

MAKING THE MASTER PLAN WORK

Implementation of the Ross Township Master Plan is the most challenging part of this important community land use planning effort. Following through on addressing the issues, goals and objectives noted in the previous sections will require an atmosphere of cooperation between individuals, community organizations, business owners and governmental agencies. Areas where cooperation can occur include:

Local Government

- Elected Township officials and Township staff should use the Master Plan as a basis for addressing any land use planning issue.
- Periodically review and update Township land use management tools, including zoning and land division ordinances. An important component of good land use management is the application of site development standards as specified in the Township's zoning ordinance, including the 'open space' section of that ordinance. For larger scale developments, which are more likely to have a recognizable impact on the environment, a development impact analysis should be instituted. This is a viable tool that can be used to garner a relatively objective picture of the impacts of a proposed development upon the Township. It is essentially a scoring mechanism that evaluates the social, economic, physical and environmental impacts of the development.

To effectively use this tool, Ross Township should establish specific guidelines that will allow the developer to determine the potential impacts of his or her development upon the Township in general and surrounding properties in particular. That includes the fiscal impact upon the Township in terms of the placement and maintenance of public infrastructure. The impact analysis would be completed by the developer, using the Township's criteria, and would include mechanisms the developer would employ to mitigate or minimize negative impacts that might result from the development. Impact

analysis could be integrated with the site plan review and approval process required within the zoning ordinance.

Impact analysis would not have to be applied to all new developments. The Township could establish threshold criteria that would determine when an impact analysis was required, such as a minimum number of proposed housing units or a minimum amount of development acreage, or proximity of the proposed development to a probable environmentally sensitive feature, such as a lake or wetland.

- Establish a mechanism (spreadsheet) for identifying all the necessary permits and procedures that will be required for various types of development. Such a spreadsheet will assist the Planning Commission and developer in identifying proper procedure and ensuring that all appropriate agencies and organizations have been notified and have responded as required.
- Promote the continuing educational development of Township officials, staff and community volunteers regarding land use planning techniques, practices and policies.
- Further pursue and support cooperative regional and sub-regional planning efforts with neighboring communities and townships, Kalamazoo, Barry and Calhoun counties, and state agencies.

State and Federal Government

- Work with elected state and federal representatives to support land use conservation and preservation programs. Invite elected officials to Ross Township to share their land use planning vision with local citizens.



- Encourage, support and promote fiscal and tax policies which encourage sustainable land development and regional land preservation initiatives.

Businesses

- Encourage the location and expansion of commercial development in areas that are centralized in community-identified areas (as noted on the Future Land Use Map). Promote mixed use, pedestrian-friendly business development that is handicap-accessible and offers Ross Township unique and personal customer service. That pertains especially to the M-89/D Avenue area, where a higher density, pedestrian oriented (neo-traditional) “commercial village” could be structured over time.
- Pursue the conservation of infrastructure and the surrounding natural environment when reviewing potential business site plan designs. Work with utility companies to retrofit existing facilities to be energy-efficient and have a minimal impact upon neighboring land.
- Integrate commercial land uses into their surrounding environment through appropriate and attractive architecture and signage, setbacks, site design and sensitivity to the natural environment, minimizing typical strip development layout.
- Support environmental regulations that protect the area’s water resources, soils and natural vegetation.
- Involve residents and community leaders in decision-making concerning commercial development and the benefits/costs to Ross Township. Encourage a partnership between Ross Township and both existing and potential area business owners regarding the location, design and construction of commercial development projects.

Developers and Builders

- Encourage cluster/open space development as a mutually cost-effective approach to residential land development, saving taxpayer dollars on infrastructure and development costs on large-area parcel acquisition.
- Pursue a cooperative, pro-active partnership between Ross Township and Township developers and builders regarding the location, design and construction of development projects.
- Support environmental regulations that protect the area's water resources, soils and natural vegetation.

Advocacy and Service Organizations

- Encourage coalitions with area businesses, banks and developers to support agricultural and open space preservation.
- Consider and, where possible, support innovative projects and new land use concepts, which promote preservation of Ross Township's natural resources and open space. Encourage the purchase of conservation easements within cluster/open space residential developments.
- Participate and/or continually monitor active area advocacy and service organizations. Invite representatives of these organizations to Ross Township Board of Trustees and/or Planning Commission meetings to share ongoing projects, programs and new land use concepts and proposals.
- Work to ensure that Ross Township, Kalamazoo County and regional area land use needs are met while addressing local planning issues.

Individuals

- Pursue community outreach whenever possible to get public input on Ross Township land use issues.
- Strive for an active, informed citizenship in Ross Township. An educated and active population which leads, not follows, are invaluable assets for any community.
- Respect individual citizen interests and community interests equally. The voice of the minority and majority should be weighed in a fair and even-handed manner concerning any land use planning effort.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE

The implementation guideline is associated with the Goals and Objectives highlighted previously in the Ross Township Master Plan. Actions are completed by participants noted in the implementation guideline with a timeframe and potential funding sources for each action as defined below.

Participants, which include local and state agencies or groups. Often, several participants will be required in order to accomplish a task.

Timing, which refers to the anticipated implementation time frame of each task. The time frame is divided into three categories: short-range/ongoing actions (one to three years), medium-range actions (three to ten years) or long-range actions (ten years or more). Often, implementation-to-completion of an action transcends over a considerable length of time. Therefore, the timing portion of an action noted on the implementation guideline may identify two or three time periods.

Funding, identifies known and potential funding sources concerning an action. Primary funding sources are often initial sources of capital or the main funding mechanism to both finance and manage specific action projects. Secondary

funding sources are potential funding sources, usually associated with governmental or nonprofit grants and various types of individual and/or group contributions.

While the guideline may not be completely comprehensive, it does highlight primary actions Ross Township needs to accomplish to achieve this Plan's overall goals. It is the responsibility of Ross Township to ensure that objectives are completed and goals are met concerning this Master Plan.

