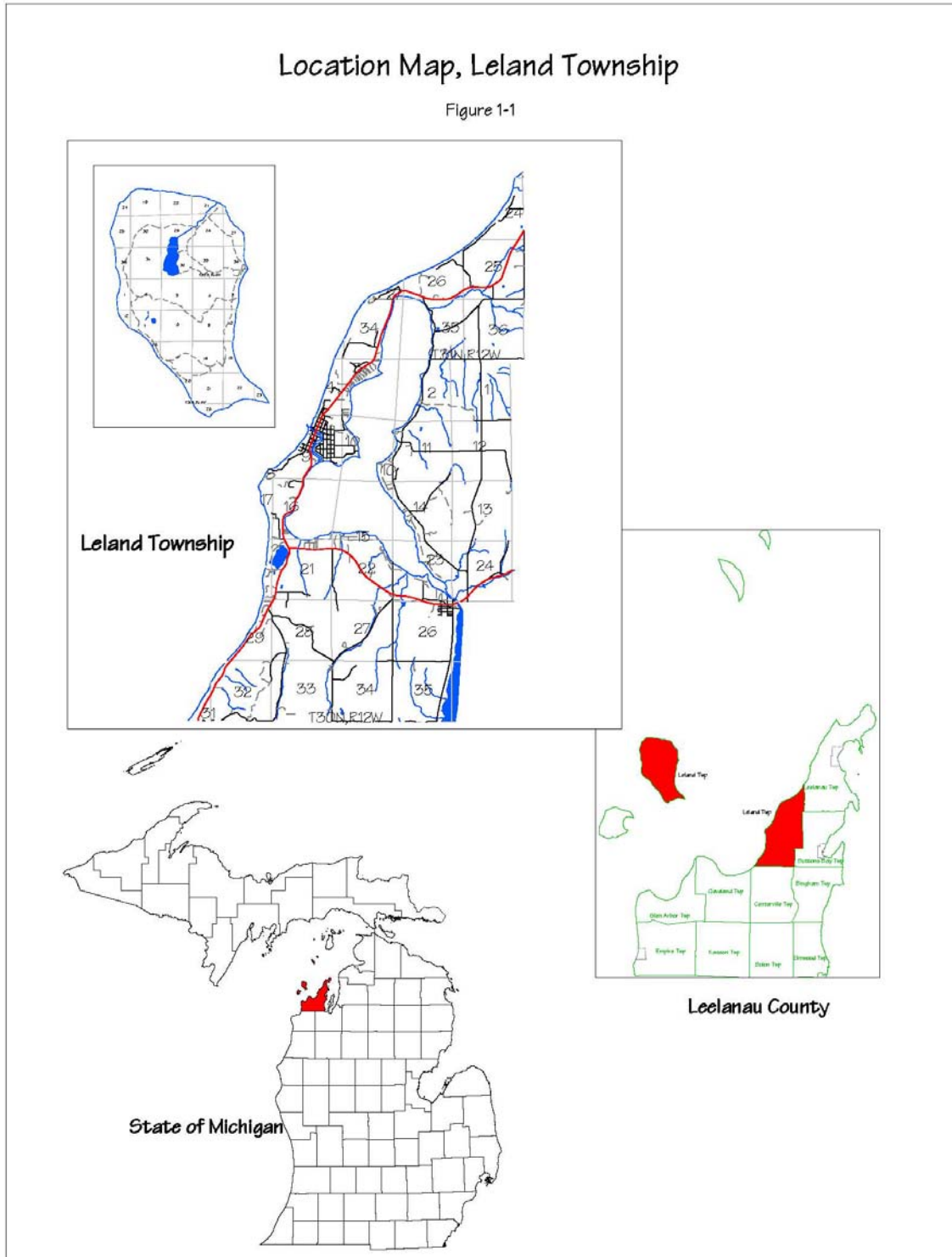
This is a rural Township where the majority of land consists of wooded or vacant fields. There are large acreages planted in fruit trees and other crops which provide a pastoral character to the Township and contribute significantly to the local economy. Working farms, with primarily cherry and apple orchards, but also strawberry and other row crops, cover major areas of the east and south. In recent years, vineyards have replaced some cherry orchards. Agricultural uses are dictated by generally poor soil types, but the unique geography of the region provides nationally noted "mini environments" which support fruit growing.

