

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Planning Process

The purpose of the City of Harrisville Master Plan is to provide guidelines for future development within the community, while protecting the natural resources and small town character. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, states a City may adopt, amend, and implement a master plan. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act states: *The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:*

- (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.*
- (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.*
- (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.*
- (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:*
 - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.*
 - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.*
 - (iii) Light and air.*
 - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.*
 - (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.*
 - (vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.*
 - (vii) Recreation.*
 - (viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.*

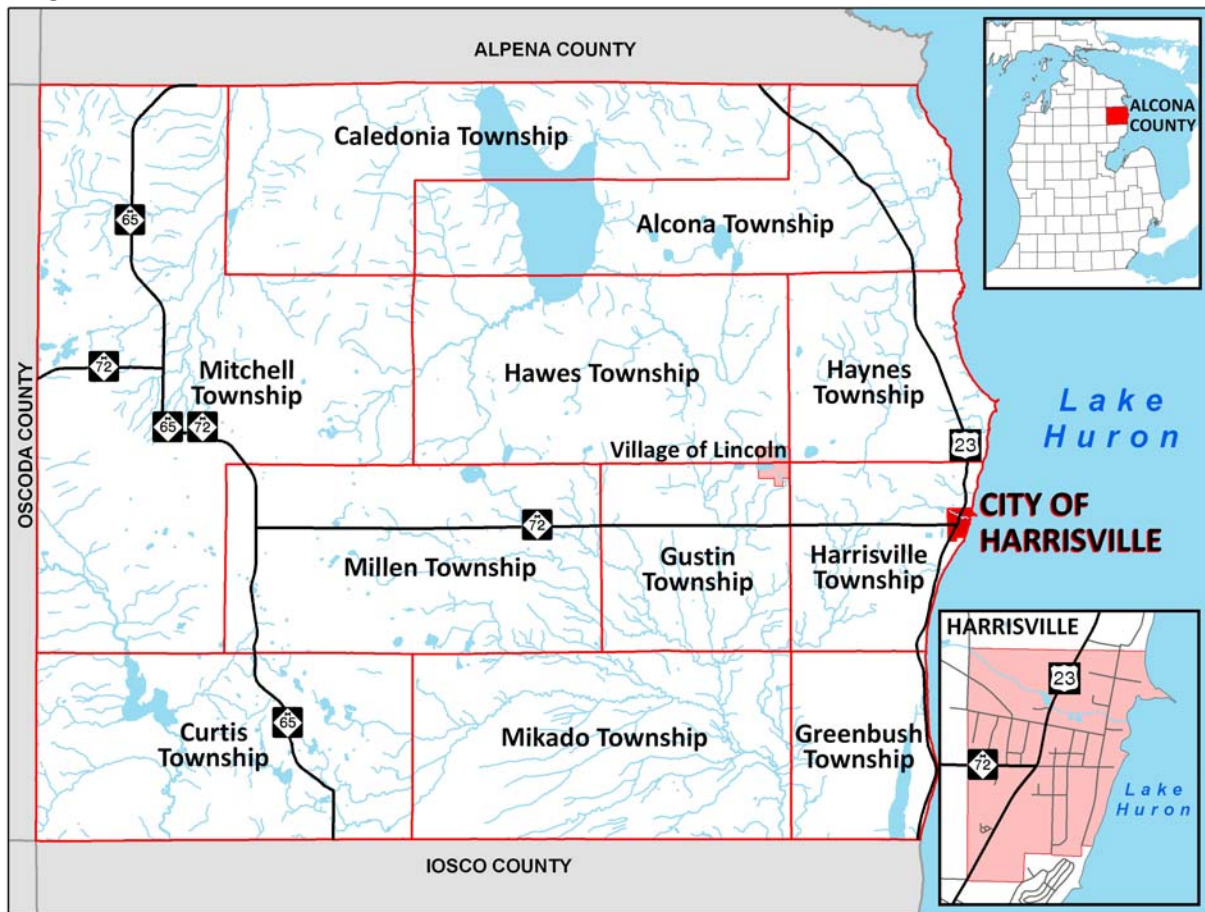
This plan presents background information on social and economic data, natural resources, existing community services and facilities, and existing land uses. The background information is used to identify important characteristics, changes and trends in the City of Harrisville. A special community workshop was held to gather input from residents and landowners. Based on information gathered at this workshop and the background data, the City Planning Commission developed goals and objectives. These goals and objectives, along with a series of maps including soils, ownership, existing land use, and zoning, provide the basis for the Future Land Use Map. The future land use map recommends locations for various types of future development within the City.

