

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan serves as the guiding framework for putting the goals, objectives, strategies, and land use plan into action. This section is also important for maintaining the master plan as a living, breathing document as it also includes a guide for when and how to review and update the Master Plan. Due to changing conditions within the township and the importance of carefully using township resources for implementing these strategies, these are changes that are encouraged over time with different ways of tracking their successes or evaluating what can be fixed.

Strategies

The strategies identified through this plan are summarized here, with the exception of the zoning ordinance update recommendations which are summarized in the zoning plan and the location criteria for various land uses which are incorporated into the Land Use Plan.

- Create educational material to provide zoning applicants on the benefits and methods of protecting natural features
- Consider adoption of natural features ordinance
- Meet with county and state officials to identify local authority to regulate septic systems
- Evaluation of low impact design is conducted
- Participate in review of any city master plan update
- Undertake access management study with the city
- Reach out to the city about future joint planning work on projects on the border
- Undertake non-motorized transportation plan
- Continue to negotiate with the city on future water and sewer agreements
- Work with the City of Grand Ledge and the county on plans to address areas of concern regarding storm drainage
- Work with the city on a joint Parks and Recreation Plan
- Work with the County Road Commission on a plan for road improvements and reach out to the public on funding options
- Establish policy for ensuring all Planning Commission, ZBA, Township Board, and staff have the training needed to perform their assignments
- Continue township policy of posting meeting notices, minutes, and reports on township website
- Develop a public engagement plan
- Conduct a planning and zoning debrief annually to identify ways of making procedures clear and concise

Strategic Implementation Plan

In order to implement the key goals and objectives of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission has prioritized the following strategies over the next five years. These strategies should help inform the Planning Commission as it identifies its work goals for the annual planning report to the Township Board. The Planning Commission should track the completion status of strategies on this list even if they are not a responsible party.

Strategic Implementation Plan		
Strategy	Responsible Party	Deadline
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to address the improvements proposed in the zoning plan	Planning Commission Township Board	2022
Conduct Five-Year Review	Planning Commission Township Board	2026

Plan Maintenance and Update

The final - and sometimes most difficult - step in the planning process is the last one: re-evaluation and adjustment. The process of community planning is never really finished. A community's population, economic status, goals, land uses, land use problems, and political climate are constantly changing. It is important to assess how well the plan is addressing the present land use issues in the community, and whether amendments should be made to keep the plan relevant and make it the most appropriate guide for the city's future land use. If the plan no longer reflects the vision of the community, the Planning Commission can then begin the planning process again. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Master Plan to be reviewed at least every five (5) years to ensure the plan is up to date and reflects current policy. However, a key aspect of keeping the plan "on-track" is to undertake the implementation strategies, particularly those in the Strategic Implementation Table. The community cannot expect the plan to be implemented if the strategies identified as necessary for that implementation are not followed through.

Annual Report

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the Planning Commission to report on its activities every year. It is recommended that the Planning Commission take the opportunity to undertake a concise review of the plan. This review is intended to address two issues:

1. What were the implementation strategies outlined in the plan that should have been undertaken in the preceding year by either the Planning Commission or other stakeholders, and were they undertaken?
2. Did anything occur in the preceding year that might impact a basic premise of the Master Plan that should be evaluated to determine if a more formal review process is called for? Potential events could include things such as an extension of utilities into an area of the township that was not anticipated,

a substantial change in the economy (good or bad), or rezoning decision that was inconsistent with the Master Plan.

The review of the Master Plan should occur one month before the preparation of the annual report. The annual report should address the following:

1. What did the Planning Commission accomplish in the preceding year (number of meetings held, number of requests reviewed)?
2. What implementation items outlined in the plan and the previous annual report were accomplished the previous year and which were not? These should include items that were not the direct responsibility of the Planning Commission.
3. Did the annual review raise issues that would require a formal review of the plan?
4. What activities are to be undertaken by the Planning Commission in the coming year and what implementation items that are the responsibility of other stakeholders should be undertaken in the coming year?

If, based on the results of this analysis, the Planning Commission found that changes have occurred that make a review of the plan necessary even if a five-year review as discussed below is not scheduled, the report should indicate that.

Five-Year Review

Under the terms of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the township Planning Commission must review the Master Plan at least every five years to determine if there is a need to update it. The process might be initiated before the five-year deadline if circumstances indicate that the plan has deficiencies that should be addressed. The process outlined below can be followed at that time to meet this requirement.

The review should be a formal process. This means that a report outlining the standards for review and other basis upon which the Planning Commission determined an update was or was not necessary are outlined. The findings should be set out in a resolution adopted by the Planning Commission.

