



Benzie County Board of Commissioners

Strategic Plan Update

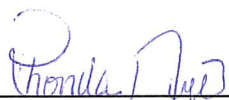
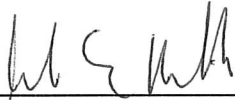
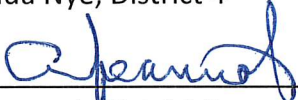
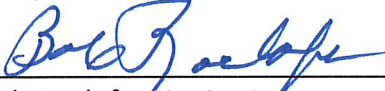


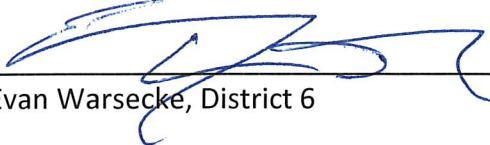
April 2021

Revised 5/5/21

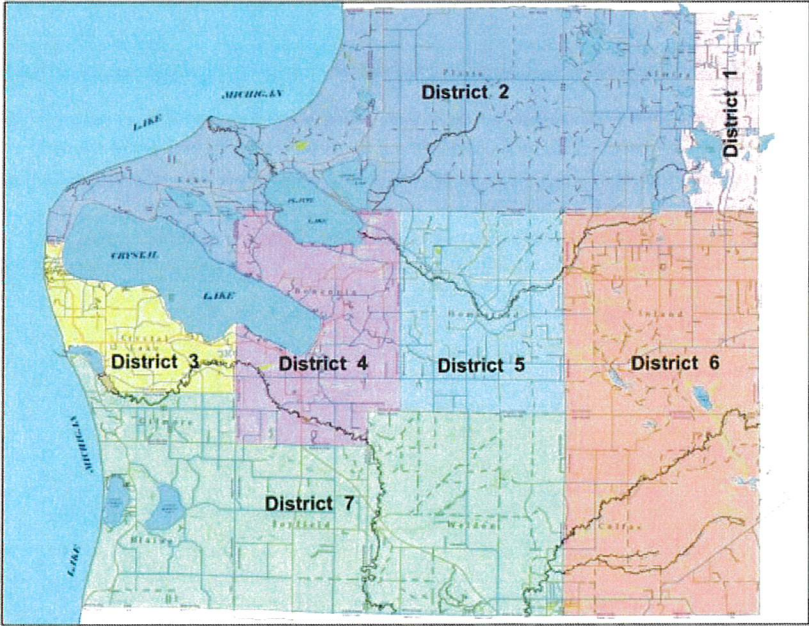
This is the second update of the Benzie County Board of Commissioners Strategic Plan that was initially developed in 2017. The following pages:

- Define our mission, vision and values
- Identifies key Stakeholders and how this Plan will be used
- Recognizes progress and accomplishments
- Identifies trends and opportunities
- Establishes Areas of Focus and Goals for each

We welcome input and participation from all those interested in working together to achieve important goals for Benzie County.

 Rhonda Nye, District 4	 Andy Miller, District 3
 Art Jeannot, District 2	 Bob Roelofs, District 1
 Gary Sauer, District 7	 Tim Markey, District 5
 Evan Warsecke, District 6	

Benzie County Commission Districts



Why a Strategic Plan?

The Benzie County Board of Commissioners work as partners to develop and use this Strategic Plan to: 1) identify priorities that are the focus of our agenda; and 2) track our progress. Annually, the Board reviews the Strategic Plan to ensure it is up to date.

The purposes of this Strategic Plan are to:

- o Develop a unifying game plan for Benzie County involving key issues and opportunities.
- o Ensure efficient use of financial and human resources.
- o Establish areas of focus and strategic goals that are measures for progress and accountability.

We welcome ideas, input and participation in our Strategic Plan. Input can be provided by:

- o Contacting a Commissioner.
- o Providing input at Commission meetings.
- o Mailing to: Board of Commissioners, Benzie County Building, 448 Court Place, Beulah, Michigan 49617.
- o Call the County Administrator's Office at 231-882-0558.

Mission

The mission for the Benzie County Board of Commission is:

As a service provider, convener, advocate, employer and steward, the Benzie County Board of Commissioners fulfills its constitutional obligations and the needs of the community through decisive, responsible leadership and maintaining a commitment to creating an inclusive, prosperous community where opportunity and quality of life are paramount.

Vision

The Vision of the Benzie County Board of Commission reflects the "ideal" state of the County from the perspective of the Commission:

Benzie County's vision is **“prosperity and opportunity for all residents and visitors.”**

Progress toward the vision will be achieved through our mission and by achieving strategic goals in partnership with others.

The vision assumes that we will strive to attract families, create employment opportunities, provide mandated and desired services, and develop housing, recreational and other assets to support and enhance our quality of life.

