

Village of Northport and Leelanau Township

# DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL II



A collaborative effort between  
Leelanau Township and the Village of  
Northport, supported by the Leelanau  
Township Community Foundation  
(LTCF)

Funded by LTCF and Rotary Charities



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leelanau Township Community Foundation, Leelanau Township and Village of Northport are supporting the second community collaborative effort to identify community priorities and develop strategies that will result in improvements to the region. Several methods were utilized to gather community input including a community meeting, interviews, focus groups and an online survey.

The top three community priorities are:

- Protecting the Environment
- Economic Development-Building a Year Round Community
- Development of Moderate-Priced Housing

The other 5 priority areas were considered important as well with a weighted average range of 3.29-4.67 where 1=not important and 5=very important. These include:

- Strengthening Northport Public Schools
- Support for the Arts Community
- Improved Governmental Collaboration
- Zoning Reform and Enforcement
- Increased Tourism

Within each priority area, feedback was given on various approaches to addressing community issues. Five overarching strategies are recommended with corresponding action items. Several are already beginning, which simply shows the community supports these efforts. Many of these issues are complex, and as was noted by community participants cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, the recommendations in the report focus on strategies within reach of the community and its resources. The hope is that this work will bring in larger investments from public and private partners.

### Strategy 1

***Work with local organizations on public education campaigns to raise awareness on environmental issues that bring local policy makers and the community together to develop solutions and implement policy change.***

Action Steps:

- Work with local organizations to organize public education campaigns, for example, on the risks of failing septic systems and need to have regular inspections
- Develop material to inform local residents of dark sky ordinance and develop advocacy strategy to ensure there are penalties for violators of the ordinance
- Identify land in Leelanau Township that might be preserved through the Leelanau Conservancy for future public use and enjoyment
- Work with the appropriate oversight agency to ensure public space is maintained for continued public enjoyment, including beaches, hiking and bike trails

## Strategy 2

***Form an economic development sub-committee to ensure the region's readiness for development.***

Action Steps:

- Work with MEDC on Redevelopment Ready Community
- Identify building sites for small apartment buildings
- Identify zoning changes, incentives and work with local government to attract developers
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in its work to market the region to business and developers
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in developing a community website
- Developing marketing material for Leelanau Township and Village of Northport, working with retired professionals that have expertise in marketing and business development

## Strategy 3

***Address housing development by working with nonprofits, the public and private sectors to identify housing solutions.***

Action Steps:

- Work with local government to provide incentives for development of small apartment buildings
- Identify available land parcels for development
- Work on necessary zoning changes that will encourage housing diversity

## Strategy 4

***Form an education advisory group with buy-in from the school board that will work to build community support for the Northport Public School through a community school model and marketing of its school-community partnerships and achievements.***

Action Steps:

- Research community-school models
- Explore community resources such as nonprofits to offer programming, and retired professionals willing to volunteer
- Market school community partnerships and academic achievements
- Offer opportunities for adult learning

## Strategy 5

***Build a brand with a marketing and communication strategy that will attract regional tourists to the area off-season.***

Action Steps:

- Create a regional brand
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in designating someone to oversee its website design
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to market the region's hiking trails, fat bike trails and cross-country skiing

- Sponsor a 5K or tri-Athlon
- Connecting the Heritage and Tart bike trails and promote riding the peninsula
- Complete phases of the walking trail
- Maintain and promote resources such as the G. Marsten Marina, Leelanau State Park, Christmas Cove, Peterson Park, Braman Hill Recreation Area, and public beaches

## INTRODUCTION

The Leelanau Township Community Foundation (LTCF), Leelanau Township and the Village of Northport came together in 2012 to launch Design and Achieve I, a community collaborative effort to develop strategies toward a revitalized economic core. A leadership team made up of people representing various aspects of the region was established as part of the Designing and Achieving I. Ten recommendations were made and shared with the community in 2013<sup>1</sup>. The leadership team (Appendix I) continued to meet monthly over the past five years to research and implement strategies in response to the recommendations. Although not all the issues identified were resolved, many positive results have occurred because of this and previous initiatives and can be seen in several new streetscapes, street lighting, walking trails, art venues and other local improvements. With these successes, the collaborative believed it was time to engage the community once again in a priority setting process. With a grant from Rotary Charities of Traverse City, Designing and Achieving Our Potential Project II was launched.

## BACKGROUND ON COMMUNITY INPUT

The 2015 American Community Survey shows the population of Leelanau Township is 2,234 and the Village of Northport is 633. In the township, 46.4% are 62 years and over, while 40% are 62 years and over in the Village. To capture community input as widely as possible, a mixed-methodology approach was used. First a community meeting was held on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Northport Creek Golf Course in Northport where approximately 80 people participated in a world café model for framing and prioritizing community issues. With guidance from the leadership team, individuals were selected for one-on-one interviews and participation in three focus groups to further understand issues that might be relevant to specific populations groups. Last, a community survey was opened to all township residents on January 8, 2018 for four weeks, and made available on the LTCF website, township and village websites, and through a link distributed through numerous community listservs, such as the chamber of commerce, school district, etc. A postcard was mailed to all residents informing them of the survey and encouraging them to go online to provide their input. Computers and internet access were made available at the Leelanau Township Library.

A community meeting was held on October 4, 2017 at the Northport Creek Golf Course in Northport. Information about the community meeting was mailed to residents and circulated through various clubs and associations. Seventy residents people participated in the meeting and were divided randomly into groups of 10 at each table. There were three major questions that were addressed by each table, and hosted by a facilitator. The questions included:

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Strategy Report, February 2013. Designing and Achieving Our Potential. Beckett&Raeder, Leelanau Township Community Foundation.

1. Do we have a need for housing, and if so, what type?
2. How do we ensure our region's natural environment is protected?
3. When you think about living here, what do you like now, and what do you see in 10-20 years? How will we get there?

The meeting organizer monitored time to ensure each question received an equal amount of time in the discussions. As expected, there were numerous priorities identified on how we might achieve community well-being. At the end of the meeting, community priorities were posted on the wall and each resident received five votes to be used however they chose. **Voting results are provided in Appendix II.** Priorities were then organized into the priority areas shown in Table I below to highlight similarities among the priorities and contextualize emerging strategies for further exploration in interviews, focus groups and the community survey.