Development is largely residential, with a preponderance of single-family homes in the villages and on the shores of Lake Leelanau and Lake Michigan. Very little waterfront property remains undeveloped.

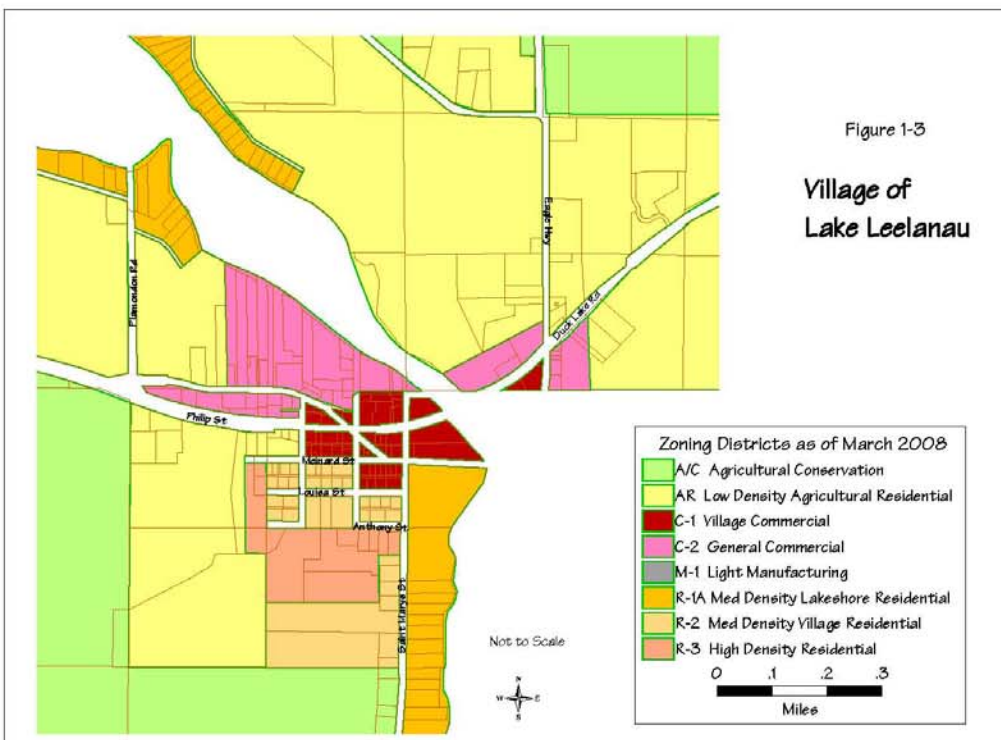
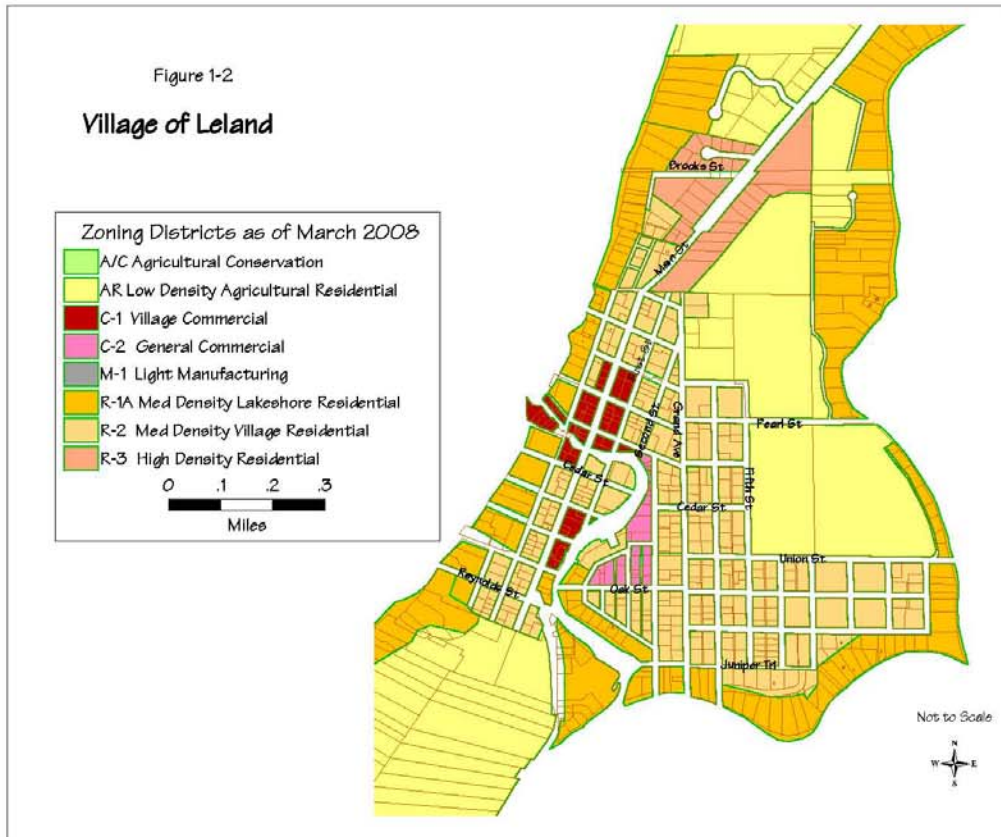
Many miles of shoreline along Lake Michigan and Lake Leelanau make Leland Township a very desirable place to live and a substantial number of people come to visit on a seasonal basis. Winter sports activities, hunting and fishing, fall colors, cherry blossoms, wine tasting and other attractions bring people to this Township the year around. Tourism is the Township's primary economic anchor.