Values

A set of values guide our goals, decisions, and leadership for the betterment of Benzie County including:

- Fiscal responsibility
- Transparency
- Being accessible and available for all interests
- Open communication
- Inclusiveness
- Integrity and strong ethics
- Sustainability
- Forward thinking

Stakeholders

The Benzie County Board of Commission is unified around the importance of sharing and encouraging participation and input in this Strategic Plan. The County Board and County Administrator welcome opportunities to present the Plan, including to stakeholders such as:

- County employees and elected officials
- County Boards and Commissions
- All local units of government
- The business community
- Regional partners like Networks Northwest, Rotary Charities of Traverse City, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Area Regional Community Foundation, and others
- State government, including the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Pure Michigan, the Michigan Dept. of Transportation, the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Michigan Dept. Agriculture — Rural Development, Michigan State Housing & Development Authority and others
- Nonprofits, such as the Human Services Collaborative Body, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Grow Benzie and Conservation Resource Alliance
- Education, including the Benzie County Central and Frankfort school districts, Traverse Bay Intermediate School District, Northwestern Michigan College, Baker College, and West Shore Community College
- Benzie Senior Resources
- Veterans and Veteran groups
- Betsie Valley Community Center
- Benzie Bus

- All Service Clubs, including local Rotaries and others
- Sportsman Organizations
- Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Benzie County's and Frankfort's Chamber of Commerce
- Medical Care Facility MDHHS (Maples)
- Paul Oliver/Munson Health Care System
- Watershed Groups
- Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore
- Venture North
- Economic Development Contractors
- Michigan State University Extension (MSUE)
- Community Mental Health/Centra Wellness
- Citizen Groups
- Farming Community
- Neighboring Counties

If you would like to know more or become involved in our Strategic Plan, just let us know!

How Will the Strategic Plan be Used?

The Commission will use this Strategic Plan to:

- Provide leadership
- Establish our agenda and priorities.
- Set long term goals.
- Provide direction for County Employees and guidance for Elected Officials.
- Assess goals to ensure they reflect evolving conditions.
- Clarify County Commission priorities and goals to foster collaboration and understanding with local units of government.
- Set priorities for training for units of government and locally elected officials.
- Build partnerships and collaboration.
- Promote the entire County (all local governments)
- Encourage participation by young people in the future of the County.
- Protect, enhance and wisely manage the County's valued natural resources.

Progress

The Board recognizes that progress is being made in Benzie County. Examples include:

Workforce

- Creation of Local College Access Network Best Benzie County (2020-present)
- 30-unit workforce housing project Frankfort (2021)

Health Care

- Progressive programming of Central Wellness focused on rehabilitation and treatment as opposed to incarceration
- Veterans Affairs Enhancements – Access to Benefits focus
- Benzie Leelanau District Health Department pandemic response (2020-2021)

Community/Economic Development

- County Airport achieved general utility license
- Beulah – system upgraded and water quality compliance attained
- Thompsonville – upgrading water supply system
- Road Commission – ahead of schedule with road repair and county-wide road millage
- Storm Cloud Brewery expansion
- Xpert Fulfillment growth and development
- Sleeping Bear Apiaries expansion
- Crystal Mountain continued growth and success as four-season resort
- Land Bank Progress/Success
 - Thompsonville Housing
 - Affordable Rentals
 - Developments – catalyst for natural gas
- Veteran Memorial Site (2017)
- Memorandum of Understanding with Eclipse to expand broadband (2019)
- Village of Beulah Streetscape (2019)
- Village of Benzonia Water Upgrade (2019)
- New Platte River Park Funding & Development (2020)
- New Elberta Park Funding (2020)
- Growth of Cannabis industry in Benzie County (2020)
- Acquisition of Rail-Road Point property (2020)
- US-31 Street and Sidewalk upgrades Benzonia Township (2020)
- Zada Price Park Upgrades (2020)
- Homestretch Apartments Village of Honor (2021)
- Betsie Valley Trail upgrades (2021)
- High level of Board of Commission civic engagement

- Benzie Central Schools bond approval
- Local companies in a difficult COVID -19 environment doing very well
- Completion of Benzie County Medical Care Facility (Maples)
- Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital financially stable and reorganizing to better serve residents

Financial Wellness/Infrastructure

- Received \$660,000+ grant to upgrade emergency communications (2018)
- Development of a 5-year rolling capital improvement plan
- Board of Commission high level of involvement with budget preparation
- Municipal Analytics County Financial Report (2019)
- Addressed retirement liability going from DB to DC plans (2020)
- Continued progress on Headlee Restoration (2019- present)
- Continued review of opportunities associated with space needs study.

Trends and Opportunities

The County Commissioners recognized several trends and opportunities in the County that merit attention:

- Review and reorganization of County Administrator's office.
- Increased coordination and cooperation – efforts at County level and outside of County.
- Continued planning for the future: finance staff; capital expenditure budget; cooperative inter-county functions; Multiple year budgeting forecasting.
- Interest and need for more cooperative infrastructure initiatives involving sewer, water supply and broadband and the need for keeping infrastructure capacity parallel with growth
- Need to address housing for seasonal workers.
- Continued emphasis upon four season economy development, including opportunities for winter tourism and general business attraction.
- Need for increased citizen participation and maximizing considerable talent of volunteers.
- Need to make use of “best practices” in develop/modifying new programs.
- Continued need for business attraction with continued need for employees/workforce and workforce housing.
- Review/use of county-owned assets – will be subject of County-assessment.
- Work with community development leaders to develop tools/approaches for marketing and growth that benefits Benzie County.
- Need for 24/7 childcare and early childhood programming.
- Need to continue work to manage invasive species and improve water quality.
- Periodic review of County compensation structure.
- Continued support for child abuse prevention and healthy family interventions
- Need to fully leverage DNR/Park Service programs for mutual benefit.