### SOME OF THE THINGS WE LIKE ABOUT LIVING HERE:

Natural beauty of the area  
 Small town feel  
 Dark nights  
 Walkability  
 Farmers market  
 Arts and culture  
 Music in the park  
 Festivals  
 Parks and recreational areas  
 Healthy Retirement Community

In-person interviews were conducted with ten individuals that have considerable knowledge of the region. In addition, to better understand regional and generational differences, focus groups were conducted in Northport and Omena, and one with younger community members. (Appendix III provides a list of stakeholders that participated in interviews and focus groups.) The community survey (Appendix IV) was available to all community members for four weeks online.

**Table I**

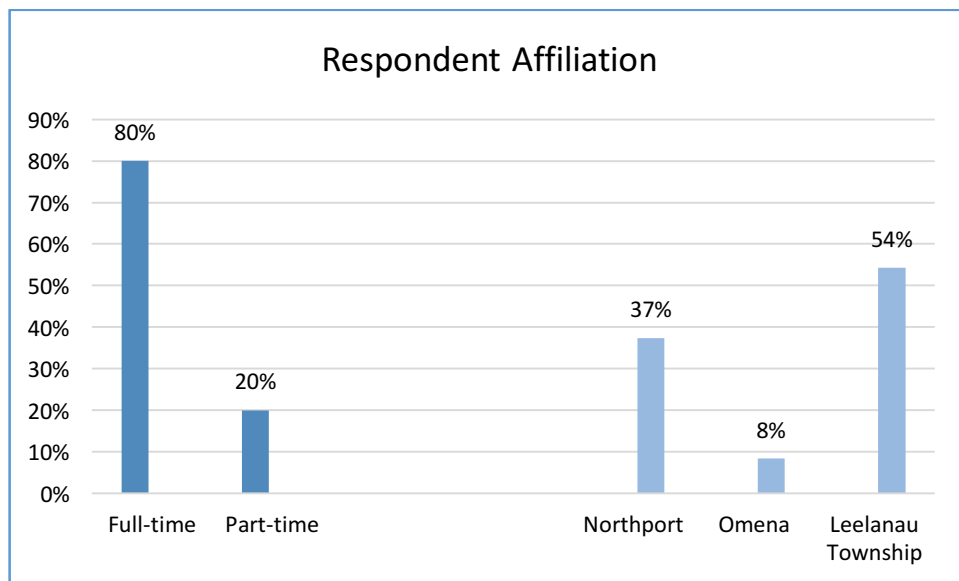
Priority Area*
<b>Economic Development</b>
1. Maintain a year-round community with a vibrant downtown
2. Attract new industry to the region that will bring jobs
3. Support technology companies that promote high-tech jobs and remote workers
4. Attract small businesses such as pharmacy, laundry, car wash, dentist
5. Strengthen the Chamber of Commerce and improve marketing and publicity
<b>Education</b>
6. Utilize Northport Public Schools as a Community School
<b>Arts</b>
7. Support artists and expand the art community
<b>Environment</b>
8. Protect the coastline through education and zoning
9. Promote alternative and clean energy
10. Build public awareness of the dark sky initiative

<b>11. Ensure public access to land and water is protected</b>
<b>Governance</b>
<b>12. Improve village and township collaboration</b>
<b>13. Ensure region's historical preservation</b>
<b>14. Merge village and township government</b>
<b>Public Service</b>
<b>15. Improve Wi-Fi and Internet</b>
<b>16. Expand the library</b>
<b>17. Improve public transportation</b>
<b>18. Make this area an age-friendly community, including activities for all age groups, walkable streets and access to buildings for seniors and people with disabilities</b>
<b>Zoning (include in Governance)</b>
<b>19. Zoning education, enforcement and where needed, reform</b>
<b>20. Ensure Northport maintains its village character</b>
<b>21. Eliminate junk yards</b>
<b>Housing</b>
<b>22. Develop housing for several population groups, including workforce, young families, seasonal and seniors</b>
<b>23. Numerous affordable housing options were listed including tiny homes, mobile home parks, small apartments, granny flats, boarding houses</b>
<b>24. Obtain redevelopment ready community certification©</b>
<b>25. Provide more short-term rental oversight</b>
<b>26. Make the new sewer system marketable</b>
<b>27. Provide tax incentives for apartment development</b>
<b>28. Develop plans for vacant real estate</b>
<b>Tourism</b>
<b>29. Redevelop the RV park</b>
<b>30. Improve and extend the bike trails</b>
<b>31. Make the visitor center more visible</b>
<b>32. Support agri-tourism</b>
<b>33. Market off-season tourism</b>
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>
<b>34. Develop and maintain a website</b>
<b>35. Create a regional brand</b>
<b>36. Market Northport as a suburb of Traverse City</b>

\*The table above shows how priorities are grouped into categories. Numbering does not reflect the order of community priorities.

Among the 314 respondents to the survey 80% classified themselves as full-time and 20% as part-time residents as shown in the chart below. Slightly over half (54%) indicated they lived in

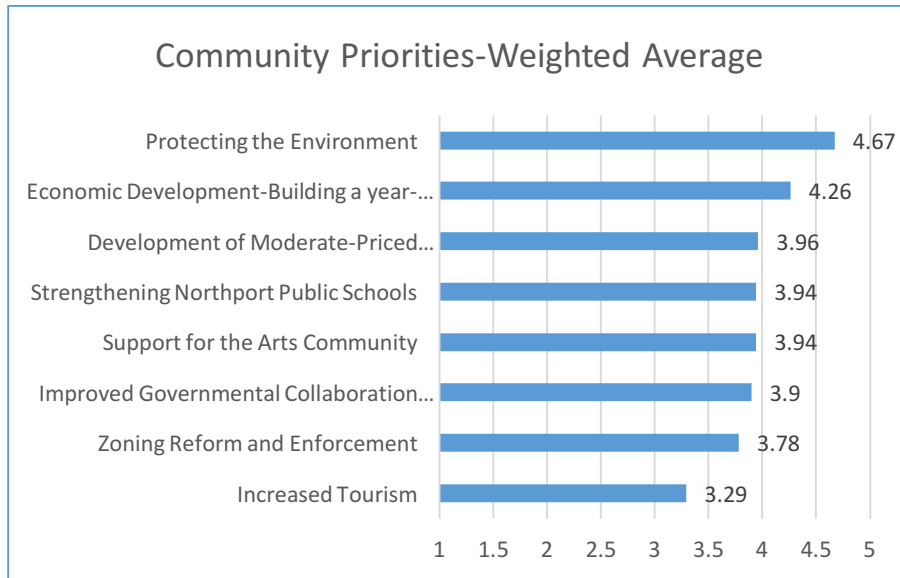
Leelanau Township, while 37% indicated they lived in the Village of Northport and 8% identified with Omena.



