



## **Opportunities and Challenges of a Changing Leelanau**

The objective of this committee is to inquire into the character of Leelanau County -- how it has developed in recent years and where it seems to be heading. As we identify key trends in demography, economy and society, we and other citizens will be better able to discuss issues of public policy that those trends suggest.

### **Elements of the study include:**

- Key trends in the demography, economy and social structure
- Significance of those trends and analysis by those knowledgeable about the county
- What policy issues or options do the trends raise for the county, townships and villages?

### **Our thanks to the following for their time and responses to our questions:**

- Rich Bahle, Supervisor, Suttons Bay Township
- William Bolton, Supervisor, Empire Township
- Trudy Galla, Director, Leelanau Planning and Community Development



- Leonard Kelenski, Supervisor, Centerville Township
- Anne Kelly, Care Coordinator, ShareCare
- Jack Kelly, Supervisor, Elmwood Township
- Fred Lanham, Supervisor, Kasson Township
- Cal Little, Supervisor, Leland Township
- April Missias, Director, Leelanau County Senior Services
- Doug Scripps, Supervisor, Leelanau Township
- Timothy Stein, Supervisor, Cleveland Township
- Marian Werner, Supervisor, Bingham Township
- Deb Wetherbee, Office Manager, ShareCare
- Northern Michigan Council of Governments (NMCOG)



## Selected Characteristics of Leelanau County

- I. County is growing older, with fewer young people
- II. Differences in income are significant
- III. Not enough housing and high cost of transportation



## **Assumptions**

The committee studying the opportunities and challenges of a changing Leelanau has identified several demographic, social and economic trends that seem relevant for the future of the county. They include

**Assumption 1**                      Since 2000, slow population growth and an aging population

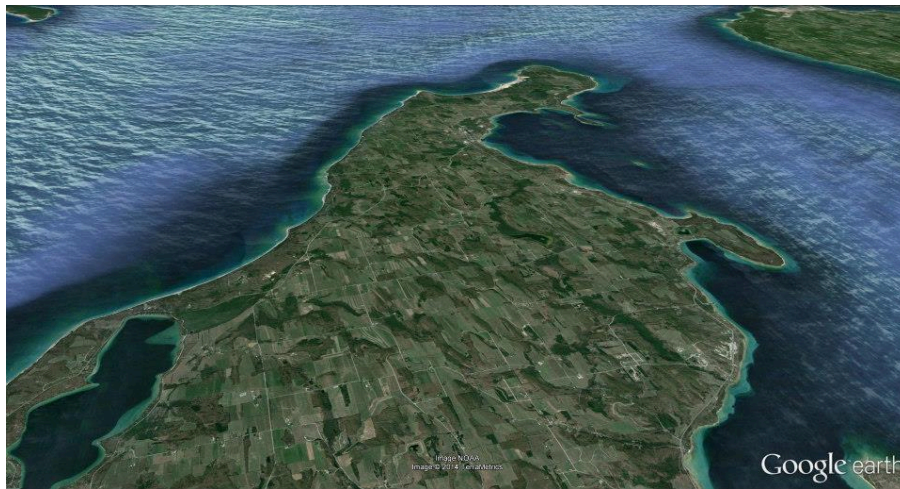
**Assumption 2**                      Slow economic growth, a narrowing economic base, and an increasingly polarized income distribution

**Assumption 3**                      A range of social needs associated with low income



# HANDOUT

## SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF LEELANAU COUNTY



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## **Question 1: Are there trends we've missed or gotten wrong?**

- Aging population was seen prior to the 2000 census as the fastest growing demographic in the county
- Decrease in younger population; losing children in schools
- Within aging population -- persons living longer, often with dementia causing needs such as new care and transportation options



**Question 2: What forces seem to drive population growth? What are the implications for the next decade in Leelanau County?**

- County is advertised as a “best place to retire”
- If older people had happy younger memories here, they are pleased to retire here.
- Housing and jobs drive growth - either in or out
- Family sizes are much smaller, reducing population
- Leelanau’s tourism industry need employees, yet the people needed in such businesses are the people who can’t afford to buy existing homes.
- Jobs, housing and affordable living -- Leelanau is short on all three.
- Housing trend of tearing down small houses to build bigger needs to change.



**Question 3. What, if anything, should be done (by government or others) to try to affect population growth?**

- Year-round rentals are critical
- An estimated 50 percent of the Leelanau workforce leaves the county everyday to get to jobs elsewhere.
- Bring in businesses that each offer 6, 8 or 10 good jobs
- Need to promote the area via economic development
- Economic Development now in the hands of the Leelanau Chamber
- Lots happening in the winery and agri-tourism areas but the jobs are small in number and seasonal
- Individual entrepreneurs may work from their home but they often don't offer any jobs
- Need to analyze zoning, which happens at township level. Is it keeping people out (i.e., lack of "grannyflats")?
- Need to analyze tax issues -- how to tax multiple housing developments?





