



# City Commission Objectives and Key Results

Adopted January 20, 2026



# Traverse City Strategic Action Plan

## Objectives and Key Results (OKR's)

### Key notes:

- The OKR's have been developed by drawing from the community input during the Strategic Action Plan process, Commissioner interviews, Commission work sessions, and staff interviews.
- The implementation process will involve prioritization by staff and the Commission and identifying key partners organization.

*Revised January 20, 2026*



## Pillar 1 – Proactively Manage Urban Design

**Overarching objective: Proactively manage urban design to protect local character and community feel**

***Key themes from community engagement:** People in Traverse City want to see more control and intervention in design. They are eager to see new development be more people-centric, focused less on cars, and protect the charm and character of the community.*

Priority Objectives	Pathway	Key Results 1-3 years
<b>Develop plans for key strategic ‘entry’ and ‘internal’ corridors<sup>(1)</sup>.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate Complete Streets (see also Pillar 2) into programming and design work. Establish targets / goals for implementation.</li> <li>Outline a timeline for the creation and design of key ‘internal’ corridors, that reflects a bold ‘people-first design model’.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-ordinate with County and surrounding townships to participate in a collaborative approach for the planning and development of strategic ‘entry’ corridors.</li> <li>Identify and prioritize long term plans for key ‘internal’ corridors and roads such as 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> / Garfield area.</li> <li>Highlight the opportunity for a broad mix of housing options to be included in redevelopment areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Align the Traverse City Master Plan with the community aspirations identified in the Strategic Action Planning process<sup>(2)</sup>.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify where, and how, the Master Plan could be revised<sup>(2)</sup> to reflect community desires identified in the SAP engagement process.</li> <li>Develop local design standards and guidelines<sup>(3)</sup> for commercial and larger multi-family properties, that includes aspects such as visual design, materials used, parking space design etc.</li> <li>Begin to develop suggested design options<sup>(3)</sup> for single family homes and associated buildings (such as ADU’s) that would help guide and inform future developments and renovations to reflect the Traverse City character.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build close co-operative relationship with Planning Commission, to help identify areas of existing close alignment with Strategic Action Plan, and where there are possible gaps.</li> </ul>

1. Strategic corridors are defined as (1) ‘entry’ corridors, which are the main arterial transport routes in and out of the city, and (2) ‘internal’ corridors that are main resident community nodes and traffic intersects. These corridors offer a testing ground to apply best practice approaches, that reflect the community aspirations for sense of place and connection points.
2. This aims to ensure the Master Plan fully reflects the emerging priorities for proactively managing urban design, especially in areas such as design guidelines that would guide the character of the community and neighborhood transitions. The existing Master Plan is due for its 5-year revision in 2027-28 period, so these actions are preparation leading up to that formal revision and update process.
3. The development of design standards and guidelines is proposed in the existing Master Plan action items. For example, the Bay Street area in Slabtown has been raised by the community as one area where the Master Plan may need to be adjusted.

## Pillar 2 – Strengthening place-making and neighborhood character

### Overarching objective: Protecting the character of downtown and neighborhoods

*Key themes from community engagement: People are eager to protect the community so that it continues to offer a unique sense-of-place that is rich in arts and culture; has strong connections to nature; and exudes a powerful sense of belonging.*

Priority Objectives	Pathway	1-3 years
<b>Develop and enhance ‘social gathering spaces’ that provide important connection points for residents.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop programs that help foster more and enhance existing social gathering spaces, with additional pilot projects for ‘tactical urbanism’.</li> <li>Continue to build multi-modal connectivity across the community and between neighborhoods, focusing initially on filling key gaps in connectivity.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed the concept of enhancing social gathering spaces that are focused on residents, in the planning and redevelopment of key corridors and neighborhoods<sup>(4)</sup>. This especially applies to existing park amenities and recreation spaces<sup>(5)</sup>.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage and support community driven initiatives that build local sense-of-place and neighborhood cohesion.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a fund to support community-driven initiatives, and place-making (including continued support for public art).</li> <li>Elevate the role of neighborhood associations in community engagement, including strengthening support to help convene neighborhood associations and the President's Council.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage an ongoing shift in perspective to focus on quality of life for current residents and future residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Re-focus the downtown as a key neighborhood within the local community fabric.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with DDA to reframe the approach for supporting downtown businesses and infrastructure and help encourage a live and work environment. (Refer also to Pillar 1)</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the maintenance and refinement of local funding tools to support urban design and place making.</li> </ul>

4. This action is an excellent opportunity for public / private partnerships in redevelopment or development projects.

5. The upcoming update to the Parks Master Plan offers the opportunity to further develop this action point.



### Pillar 3 – Fostering a regional collaborative approach

**Overarching objective: To help manage resources, utilities and climate adaptation and lead on key issues**

***Key themes from community engagement:** People recognize that Traverse City can't solve all the issues on its own. There is particular interest in a regional approach on shared services and solving big challenges like housing.*

