Community Values

Chapter 2

Key Concepts

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

A. Based on public input, rural character in Chocolay Township seems to be experienced as aesthetically pleasant, mostly natural places that offer a feeling of peace and privacy and a quality of life that invites participation. Community input makes it clear that Chocolay Township contains many features that people care about.

HEALTHY & LIVABLE COMMUNITY

B. Chocolay Township values policies and projects that address the needs of the aging population while providing better opportunity for all residents. This means looking at public places in a new way.

CRITICAL SYSTEMS

C. The food supply system is recognized as a critical system in Chocolay Township in much the same way as water supply, waste management, and the environment are critical systems.

SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

D. A sustainable community is one that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient.

SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

E. A sustainable community depends on inspiring, effective, and responsive leadership; active, organized, and informed citizenship; and responsible, caring, and healthy community institutions, services, and businesses. Therefore, every part of the community has a stake in and a responsibility for community sustainability and resilience.

RESILIENCE PRINCIPLES

F. Capacity for resilience relates to the ability of people and organizations to identify and anticipate shocks, avoid them when possible, and work together to devise a positive response when avoidance is impossible.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER – PLACES WE CARE ABOUT

It is reasonable to assume that the most enduring elements of communities are those that people care about. This could explain continued investment and patronage of historic downtowns even with the encroachment of bustling highway corridors that accommodate modern growth patterns. It also explains the subsequent abandonment of those same bustling highway corridors. People care most about places that look good or offer a pleasant or useful experience. And when people care about places, they are more likely to preserve them.

Although the 2013 survey indicates some dissatisfaction with portions of the built environment of Chocolay Township, it is clear that the natural environment creates an enduring attachment among residents. In a 2010 community survey, 63 percent of respondents identified rural character as the top reason they reside in Chocolay Township (290 responses). 88 percent (389 responses) said that rural character was the most positive aspect of living in Chocolay Township.

This begs the question "what is rural character"? The Chocolay Township Zoning Ordinance defines rural character thus:

> "The rural character of Chocolay Township embodies a quality of life based upon traditional rural landscapes, activities, lifestyles, and aesthetic values. . . For purposes of this section, rural character shall also be defined to mean areas perceived as having a low density pattern of development, being generally void of man-made improvements such as city essential services, and exhibiting open fields, farmlands, or woodlands as common elements of the visual landscape."

Character is perceived through how things look, feel, or function. In other words, it is perceived through experience. In the 2013 community survey, the majority of residents indicated that rural character means the following things, in order of most frequent response:

- Places to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature
- Large wooded lots with plenty of privacy between neighbors
- Access to outdoor recreation
- Hiking/biking trails
- Quiet country roads fronted by farms and single-family homes
- Dark areas that let you see the stars
- Living in a place where you don't have to deal with a lot of government regulations
- Small hobby farms
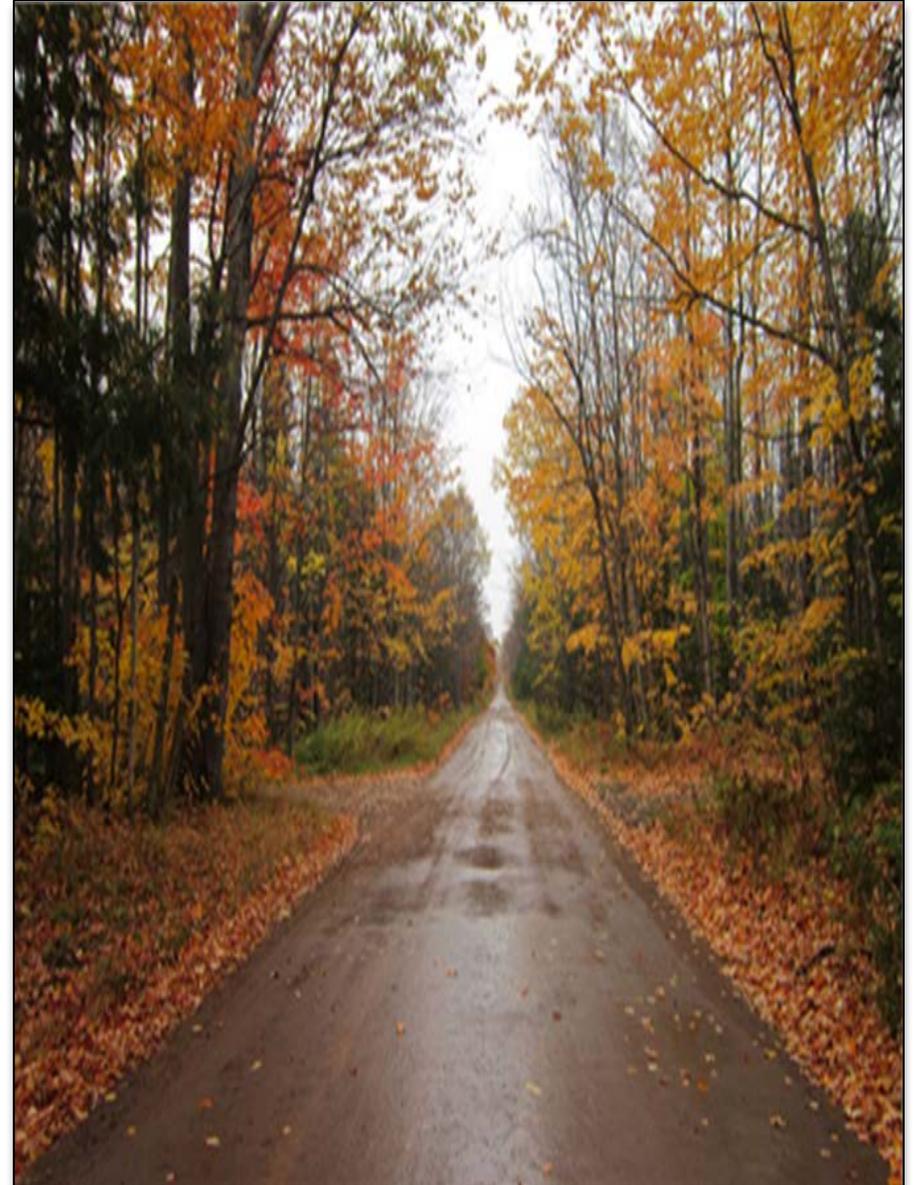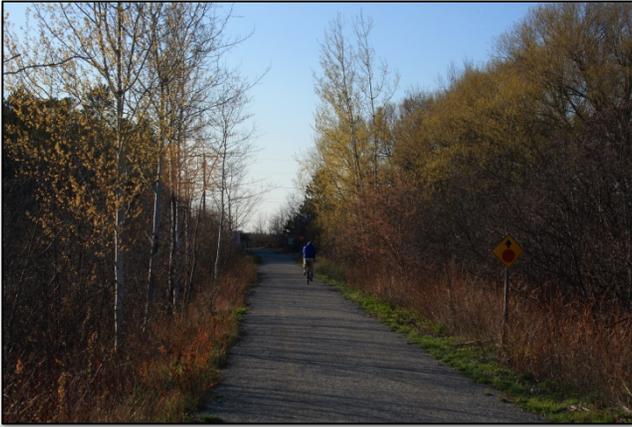
Rural section of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail

Fishing platform at the Township marina

An overwhelming majority of respondents neglected to choose "large, busy retail strips", "cleared lots with homes built close to the road", "stately homes with well-maintained lawns and park-like open spaces", "commercial areas with ample, well-lit parking lots", or "living with the sights, sounds, and smells of farm animals" as representing rural character. In their comments, several indicated that there are appropriate places for these things in the Township even though these elements are not perceived as representing rural character. What seems clear is that many people in Chocolay Township value a peaceful, quiet lifestyle that is compatible with enjoyment of nature. While they don't value a lot of government regulation, they are accepting of regulations to manage elements that conflict unnecessarily with important community values. For example, in the 2013 community survey, the majority of respondents were supportive of land use regulations to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and sensitive natural features such as wetlands, steep slopes, and dunes. They were also supportive of regulations to require removal of dilapidated structures, control outdoor accumulations of inoperable cars, equipment and junk, or to require screening for such accumulations. This is probably because these items were not perceived as contributing to a positive experience.

