



CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Algonac 2040 Vision Statement

Algonac is a livable, walkable community that exists in harmony with its natural resources, protects its beautiful waterfront, provides a good climate for entrepreneurial opportunity, and offers affordable housing options and strong, connected neighborhoods through multiple modes of transportation.

Algonac is a place that values its high quality of life, sense of community, and small town atmosphere. A diverse mix of new and long-time residents enjoy living in safe, attractive neighborhoods, as well as gathering in public spaces created to serve residents and visitors of all ages.

Neighborhoods in Algonac are safe, stable, and lively. There is a wide range of housing options for a diversity of incomes and ages. Homes are well-maintained and neighbors enjoy intermingling with one another on any given day.

With sidewalks and bicycle paths throughout the city, it is easy to get around Algonac without the use of an automobile. While significant vehicle traffic still travels to and through Algonac, it does not overpower the community and it is clear to drivers that they are entering a uniquely special place. Landscaping and gateway signage has been added along St. Clair River Drive and Dixie Highway, providing a grand welcome to those entering or exiting the city.

Green elements such as community parks, trails and street trees are found throughout the city, providing residents and visitors with ample recreation opportunities. New and existing development in the city utilizes renewable energy sources and energy-efficient green building technology, such as solar panels, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, pervious paving, and landscaping.

The community treasures its pristine water resources and green infrastructure along the St. Clair River. People enjoy kayaking and canoeing along the clean and well-maintained Blueway water trails that meander throughout the delta area. Boating and fishing are major attractions for residents and visitors alike. The waterfront is a destination that helps define Algonac's unique sense of place. Residents and city officials work with neighboring stakeholders from around the region to promote stewardship of the St. Clair River.

INTRODUCTION

This portion of the Algonac Master Plan is intended to outline a course for action in achieving the community's vision for the future. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders must identify, comprehend, and work toward a long-term vision that is agreed upon by the community as a whole. The vision statement is intended to inspire and encourage community members, civic organizations, private developers, and public officials to invest in Algonac and make it a vibrant place to live, work and play for current residents and future generations.

The residents and business owners in the City of Algonac played an important role in the preparation of this master plan. The vision for Algonac's future was developed through a public involvement process that included a series of community visioning exercises that served to identify what residents and leaders would like the community to become - how it may look, how it may function, how it may improve. The vision and associated planning goals and objectives are also based on a survey of local leadership. These planning objectives were then refined throughout the planning process following input from the planning commission, city council, city administration and residents.

ALGONAC 2040 VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement is an attempt to capture in words what Algonac will be like in 2040 if the goals of this master plan are achieved and various strategies or recommendations are implemented. When reading this vision, it is necessary to imagine that you are living in the future and describing what the community is like at that point in time, in 2040. This approach is intended to present a better sense of the desired future.



Residents and project planners discuss trends and ideas for Algonac's future at the March 11, 2013 Community Visioning Meeting.

GOALS AND PLANNING OBJECTIVES

In order for the long-term community vision to become a reality, Algonac must utilize the guidance of this master plan and continually work to successfully achieve the city's planning goals. Relying on input from city residents and local officials during the community visioning process combined with a thorough analysis of demographic, economic and land use trends, a distinct set of planning goals and objectives was developed.

These goals and objectives should guide decision making relative to land use, transportation, change management, and economic development. City officials should be mindful of the community's long-term vision and should rely on these planning goals, objectives and policy guidelines when examining development proposals, administering or amending the zoning ordinance, and considering public input. Each of those key terms is defined below to ensure clarity and understanding.

- **Goal:** Goals are broad-based statements of intent and establish the direction for the Algonac Master Plan. Goals could generally be thought of as the desired "results" of successful implementation of this master plan.
- **Planning Objective:** Objectives are the stated "means" of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be carried out in the process of successfully achieving goals.