Standards for Review

In conducting the five-year review or a less formal annual review, the Planning Commission should evaluate the plan using the following criteria:

1. Have the conditions that the plan was based on changed? If so, then assumptions regarding future development patterns or land use needs could also change. Indicators to consider in evaluating this factor are:

- a. **Farmland**

A major goal of the plan is farmland preservation, but the current regulations are not designed to severely restrict the right of property owners in the farmland area from the right to building new single-family residences. This is based on the assumption that, given the relatively flat growth rate in the township, there will not be tremendous pressure for farmland conversion. However, this should be monitored by tracking new construction within the A-1 zoning district.

b. Utilities

The township is currently working on extension of municipal water service and sewer agreements with the City of Grand Ledge. If these agreements eventually result in in changes to the areas in the township where water and sewer may be available, then that would change the areas where uses other than agricultural and single family low density residential would be appropriate.

c. Housing Mix

The type of housing can impact the needs of the community. In Oneida’s case, the plan assumes a limited demand for high density residential units. If demand for this type of housing outstrips the amount of land set aside for that purpose, there may be a need for reconsideration of the Future Land Use plan. Housing mix can be tracked by review of building permit data.

d. Housing Cost

Changes in housing cost in comparison with household income impacts housing affordability. Measuring changes in housing costs is tricky because it is not directly tied to changes in housing values and living expenses. It is also impacted by turnover rates for owner-occupied dwellings. Rapid decrease in housing affordability could call for a reconsideration of policies to allow for more affordable housing options.

e. Adjacent Planning and Zoning

Changes in the master plan or zoning map of the surrounding jurisdictions should be reviewed to consider their impact on the township’s plan. Particular attention should be given to changes that increase the intensity of land uses adjacent to the township. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the adjacent townships, the City of Grand Ledge, and the county to notify the township whenever it is proposing to adopt changes to their plans. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act does not contain similar coordination requirements, but the township could enter into arrangements with the surrounding municipalities to notify it of proposed rezonings within 500 feet of their common boundary.

f. Transportation

Changes in the traffic flow on the major roads could have significant impacts. The township should continue to monitor traffic counts and accident rates at key intersections to identify potential congestion points.

2. There was a significant error in the plan that affects the plan policies, goals, or recommendations.

Sometimes a plan is based on an assumption that turns out to be incorrect. An area was thought to be a wetland, but turns out not to be. Any changes in the facts as a community knows them should be considered to see if it changes the appropriateness of proposals in the plan.

3. There has been a change in the community’s attitude about some basic goal of the plan, or on a proposed approach to achieving the goal, that is reflected in the Planning Commission’s recommendations or the Township Board’s decisions, but not in the plan.

A master plan is based both on the facts that describe the conditions in a community and the township's vision of the future. That vision is outlined in the community's goals. For example, the current breakdown of various housing types is a fact. The plan's goals identify whether the community views that current ratio as a positive fact they want to see continue or as a condition they want to change. Community attitudes can change over time, which means that goals may change in time even though the facts have not.

The master plan's objectives and strategies describe how a community is proposing to reach its identified goals. In some cases, policy may not be effective in helping to reach the proposed goals. That may be due to a lack of application of the policy or the ineffectiveness of the policy in achieving the anticipated results. Ineffective policies should be identified and addressed.

4. New issues that should be addressed by the plan have come up and are either not addressed in the plan or not adequately addressed by it.

Issues important to a community may crop up after a master plan has been adopted. In those instances, it might be an issue that requires amendment of the master plan to ensure that the township's policies regarding the use are clear.

5. The plan is out of date.

Master plans normally have a 10- to 20-year scope. If the plan has not been revised or significantly updated by the time the plan has reached the end of its "life", then it should be updated at that point.

Using the Master Plan in Zoning Decisions

In considering a rezoning request or a proposed text amendment, the primary concern to ask is: "Does this zoning amendment conform to our Master Plan?" The follow-up question is "Is the plan relevant to this request?" To answer that, the Planning Commission must ask questions similar to those during the five-year review, but specific to the proposed request.

- Was there an error in the plan that affects the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?
- Have there been relevant changes in conditions since the plan was approved that affect the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?
- Have there been changes in the community's attitude that impacts the goals and objectives of the plan and affect the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?

Answering these questions should answer the main question of whether or not a zoning amendment is appropriate, and that should frame the reason within the context of the plan.

The following are items to consider when approving a rezoning or text amendment:

- **Consistency with the Master Plan.** The proposed change is consistent with the Master Plan. This means that rezoning changes should be consistent with the relative goals and policies, as well as the future land use plan. In the case of a proposed text amendment, consistency means it is consistent with most of the relevant goals and policies.
- **Mistake.** A mistake in a Master Plan can be an assumption made based on incorrect data, an area on a future land use map that is incorrectly labeled, or other factors that, if known at the time of the Master Plan adoption, would have been corrected.

- **Changes in Condition.** The development of this plan is based on the current conditions of the city. If conditions change within the city, that may cause the adopted goals, policies, and land use decisions to no longer be valid or relevant. A text amendment that was previously not recommended may be appropriate now.
- **Change in Policy.** This Master Plan document is the Planning Commission’s vision for the city. When the vision changes, then so should the Master Plan. When a zoning issue results in a change in vision, a decision can be made that is contrary to the current Master Plan as long as that changed vision is explicitly incorporated into the Master Plan.
- **Additional Considerations Related to Text Amendments.** The changing of text in the zoning ordinance should be evaluated on the above standards, but also changes that may not have any impact on the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. These neutral changes are appropriate when:
 - The text change is necessary to clarify a provision in the zoning ordinance.
 - The text change is necessary to correct a mistake in the ordinance.
 - The text change is necessary to improve administration of the zoning ordinance or better serve the community.
 - The text change is necessary to address a provision that is determined to be inconsistent with state or federal law.

Two points should be made. First, the factors for consideration (oversight, change in condition, or change in goals or policies) can work in reverse; making a proposal that otherwise seems appropriate, inappropriate. Second, these factors should not be used to create excuses for justifying a decision to violate the Master Plan or to change it so often that it loses its meaning.

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