

## Chapter 13

# STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

The previous twelve chapters have presented background information, analysis, goals, and policies, associated with a generalized Future Land Use Map to guide decisions on land use, capital improvement and intergovernmental issues for the next twenty years. There are many explicit and implied recommendations. There is more to pursue than can be undertaken all at once. Yet, the initiatives proposed in this Plan will not implement themselves. It will take continued support and commitment for many years.

The first section of this chapter examines ingredients for successful Plan implementation. The second section focuses on key recommendations that should be given priority for implementation. There are also some policies that are much more important than others to always keep in mind when decisions are being made. The third section presents a brief description of key strategies that must be pursued at every opportunity in order to successfully implement this Plan.

### ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

#### Central Ingredients

The central ingredients to successful Plan implementation will be:

- Commitment by the Joint Planning Committee, each Planning Commission, the City Council, the Village Council, the Township Board of Trustees and staff of the each jurisdiction.
- A citizenry better educated on the vision in this Plan. Information about desired residential development patterns, the fiscal and land use constraints of extending urban services, property rights, open space preservation, natural resource protection and new tools to improve and then sustain the quality of life in the Tri-Communities need to reach citizens or they may not understand why and how local decision-making is directed to implementing this Plan.

#### Focusing on Priorities

As the body principally responsible for preparing and maintaining a land use plan for a community, but one which also has substantial responsibilities in review of proposed developments for zoning compliance, it is easy for a Planning Commission to become distracted with ongoing tasks or ad hoc, controversial issues. Still, the Commission needs to prioritize its tasks relative to implementation of this Plan. Time needs to be set aside for high priority items. These include the preparation of an annual report and work program for the next year, drafting updates to the Zoning Ordinance, assisting with the preparation of a capital improvement program, and the five-year Plan update. These are discussed below.

#### Annual Tasks

An annual report on all activities undertaken by each Planning Commission with a special focus on actions taken to implement the Plan should be made to the governing body. A proposed work program that identifies priorities and projected expenses for the next year should also be prepared and submitted in time to be included in the annual

budget process. The Planning Commission should also assist the governing body with the preparation and annual updating of a capital improvement program. Each of these activities are prescribed by the Municipal Planning Act and/or the Township Planning Act.

### **PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

Neither a new Joint Planning Committee nor the individual Planning Commissions can be expected to implement all of the measures listed in this Plan alone. Many of these can only be accomplished with support from the respective governing bodies and with help from other agencies or groups. It is essential that discussions begin with each of these entities so that they understand the goals, find agreeable common ground where there are differences and obtain a commitment to a common action.

#### **All Three Jurisdictions Together**

- Public acquisition of the Denison property on both sides of the Kalamazoo River is the top priority for the Tri-Communities.
- Protection and maintenance of the Kalamazoo River and Lake Michigan, including protection of water quality and dredging of Kalamazoo Lake (which requires selection of a spoils site and petition to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers for project approval and funding assistance).

#### **Governing Body Priorities**

The following activities should be the key priorities of the governing bodies of the City of Saugatuck, City of the Village of Douglas and Saugatuck Township:

- Creation and support of a continuing Joint Planning Committee per the recommendation in Chapter 12.
- Support the efforts of the Joint Planning Committee and each Planning Commission to implement this Plan.
- Authorize and give serious consideration to the findings of a special study of the pros and cons of creating a Joint Planning Commission to serve all three jurisdictions and a single joint Zoning Ordinance per the recommendation in Chapter 12.
- Consider initiating a study to determine the benefits/feasibility of consolidating the three governments.

#### **Planning Commission Priorities**

The following activities should be the key priorities of the Joint Planning Committee and each Planning Commission for the next five years:

- Enlist the support and involvement of residents to achieve community goals and educate the public regarding the benefits of growth management and the vision, goals and policies of the updated Comprehensive Plan.
  - Inform through newsletters and periodic town meetings.
  - Post draft documents on the web and ask for review and comment.
- Review all current ordinances or regulations to note those sections that are not in conformity with the plan and make public the results of that review, whether in a report or such other manner as the commission deems appropriate, which will form a baseline document against which to measure progress.
- Update the respective Zoning Ordinances to be consistent with this Plan.
- Update other land development regulations in each jurisdiction (such as land division and subdivision regulations) as necessary to be consistent with this Plan.