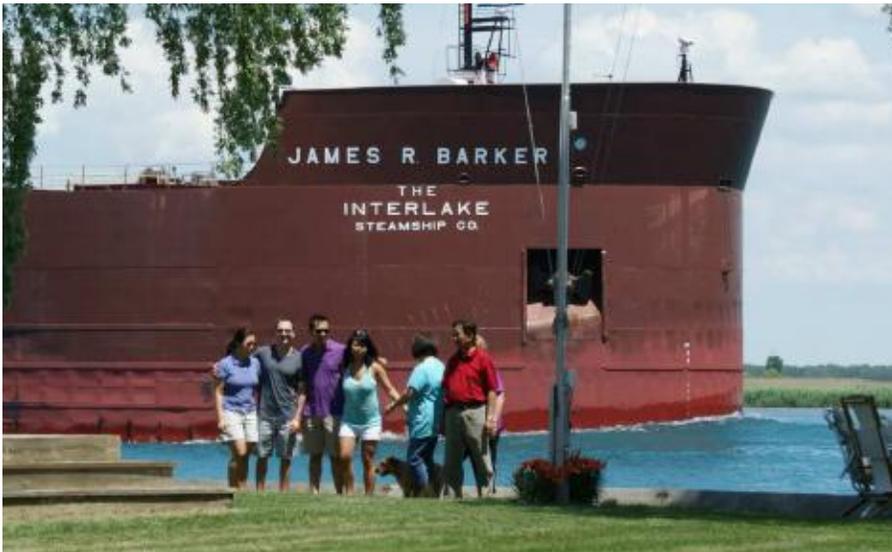
PLACEMAKING

Goal #1:

Ensure Algonac is well-known throughout the state as one of Michigan's great PLACES - a community with walkable, functional neighborhoods, as well as a distinct town center that offers residents and visitors a variety of options for living, working or recreating.

Planning Objectives:

- Create and encourage developments that promote community and make the city a vibrant and interesting place to live, work and recreate.
- Identify the city's existing assets and promote those assets as unique quality of life drivers that differentiate Algonac from other communities in the region.
- Ensure that Algonac has a wide variety of amenities including recreation, shopping, cultural resources, entertainment options, and "third places," all of which will help in attracting and retaining talented workers.
- Where appropriate, identify and pursue new opportunities for public transit, bicycling and other modes of transportation alternatives to automobiles. Integrate these multi-modal amenities into commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.
- Enhance linkages and entries to downtown, the Riverfront Park, and the city's neighborhoods.
- Explore new regulatory mechanisms to enhance the built environment in Algonac - particularly in the central business



Algonac's location on the St. Clair River provides ample opportunities for viewing freighters and other waterfront tourism activities. Photo courtesy of the Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

district - including form-based codes and hybrid zoning regulations.

- Provide for mixed-use, walkable developments in strategic locations.

Goal #2:

Promote the City of Algonac as a major destination in St. Clair County and Southeast Michigan - a gathering place for residents and visitors that combines the waterfront, parks, cultural activities and other active and inclusive places.

Planning Objectives:

- Focus on "The Power of Ten" - identify the ten destinations that give an identity and image to the city and help attract residents, businesses and tourists.
- Explore opportunities that will further position Algonac as a tourism destination that capitalizes on Algonac's unique location as a waterfront community.

- Continue developing opportunities to celebrate Algonac's history and culture of shipbuilding, pleasure boating, and other maritime activity.
- Enhance the marketing of the city to tourists staying at Algonac State Park.
- Continue participating in and leveraging the reach and resources of the Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau's "Discover the Blue" campaign.
- Implement recommendations from Blue Water Area Trail Towns initiative that focuses on drawing park and bicycle/water trail users into the central business district.
- Increase the quality and uniqueness of tourism events and activities - such as the Pickerel Tournament and Festival - that attract visitors to the city all year long, with a special emphasis on the off-seasons.
- Identify additional opportunities to use the water for recreation and education - boating, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, environmental programming - and market those opportunities.
- Ensure the downtown area along the Riverfront Park is pedestrian-focused and promotes activity and public gathering.
- Support and assist entrepreneurs looking to start retail shops or restaurants in the city.
- Ensure that Algonac's parks, streets and other public spaces are well-maintained and portray a community with civic pride.
- Overhaul any city regulations that serve as barriers to tourism-based land uses and business retention or attraction.
- Work with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, as appropriate, in the development of recreation amenities or enhancement of the Bridge to Bay Trail.
- Support public education about cultural resources and heritage.
- Adopt zoning regulations that permit mixed uses in the central business district and eliminate regulations that are impediments to tourism-based uses and business development.

- Design public spaces for *PEOPLE* to support community interaction and activities that contribute to strengthening the community.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Goal #1:

Preserve the quality and character of existing neighborhoods and promote new development that contributes to the unique historic and cultural character of the community.

