

# PREFACE

## **Plan Purpose**

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to ***provide policy and guide decision making for future land and infrastructure development decisions*** within Benzie County. Within the Plan, key planning issues are identified; community character is described; goals and policies are outlined; existing and future land uses are described and mapped; public facility standards are established; transportation improvements are identified and specific implementation measures are recommended.

***The planning process used in developing the Benzie County Comprehensive Plan included meetings of the County Planning Commission, the 70 member Citizen Advisory Committee, topical Subcommittees, mapping, data analysis, consideration of alternative development options, hundreds of citizens at town meetings, and public hearings.*** Critical to the planning process was the preparation of ten background reports. These reports provide the most thorough reference to data, trends, issues and recommendations used as a basis for this Plan. The Subcommittees for each of the background reports were comprised of citizens, local officials and persons with expertise in the topic area. They are listed on the back of the title page.

This Plan is adopted by the Benzie County Planning Commission to promote public health, safety, and welfare through planning for the appropriate use of land and water resources and the provision of adequate public facilities and services. Although this Plan states specific land use and development policy and proposes specific land use arrangements, it has no regulatory power. It will be implemented by County and local zoning decisions, public facility and infrastructure improvements and the actions of private property owners acting consistent with the Plan.

The Planning Commission adopts this Plan pursuant to authority in the County Planning Act, PA 245 of 1945. The Benzie County Comprehensive Plan will probably be used most frequently to guide decisions by the Benzie County Planning Commission on whether or not to approve local plans and rezoning approvals submitted to it. The Plan will also guide recommendations made by the County Planning Commission to County and State authorities on roads, parks, county buildings and other infrastructure.

The land area covered by this Plan includes the entire area of Benzie County and all 19 units of local government in the County. It is intended to promote sensible and sustainable interjurisdictional land use planning. It is hoped that this Plan will guide the formation of Township, City and Village plans consistent with it and that subsequent local zoning and infrastructure decisions will also be made consistent with it.

All proposed future land use arrangements and policies presented in this Plan were developed based on a blending of:

- The natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of development and the important natural functions played by unique land and water resources in the area.
- The relative future need for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses; as well as the existing land use distribution.
- The relationship of agricultural and undeveloped lands to existing community character and the economic base of the County.
- The desires of local residents and public officials as expressed through their participation in visioning sessions, Subcommittee meetings, Citizen Advisory Committee meetings and public Planning Commission meetings.

This Plan has a time orientation of twenty to twenty-five years into the future. It is heavily influenced by the **Concept of Sustainability**: *that a community should make decisions today that meet the needs of the present without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

### **Plan Contents and How to Use the Plan**

There are three critical components to using this Plan as a decision making guide.

- First is the future land use map and associated policy maps presented in Chapter Four.
- Second, are the policies in Chapter Five. These are based on public input and reflect where citizens want their County to be over the next twenty to twenty-five years. The condition of the County now, and recent trends of population size, age and other characteristics, as well as economic, infrastructure and natural resource conditions form the foundation for planned change and are discussed in Chapters One through Three.
- Third, are the implementation strategies found in Chapter Six. Key priorities for action are described.

This Plan is a statement by the County Planning Commission regarding the present and desired future character of the County and strategies to assure that character. As a formal and tangible document, this Plan is intended to instill a sense of stability and direction for County, City, Village and Township officials, and for Benzie County citizens.

### **Background Reports**

Following is a list of each of the background reports prepared prior to the adoption of the Plan. Each background report includes much more data and analysis than is included in the Plan on the subject matter it addresses. Each background report was adopted by the County Planning Commission, following a public hearing, and comprises important detail not repeated in this Plan. Please

consult these background reports for greater detail on any issue or policy included in this Plan.

***Background Reports***

Agriculture

Community Services and Facilities

Forestry and Minerals

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Jobs and Economic Development

Recreation (Completed as an update to the Benzie County Recreation Plan)

Residential Development

Sensitive Lands and Forestry

Social and Economic Trends

Transportation