- Develop a Tri-Communities Greenspace Plan in conjunction with each Park and Recreation Commission. This Plan would prioritize lands for open space preservation and greenway trails, identify and implement tools for acquisition of title or development rights from willing sellers and set up funding mechanisms for implementation. It would detail how to ensure the establishment of connected open space as abutting properties are developed.
- Prepare additional sub-area plans to provide greater detail to desired development in each sub-area, such as is being done in Saugatuck for the Oxbow Peninsula, and may be desirable along the waterfront and along Blue Star Highway.
- Use this Plan in the analysis and review of proposed rezonings, zoning text amendments, site plans, and new or amended master plans of adjoining jurisdictions submitted for statutory review and comment.
- Closely coordinate land use policies with those of neighboring communities.
- Share key draft documents with adjoining jurisdictions for review and comment.
- Be sure to comment on draft documents of adjoining jurisdictions when presented for that purpose.
- Monitor neighboring jurisdiction and County agency decisions and periodically inform other local governments and the County Board of Commissioners on the status of efforts to implement this Plan.
- Join efforts with others outside the Tri-Communities to modernize planning and zoning enabling legislation and to authorize or use new tools to better manage growth and preserve open space.
- Develop and promote design guidelines by the Joint Planning Committee and each Planning Commission that illustrate how to protect rural and scenic character and open space values on private residential, commercial, public and institutional properties. Examples include the design guidelines for the **Grand Traverse Bay Region Development Guidebook** that illustrates a preferred development approach that protects scenic quality, open space, water quality and sensitive environments.
- Create residential development standards that set aside open space and employ vegetative buffers along roadsides and where there are sensitive environments, greenways and potential trail and wildlife corridors. These standards should be adopted as part of site plan review, cluster ordinances, conservation subdivision ordinances, site condominium ordinances and planned unit development ordinances.
- Create an aggressive tree planting and replacement program in all three jurisdictions along all public roads so that a new tree canopy will be in place as the many post-mature trees along public roads die off.
- Assist with preparation of an annual capital improvements program in each jurisdiction to guide the location of future public facilities consistent with this Plan.
- At least once each five years, this Plan should be thoroughly reviewed and updated by the Joint Planning Committee and each Planning Commission with support from each governing body.

### **Saugatuck City**

Specific priority recommendations in the City of Saugatuck include:

- Complete preparation of a sub-area plan for the Oxbow Peninsula in cooperation with Saugatuck Township.

- Examine zoning along the waterfront with an eye to permitting limited mix use and more public views of the waterfront without increasing building height.
- Coordinate waterfront zoning changes with those of the City of the Village of Douglas and Saugatuck Township.
- Establish uniform height standards and maintain side yard setbacks.
- Where the opportunity exists to acquire property for public parks (even if just pocket parks), do so.
- Promote marina development on Kalamazoo Lake, especially the remaining undeveloped shoreline, as an approach to improving boating access instead of converting waterfront lands to residential, which would restrict access.
- Add groundwater and wetland protection to site plan review standards.

Photo 13-1

**Preparation of an Oxbow Peninsula Sub-Area Plan is Important for Long-term Preservation**



*Photo by Aaron Sheridan*

**City of the Village of Douglas**

Specific priority recommendations in the City of the Village of Douglas include:

- Complete a comprehensive reexamination of zoning district boundaries and permitted uses in a manner consistent with this Plan.
- Coordinate waterfront zoning changes with those of the City of Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township.
  - Establish uniform height standards and maintain side yard setbacks.
  - Where the opportunity exists to acquire property for public parks (even if just pocket parks), do so.
- Add groundwater and wetland protection to site plan review standards.

**Saugatuck Township**

Specific priority recommendations in the Township of Saugatuck include:

- Examination of the zoning boundaries and appropriate range of permitted uses, including mixed uses of property along Blue Star Highway. Pay special attention to not inadvertently undermining the integrity of existing local businesses in the City of Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas.

- Examination of the permitted density in rural residential and agricultural parts of the Township with an eye to possible changes to reduce permitted density or which result in permanent protection of large amounts of open space so that overall development density in these areas is much lower than would occur at buildout under existing zoning.
- Coordinate waterfront zoning changes with those of the City of Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas.
  - Establish uniform height standards and maintain side yard setbacks.
  - Where the opportunity exists to acquire property for public parks (even if just pocket parks), do so.
- Add groundwater and wetland protection to site plan review standards.
- Promote marina development on Kalamazoo Lake, especially the remaining undeveloped shoreline, as an approach to improving boating access instead of converting waterfront lands to residential, which could restrict access.
- Where there are pristine creeks and no public storm water facilities, consider density below 1 dwelling unit (DU)/2.5 acres unless significant mitigation measures are required (more than storm water detention, such as filter traps, cleaning, rain gardens, etc.)
- Obtain base line traffic counts from the County Road Commission on County Roads.
- Prepare sub-area plans for the Interstate Highway interchanges.