Developed by the City of Harrisville Planning Commission with assistance from the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG), the Master Plan looks at a twenty year planning horizon, with required revisits every five years or sooner if needed. A series of planning workshops were held over the two-year period. All workshops were open meetings with public welcomed and encouraged to comment on the plan.

Location and Regional Setting

Located in the Northeastern Lower Peninsula of Michigan along the western shore of Lake Huron (See **Figure 1-1**), the City comprises a total area of 0.6 square miles and is bordered on the north, south and west by Harrisville Township. Harrisville serves as the county seat of Alcona County. The US-23 Coastal Highway traverses the community south to north. M-72 highway's eastern terminus connects to the coastal highway within the community with the US-23 and M-72 junction being the location of the County's only signalized intersection. The latitude of Harrisville is 44.656N, approximately half way between the North Pole and the equator.

Figure 1-1



Brief History

Alcona County has a rich history and long history of human occupation. The earliest artifacts found here are stone lance heads, similar to those used by the ancestors of today's Native Americans from approximately 9,000 BC. Native Americans, during their yearly seasonal migrations, would stop and camp on Lake Huron's shoreline. "The Great Black Rock" north of Greenbush and South Point in Negwegon State Park were prominent landmark features to the

early native Americans.

Formed by the Michigan Legislature in 1840, Alcona County was first known as the Negwegon District, taking its name from the Chippewa Indian Chief. In 1843, historian Henry R. Schoolcraft changed the name of the district to the Chippewa word meaning “a fine plain”. In 1846, the first settlement in the county was located at the village of Springport as a commercial fishing port. The first crop, rye, was raised near Springport in 1857. Additional ports were established at Alcona, Black River, and Harrisville to accommodate the growing fishing fleets and to serve the lumber industry. The Sturgeon Point Lighthouse opened in 1870 as a navigation aid, while the Life Saving Station opened in 1876.

The community of Harrisville was first known as "Davison's Mill" named after Crosier Davison. Davison and Simeon Holden had purchased land here in 1854 and constructed a mill pond and water-powered sawmill. In 1856, Davison and Holden sold their saw mill to Benjamin Harris and his sons, Levi and Henry. The mill, located at Mill Pond, was developed into a grist and saw mill. A post office, established in 1857, was named Harrisville after the family operations. Harrisville became the county seat when Alcona County was established in 1869. It was platted in 1870, incorporated as a village in 1887, and as a city in 1905.¹ Currently, Harrisville is considered a Home Rule City with a Fourth Class City Act Charter.

The Status of Planning and Zoning in City of Harrisville

The Harrisville City Planning Commission was established by City Ordinance #74-3 under the Municipal Planning Act 285 of 1931 and became effective on January 2, 1975. The Planning Commission consisted of seven at-large members appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. On July 14, 2008, the City Council repealed City Ordinance #72-3 and reestablished the Harrisville City Planning Commission by City Ordinance #08-1 in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008. The planning commission is responsible for all aspects of planning for the city, including the preparation of a comprehensive master plan, site plan review, and recommendations to the city council on requests for amendments to the zoning ordinance, and zoning and re-zoning requests. Members serve for three year terms.

In 1985, the City unanimously passed a resolution causing the existing Planning Commission to assume the functions of a parks and recreation commission. The duties and responsibilities defined in that resolution include the establishment of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, overseeing the operation of any recreational facilities owned and/or maintained by the City, and other duties related to parks and recreation that the City Council directs.

The City adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1949. Subsequently, in 1985 Harrisville adopted its first Comprehensive Plan. The current zoning ordinance was adopted in 1980 by City Ordinance #80-3.

City of Harrisville has recognized the importance and need for developing an updated Master Plan in compliance the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008. Two key issues are to provide a legal foundation for the City Zoning Ordinance and to address anticipated future needs of City residents and businesses. By documenting existing conditions such as the environment, socio-economic trends, community services, transportation, recreation, and land use within a master plan, the City will be able to formulate appropriate land use goals and policies to guide development and serve as the basis for enforceable zoning. The master plan will in turn be used as a basis for re-examining the City's zoning districts and land use development controls.

¹ Romig, Walter (1986) [1973]. *Michigan Place Names*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press. [ISBN 0-8143-1838-X](#)