Planning Objectives:

- Ensure new development in the city will be consistent with the character of the community, mindful of our natural resources, and consistent with the city's master plan and zoning ordinance.
- Encourage a continued high rate of single-family owner occupancy to maintain housing quality, while meeting local needs for rental housing.
- Ensure that the special needs of the disabled or elderly population are considered in community development initiatives.
- Review all types of development proposals – residential, commercial, office, industrial – to ensure that future development will be compatible with and enhance Algonac's character.
- Adopt zoning ordinance provisions that adapt to changing housing types.
- Identify and participate in targeted neighborhood reinvestment and stabilization programs that improve the quality of the housing stock and overall neighborhood character.
- Discourage incompatible non-residential uses from locating in residential neighborhoods.
- Implement land use strategies that encourage development of a range of residential densities and building types appropriate to local needs.



Algonac is characterized primarily by tree-lined streets arranged in a grid pattern. This photo shows Market Street, looking north towards the Howard Street intersection.

- Promote new development that is supportive of a pedestrian environment by adding or extending existing pedestrian pathways connecting the central business district and the waterfront to the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial and public uses, including schools, parks and civic uses.
- Retain existing assets, including businesses, schools, and institutions and expand these types of uses within the neighborhood.
- Encourage developers to use a variety of housing types and models, sizes, and price ranges to provide expanded housing options.
- Consolidate vacant properties into development parcels for housing to provide new opportunities for infill development.
- Establish partnerships with historic preservation groups to explore assistance opportunities.
- Establish partnerships with community development and nonprofit housing agencies to implement programs or projects that strengthen neighborhoods.

- Identify grants and foundations that may be able to subsidize residential programs and initiatives within the City of Algonac.

Goal #2:

Eliminate blight throughout the City of Algonac.

Planning Objectives:

- Increase code enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with city standards and protect the long-term stability of neighborhoods.
- Promote and improve the physical condition and appearance of homes, commercial buildings, parks and infrastructure.
- Maintain all housing in the city in a decent, safe and sanitary condition through utilization of building/maintenance codes and other city ordinances.
- Work in concert with St. Clair County on the implementation of housing rehabilitation programs offered through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Maintain a rental registration and inspection program.

- Establish a proactive business support and business development policy at the Algonac City Council level.
- To the greatest extent possible, improve support for entrepreneurship and innovation in the city.
- Expand retail and service opportunities in Algonac to make the city more self-sustaining and self-supporting.
- Enhance communication and program development between Algonac Community Schools, RESA, the business community, and the city in matters of joint economic development.
- Encourage commercial activity that compliments and capitalizes on Algonac's location as a waterfront community.
- Work collaboratively with Clay Township to further support economic development activities.

Goal #2:

Ensure commercial areas within the City of Algonac are of high-quality design, are well-maintained, and encourage further higher-value commercial development.

Planning Objectives:

- Encourage redevelopment that enhances the appearance of existing commercial and industrial areas.
- Ensure that future commercial development will adhere to principles of good planning and design.
- Allow and promote redevelopment in the central business district as a denser, walkable destination of shops, offices, restaurants, and gathering spaces.
- Adopt design guidelines for signs and landscaping to help assure designs that will be consistent with Algonac's character.
- Explore new zoning techniques such as form-based codes and hybrid codes to help revitalize the commercial corridor along M-29.
- Expand efforts to improve the face of existing commercial structures along M-29 and the central business district through improved design and redevelopment..

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal #1:

Establish Algonac as a business-friendly community that actively pursues economic development and growth opportunities.

Planning Objectives:

- Develop regulations that will support a mixed-use, town center land use pattern along St. Clair River Drive for the entire length of the riverfront park.
- Market Algonac's strengths and opportunities, including its school system, safety services, road network, and overall quality of life.



Commercial uses in the city are predominantly located in strip shopping centers, particularly along M-29.

- Support economic development initiatives that create a simple, walkable town center that serves as a destination and attracts people to local businesses.

Goal #3:

Continuously work to reduce the tax burden on residential property owners by pursuing opportunities that will further diversify Algonac’s tax base.

Planning Objectives:

- Expand commercial development to diversify Algonac’s tax base and supplement residential property tax revenues.
- Work with appropriate partners to strengthen the economic base of the community by supporting existing business while continually seeking to expand the number of businesses within Algonac.
- Encourage local companies to take advantage of appropriate state business incentives.
- Work in concert with the Economic Development Alliance (EDA) of St. Clair County, St. Clair County government, Clay Township, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), as appropriate, to further the economic development goals of the city and the region.

- Continue to coordinate activities with the Blue Water Convention and Visitors Bureau as an agent for increasing the economic and quality-of-life contributions derived from travel and tourism activities in the City of Algonac.
- Build partnerships with private sector players and community stakeholder groups to capitalize on significant development opportunities.

Goal #4:

Build and strengthen partnerships with regional and local stakeholders to promote education, job training, and workforce development programs that will improve the skills and talent of Algonac residents.

