

## Introduction

### ORIGINS OF THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

The Harbor Area Regional Board of Resources, Inc. (HARBOR Inc.) is a non-profit organization charged with protecting and maintaining a common vision for the greater Harbor Springs Community. After a number of community meetings and discussions in the fall of 2004, HARBOR, Inc., the City of Harbor Springs and the townships of Little Traverse, Pleasantview, Friendship and Readmond passed resolutions (see *Appendix*) and submitted a proposal to the *Partnerships for Change* program to assist in the development of a multi-jurisdictional plan to organize, manage and preserve the recreation assets of the community. This proposal was accepted by *Partnerships for Change* and a formal agreement was signed in June, 2005.

*Partnerships for Change* is a grant funded program developed by the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), Michigan Municipal League (MML), the Michigan Townships Association (MTA), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), and Michigan Association of Planning (MAP). The overall mission of the program is to foster new and expanded cooperation between cities, townships and villages in developing and carrying out local land use policies that contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

### PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

“The purpose of this project is for local units of government to work together in good faith to develop a joint recreation plan and to implement the plans recommendations.” This purpose was outlined in the original agreement executed by the City of Harbor Springs, Little Traverse Township, Pleasantview Township, Friendship Township, Readmond Township, HARBOR, Inc. and *Partnerships for Change* at the start of this planning process in June 2005 (see *Appendix*).

Prior to the execution of this formal agreement, HARBOR, Inc. staff conducted a preliminary analysis of existing recreation plans, community surveys and local expenditures in the spring of 2005 to identify potential outcomes of the effort. The proposed work effort was summarized in a three page document included in the grant proposal to *Partnerships for Change* (see *Appendix*). The participating jurisdictions and HARBOR, Inc. indicated that a joint recreation plan should address the “trail and waterfront needs identified in individual jurisdiction plans and community surveys”. They also indicated that a closer examination of “budget shortfalls and perceived funding inequities” should be conducted to understand the magnitude of the issues.

## Plan Process and Focus

Therefore, the planning effort began by evaluating those areas identified in the original proposed work effort described above. A broad planning process was then undertaken to document the existing facilities, services and programs; analyze current and potential gap areas; confirm the gap areas through public input and develop workable solutions to meet those needs. Initial planning discussions among the participating jurisdictions and the first two public meetings reinforced and helped define the plan focus. First, **trails** are clearly a priority for the community. Second, while public waterfront is at the top of the list, it is best addressed by focusing more comprehensively on public **open space**. Lastly, to adequately address trails and open space on a multi-jurisdictional basis, and deal with the issues of budgets and funding, the planning effort had to consider the broader system of recreation and think about an **umbrella system** to coordinate these efforts. Therefore, these three areas - trails, open space and an umbrella system - are the focus of this plan.

## PLANNING AREA

This plan refers extensively to the HARBOR Area Community. The HARBOR Area Community is located in Northwest Emmet County in the Northwest corner of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. As it is used within this plan, the HARBOR Area is comprised of the City of Harbor Springs and Little Traverse, West Traverse, Pleasantview, Friendship, Readmond and Cross Village Townships (see Map 1).

It is important to note that this planning process was initiated with a proposal to the *Partnerships for Change* program from 5 of these 7 jurisdictions. The 2 jurisdictions which were not part of the original proposal and the subsequent formal agreement are West Traverse and Cross Village Townships. West Traverse Township has participated in this planning process on an informal basis while Cross Village has largely not participated. At the time of this writing, it is hoped that the goals, objectives and action steps outlined in this plan will be seen as beneficial to all 7 jurisdictions and the joint plan will be adopted by all.

## AREA CHARACTERISTICS

The HARBOR Area Community is blessed with abundant recreational resources. From the shores of Lake Michigan to the bluffs, forests, wetlands and intermittent streams that comprise the interior section of the community, the significant natural resources offer vital recreational opportunities for visitor and residents alike. The community also boasts a number of well-developed organized recreational resources. Downhill skiing, cross country ski trails, ball diamonds, basketball courts, a skate park - these and other assets are available to the community. Because of the economic importance of the recreational and natural resources present in the planning area, enhancement and preservation of those resources is essential to the local economy.

Residents have identified many important quality of life attributes of the area including the small town character, outlying farms and forests areas and family-like and close-knit characteristics of community members. These existing attributes make appropriate local management of resources possible and indeed, recreational opportunities for residents are abundant. It is the abundance of resources that is so essential to the economy and to quality of life in the area. Because of the importance of local resources, long term sustainability is essential. This plan focuses on recommendations to enhance and improve upon a system that is not in crisis, but has potential for enhancement. It also recommends important desirable steps to ensure long-term sustainability of the system.

## **DNR REQUIREMENTS AND PLAN FORMAT**

In compliance with the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans* put forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR - rev. 01/27/2006), the goals, objectives and action plan presented in this plan are identified for the next five years, at which time the plan will be updated. However, this plan is a *working* document and requires appropriate adjustments as conditions change and funding opportunities arise.

The subject matter and process used in developing this plan incorporate the minimum standard requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for a community recreation plan with sections devoted to:

- Community Description
- Administrative Structure
- Recreation Inventory
- Description of the Planning and Public Input Process
- Goals and Objectives
- Action Program