
WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP

VISIONS AND STRATEGIES

SECTION 8.0

INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense, the Master Plan is a general policy. Presumably, the Plan contains several policies, each supported by a group of strategies designed to serve as a guide to consistent and rational public and private decisions in the use and development of land and public improvements. The policy statements and planning strategies discussed in this section only differ from the Master Plan elements and Illustration itself in function and in degree of specificity.

The choices of direction for the Township in the broadest terms are:

1. The unplanned “laissez-faire” approach that permits growth to take its own course with little or no control.
2. The planned approach customarily incorporates one or more of the following approaches:
 - A. The linear or corridor development orients all uses along major transportation routes.
 - B. The nuclear arrangement where the entire community evolves around a multi-purpose center.
 - C. The multi-nuclear arrangement where intensive uses may be placed at various community locations to foster that type of use concentration.
 - D. The neighborhood concept orients residential units around an elementary school or neighborhood center.
3. A combination of the above concepts which meet the Township’s need.

PURPOSES OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purposes of the Master Plan are:

1. To improve the physical environment of the Township as a setting for human activities to promote the general health, safety and welfare by making the Township more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, interesting and efficient.
2. To promote the public interest, the interest of the Township at large, rather than the interests of individuals or special groups within the Township.
3. To facilitate the democratic determination and implementation of Township policies and physical development. The Plan is primarily a policy instrument. The Plan constitutes a declaration of long-range goals and objectives and provides the basis for a program to accomplish the goals. By placing the responsibility for determining policies with the Planning Commission and providing an opportunity for citizen participation, the Plan facilitates the democratic process.

4. To affect political and technical coordination in community development.
5. To inject long-range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.
6. To bring professional and technical knowledge to bear on the making of political decisions concerning the physical development of the Township.

As an expression of desirable physical development, the Master Plan is an affirmation of visions and strategies.

POLICY BASIS

Only through careful analysis of existing conditions and the forces which have brought them about, can the Township understand their interrelationship, identify their underlying purpose, anticipate future problems, and devise solutions.

Accordingly, the Township identifies its goals and objectives by relating them to current problems and issues and to tangible alternative solutions; at the same time, the Township must attempt to anticipate future problems and recommend the steps necessary to prevent their development or reduce their severity.

No Statement of Policy or set of objectives, however carefully and analytically developed, will be equally relevant at all times. Movements of people and the stimulation of activities relieve one set of problems and leave others in their wake. For example, when the automobile replaced the horse, the streets became cleaner but the air dirtier. As our production rises, distribution, rather than production of consumer goods, becomes the problem. As urbanization continues, flooding becomes a problem in previously well-drained areas because of increased water run off. Increases in population and income affect recreation demand and create weekend traffic congestion in areas usually free of such conditions.

While policy formation in practice is not as tidy and logical as it is in theory, it is important to note that policy decisions tend to move in sequence from the general to the specific. In this chapter, less emphasis is being placed on the very general goals because it is presumed that they reflect universally accepted values (i.e., create a community of the highest quality in which to work, live, and recreate, ensuring optimum protection of health, safety, welfare, etc.).

This section attempts to reflect the community structure and quality of community life which the Township desires. Decisions cited in this chapter and the resulting objectives are translated in a Master Plan that reflects Washington Township's key decisions in selecting future development patterns.

In this chapter, strategies mean those necessary steps, put into words, that amplify and implement broad policy and relate it to "short-range decisions," specific recommendations and finally, to detailed regulations.

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POLICY PURPOSE

Administration by Township Officials, legislative action by the Township Board, quasi-judicial rulings by the Zoning Board of Appeals, and administrative action and recommendations by the Planning Commission are sometimes criticized as being capricious and arbitrary. Clear-cut statements of policy can go far to minimize the perceived arbitrariness of certain planning and planning-related actions. They can guide and substantiate honest, intelligent decisions. They can also serve the Community Planner and the Planning Commission as an anchor of objectivity. Another useful function performed by policy statements is in the area of informing the public about the thinking of the Planning Commission with regard to land use decisions.

DETERMINING POLICY

The Master Plan is not just a series of maps. Rather, it is first a series of policy statements or objectives. Such objectives cover:

- Residential Use
- Retail and Service Use
- Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation
- Environmental Quality
- Industrial Use
- Community Facilities

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

VISIONS

A Community where:

1. Residential developments are designed to exist in harmony with the natural environment.
2. Residential dwellings are constructed of quality, durable and aesthetically pleasing materials and designs.
3. Residential developments are designed with open space and recreational opportunities within close proximity to residential dwellings.
4. All residential lifestyles are accommodated by creating transitions from smaller lot, more intense single-family and multiple-family developments in the south and central portion of the community, to larger lot/lower density type developments in the north and the west.
5. Residential housing is provided for all ages and income levels at appropriate locations within the community.