Planning Objectives:

- ▶ Promote training opportunities and other programs intended to bolster the skills of the workforce.
- ▶ Partner with Algonac Community Schools, RESA, SC4, the EDA and other organizations on initiatives to improve educational attainment levels in St. Clair County.
- ▶ Promote training programs or funding programs put forward by the MEDC to further connect residents to the skills and tools needed for the jobs of today and the future.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal #1:

Continue to develop a transportation system that provides residents with a variety of options for mobility, including public transit and non-motorized transportation facilities that connect key origins and destinations throughout the city, as well as the greater region.

Planning Objectives:

- Increase pedestrian safety by providing opportunities for pedestrian circulation along existing and planned road systems through a coordinated program of sidewalk construction and maintenance.
- Provide sidewalks and pedestrian ways whenever possible.

- Expand the use of dedicated bicycle lanes on local roads throughout Algonac's neighborhoods.
- Work in concert with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) and other partners to expand the city's system of non-motorized trails.
- Work with St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS), and other entities to support complete streets policies and integrate complete streets elements into future road improvement projects.
- Work with PARC to implement planned and conceptual greenways detailed in the *St. Clair County Trails and Routes Action Plan*.
- Work with the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission to ensure adequate public transit services are available to residents throughout the city.
- Expand opportunities for linear forms of outdoor recreation, such as hiking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian, and walking trails.



Due to the numerous channels meandering through neighborhoods in the southern and northeastern sections of the city, the DPW is responsible for maintaining a number of canal bridges that were originally built by a developer at minimum standards.

Goal #2:

Ensure Algonac has a network of safe roads to assure proper access and movement within and throughout the community.

Planning Objectives:

- Cooperate with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the St. Clair County Road Commission (SCCRC) and SCCOTS to ensure that a proper relationship exists between planned road improvements and the city's desired future land use plan.
- Coordinate with SCCOTS on planned road improvements and participate in the rating and evaluation of pavement on federal-aid roads to better serve residential and commercial areas.
- Work with MDOT, the SCCRC, and other stakeholders to ensure the proper placement of signs and traffic signals.

- Collaborate with Clay Township, the SCCRC, and other stakeholders on the development of corridor plans for key corridors as needed.
- Actively participate in the transportation planning process and communicate regularly with SCCOTS to stay abreast of funding opportunities for transportation improvements.

Goal #3:

Develop a streetscape enhancement plan for M-29 in the central business district of the city.

Planning Objectives:

- Work with MDOT to create an enhanced streetscape that runs along the entire length of Riverfront Park along M-29.
- Implement elements that will create safe and aesthetically pleasing crossing points to connect pedestrians and CBD uses on the west side of M-29 to Riverfront Park.

- Utilize design elements consistent with Algonac’s community character to enhance public benches, street lighting, and pedestrian crosswalks.
- Implement gateway signage letting people know they are entering Algonac’s downtown.
- Clean up gateway properties that are closed or in disrepair to enhance the aesthetics of the central business district.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE/RECREATION/ENVIRONMENT

Goal #1:

Improve Algonac’s parks and recreation facilities through maintenance and enhancement of the existing parks and thoughtful development of new parks in appropriate locations.

Planning Objectives:

- Ensure that a master recreation plan for the City of Algonac follows the requirements for recreation, park and greenway planning put forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and is reviewed and updated every five years to make Algonac eligible for state grant funding.
- Review the inventory and assessment of park equipment and recreation facilities to determine improvement and maintenance requirements.
- Improve existing parks by diversifying the range of activity opportunities as a means to attract a greater number of park users, including persons of all ages, abilities, and interests.
- Create and implement a preventive maintenance program that is funded by an adequate operating and maintenance budget.
- Maintain an “Adopt-a-Park” program that seeks the participation of neighborhoods, schools, local clubs, and other community groups to maintain and watch over city parks.
- Ensure that future improvements to Riverfront Park do not result in diminished views of the waterfront.



The Columbia Street Playground is located at the corner of Market Street and Columbia Street and serves residents in the immediate neighborhood.

- Within the master recreation plan, develop a specific plan for Riverfront Park improvements to determine the best course to enhance the amenities available to residents and visitors.

Goal #2:

City officials and residents are educated about and aware of environmental issues central to the community.

Planning Objectives:

- Establish leadership among city officials and residents to get environmental messages to the general public.
- Work with county agencies, schools, and environmental organizations to involve children in the education and preservation of our natural resources.
- Increase awareness of the value of environmental protection and the necessity of complying with governmental regulations.
- Encourage and educate citizens and businesses on the importance of waste reduction and reuse.