#### **KEY STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

While the above priority initiatives are being implemented, the matters that come before planning commissions and governing bodies month-to-month will permit many opportunities to implement key policies in this Plan (see policies in Chapter 1). Following are key strategies that should be implemented at every opportunity through local zoning, subdivision regulations and capital improvement programs. Many may first require updates to existing Zoning Ordinances. Most of the following strategies focus on preservation of the existing character of the Tri-Communities:

- Protect the natural environment of the area.
- Protect the visual quality of and visual access to the waterfront.
- Preserve farmlands that farmers want to preserve.
  - Continue to support farmers that enroll land in PA 116 or who choose to participate in a county, state or national PDR program.
  - Promote use of cluster zoning with at least 50% open space in agricultural areas.
- Encourage the use of land in accordance with its character and adaptability through the use of appropriate planning and zoning techniques.
  - Zone land presently used for continued low density/intensity use until utilities are available.
  - Preserve connected open space with each new development proportionate to the size of the development and the use of adjoining lands.
  - Do not strip zone or spot zone.
  - Do not zone land for high intensity use outside existing urban service areas or areas planned for utility expansion within the next few years.
- Encourage the majority of new development to locate in areas where public utilities can be most efficiently and cost effectively provided.
  - Zone land at densities that promote use of public utilities where they are

- available (usually 4 dwelling units/acre or more).
- Provide an adequate level of public services and facilities to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and to ensure a high quality of life for residents.
  - Require connection to public sewer and water wherever feasible.
  - Require the developer to pay for extensions of public sewer and water except the portion of the cost of lines that are oversized for access by other properties.
  - Use capital improvement programs to provide public services to areas already developed but not presently served, and pay for with special assessments.
  - Require all new development to have connected streets, sidewalks or trails or planned connections if adjoining land is not developed.

Photo 13-2

**Preservation of Scenic Viewing Areas is Very Important  
to Improving Quality of Life  
as with this Opportunity Along Tannery Creek**



*Photo by Aaron Sheridan*

- Ensure that all new development is of high quality.
  - Be upfront with developers that nothing less than good design and the use of quality building materials is acceptable.
  - Provide bonuses for high quality design (increased density, approval for mixed use, fast track approval, etc.) where feasible and not counter to the achievement of other public objectives.
- Maintain or improve the character and stability of all existing single family neighborhoods and multiple family and manufactured housing communities by:
  - Adopting and implementing uniform property maintenance codes.
  - Participating in county low-interest home repair and improvement programs.
  - Encouraging blocks to create self-help home improvement projects for their neighbors in need.
- Provide a balanced range of affordable housing types at varying densities.
  - Ensure more land is zoned for residential use, but presently not used for residential use, in varying densities, where public utilities are present or could be

quickly provided.

- Encourage high quality commercial development to locate adjacent to existing commercial development and only where planned and zoned for it.
  - Do not prematurely zone land for commercial use.
  - Maintain a range of commercial zones and zone into the classification most compatible with adjoining uses.
- Reserve land well suited for industrial use and resist rezoning to another classification.
- Identify and protect important historic structures.
  - Inventory historic structures and pass and thereafter implement an historic preservation ordinance.
- Preserve the capacity and function of the existing arterial and collector streets and minimize the conflicts between their functions by regulating land use, building setbacks, and driveway openings, and where appropriate, by requiring the development of front or rear access service drives. In addition:
  - Expand access management regulations to be consistent with the **Michigan Access Management Guidebook** prepared by MDOT for local governments.
  - Encourage the Allegan County Road Commission to adopt access management regulations.
  - Keep zoning density very low on land adjoining gravel roads until/unless the road is paved (see **How Much Development is Too Much**, available from the Huron River Watershed Council).
  - Keep new housing set back at least 300 feet from the interstate highway and require the planting and maintenance of a very thick vegetative buffer between homes and the highway.

Photo 13-3

**Maintaining Quality Streets and Preserving their Capacity is Important for Access by Residents and Visitors**



*Photo by Aaron Sheridan*

- Be sure that all future rezonings are consistent with this Plan and if not when proposed, then the Plan needs to be amended first (can be done concurrently).

- Be sure that future zoning text changes related to specific districts (e.g. permitted uses in commercial zones along Blue Star Highway) and other key standards are consistent with this Plan.

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