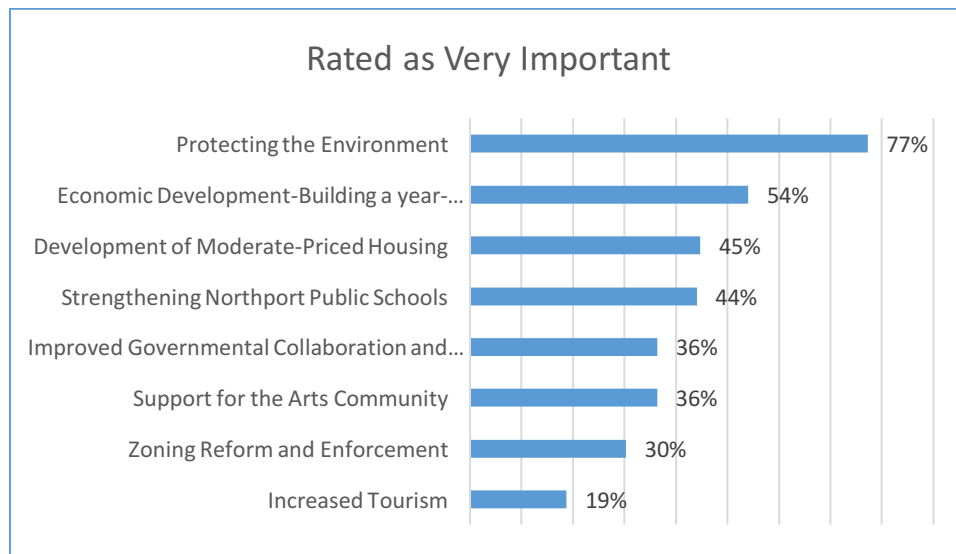
## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The first chart below shows the weighted average for each priority area where 1=not important and 5= very important. As is evident by the close range in the scores (from 3.29 to 4.67), all the priority areas are important to the community, and many, such as economic development and housing are very closely linked. This complexity of the issues came across during interviews and focus groups as well. When informants were asked which of the priority areas was most important to the future of the region, there was a tendency to gravitate toward housing and economic development, but with the acknowledgement that these issues are complex and difficult to separate. That is the case with many of the priority areas that are not only key drivers of a healthy community, but are relevant issues to life in Leelanau Township. For example, tourism has played a key role in creating the need for workforce housing as more summer businesses open that cater to the summer influx of tourists. Further, as is the case in other communities, vacation rentals have replaced year-round rentals, which adds to the growing affordable housing shortage for workers and families. Lack of housing has made it more difficult for local businesses to recruit employees, which can deter plans for expansion, thus impacting the job market. Understanding these relationships is important when considering each of the priority areas presented below and developing any strategy to address key issues, because often it will be important to develop a more comprehensive, systemic approach to have an impact.





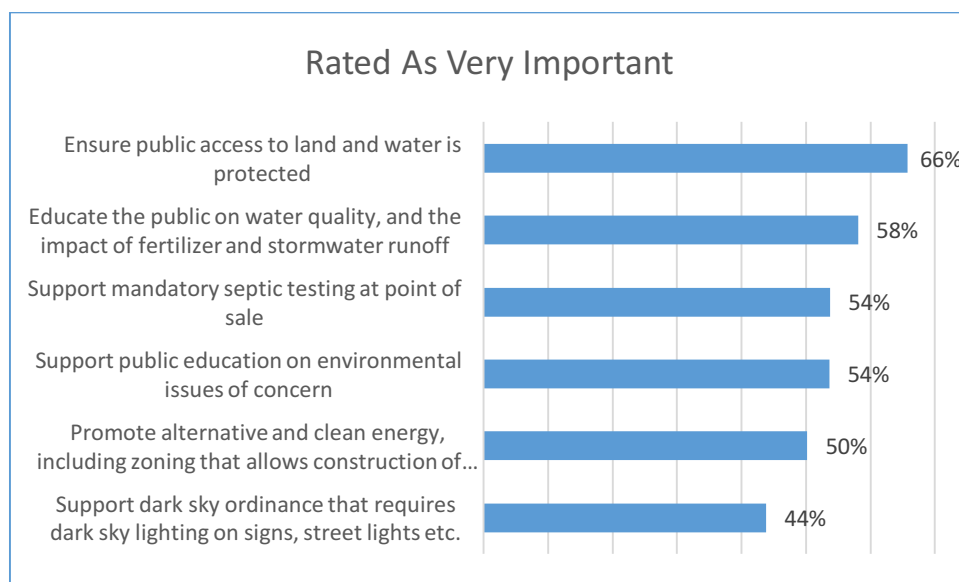
The next chart shows the percentage of people that rated each priority as **very** important. Again, protecting the environment came out on top with 77% of respondents rating it as very important, while the only other priority to receive more than half of respondents ranking it as very important was economic development. Housing and strengthening Northport Public Schools were rated as very important by slightly less than half of respondents.



## ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

### Protecting the Environment

Leelanau Township's natural beauty is its greatest asset. It is the reason people come to vacation in the area, have summer homes and retire here. The chart below shows the percentages of survey respondents that rated the environmental priorities as very important. The results are consistent with what community members reported on what they liked about living here, for example access to public land and water and the abundance of recreational areas. Leelanau Township is surrounded by water, making water quality a very prominent issue in our region. As a result, public education on the impact of fertilizer, storm water and other environmental concerns was a high priority. One source of water pollution comes from failing septic systems, therefore it is not surprising that 54% of respondents support mandatory septic testing at point of sale. Half of respondents believe promoting alternative and clean energy, including zoning that allows construction of solar panels to be very important. Although enforcement of the dark sky ordinance received the lowest ranking among the environmental action items, it is possible more clarity on dark sky is needed.



### Strategy 1

***Work with local organizations on public education campaigns to raise awareness on environmental issues that bring local policy makers and the community together to develop solutions and implement policy change.*** Nearly all community members rank protecting the environment as important or very important to the region's future. In addition, there is wide support for protecting public access to the region's land and water. There are several local organizations\* already working to address water quality, land conservancy and alternative energy sources; issues identified by community members as important. Local leaders ought to seek out these organizations to and identify areas where they can provide support on efforts in Leelanau Township.

For example, the work that went into raising awareness on the septic issue was a good process because it brought in experts to educate the public on the risks of failing septic systems. Several public hearings occurred to allow residents to voice their opinion. Although the ordinance ultimately did not pass, the issue has gained a lot of momentum and visibility. Home purchasers may now think to ask for a septic inspection prior to purchase. Because the dark sky ordinance already exists, a quick win for the leadership team is to launch a public education campaign to educate consumers on the ordinance along with advocacy at the local level to demand enforcement.

Ensuring our natural resources remain available to the public is a high priority among the community. Certainly, this is the mission of the Leelanau Conservancy that has preserved thousands of acres for public use. If there are areas within Leelanau Township that the committee believes ought to be preserved they should work with the Conservancy to determine the feasibility preserving these properties. Other concerns brought up by community members regarding existing public sites are maintaining those that we have, for example, Christmas Cove needs maintenance in their opinion.

\*The Watershed Center of Grand Traverse Bay  
For the Love of Water (FLOW)  
Inland Seas Education Association  
Leelanau Conservancy  
SEEDS  
Northport Energy

#### *Economic Development*

“Northport hasn’t grown for the last 100 years.” To many residents, economic development is a necessity to counter-balance the changing landscape of the region, from an agricultural, small business community to a retirement community that also depends on its tourism industry. Downtown Northport has realized several new businesses and improvements in recent years, and agritourism has brought new wineries and breweries to the region. Community members now believe more attention needs to be placed on strategies that will recruit and retain employers that provide year-round, higher paying jobs. Many community members suggest attracting high-tech jobs to the region, although the challenges with wireless internet connectivity remains a barrier for these types of positions. Northport does have an industrial park, and assuming the wireless internet could be solved there may be potential for attracting new businesses there.

In the chart below the amount of support for each economic development strategy proposed is shown. Development of workforce housing and attracting high-tech companies were rated as very important by two-thirds of respondents. In addition, attracting companies that pay a living wage was third, with 48% of respondents indicating this is very important to the region.



## Strategy 2

### ***Form an economic development sub-committee to ensure the region is ready for development.***

A sub-committee ought to be put together with members from the village and township planning commissions, local businesses and the leadership team to focus on the following areas: 1) work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to obtain redevelopment ready community certification©, 2) identify building sites that can be developed for small apartment units, 3) work with local businesses to identify potential buildings that can be purchased for worker housing, 4) work with local government to remove zoning barriers and identify incentives to attract developers, and 5) support the Chamber of Commerce in its work to market the region to businesses and developers. Although these are complex issues to tackle, there are steps that have already been taken by members of the leadership team and local government, including sending several individuals to the MEDC training to obtain the Redevelopment Ready Community certification©. Once certified, MEDC will promote up to 3 regional sites to developers, as well as provide technical assistance match funding.

Other action steps that could be accomplished with limited resources include the following:

- Supporting the Chamber of Commerce in developing a community website
- Develop marketing material for Leelanau Township and the Village of Northport
- Working with retired professionals that have expertise in marketing and business development to promote the region to businesses that might relocate here

## *Housing Development*

A growing tourism industry requires different housing types than the traditional single family home that has supplied the region historically. Employers are in need of workers, particularly during the summer and fall months at the height of tourist season. Seasonal housing in Northport and Omena make up the vast majority of vacant homes during the off-season. On the other hand,

most houses are rented on a short-term lease basis during the tourist-season and are not affordable options for families or workers in the tourist industry. As the region has become more popular, the median home price has risen, resulting in a housing market that is out of reach to most entry-level workers. Without available year-round housing it becomes a challenge for a community to remain a “real place” with a diverse population. In the Village of Northport, many houses are now dark in the winter.

Affordable housing is defined as 30% or less of a household’s income is spent on housing. Table II estimates the earnings required to afford and average rental in NW Michigan in 2014. With the cost of construction for a single-family home averaging approximately \$250,000, it is out of reach to young families and entry-level workers.

Table II

65 hours a week a minimum-wage worker would need to work to afford an average rental in NW MI=(\$650-\$800)
\$12.19 hourly wage needed in order to earn enough to afford an average rental
\$25,360 annual wage needed in order to earn enough to afford an average rental

Source: Networks Northwest-A Framework for Housing Choices (2014)

Unless local businesses are willing to increase wages substantially, housing the workforce will require creative solutions, involving partnerships between local businesses, government and the nonprofit sector. As a first step, policies that may be influencing the local housing market ought to be addressed. These include consideration to limiting the number of short-term rentals and regulatory changes that support smaller and more diverse housing.

Recently, the Northport Leelanau Township Utilities Authority (NTULA) adjusted the table used to determine monthly rates for apartments hooked to to the municipal sewer system, allowing for more worker apartments in the business district of Northport. In addition, the Village of Northport is considering a proposal that would reduce the minimum frontage and lot size for a residential lot in the core residential district. If this zoning change passes it would lower the cost for new construction, allowing for smaller, more affordable homes.