Priority Objectives	Pathway	1-3 years
<b>Increase the participation of Traverse City representatives in key regional groups, to help build cross-connectivity.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and participate in collaborative approaches with storm water permitting and management(MS4 Program).</li> <li>• Participate and actively collaborate in the development and planning of the future of the services at the Governmental Center and Law Enforcement Center with Grand Traverse County.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively solicit opportunities to participate on other key groups (for example the airport board).</li> <li>• Build a mindset of collaboration rather than competition.</li> <li>• Traverse City Commissioners and senior staff provide a stronger public facing voice for the community, both internally in the city and externally in the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide a regional leadership and convening role on key topics, as needed.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help facilitate more collaboration on operational items at a regional level on areas of resource management, utilities and transportation.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene (or help convene) leadership groups as needed, to address regional issues such as the housing crisis, childcare and long-term environmental sustainability (see also Pillar 5).</li> </ul>

## Pillar 4 – Creating a complete community

**Overarching objective: Work to create a ‘complete community’ that has demographic balance**

***Key themes from community engagement:** Create more available childcare and encouraging more full-time residents are the big issues. These are connected issues and will help retain the demographic balance and bring in more young people and families.*

Priority Objectives	Pathway	1-3 years
<b>Focus on building the year-round populations in the core neighborhoods.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planning tools that allow more residential options, such as ADU’s.</li> <li>Host workshops for residents and small developers, that outlines options and approaches for creating more year-round occupancy options on properties in core residential areas.</li> </ul>
	Policy <sup>(6)</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore policy settings to help encourage more full-time residents in residential core neighborhoods and understand the limits of existing policy tools.</li> <li>Use the pulpit of the Commission to encourage shifts in housing allocation – to longer-term residential for locally employed people and residents.</li> <li>Explore and assess new and emerging policy and planning tools that could help broaden the housing mix and year-round occupancy levels.</li> </ul>
<b>Expand the available childcare so it is not a constraint to participation in the workforce.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-establish summer camp at Hickory Hill for 2026.</li> <li>Offer pilot programs for new Childcare options and models <sup>(7)</sup>.</li> </ul>
	Policy <sup>(6)</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore potential millage to support investment in childcare.</li> <li>Examine policy barriers to providing childcare options to help facilitate easier solutions, such as zoning changes or start-up subsidies.</li> </ul>

6. These topics provide opportunities for stakeholder participation to help inform policy and action ideas.

7. Examples of this approach includes MI Tri-Share.

## Pillar 5 – Supporting environmental sustainability

**Overarching objective: Helping to adapt to a changing world and supporting a thriving ecosystem**

*Key themes from community engagement: Environmental sustainability remains a big issue for residents. They would like to see more sustainability practices, and a region-wide sustainability plan.*

Priority Objectives	Pathway	1-3 years
<b>Create a sustainability plan anchored by Traverse City and including the surrounding region.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a regional and local sustainability plan, that builds on existing work and has tangible targets and performance dashboard<sup>(8)</sup>.</li> <li>Research and apply best practice approaches from other leading communities<sup>(9)</sup>.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage businesses, tourism and local organizations to be adapt more sustainable practices.</li> <li>Traverse City to work with community partners to identify and adopt innovative measures and policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Implement innovative initiatives that take sustainability to the next level.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot electrification of houses as a demonstration project.</li> <li>Collaborate with local utility operators to help demonstrate and educate the public further on best practices.</li> <li>Participate in emerging projects that explore approaches like industrial symbiosis and circular economy.</li> <li>Implement the West Bay Lakeshore Stabilization project as an excellent demonstration of an innovative sustainability project.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore ways to protect our fresh-water resources, including riparian buffers and storm water management, on our local waterways and river.</li> </ul>

8. The plan would be developed by staff in conjunction with local stakeholders.

9. There is a desire for ongoing research and application of best practice approaches from other leading communities.

## Pillar 6 – Building thriving year-round economy

**Overarching objective: Expand business diversity and innovation capacity to build year-round economy**

**Key themes from community engagement:** People want to see further economic diversification, away from an over-reliance on tourism. They are also interested in a more active sustainable tourism approach.

Priority Objectives	Pathway	1-3 years
<b>Examine and adapt a sustainable tourism<sup>(10)</sup> model approach.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the development of a sustainable tourism plan and approach, at a local and regional scale, that builds on the existing work in the current Master Plan.</li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Traverse City Tourism and other tourism entities to explore future tourism models and approaches that could reduce the negative local impacts and enhance positive local impacts of the visitation economy.</li> <li>Advocate for more existing lodging revenue funding to be directed to impact management<sup>(11)</sup>.</li> <li>Explore new mechanisms to capture new funding from the visitation economy, that can help manage environmental impact and sustainability.</li> </ul>
<b>Continue to enhance the strategy to diversify the economy.</b>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This programmatic area is delivered by Traverse Connect and other partner groups.</i></li> </ul>
	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and deepen the partnership with groups like Traverse Connect and Michigan Works, to support ways to diversify the economy and elevate local jobs and wages (for example the ‘blue economy’<sup>(12)</sup>).</li> </ul>

10. Sustainable tourism is an emerging approach that intentionally works to enhance the positive impacts of tourism and reduce the negative impacts. At its core, sustainable tourism is about achieving the correct balance for impacts on the community, the local economy and the local environment. This ‘balance’ aims to reflect local community values and priorities.

11. There are several tourism dependent communities in Michigan, that are partnering to lobby to change the State legislation. This would potentially allow local communities to have more options for how they spend lodging tax revenue, and to be able to better support destination impact management, as opposed to destination marketing.

12. The ‘blue economy’ is associated with leveraging the unique freshwater resources in the Traverse City area for innovative industries.