HEALTHY & LIVABLE COMMUNITY

Research has shown that obesity, asthma, diabetes and heart disease are all aggravated by the auto-centric way we live our lives today. This is one of the ways that land use and community design are related to public health, and why public health departments have become involved, asserting that development that does not provide for physical activity, access to healthy food, and clean air and water can reduce positive health outcomes and lead to increases in preventable illness.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has created a checklist to assist agencies in their review of applications for new development and redevelopment plans. Here are some examples of development principles they say support healthy communities:

- Sustainable water supply
- Landscaping plan that includes water conservation measures
- Opportunities for recycling or reuse of water and wastewater
- Absence of air quality impacts
- Project designed to reduce vehicle emissions (connectivity of streets, mixed-uses)
- Encourages alternative modes of transportation
- Separation from cell towers, power lines, and other uses that emit potentially harmful electromagnetic radiation
- Open spaces and trails to provide opportunity for physical activity and play
- Mix of uses so that people can walk to destinations
- Sidewalks of sufficient width to accommodate multiple uses
- Lighting along trails and sidewalks to increase comfort and security for users
- Traffic quieting design
- Access to public transportation
- Accommodation for the disabled

Chocolay Township, like many other communities, has an increasingly older population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2030, as many as one in five Americans could be age 65+. People in this age group are more likely to be retired from work, engaged in civic life, volunteering in their communities, and even starting new businesses.

Healthy and livable communities also recognize that as people age, they have different needs and desires. Growing older is more difficult in communities that lack accessible transportation and safe walkways or do not provide diverse leisure facilities and cultural opportunities. As people age, they experience changes in mobility that impact their ability to use stairs, cut the grass, or mount a ladder for home repairs. This impacts their ability to stay in their homes. They may also experience changes in vision and hearing that impact their ability to drive. This limits their opportunities if they don't live in a walkable community. The good news is that communities that work well for older adults also work well for everyone else.

It is also clear that healthy food is integral to the health and well-being of our community. Healthy food is defined as food that is fresh and nutritious and grown without harming its producers or our air, water, or soil. The food system is made up of all the ways in which food moves from farm (or producer) to table (consumer). It includes the farms on which it's grown, the manufacturers who process food, the venues in which the foods are delivered to the public, and the way the consumer receives and consumes food. More and more local governments are concerning themselves with food systems because of the link to public health, environmental health, and the economy. Strengthening the local food supply system also strengthens people and the economy.

SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

The concepts of sustainability and resilience are linked. Sustainability does not mean maintaining the status quo, because change is a reality of our world. Sustainability means being able to respond positively to change or adapt to adverse conditions. It often means embracing a "new normal" instead of returning to previous norms. Achieving sustainability requires a long-term perspective focused on both the present and the future, extending well beyond the next budget or election cycle.

Guiding Principles for Sustainability

Sustainability is commonly defined as the capability to equitably meet the vital needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept describes a condition in which human use of natural resources is in balance with nature's ability to replenish them. From a community perspective, this means managing human, natural, and financial resources in a sustainable way. It means thinking to the future while designing solutions for the present.

Sustainable systems mean a better quality of life, healthier ecosystems, economic security, and security of critical needs. It is achieved through collaboration supported by more effective governance and meaningful and broad-based citizen participation.

Guiding Principles for Resilience

Resilience is a process rather than an outcome. Resilience results from the capacity to absorb shocks and stresses. These shocks or stresses can be economic (such as rising energy prices), climate-related (such as an increase in severe weather events or changes in regional weather patterns), or social (such as population change or migration). For a local government, resilience means that the economic, social, political, and physical infrastructure systems can retain their basic function and structure regardless of change.

It is difficult to establish common elements of resilience when considering complex relationships. However, it is safe to say that systems that are **flexible**, **diverse**, contain some **redundancy** (backup plan), and are **integrated** have a greater capacity for resilience. These principles can be translated into strategies or criteria for decision making. For example, redundancy is particularly important for critical infrastructure such as drinking water supply, electrical power, heating and cooling systems, and public safety services. It is also important that transportation systems offer multiple routes and modes in case of emergency. Sometimes redundancy can be achieved through decentralization.

Here is an example of how decisions are viewed through the lens of resilience. We know that demand for all forms of energy is projected to increase in the coming years due to the increase in world population and level of affluence. All our systems are particularly dependent upon oil while the future supply is uncertain. A reduction in this dependence is critical. This includes our transportation systems, shelters, and even our food systems. A resilient process that works to improve energy performance and reduce energy consumption in order to lessen the impact associated with future energy availability or costs will provide greater sustainability.

PRIORITY DECISION CRITERIA

The following priority decision criteria are meant to support community character and a healthy, livable, sustainable, and resilient community. All projects in Chocolay Township should be evaluated in accordance with these priority criteria and measured based on expected outcome:

- **Diverse Users**

  To what extent does the activity involve infrastructure or services that will benefit diverse interest groups and support healthy and livable communities?