STRATEGIES

1. Compare and contrast actual development results with expected results and amend the Zoning Ordinance and Land Division regulations when necessary.
2. Review provisions that would allow mixed-use and mixed density type developments.
3. Re-examine development options for alternative residential development techniques.
4. Enhance the sense of community through the adoption of design guidelines that promote pedestrian traffic and minimize the impact of the automobile.
5. Encourage continued residential development in the Washington Village area.
6. Review standards that would allow housing opportunities for all age levels and income brackets within the community.
7. Consider ordinances that will enforce stricter architectural design guidelines to produce a higher aesthetic and building construction quality.
8. Incorporate zoning provisions which permit and encourage open space development options.
9. Consider mandating recreational and open space in residential developments. Use landscaping requirements to create park-like settings where natural amenities do not exist.
10. Develop higher standards for landscape screening between residential developments and incompatible uses, such as highways and parking lots.
11. Re-evaluate density allowances within the multiple-family districts to encourage a higher quality of life.
12. Continue to plan and zone for larger lot and/or lower density residential developments in the northern and western sections of the community.
13. Re-examine density transitions in residential areas.
14. Promote smaller more accessible neighborhood parks within proposed developments.

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RETAIL AND SERVICE

VISIONS

We envision that:

1. The retail environment embraces market needs; while recognizing community needs such as aesthetics, safety, value, function, pedestrians, and infrastructure demand.
2. The commercial and office developments will be of the highest aesthetic quality to match the current housing quality the Township is receiving.
3. New commercial developments will be located in small accessible clusters where appropriate, rather than in a typical linear fashion.
4. Agricultural uses are given the opportunity to co-exist with surrounding development while remaining economically viable commercial entities.

STRATEGIES

1. Concentrate commercial development in downtown Romeo and Washington Village.
2. Review possible standards that would encourage pedestrian friendly site design.
3. Consider conducting an historical features survey and review possible methods of preserving those properties that contribute to the character of the Village area.
4. Require parking lots to be interconnected with shared access drives and cross-access easements where possible and desirable to reduce curb-cuts on primary roads.
5. Increase landscape standards within the interior and along the perimeter of non-residential developments.
6. Require landscaped boulevard entrances to all non-residential developments when feasible.
7. Improve sign standards by minimizing sign area, height, and general visual clutter to enhance roadway safety and appearance.
8. Ensure that lighting standards are adequate for safety while taking into consideration the tranquil country setting of the Township.
9. Develop outdoor merchandising and outdoor storage regulations which are equitable for all businesses while providing aesthetic protections for the Township.
10. Examine the potential of down-zoning commercial to other reasonable uses where excessive commercial properties currently exist, where safety is at risk, or where no commercial market is evident.

11. Give farmers the opportunity to earn supplemental income by creating Zoning Ordinance provisions that allow agricultural uses to engage in agri-business type operations.
12. Provide agricultural land owners with alternatives to the conventional development of farmland by making available such farmland preservation tools as Purchase of Development Rights.

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

VISIONS

We envision:

1. A safe and efficient circulation system for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic which acknowledges that visitors to the community identify the Township through its natural roadway surroundings and man-made streetscapes.
2. Pedestrian pathways which are available throughout the entire community providing alternative means of transportation as well as recreation.
3. A level of service of "C" or greater on all roadways in the Township.

STRATEGIES

1. Work with County and State agencies to require acceleration/deceleration/ by-pass lanes where such lanes will provide a benefit to the community.
2. Connect bikeways and sidewalks wherever feasible. Further, inventory gaps in the existing sidewalk system and examine programs for completing the system.
3. Provide a uniform landscaping scheme along all major roadways throughout the community.
4. Consider regulations requiring subdivisions to be connected with a pedestrian access.
5. Provide directional signs to important districts in the area, i.e. Washington Village, The Orchards, Romeo CBD.
6. Provide a park-like setting for all pathways within the community.
7. Work with the County during the redesign process on 26 Mile Road for a crossing bridge over the M-53 Expressway.
8. Create traffic and access standards to improve safety on roadways in the Township. The standards should address access spacing and alignments as well as the potential for marginal access roads. Marginal access roads should be considered between 29 Mile Road and 32 Mile Road along M-53.
9. Balance the needs for on-site circulation and access needs for emergency services with the inherent conflict of off-site traffic safety flow.