**Question 4: What, if any role, should county government take in encouraging or otherwise directly affecting the course of economic development in the county?**

- Thinking outside the box; using new ideas to make changes
- Many want to keep things as they are, but we must change
- Need to better determine what economic development is and then promote it
- Make sure established community keeps thriving
- Fill empty retail space
- Develop summer conference to bring business people and their families to the area and show them all we have here (ie. create business opportunities in an area where families can thrive)



**Question 5: Insofar as government is involved, what concrete programs or policies would you recommend? Why? (broadband, zoning, services, a jobs, housing, etc.)**

- Need broadband throughout the county, but technology changes may bring that, when no area is too low density for a company to provide service
- Improve and expand housing opportunities, including rentals
- Affordable alternative housing for seniors
- Zoning changes allowing people to sell excess property
- Zoning for housing and businesses so people can be successful
- Allow zoning for homes smaller than 1200 square feet
- Government housing grants only allow for three bedroom/two bath homes, which exceed budgets of many families
- Provide tax incentives for new businesses
- Work closely with seniors to secure home rehab grants
- Make driving exams more frequent for older drivers
- Increase the minimum wage



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**Question 6. For the near and middle term, whatever else, the local population is going to age. What implications for public policy flow from that?**

- Need for housing
- Need for zoning changes
- Community-building the networks and services necessary for the senior population
- Educating communities for how they should prepare for aging populations
- Hosting noted speakers on aging to explain “here’s what you’re going to be in the future”
- Better mental health services for population

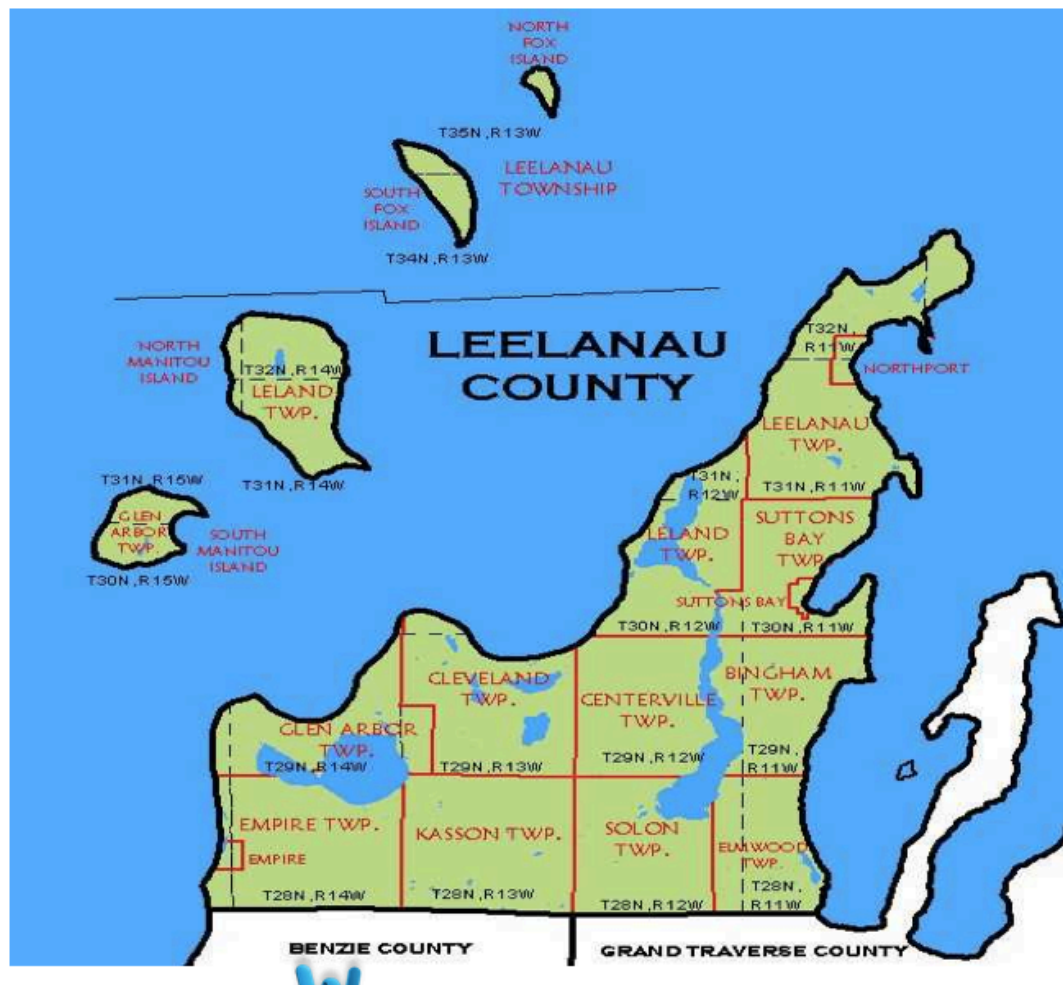


**Questions 7. In very broad terms, there seem to be two stances toward the future of the county: an activist/developmental position and a more hands-off/stay-pat position. What do you make of this division?**