  Facilities or services that can satisfy the needs of diverse interest groups and support healthy, livable communities will receive higher priority, whether those interest groups are based locally or regionally, because local sustainability is related to regional sustainability. The inclusion of diverse user groups increases the beneficiaries of the project, spreads the costs, and makes administrative allocation of funds more justifiable.

- **Diverse Uses**

  To what extent does the facility or service satisfy multiple purposes?

  Facilities or services that serve multiple purposes will receive higher priority because they have greater potential to satisfy diverse users, involve cost efficiencies, and invite greater political support.

- **Flexibility**

  To what extent can the facility or service be adapted to meet changing needs or contexts in the future?

  Facilities or services that are more easily modified to adapt to changing conditions or needs will receive higher priority because of potential for greater sustainability and resilience.

- **Strengthen Critical Systems and Public Health**

  To what extent does the activity, service, or project strengthen critical life-support systems or conditions?

  Projects that are linked to critical human and environmental needs relating to water, food, energy, mobility, and public safety systems, or systems with a direct relationship to public health, will receive higher priority than non-critical needs.

- **Redundancy in Critical Systems**

  As related to critical needs, to what extent does the activity or project provide redundancy or backup for other critical activities or systems?

  Facilities or services that provide an alternative for critical systems will receive higher priority because of the greater capacity for sustainability and resilience.

- **Efficiency in Non-Critical Systems**

  As related to non-critical needs, to what extent is the facility or service supported by non-governmental groups, other agencies or organizations, or volunteers (funding, implementation, or continuing maintenance)?

14 Decision Criteria

1 Diverse users

2 Diverse uses

3 Flexibility

4 Strengthen critical systems and public health

5 Redundancy in critical systems

6 Efficiency in non-critical systems

7 Integration with other jurisdictions

8 Capacity building

9 Sustainability or resilience over time

10 Prevent or mitigate risks

11 Replication

12 Collaboration

13 Renewable Resources

14 Catalytic opportunity

Facilities or services that are supported by organizations, agencies or individuals outside of or in addition to local government will receive higher priority because the greater number and diversity of stakeholder groups helps to ensure continued maintenance while governmental reserves are focused on critical systems.

- Integration with other jurisdictions

  To what extent does the facility or service also support the goals or strategies of other project or planning entities within the region?

Facilities or services that are consistent with the goals or strategies of other project collaborators or planning entities within the region will receive higher priority because of the potential to attract additional resources, funding, and work capacity; address issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries; deliver solutions to complex problems; provide more coherence and support; and provide broader benefits.

- Capacity Building

  To what extent does the activity improve the ability of participants to understand and achieve Chocolay Township Master Plan outcomes?

Activities that increase the capacity of local government representatives or project partners to achieve plan outcomes will receive higher priority because the only successful plan is a well-implemented plan.

- Sustainability or Resilience over time

  To what extent does the project have the necessary support over the life of the project?

Projects that have multi-year or enduring support for the life of the project will receive higher priority.

- Prevent or mitigate risks

  To what extent does the project or activity prevent or mitigate identified risks to sustainability or resilience?

Projects or activities with greater potential to prevent or mitigate risks will receive higher priority, especially those that prevent irreversible loss.

- Replication

  To what extent can the project or activity be replicated to benefit or provide a positive role model for other locations?

Projects or activities with greater potential to positively influence others and therefore have a more far-reaching benefit will receive higher priority.

- Collaboration

  To what extent will the project or activity improve and increase opportunities for partnership with other jurisdictions, agencies, organizations or volunteers or provide additional inclusiveness for residents?

Projects or activities that increase capacity for partnership, collaborations and inclusiveness will receive higher priority.

- Renewable Resources

  To what extent will the project or activity reduce dependence on non-renewable resources?

Projects or activities that provide greater sustainability by reducing dependence on non-renewable resources will receive higher priority.

- Catalytic opportunity

  To what extent will the project or activities stimulate other beneficial projects or activities?

Projects or activities that include greater potential for catalytic economic, environmental, or social impacts will receive higher priority.

MEASURING PROGRESS

As part of the *Annual Report*, all departments in Chocolay Township should assess and summarize progress toward the outcomes and targeted strategies of this plan which are intended to achieve greater community sustainability and resilience.