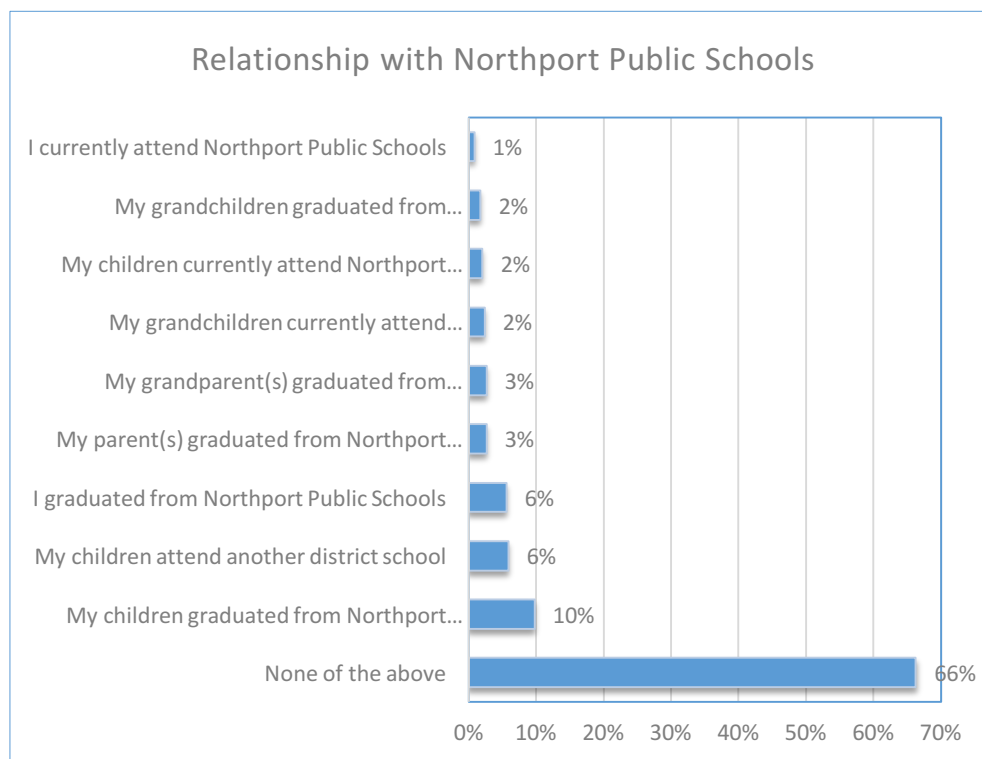
### Strategy 3

***Address housing development by working with nonprofits, the public and private sectors to identify housing solutions.*** The complexity of housing development requires cross-sector cooperation. There are many positive signs that there is momentum starting with the community’s overwhelming support and recognition of the need for workforce housing. The leadership team organized a team of public and private representatives to attend the MEDC redevelopment ready community certification© training. Several members of the leadership team were appointed to a countywide planning committee to look at housing solutions. Last, in the Village of Northport there are plans to make housing development less costly for downtown apartments and proposed zoning would allow development on smaller lot sizes. Other mechanisms available to local government are to provide incentives to developers of small apartment buildings, such as waiving the sewer hook-up fee or providing tax abatements. Identifying available land parcels for development and working with the planning commissions

on any necessary zoning changes to encourage diverse housing are additional action steps that can be taken.

#### *Northport Public School*

The chart below shows the percentage of survey respondents that attended the Northport Public School. Two-thirds of respondents reported no direct relationship with the school, however, there is a great deal of concern about its future. The most frequented concern expressed was in regard to the enrollment size. Michigan's school choice law allows students to attend schools out-of-district, and Northport loses about the same number of students it gains from other districts. Enrollment has been flat since 2004 and the student body is now 150.



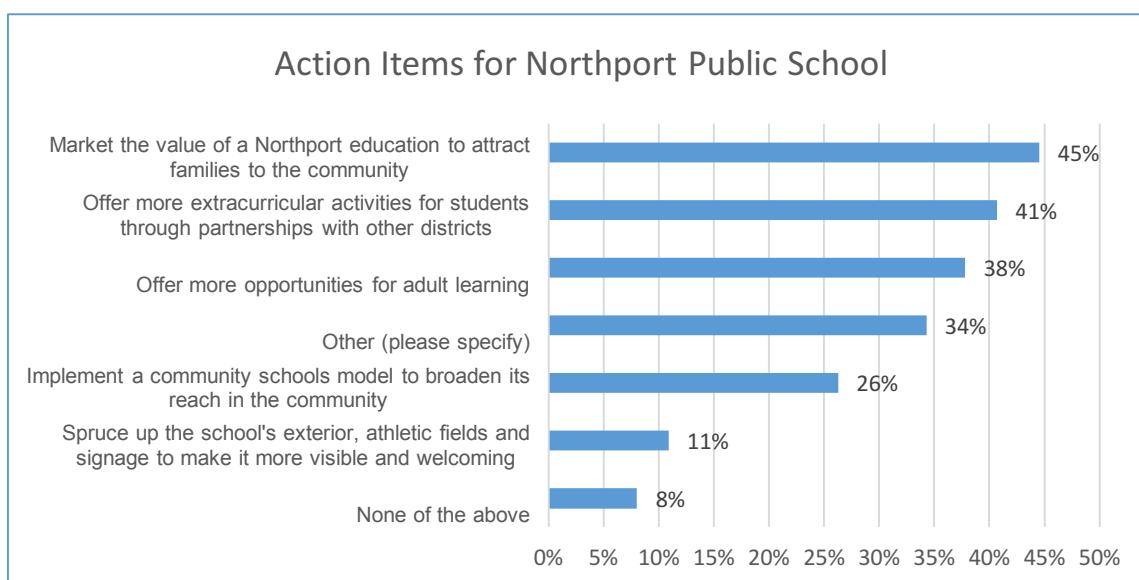
Northport is an out-of-formula school district, meaning it does not rely on state per pupil funding to operate. Northport is able to levy 13.388 mills of the 15.2884 mill levy on non-homestead, non-qualified properties generates, which generates about 85% of the district's \$4.5 million annual budget. In 2017, district expenditures were \$3.7 million and there was a fund balance of \$2.1 million. Student enrollment was 150, and per pupil instructional spending was \$13,335. In 2015-2016, the last year data were available, the district ranked in the 43<sup>rd</sup> percentile statewide, however in 2016-2017 state test scores placed Northport grades 3-8 in the 64<sup>th</sup> percentile and the high school in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile (18<sup>th</sup> in the state.) More than half of students that attend Northport Public School are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

The community ranked the school slightly better than average as shown in Table III.