- Use the hands-off/stay-pat position as an opportunity to educate people about the needs of the senior population
- It's politics. Depending on who is in office, you'll have the "involved" or "not involved" position
- The pendulum swings in politics; citizen involvement causes it to move
- To get things done, you've got to meet in the middle
- We're not the tight little packs we used to be where family takes care of its own; our packs are not as strong; we need leadership to help our families survive
- A trend is that current leadership is not representing the people; it is protecting itself

## Questions for Township Supervisors

1. What are the primary challenges coming up in your township?
2. Where would you like your township to be in five years?





## **Bingham Township**

### *Primary Challenges?*

- Continuing to support Bingham as a rural and agricultural base and as a bedroom community to Traverse City and Suttons Bay.
- Keeping farmland secure and residential areas happy.
- Continue good fire and rescue services.
- Really difficult to provide affordable housing with current land costs.

### *Township in Five Years?*

- More secure financially
- Continue to do what we are doing and adding to the agricultural base.
- Continuing good fire and rescue services.



## **Centerville Township**

### *Primary Challenges?*

- Consolidating fire departments in four townships.

### *Township in Five Years?*

- Something done with Sugarloaf.
- Fire departments consolidated.





## **Cleveland Township**

### *Primary Challenges?*

- Sugarloaf.

### *Township in Five Years?*

- Sugarloaf up and running.



## **Elmwood Township**

### *Primary challenges?*

- Traffic on M-22
- Enacting our new zoning ordinance taking township building land from agricultural to municipal center zone.
- Attracting younger families.
- Affordable housing, particularly affordable apartment complexes.
- Creating an environment for and attracting entrepreneurial and young people.
- Economic development (would like to see Economic Development Commission reinstated).
- Traffic study, currently underway, with Rotary Charities.

### *Township in Five Years?*

- An M-22 Corridor Improvement Authority to bring sidewalks, decorative lighting, and connecting parking lots for ease of access and traffic reduction on M-22.



- Possible engagement of Disney Imagineering to plan development of Brewery Creek as a destination. (Brewery Creek is 10 acres owned by Elmwood Township across M-22 from Grand Traverse Bay.)
- Master planning for M-22 Greilickville commercial corridor.
- Creating a “Grand Entrance to a Grand County” or something similar as part of the commercial corridor development.
- Circular BATA bus routes from one entity to another, running continuously, especially during busy summer months.



## **Empire Township**

### *Primary Challenges?*

- Keeping fire department
- Deciding on whether or not to expand camp ground.

### *Township in Five Years?*

- The campground is not losing money and want to keep it that way.
- Not a lot of change.



## **Glen Lake Township**

Supervisor chose not to respond to questions.



## **Kasson Township**

### *Primary Challenges?*

- Dealing with growth and gravel issues

### *Township in Five Years?*

- Stay as much as it is now and keep the farmland.



## **Leelanau Township**

### Primary Challenges?

#### Public Safety

- Improve emergency services with emphasis on increasing broadband services.
- Most emergency calls come via cell phones and some areas are not
- covered.
- Progress is underway with 199 ft. tower to be built with capacity to rent space to Verizon or other companies.

#### General Health

- Keep the local doctor here and busy.
- Probably need to help people apply for ACA and/or Community Foundation grants for local health care.

#### Safety and Well-Being

- Work with county and state on road improvement.
- Expand recreational opportunities and possible expansion of library.
- Restore reasonable BATA services.
- Protect agriculture with some emphasis on Agro-Tourism

### Township in Five Years?



- Same as above.

## **Leland Township**

Focus on keeping sense of zoning process open & fair and especially developing a new fire hall.





## **Solon Township**

Supervisor chose not to respond to questions.



## **Suttons Bay Township**

### **Primary Challenges?**

- Need for jobs and housing, especially rentals.
- Address the rapid decrease of students in Suttons Bay Schools.
- Complete current parks and recreation plan. Research shows good parks and amenities improve communities and positively impact property values.
- Realization that statutes do not allow townships to have the reach to develop such things as affordable housing; we are dependent on the county to do so. The role of county government should be to do viable market analyses and housing needs assessments and then address the need with affordable housing programs.

### **Township in Five Years?**

- A combined fire and rescue district for North Leelanau County, including Northport, Leland, Suttons Bay and Bingham areas allowing for greater efficiencies and better services to residents.
- More jobs and housing.
- Student growth in Suttons Bay Schools.
- Parks and amenities that bring people to Suttons Bay Township.



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