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

VISIONS

We envision that:

1. Environmental systems such as woodlands, wetlands, and flood plains can co-exist with all types of developments while providing enhancements to those developments which maximize the quality of life for Township residents.
2. The Township recognizes its significant role in the Stony Creek and Clinton River Watersheds and strives to protect all waterways and tributaries within the Watersheds.
3. The Township recognizes its diverse setting and environmental resources; being rolling hills, woodlands and waterways in the west, and the relatively level, fertile and well-drained soils to the east.

STRATEGIES

1. Study the possible benefits of creating ordinances which protect the existing trees and woodlands, as well as providing increased planting standards for areas currently without tree growth.
2. Enhance the appearance of detention and retention ponds. The ponds should be designed as part of the overall landscape scheme for a site, providing an amenity as well as a function.
3. Work with the Public Works Department to ensure the preservation of natural drainage systems and their natural flood plains.
4. Continue to upgrade the engineering requirements to ensure that site run-off generated by new development is filtered and cleaned before entering natural drainage ways.
5. Revise ordinances to require maximum impervious service ratios for all types development to allow for ground infiltration of natural run-off.
6. When within reason, require all existing developed sites in the Township to meet new environmental standards.
7. Continue to enhance and develop a monitoring system for the enforcement of the development performance standards for emissions.
8. Study the possible benefits of enacting a wetlands ordinance.
9. Develop ordinance regulations that require undisturbed buffer areas along waterways, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive lands.
10. Where appropriate, site plan review should assure that natural features are preserved and accessible to residents.
11. Develop Ordinances that provide for more effective monitoring of septic fields and the repair of failing fields.

INDUSTRIAL

VISIONS

We envision:

1. A larger, well-planned industrial development area in the Township. Such an area must be able to accommodate the basic needs of industry such as regional and major thoroughfare access, utility availability and strong work force demographic indicators.
2. Attractive industrial areas that add value to the community without reducing the quality of life for Township residents.
3. Industrial developments situated in park-like settings which afford a more palatable transition with adjoining uses.

STRATEGIES

1. Restrict industrial uses from areas planned for predominantly residential uses.
2. Recognize the benefits of industrial development towards a positive tax base and study the use of tax incentives (tax abatements) as a means of attracting development.
3. Continue to encourage industrial development north of 29 Mile Road between the M-53 Bypass and the Macomb Orchard Trail. Plan for a planned industrial development area near the M-53/32 Mile Road interchange.
4. Continue to enhance conditions that encourage additional industrial development in appropriate locations. Coordinate with MDOT, RCMC, and other regional and county entities to facilitate access improvements and utility improvements in planned industrial areas.
5. Work with the Macomb County Planning Commission's Economic Development Division to market the industrial assets of Washington Township.
6. Re-examine industrial site design standards to increase landscape requirements and reduce impervious service requirements.
7. Provide architectural design standards to include durable, non-staining materials with aesthetic quality.
8. Re-evaluate outdoor storage requirements, as well as the containment and screening requirements for such outdoor storage.
9. To the extent permissible, require existing facilities to upgrade to all current standards.

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES

VISIONS

We envision that:

1. Community facilities and parks will be accessible, functional, and appropriate to all areas of the Township.
2. Township and other governmental developments (schools, libraries, etc.) will provide a model in terms of architecture, layout, landscaping, etc. for private sector developments.
3. A wide array of governmental, recreational, community oriented services will be available to facilitate the diverse needs of Washington Township residents.
4. The Township services, such as Municipal, Fire, Police, Parks and Recreation, etc. will continue to provide high quality services.

STRATEGIES

1. Continue to pursue the funding and design of a Township wide parks and recreation facility within the central region of the Township.
2. Work to strengthen the existing cooperative effort between Washington Township, Bruce Township, and the Village of Romeo for recreational services.
3. Pursue the possibility of providing small neighborhood parks in the southeastern and southwestern areas of the Township to service existing neighborhoods.
4. Promote and work in conjunction with the Huron Clinton Metropark Authority and Stony Creek Metropark to ensure its long term service and existence.
5. Promote the development of the Rails-to-Trails project and the connection of current sidewalks and trails into the regional Rails-to-Trails system.
6. Pursue the possibility of providing a Township Firehouse on the western side of the Township.
7. Develop a Firehouse on the east side of the Township upon the land which was donated to the Township.
8. Continue to expand the technology and information provided at the Township Hall for resident's use.