

## INTRODUCTION

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Keweenaw County is the most sparsely populated with 2,301 persons (2000 census) and remotest of all Michigan counties but it enjoys over 95 miles of Lake Superior coastline, many miles of uninterrupted forests, thriving small communities and a history all its own. Located at the northernmost tip of Michigan, the County is blessed with abundant and spectacular natural resources encompassing 241,894 acres of land (plus 133,623 acres of land that comprises Isle Royale National Park) that make it both visually captivating and economically significant. It is characterized by vast stretches of picturesque forestland, unspoiled views of coastline and rugged cliffs, accessible lakes and streams, and unique historic and seasonal communities.

The County includes a diverse landscape including a number of special communities, small towns to thriving destination resorts with miles of forestland and waterfront in between. A long history of corporate ownership through the mining and logging industries have left the unique legacy of small communities and large tracts of undeveloped lands present today. The land is only part of its story as a mix of people and characters as diverse as its landscape call the Keweenaw home. Keweenaw County has been enjoyed by many generations of residents and visitors with a mixture of memories both new and old.

Recent changes in Keweenaw County, including the development of Mt. Bohemia Ski Resort, accelerated waterfront home construction, and changing ownership patterns has raised concerns over the future of the area. The changes have elevated land use issues to the forefront of decision making in Keweenaw County. Although many wish that Keweenaw County would remain the same, change is inevitable. The impact of the change will be determined by Keweenaw County as they craft a vision for the future and make land use decisions that are consistent with that vision.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

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This ‘Blueprint for Tomorrow’ land use plan represents the culmination of months of discussion and study by the Keweenaw County Zoning & Planning Commission and Township Planning Advisory Committees, with technical assistance from the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR). The planning process was guided by the citizens of Keweenaw County through the ongoing efforts and recommendations of the Township Planning Advisory Committees. The final plan was compiled by the Keweenaw County Zoning & Planning Commission. Funding for the ‘Keweenaw - Blueprint for Tomorrow’ Project has been provided by People and Land (PAL).

The plan can be broken down into three main sections ---Section 1: Background Information, Section 2: The Vision for Keweenaw County, and Section 3: Plan Implementation. Within Section 1 is an Introduction and four main discussion areas: Community Character and Community Life; Land and Water Resources; Economic Development and Fiscal Balance; and Public Facilities, Infrastructure and Services. Section 1 defines ‘where are we now?’ and details the existing conditions including background information on population trends, the local economy, land use, etc. and helps to form a complete picture of the County. In order to set the stage for Section 2, the Vision for Keweenaw County, the final chapter of Section 1 defines issues and opportunities within each Township and for the County.

Once a complete understanding of the past and present situation is gained, the question is ‘where do we want to go in the future?’ setting the stage for Section 2, the Vision for Keweenaw County. Section 2 is the framework or ‘blueprint’ including goals, and policies that will guide Keweenaw County’s future land use decision-making. Section 3 is the recommended plan implementation strategies and actions or more simply ‘how do we get there?’

In addition to providing a general framework for decision-making the plan will assist the Planning Commission in updating the zoning ordinance to reflect the desired future land use pattern for the County. The County Rural Zoning Enabling Act, Act 183 of 1943, requires that a County's zoning ordinance "be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to encourage use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability and to limit the improper use of land, to conserve natural resources and energy, to meet the needs of the state's citizens for food, fiber, and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, services and other uses of land, to assure that uses of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships, to avoid the overcrowding of population, to lessen congestion on the public roads and streets, to reduce hazards to life and property, to facilitate adequate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, education, recreation, and other public needs, and to conserve the expenditure of funds from public improvements and services to conform with the most advantageous uses of land, resources and properties."