The unincorporated villages of Leland and Lake Leelanau provide many attractions and small businesses that result in a large amount of tourist trade. (Note: These unincorporated villages are under the jurisdiction of Leland Township and this Master Plan. However, in order to easily distinguish between the Township, the village of Leland, the village of Lake Leelanau and Lake Leelanau- the body of water, this document refers to the unincorporated village of Leland as

Leland village, and the unincorporated village of Lake Leelanau as Lake Leelanau village.) Leland village has a harbor of refuge which is usually filled with watercraft during the summer months. Lake Leelanau village, located on the narrows between north and south Lake Leelanau, is the primary entrance to Leland Township from the east on highway M-204. Maps of the villages are provided in Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3.



See Figures 1-2 and 1-3 for details of Leland and Lake Leelanau Villages



## 1.4 History of Leland Township

As the only Township in Leelanau County with two villages, its history can be found in these two waterfront communities. Leland village finds its origins in settlers who crossed from North Manitou Island during the early 1850's.

The settlers came to take advantage of water transport for use in the logging industry. A dam was built on the Leland River which raised the level of Lake Leelanau (north and south lakes). This in turn made the narrows navigable for future steamboat use.

Docks and sawmills were built in Leland village and by 1860 the population had grown to 200 people. Stores, hotels, and shops were added near the present location of the county buildings. In 1870 an iron furnace was built on the waterfront and used to refine ore from the upper peninsula.

Leland's substantial population growth and size enabled the village to become the county seat. By 1884 the Township population had grown to 839, with 370 persons living in Leland village. Almost a century later, the village's permanent population remains nearly the same. Many of the buildings in both Leland and Lake Leelanau villages were built before the turn of the century and remain as historical evidence of past endeavors.

Commercial fishing has been a Leland industry since 1880 and although diminished continues today, with sport fishing added along the way. Fishermen's demands for a better harbor resulted in improvements in 1937. In 1965 the State of Michigan designated the harbor a "Harbor of Refuge", and installed a breakwall and marina. An upgrade and expansion of the harbor is planned for 2008.

As the lumber industry ran its course and the iron business yielded to major cities, Leland Township was saved from financial failure by the blossoming tourist business. Travelers arrived by rail to Traverse City and again by rail to Fouch on the southeastern corner of south Lake Leelanau. Here travelers boarded lake steamers for transport to both Leland and Lake Leelanau villages.

Hotels were built at Fountain Point south of the narrows in 1890 and in Leland village in 1901 and 1909. Summer visitors also began to arrive in Leland village by steamer directly from Chicago. The Township has been a tourist destination ever since and tourism is its primary economic anchor.

The first store building was built in Lake Leelanau village in 1881 by Noel Couturier. At that time the village was called Provemont, where the Schaub brothers had farmed since mid-century. The narrows were first bridged in 1864, and again in 1895 and 1935. Lake Leelanau village provided wood for the steamers from a lumberyard erected in 1884. In 1903 the village became the terminus of a railroad from Traverse City which provided service until 1944. A Catholic missionary founded a church at Provemont that developed into today's church, and school. (Source: Edmund M. Littell, 100 Years in Leelanau, 1965.)