

## CHAPTER 1 - THE PLANNING PROCESS

### Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to guide policy and decision making for all future land use and infrastructure development decisions within Clark Township. Within the Plan, key planning issues are identified; goals, objectives and policies are outlined; public facility standards are established; future land uses are described and mapped; and specific implementation measures are recommended.

This Plan is adopted pursuant to the authority of the Township Planning Act, PA 168 of 1959. This Act provides for the preparation of a "*basic plan*" to promote community health, safety, and welfare through provisions for the use of land and resources and the assurance of adequate public facilities and services. The Clark Township Master Plan is a "*basic plan*." It is prepared as a foundation for, and depends primarily on, the Township's zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and capital improvement program for its implementation. Although this Plan states specific land use development policy and proposes specific land use arrangements, it has no regulatory power.

Act 33 of 2008, being the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, was approved on March 13, 2008 and takes effect on September 1, 2008. The contents of this Plan have been reviewed and modified as necessary to ensure compliance with this new Act governing Master Plans throughout the State of Michigan.

All proposed future land uses and policies presented in this Plan were developed based on a combination of the natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of development; the important natural functions played by unique land and water resources in the area; the relative future need for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses; the existing land use distribution; the relationship of undeveloped lands to existing community character; and the desires of local residents and public officials as expressed through the community and leadership surveys, and public meetings.

This Plan is intended as support for the achievement of the following public objectives, among others:

- to protect and promote public health, safety and general welfare;
- to conserve and protect property values by preventing incompatible uses from locating adjacent to each other;
- to protect and preserve the natural resources, unique character, and environmental quality of the area, while encouraging the sustainable use of the areas resources;
- to maintain and enhance employment opportunities and tax base of the area;
- to promote an orderly development process which is paced in coordination with the Township's ability to provide services and which permits public officials and citizens an opportunity to monitor change and review proposed development in a reasonable manner; and
- to provide information from which to gain a better understanding of the area and its interdependencies and interrelationships, and upon which to base future land use and public investment decisions.

## **How to Use the Plan**

This Plan is organized into seven chapters with five critical components. First, is the community profile presented in Chapter 2 which provides the basis for a common understanding of the trends and conditions influencing the Township. Second, are the natural features of the Township which give it a unique character. They are presented in Chapter 3. Third, are the public services, facilities and transportation policies which provide guidance in making future land use and infrastructure decisions presented in Chapter 4. Fourth are the community goals, objectives and policies, presented in Chapter 5. They provide a road-map for decisions. Fifth, are the existing and future land use and policy statements which provide guidance in making future land use and infrastructure decisions presented in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 presents information and strategies on implementation.

This Plan is presented to assist all elected and appointed officials when making choices between competing interests by serving as a guide for decision making. It is anticipated that this Plan will be consulted in the following situations:

### **Review of rezonings, variances, and special use permits:**

Applications for rezonings, variances, or special use permits should be evaluated not only in terms of specific zoning ordinance standards, but also in terms of how well the proposed action would help attain the goals and objectives of this Plan, fulfill its policies, and be consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

**Public improvement projects:** All future public improvement projects, including the construction of new facilities, utilities or buildings, should first be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with this plan, as provided by Section 125.32 of PA 168 of 1959. In particular, such projects should be reviewed to determine consistency with the goals, objectives and policies in the Plan, and whether such projects

support the planned future land use pattern in the Township, as set forth in this Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

**Review of land subdivision and lot splits:** The subdivision of land and associated lot split activities has a profound impact upon the character of a community and future public service needs and tax burdens. This Plan provides policies to assist the Planning Commission and Township Board regarding decisions about the appropriateness of proposed subdivisions and lot splits, and the adequacy of public services to address the increased demands associated with these subdivisions and lot splits.

**Township stability:** This Plan is a strong and visible statement by the Township and its residents, regarding the intended future character of the community and strategies to assure that character. As a formal and tangible document, this Plan is intended to instill a sense of stability and direction for township officials, township activities, township residents and future investors in the Township.

### **How the Plan was Prepared**

In mid 1990, Clark Township Planning Officials undertook a community-wide attitude survey of residents, both year-round and seasonal, with the objective of identifying, issues, opportunities and attitudes relating to a variety of topics, ranging from general appearance of the Township, to interest in community and cultural events. One of the priorities identified in that survey, as reflected in responses received from residents, was the review and update of the Clark Township Master Plan.

Originally prepared in the 1970's, this Master Plan served as the general foundation of local planning for approximately 15 years. During this period, no revisions were made to this document and, as a result, while sections of the Plan were still applicable to current conditions, a significant portion of the

document was outdated or did not contain a sufficient level of refinement to support new initiatives or guide the local decision making process.

In early 1991, several specific Plan amendments were identified which the planning commission felt were minimum revisions if the Master Plan was to satisfy both short and long term Township planning requirements. These included updating land use maps to reflect changes over time, (including extension of the sanitary sewers), establishing guidelines for new development, especially in unique or sensitive settings, and identifying policies for guiding development within village centers.

In July of 1994, with the assistance of the Planning & Zoning Center, Inc., the Master Plan was again updated through a three phase process. Phase One identified critical trends and conditions facing Clark Township. Phase Two examined key findings and conclusions from the data collected, including anticipated future growth and development. Two alternative future land use patterns were generated and reviewed, drawing upon previously established goals and objectives for guidance in evaluation. The third and final phase included the preparation of updated Master Plan text, maps, charts, tables and other graphics. The updated Master Plan was adopted by Clark Township in July of 1994.

In September of 2006, the Clark Township Board and Planning Commission decided to further update the Clark Township Master Plan. Gourdie-Fraser, Inc. was selected to update the Plan in May of 2007.

Phase One of the planning process undertaken by the Clark Township Planning Commission and Gourdie-Fraser, Inc., began with a critical review of the Clark Township Master Plan and the identification of necessary updates and additions. Information was generated based upon discussions with Township officials, a review of the Clark Township Visual

Preference Survey completed in 2001, the US-2/M-134 Corridor Visual Enhancement Plan from September of 2003, the Les Cheneaux Watershed Management Plan from 2005, and a variety of supplemental resources.

Subsequent to the general review of the Master Plan and supplemental resources, the Clark Township Planning Commission held a community forum in July of 2007 to solicit input on identified trends and issues, review and refine proposed Township goals and objectives, and gather general public feedback on planning initiatives within Clark Township. Specific feedback on the villages of Cedarville and Hessel, and waterfront planning considerations were sought and obtained.

Phase Two of the planning effort began with the preparation of draft Master Plan amendments based upon solicited input from the Clark Township Planning Commission and the community input forum. The passage of Act 33 of 2008, being the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and having an effective date of September 1, 2008, necessitated a further review to ensure compliance with the new act. A second public input meeting to encourage broad based community input was held on June 17, 2008 where the draft Master Plan language was presented and discussed. Final preparation of the revised Master Plan document, including all text, maps, charts, tables and other graphics, followed. Public hearings were held on September 30, 2008 and again on November 25, 2008, followed by Township adoption of this plan shortly thereafter.