

Preface

A Master Plan is designed to document a vision for community growth. It analyzes current conditions, measures prospects for the future and follows the desires of citizens and leaders of the community. This planned future is then implemented by the zoning ordinance, capital improvements program, development authorities and a variety of other instruments adopted to realize the vision.

The State of Michigan recognized the value of the Master Plan process and created a state law to establish rules for planning by townships. According to state law (Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959) a master plan should

- promote the public health, safety and general welfare;
- encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- avoid the overcrowding of land by buildings or people;
- lessen the congestion on public roads and streets;
- facilitate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements; and
- consider the character of the township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trends in land and population development.

Recent changes in state law also recognize the importance of planning and require notification and coordination with adjacent units of government, the county and permit adoption of the Master Plan by the Township Board of Trustees.

State law requires the basic plan to include maps, plats, charts and descriptive explanatory and other related matter to show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the unincorporated area of the township.

The basic plan includes the following subjects in developing a future plan for the township:

- A land use plan and program, in part consisting of a classification and allocation of land for agriculture, residences, commerce, industry, recreation, public ways and grounds, soil conservation, forests, wildlife refuges and other uses and purposes.
- The general location, character and extent of streets, roads, highways, railroads, bridges, waterways and waterfront developments on rivers and inland lakes; flood prevention works, drainage, sanitary sewers and public water supply systems, works for preventing pollution and for maintaining water levels; and public utilities and structures.
- Recommendations as to the general character and extent and layout for redevelopment or rehabilitation; and the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonments, changes or use of extension of ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, utilities or other facilities.
- Recommendations for implementing any of its proposals.

A master plan is not intended to define all elements of community design such as the zoning ordinance and other regulatory items. But, in fact, the master plan is an important partner in the development process. Courts normally look at the relationship of master plans to zoning districts in rendering decisions on zoning cases. Thus, it is a very important guide for the future development of the township.

Perhaps the most important part of the process is accurately knowing township residents' vision for the future. Such community-wide directions come from surveys, focus groups, open houses and public hearings to ensure community visions create a plan with broad support. These visions for the future are a powerful factor in many public and private decisions made by citizens, investors and elected officials. Crystal Falls Township developed its vision and legal framework for the master plan from a detailed resident and seasonal property-owner survey.

Incremental change is shaping the future of Crystal Falls Township even if the change is not always welcomed. This is inevitable because of life style changes and broader economic trends. The planning process is a way for the township to protect or reduce change in things that year-round and seasonal residents value most and allow a focus on changes that are most acceptable.