Table III

1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Weighted Ranking
Very Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent	
4%	13%	43%	33%	7%	3.26

When asked which action items Northport Public School should consider in the next few years, if any, the top action item shown in the chart below that is supported by 45% of respondents is to market the value of a Northport education to attract families to the community.



This is consistent with the community's concern over low enrollment numbers. Offering more extracurricular activities for students through partnerships with other districts is supported by 41% and offering more opportunities for adult learners by 38% of respondents. Although implementing a community schools model to broaden the school's reach in the community is only supported by one-fourth of the respondents, there may have been confusion on what this meant as was noted in the comments.

One third of respondents offered a response in the other category. Overwhelmingly, these comments fell into two focus areas: 1) improve the academic achievement of students at Northport Public School, and 2) merge with another district in Leelanau county. These are issues that were consistently raised in interviews and focus groups as well. Adding advanced placement courses, STEM and other specialized curricula such as in the arts or environment were also recommended by the community. Merging with a neighboring district, for example, Leland or Suttons Bay, was cited in order to maximize resources and provide students with more opportunities for Advanced Placement courses and athletics.

Northport Public School has made considerable progress in academic achievement in the last year assuming students continue to perform at this level. Further, its effort to partner with other districts have allowed students to take 43 different Advanced Placement classes, dual enrollment and early college. Additionally, 10 honors courses are offered. Athletic agreements between Northport and Suttons Bay allow students from Northport to participate in traditional athletic offerings such as football, basketball, soccer and cross-country.

#### Strategy 4

***Form an education advisory group with buy-in from the school board that will work to build community support for the Northport Public School through a community school model and marketing of its school-community partnerships and achievements.*** Although this action item was chosen by just over one-fourth of the survey respondents, other closely aligned items were supported by a larger percentage of respondents, such as offering more opportunities for adult learning and more extra-curricular activities through partnerships. In addition, a community like Northport, with a high percentage of retired professionals would be an excellent environment to bridge a community-school partnership because of access to people who would be willing to volunteer in the schools. Further, there is adequate space to house extra-curricular and support programming from community partners. The existing relationship with the Northport Community Arts Center (NCAC) is an excellent example of one partnership. In addition, Northport has a partnership with NORTE to support healthy community walking and biking, adult pickle ball three times a week, open gym many Sundays, and a community climbing wall twice a week. Many health related services are available to students including dental services, hearing and vision testing, and community mental health.

These partnerships and services reflect a community school model, even though it may be missing the structure that ties the intervention to specific student and community outcomes. Working collaboratively in the community ought to be a top priority for the district, as community resources are directly connected to student learning. Second, to market the value of the Northport school a more concentrated effort to publicize recent achievements and partnerships will need to take place. If the community does not understand all that is happening at the school, it is unlikely families considering a move to Northport will have that information without a marketing campaign. Framing these efforts within a community school model in a very unique community like Northport can be advantageous. For future reference the definition of a community school is presented below. Research publications showing promising results in academic outcomes and other resources are available through the coalition of community schools- <http://www.communityschools.org/>

#### What is a community school?

**“A Community School is both a place and a set of partnerships between schools and community resources, including nonprofit, educational, government and philanthropic sectors. It embraces an integrated focus on not only academics but also services, supports, and opportunities to improve student learning outcomes and strengthen families and communities.”**

—Adapted from Coalition for Community Schools

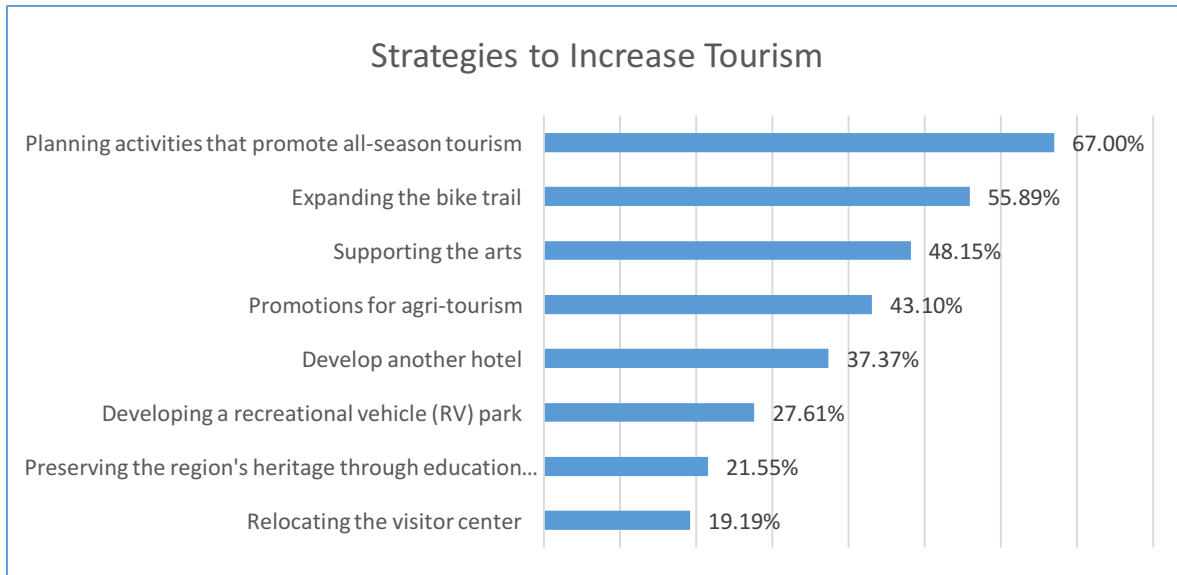


### *Support for the Arts and Tourism*

Support for the arts community was ranked as very important by over one-third of community members. Northport is rich in arts and culture from the NCAC to the Northport Arts Association, in addition to the many artists that have moved to the region that contribute to define the region. Some of the highlights over the last several years include Music in the Park and NCAC's summer productions. These events occur many tourists during summer and there are efforts to bring in tourist off-season such as Leelanau UnCaged in the fall and NCAC's dinner theatre in the winter. Local business owners report the number of tourists making day-trips has increased over the past several years, and many feel they are at capacity during the summer months. To many, the early fall is beginning to look a lot like summer. The chart below shows the community's opinion on tourism by season. Most people would agree that winter and possibly spring are the two season where more tourism is needed.