- Land use decisions will be made only after considering not only economic opportunities, but also environmental impacts.

Goal #3:

Environmentally sensitive areas located within the City of Algonac are protected through the implementation of best management practices.

Planning Objectives:

- Promote Low-Impact Development (LID) in appropriate locations.
- Implement water quality best management practices (BMPs) for all drain easement rights-of-way.
- Preserve natural stormwater retention systems along all natural water courses.
- Educate landowners on the value of protecting and preserving natural waterway flow capacity.
- Establish a strategy to maintain the flow of natural waterways, including BMP standards to reduce long-term costs associated with maintenance work that retains flow.
- Ensure that the city's Building Inspector has an updated map of all drainage districts and easements, natural stormwater retention sites, and areas where soil erosion permits are required within the city. Ensure these maps are referred to prior to issuing any building permits.
- Consider the development and implementation of a natural features and riparian buffer ordinance for all drain and natural waterway corridors.
- Encourage the use of cluster (or open space) development or planned unit developments (PUDs) as a means of protecting scenic viewsheds, conserving natural resources, creating buffers between areas of different development intensity, and providing open space for the use and enjoyment of residents.
- Use natural features, such as trees, topography, and open space as buffers to reduce noise, visual blight and other land use conflicts.



The city will ensure that the quality of surface water and groundwater is protected. This canal in the southern part of the city flows under St. Clair River Drive out to the St. Clair River.

Goal #4:

The quality of surface water and groundwater in the City of Algonac is protected.

Planning Objectives:

- Identify and eliminate sources of existing sewage contamination, as well as contamination entering county drains.
- Prevent contamination from new sources, especially new development.
- Develop land in a manner consistent with local, county, and state water protection objectives.
- Educate landowners about the beneficial interaction between surface waters, river banks, wetlands, wood lots, precipitation and drinking water.
- Consider and support the goals and objectives of the Anchor Bay Watershed Plan and the efforts of the Lake St. Clair Partnership when making land use decisions.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal #1:

The City will provide a range of public facilities and services consistent with the character of the community, which meets present and future needs and supports the public health, safety and welfare of residents.

Planning Objectives:

- Police, fire and emergency services are consistent with public need and the ability to finance improvements in the most cost-efficient manner.
- Police, fire and emergency services respond as quickly and effectively as possible.
- Solid waste, recyclable and hazardous materials are disposed of safely, effectively and efficiently.
- Continue to develop a capital improvement program that sets forth a long-term plan for improving services in the community.
- Actively participate in countywide and regional planning efforts concerning economic development, infrastructure planning, solid waste, hazard mitigation, public safety, and water quality.
- Explore opportunities as they are presented to potentially relocate city hall and other civic uses to Michigan Street to free up riverfront property in the central business district for potential redevelopment.

GOVERNING/REGULATORY

Goal #1:

Continually review the Algonac Master Plan and update the plan at least every five years.

Planning Objectives:

- The planning commission will stay abreast of the latest development trends occurring in Algonac, neighboring jurisdictions, and the region.

- The planning commission takes advantage of training and educational opportunities for land use planning and zoning.
- The city works in concert with St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), and other planning entities to achieve the directives of the master plan.
- Members of the planning commission will stay abreast of current trends and practices in the urban planning field.
- Utilize the future land use plan when considering zoning ordinance amendments, capital improvements projects, or the merits of a development proposal.
- Land use and zoning changes are based on the goals, objectives, and implementation recommendations of the master plan.
- Spot zoning is neither tolerated nor practiced within the City of Algonac.
- Enact zoning ordinance revisions as identified in the zoning plan chapter of the master plan.
- Zoning changes will not be out of scale with the needs of the city.
- Ensure that public engagement and outreach occurs early in the process of preparing development plans and ordinance changes.

Goal #2:

Regularly communicate and cooperate with other local and county agencies in making government more effective and efficient.

Planning Objectives:

- Work collaboratively with Clay Township officials to enact mutually-beneficial land use planning and economic development initiatives that will also benefit the entire southern portion of St. Clair County.
- Deal with issues of greater than local concern on a community-wide basis, including, where appropriate, neighboring jurisdictions at the city, township, and county levels.

- Embrace an environment of information sharing at the city, township, county and statewide level.
- Provide efficient emergency services on a cross-jurisdictional basis.
- Educational opportunities for local elected and appointed officials will be provided on land use issues, coordinated planning and zoning regulation.