- With the development of the Document of Understanding with the Benzie County Medical Care Facility (Maples), need to work cooperatively to research the best long term organizational model for the facility and citizens of Benzie County.
- Acknowledge the importance of Agritourism in Benzie County.
- Developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Eclipse to partner with a private sector broadband provider to expedite the process of expanding broadband throughout Benzie County. Formed the Economic Development Committee Broadband Subcommittee to work cooperatively with Eclipse and provide guidance to the EDC/BRA and County Commission regarding broadband expansion.

Areas of Focus

We have identified six areas of focus for this Strategic Plan. An “area of focus” is a broad area of high priority for the Board. For each area of focus the Board has developed Strategic Goals. The Board will work with the County Administrator to ensure that operating plans and budgets reflect our Strategic Goals. The Areas of Focus are:

1. Credibility of County Board & Building Trust
2. Collaboration & Partnerships to Achieve Priorities/ Create Efficiencies
3. Improved Institutional Capacity
4. The Financial Health of County Government
5. Creating an Environment to Support Business and Job Creation
6. Enhancing and Protecting Natural Resources of the County

1. Credibility of County Board & Building Trust

- **Goal:** To develop and implement a communications plan, including zoom capabilities during BOC meetings, web site enhancements with an inclusive email list for sharing information that uses electronic communication to encourage collaboration, two-way communications and ideas and suggestions that support the betterment of the County. Designate County Board members to attend City, Villages, Township, Airport, Benzie Leelanau District Health Department, Centra Wellness, school boards and all other relevant meetings.
- **Goal:** To convene with Benzie County Townships to understand their priorities and collaborate where possible to achieve them, achieving regional collaboration. Designate County Board members to attend City, Village and Township Association meetings.
- **Goal:** To encourage public participation in Commission meetings and other public meetings at all levels of government. To initiate action toward this goal, we will formally recognize and express our gratitude to those who offer input at the meetings we hold.

- **Goal:** To inform our County as well as partnering organizations, invite Congressional representatives, State and Federal Department leaders, and others to explore common agendas for progress, including issues and opportunities that positively impact Benzie County.
- **Goal:** Updating technology in the Commission room that will allow greater participation among residents via zoom attendance at Commission and other meetings. Greater availability of staff to participate in cost effective remote learning.

2. Collaboration & Partnerships to Achieve Shared Goals

- **Goal:** Collaborate, facilitate and act as a conveyor to develop partnerships to achieve goals of this Strategic Plan.

3. Improved Education and Training Capacity

- **Goal:** Continue to implement a professional development plan for Commissioners to strengthen governance, leadership, productivity and efficiency.
- **Goal:** Develop a Commissioner orientation plan.
- **Goal:** Develop annual training for Commissioners and other elected officials throughout Benzie County (Townships, Villages, City, etc.) that will focus on OMA, FOIA and Roberts Rules/Parliamentary procedures.
- **Goal:** Continued support for employee education and training opportunities.

4. Financial Health of County Government

- **Goal:** Continue to utilize the Municipal Analytics report to review the financial health of the County and develop priorities and an implementation strategy for that report.
- **Goal:** Continue to explore options for developing a long-term strategy for managing the MERS liability.
- **Goal:** Continue to explore options for a headlee restoration that will address the long-term fiscal stability of Benzie County. Hold off on going to the voters for headlee restoration vote until the long-term impacts of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) are fully understood.

- **Goal:** Explore all options as it relates to the Benzie County Medical Care Facility (Maples).
- **Goal:** Develop a plan to utilize the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds as effectively as possible to the greatest benefit to Benzie citizens.

5. Create an Environment to Support Business and Job Creation

- **Goal:** To leverage human, physical, business, education and other resources to support business development and job creation.
- **Goal:** To support local economic and community development strategies which include but are not limited to:
 - Infrastructure to support economic development, including last mile high speed broadband, natural gas expansion, water and sewer.
 - Recognize the importance of the business retention and growth in Benzie County.
 - Optimize and support added resources to enable expansion of capital to Benzie county businesses.
 - Strategic use of the Land Bank and related partners to achieve economic and community development priorities.

6. Enhancing and Protecting Natural Resources of the County

- **Goal:** To support implementation of the Benzie County Recreation Plan
- **Goal:** To support access for people of all ages, needs and abilities to enjoy our abundant and diverse water resources, including Lake Michigan, rivers and streams, inland lakes, wetlands and more.
- **Goal:** To sustain open space.
- **Goal:** Promote community education and awareness about the presence, impact and management/eradication of invasive species and advocate for continued water quality.
- **Goal:** Support cooperative projects that serve to foster highest and best use of public property.