Strategies to increase tourism and the respective support by community members is shown in the chart below. Planning to increase all-season tourism is supported by two-thirds of respondents. One area of agreement is the need for a coordinating body to promote events among all community organizations in a central location, perhaps through the Chamber of Commerce or Visitors Center. Another idea that received considerable support is to complete the bike trail, which would connect the TART trail with the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and allow bikers to ride across the whole peninsula. Other suggestions that surfaced in the focus groups are to build fat bike and groomed cross-country ski trails that would encourage winter outdoor sport enthusiasts to visit Leelanau Township year-round.



#### *Strategy 5*

***Build a brand with a marketing and communication strategy that will attract regional tourists to the area off-season.*** Most community members are satisfied with the number of tourists in the summer and fall. What is lacking is winter activity. Attract “tourists” from the region by focusing on the region’s natural environment and what it has to offer. Work with the Chamber to market the hiking trails, and more importantly, for the winter, the fat bike trails and the cross-country skiing. Getting the word out about the natural resources in Leelanau Township could start with a race, either a sponsored 5K or tri-Athlon. Connecting the Heritage and Tart bike trails is the one project the leadership team ought to take on to increase tourism. Work with TART trails and Sleeping Bear Heritage Trails to connect them. What a marketing campaign riding the peninsula could make!

#### *Governance, Zoning Reform and Enforcement*

Both township and village residents expressed frustration with a perceived lack of collaboration between their respective local governments. Over half of respondents believe the village and township should consolidate into one government entity. Whether this is realistic or not, 89% of respondents agree that they ought to at least collaborate on planning and zoning issues, and 60% would like a shared government office space. This is a strong indication of a need for materials to explain a range of possible local governmental structures and the effects they might have on millages. Given the high interest, it would be timely to convene a community task force whose charge is to study this issue of unification of Village and Township governments. In other words, to develop informational materials and programs explaining and comparing the current roles of both the village and township, including millage for each service provided; complete an analysis of pros and cons of uniting our Village and Township with recommendations of available options; and provide an outline of procedures and timeframes required for each option. This might be done by engaging with someone who brings expertise on governmental structures from outside the area, and would be a good opportunity to look for grant assistance for financial

support of the project. That same group, in cooperation with Village and Township, could then provide education throughout the community on this issue.

Zoning and enforcement is also one of the areas where there appears to be a lot of misunderstanding in the community. A planned series to educate the public on issues concerning government operations and zoning may help to improve public opinion on local governance. Topics might include, 1) Purpose of Village and Township government, taxes and service delivery, and 2) Zoning laws and enforcement, and the implications of proposed zoning reform on the region.

#### *Wireless Internet*

Wireless internet continues to be the number one community priority. Connectivity remains the last hurdle for rural America to join the technology economy. The Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation (LPEF) Technology Committee partnered with Connect Michigan to survey Leelanau County residents and stakeholders to identify its broadband needs and priorities. LPEF continues to work with AT&T and Century Link to expand broadband service in unserved areas. For this reason, it is not addressed as a focus area in this report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the community priorities and with consideration given to the resources the Leelanau Township Community Foundation, Village of Northport and Leelanau Township have to implement change. Although the leadership team is made-up of many committed volunteers and can have an impact in all of these areas, as noted above, many of these issues are complex and will take multiple partners and financial support to move the needle. What is most important in this phase of the work is for the partners to pave the way for substantial investments, and to take on manageable projects that can succeed. The following strategies and actions steps ought to be considered in this context.

### Strategy 1

***Work with local organizations on public education campaigns to raise awareness on environmental issues that bring local policy makers and the community together to develop solutions and implement policy change.***

Action Steps:

- Work with local organizations to organize public education campaigns, for example, on the risks of failing septic systems and need to have regular inspections
- Develop material to inform local residents of dark sky ordinance and develop advocacy strategy to ensure there are penalties for violators of the ordinance
- Identify land in Leelanau Township that might be preserved through the Leelanau Conservancy for future public use and enjoyment
- Work with the appropriate oversight agency to ensure public space is maintained for continued public enjoyment, including beaches, hiking and bike trails

### Strategy 2

***Form an economic development sub-committee to ensure the region's readiness for development.***

Action Steps:

- Work with MEDC on Redevelopment Ready Community© Certification
- Identify building sites for small apartment buildings
- Identify zoning changes, incentives and work with local government to attract developers
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in its work to market the region to business and developers
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in developing a community website
- Developing marketing material for Leelanau Township and Village of Northport, working with retired professionals that have expertise in marketing and business development

### Strategy 3

***Address housing development by working with nonprofits, the public and private sectors to identify housing solutions.***

Action Steps:

- Work with local government to provide incentives for development of small apartment buildings
- Identify available land parcels for development
- Work on necessary zoning changes that will encourage housing diversity

### Strategy 4

***Form an education advisory group with buy-in from the school board that will work to build community support for the Northport Public School through a community school model and marketing of its school-community partnerships and achievements.***

Action Steps:

- Research community-school model
- Explore community resources such as nonprofits to offer programming, and retired professionals willing to volunteer
- Market partnerships and achievements
- Offer opportunities for adult learning

### Strategy 5

***Build a brand with a marketing and communication strategy that will attract regional tourists to the area off-season.***

Action Steps:

- Create a regional brand
- Support the Chamber of Commerce in designating someone to oversee its website design
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to market the region's hiking trails, fat bike trails and cross-country skiing
- Sponsor a 5K or tri-Athlon
- Finishing the bike trail and promote riding the peninsula
- Maintain and promote resources such as the G. Marsten Marina, Leelanau State Park, Christmas Cove, Peterson Park, Braman Hill Recreation Area, and public beaches

"The distance between Traverse City and Northport is not that far, if people come halfway to Suttons Bay, why not a little further to Northport?"

