

Crystal Falls Township Master Plan



LSL Plan
Consulting



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Township Officials
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Crystal Falls Township
Iron County, Michigan

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Preface

The Master land Use portion of this Plan is developed under the Authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act 33 of 2008. This document represents a vision of how Crystal Falls will grow and develop in the future. This document was developed through an investigation of demographic and land use trends and the vision local citizens have for the Township. The basic purpose of the Plan is to manage the intensity and configuration of land use in a manner that supports economically viable, environmentally sound, and visually pleasing growth for current and future residents.

The Plan will help ensure that Crystal Falls Township remains a highly desirable community by enabling residents, business owners and developers make investments with a reasonable expectation of the future. In essence, the Plan balances the sometimes competing interests of environmental protection and individual land ownership to achieve overall community interests.

Plan Elements

This Master Plan consists of several components, including:

- Public input, which is an essential part of the planning process. It is critical to have an understanding of what Township stakeholders think of the issues.
- Background research regarding housing, population and other current conditions within the Township.
- A review of existing land use which summarizes the current land use trends within the Township.
- Development of goals, objectives and strategies that define how the Township will address identified concerns and trends.
- The land Use section that describes which types of development would be most appropriate within the Township.
- Implementation strategies that should be evaluated on an annual basis.

When the above components are combined, a picture is created that will serve as a guide for the Township as it faces important decisions now and years from now. These decisions may include policy changes, budget allocations and the more day-to-day issues such as site plan reviews, special land use approvals, and rezoning requests.

Planning Framework

Overall, the Master Plan is based upon a number of Township characteristics, each of which must be considered by the Planning Commission and Township Board as the Plan is implemented and updated. These characteristics include:

Community Character: The community character desired by stakeholders determines the Plan's goals. A strong emphasis placed on maintaining rural character, for example, would be reflected in any subsequent design standards enacted in the zoning ordinance.

Capability of Land: Environmental constraints must also be considered. Is the land itself able to accommodate planned uses? Where public utilities are not available are the soils capable of accommodating the density of planned development?

Community Needs: What types of land use are needed in the community? If a shortage of affordable housing were determined to be a community concern, the provision of suitable land uses in desirable locations would be an appropriate response. If a small shopping area seems appropriate for the community, a location should be selected and planned based on the ability of that location to accommodate such a use.

Available Services: Through issue and goal identification, as well as data collection, information is obtained about the status of community services. Are existing services capable of handling planned development? What kind of strain will new residential development place on the ability to provide adequate fire protection? What road improvements may be required?

Existing Development: How will the planned land uses affect existing uses? For example, are there some areas that are currently residential that the Township would like to see become commercial in the future? How will planned uses affect nearby existing uses?

Regional Planning: The Township does not exist in a vacuum. There are other regional issues such as transportation, watershed management, environmental protection, and utility plans that must be considered as well. Sharing copies of the Plan and communicating about it with neighboring township, county and regional planners as well as other appropriate entities will facilitate regional planning and coordination efforts.

Implementation

The Planning Commission and Township Board should continuously strive to ensure effective use of this document. Although the tie between decision-making and land use policy is not always abundantly clear, most land use and design decisions can be guided by vision, goals and objectives provided in this Plan. In the most general terms, if the Township's vision drives all decisions, community leaders will be implementing the Plan. What follows are additional practices that will ensure Plan implementation:

Refer to the Master Plan in all Zoning Decisions

One of the principal benefits of having an adopted Master Plan is the foundation it provides for sound zoning decisions. Just as the Plan is the policy guide for land use, zoning is the principal legal enforcement tool. The two should work together to provide adequate justification for land use decisions.

Encourage Other Decision Making Bodies to Use the Master Plan

The Master Plan should help guide everyday decisions, from the capacity of improved roads to new schools. Working together with the County Road Commission, school districts, and adjacent communities as well as other parties that can impact land use patterns within the Township, can help Crystal Falls Township in the implementation of the Master Plan.

Keep the Plan Current

The vision outlined in the Plan will not occur overnight. The Master Plan is an outline for the future that guides day-to-day decisions. However, even with this in mind, the Plan should not be applied or used rigidly since changing conditions that can affect the original intentions of the Master Plan should be acknowledged and the Plan amended, if necessary.

Township decisions can be weakened by an outdated Plan or one that is not in constant use as a reference. The Planning Commission should conduct an annual review of the Plan to ensure that the Plan is kept current. The State Planning Act required that the Master Plan be reviewed every five years. While this does not mandate that the Plan be changed, it at least encourages a thorough review to determine if the directions set forward are still valid. Any amendments to the Plan can be done at that time to keep it up to date and consistent with Township philosophies.

On the other hand, while the Plan needs to be a flexible instrument, its recommendations should not be taken lightly. Adjustments should be made only as necessary, and justified based upon changing conditions or shifts in community philosophy.