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I Leadership Team

*The Leadership Team (LT) is a diverse, community-based group of citizens that was established in 2011 as part of Phase I of Designing and Achieving Our Potential, a project plan of action that supported the quality of life and economic well-being of the community. The primary role of the LT was and is today, to guide the scope of work outlined in the project; to recruit participation, and to be a conduit for implementation, but not decision makers. Phase I of D & A included a plan of action with roles and responsibilities along with a schedule of possible funding sources. The LT continues to meet the first Wednesday of each month. The meetings are open to all community members with an interest in the project.*

#### Current Members:

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Dave	Bebiak	Township resident
JoAnne	Cook	Former GTB Council Member. Township resident
Karen	Cross	Northport Omena Chamber Trustee, Township resident
Joe	Defors	Northport Energy, Township resident
Jane	Gale	Village Trustee, Village resident
Rick	Foster	LTCF Trustee, Township resident
Gene	Garthe	Organic Orchardist, Township resident
Joan	Kalchik-Tenbrock	Township Resident
Sarah Jane	Johnson	Leelanau Children's Center Executive Director, REACH Board Member
Kasey	Mahony	Unit Supervisor, Michigan State Park
Phil	Mikesell	Village President, Village resident
Ann Marie	Mitchell	Realtor, Township resident
Jim	Neve	Former Township Supervisor, Township resident
Stephanie	Rosiniski	Lead Ranger, Michigan State Park
Doug	Scripps	Township Supervisor, Village resident
Fred	Steffens	Former Village President, Village resident
Ty	Wessell	County Commissioner, District #4, REACH Board Member
Neil	Wetherbee	Northport School Superintendent, Village resident
Karl	Wizinsky	Village Business owner, Village Resident

### Community Meeting Priority Areas

**When you think about living here, what do you like now, and what do you see in 10-20 years? How will we get there?**

1. Better Wi-Fi/ internet (24)
2. Combine village and township (13)
3. Make a bigger library (10)
4. Marketing for school to increase enrollment (10)
5. Historical signage (9)
6. Relocate visitor center (9)
7. Safer bike trails (8)
8. Agriculture maintained (friendly tax reform) (8)
9. Bring in young families/not just retirees (7)
10. Short-term rent controls (6)
11. Interactive display to preserve history (6)
12. Better government collaboration (6)
13. Eliminate junk yards (5)
14. Proactive plan to develop vacant real estate (5)
15. Alternative energy/clean energy (4)
16. Sewer system marketable (4)
17. Greater vibrancy in downtown (3)
18. Stronger building codes (2)
19. Water quality and education (2)
20. Improve public transportation (2)
21. Protect countryside/keep our identity/likes (2)
22. Keep year-round community (2)
23. Market Northport as suburb of Traverse City (1)
24. More senior activities and services (1)
25. More job opportunities (1)
26. More diversity (1)
27. Need dentist and more medical care (1)
28. Avoid suburbanization (1)
29. Better marketing and publicity
30. Need pharmacy and Laundromat
31. Address isolation
32. Affordable housing/housing for workers (this one was moved to housing category)
33. Develop four season tourist industry

34. Make sure everything we like about Northport is still here
35. Attract new industry
36. Controlled development
37. More communication/keep people informed
38. Car wash
39. Stronger chamber of commerce
40. Tourism supported

**How do we ensure our region's natural environment is protected?**

1. Coastline is protected (17)
2. Support organizations like water-shed and shut-down pipeline 5 (13)
3. Enforce NightSky Ordinance (10)
4. Water quality & testing (8)
5. Public access to land and water is protected (7)
6. Promote clean energy (7)
7. Invasive species control (5)
8. Village & township to adopt the same ordinances (2)
9. Manage fertilizer run-off (1)
10. Support Agriculture Use for Young Families (1)
11. Limits/restrictions on: plastic bags, bottle sales, straws (1)
12. Septic Inspection (0)
13. Protect our rural views (0)

**Do we have a need for housing, and if so, what type?**

1. Interest in zoning reform with respect to: density, lot size, agriculture-zoning, square footage requirements, sewer rates, and infrastructure costs (12)
2. Affordable housing for workforce (11)
3. Mobile home park (9)
4. Attract young families by creating jobs (9)
5. RV park (7)
6. Affordable housing for young families (6)
7. Tiny homes (5)
8. Support technology companies and promote high tech jobs where workers can work remotely (5)
9. Redevelopment readiness (3)
10. Senior housing (2)
11. Youth hostel (2)
12. Boarding/rooming house (1)
13. Gather data on housing need through needs assessment (1)
14. Provide tax incentive for apartment development (1)
15. Seasonal housing, guest homes, short-term rentals (0)



16. Manufactured homes (0)

17. Section 8 (vouchers) (0)

18. Prevent high rise, huge apartment complexes and public housing developments (0)

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### Appendix III List of Stakeholders Participating in Interviews and Focus Groups

#### Interviews:

Doug Scripps, Leelanau Township Supervisor  
Frederick Budd, Community Foundation Trustee  
Guy Fredrickson, Leelanau Township Planning Commission  
Denise Dunn, Leelanau Township Treasurer  
Janet Crane, Northport Community Arts Center  
Neil Wetherbee Northport Public School Superintendent  
Phil Mikesell Northport Village Council President  
Mike Ziter, Northport Physician  
Sarah Jane Johnson, Executive Director, Leelanau Children's Center  
Ty Wessell, Leelanau County Commissioner

Three Focus Groups were Conducted with Omena, Northport and Township Residents

Joe	Barrientoz
Marsha	Buehler
Ben	Crowe
Megan	Ernst
Kristi	Fischer
Kristin	Frank
Pamela	Grath
Brian	Hafner
Will	Harper
Steve	Kalchik
Chris	McCann
Jim	Miller
Danielle	Percy
Paul	Rebori
Phyllis	Rebori
John	Sanders
Brian	Tennis
Joey	Thomas
Thad	Tomlinson
Mary	Tonneberger
Chris	Verdon
Mary	Ziegler
Dan	Ziegler