

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Before a community can actively plan for its future growth and development, it must first set certain goals and objectives that define its needs and aspirations and thus establish a basis for Future Land Use Plan formulation. These goals and objectives must reflect the type of community desired and the kind of lifestyle its citizens wish to follow, given realistic economic and social constraints. The following describes the collected public input and sets forth goals, which describe the ultimate purpose or intent of the Larkin Township Master Plan, as well as objectives to help the Township achieve its goals.

## FORMULATION PROCESS

The process of developing goals and objectives for the Larkin Township Master Plan involved two primary steps: background studies and visioning.

## BACKGROUND STUDIES

Prior to soliciting public input at a series of workshops, the Planning Commission reviewed background studies including natural features, socio-economics, housing, existing land use, and transportation within the Township. Goals and objectives for a community are also tempered by economic constraints, therefore relevant regional economic and growth data were reviewed to reveal the current state of growth in the Township and the region. The full results of this phase of the Master Plan can be found in the Community Description Chapter of this document.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WORKSHOP

Following their analysis and initial comments, the Planning Commission held the first of two workshops to gain public input for the Master Plan on May 12, 2004. This Workshop was attended by local residents, business owners, community officials, and a representative of the City of Midland Planning Department. The Workshop consisted of an activity where the larger group was broken down into smaller discussion groups. Each smaller discussion

group was lead by at least one member of the Planning Commission, who facilitated the discussions. Each group was responsible for identifying Larkin Township's "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" (SWOT) from a land use and planning perspective. The following is a summary of the meeting comments, in no particular order or priority:

### STRENGTHS

- Primarily residential in character
- Generous open area
- Proximity to Midland
- Significant wooded areas
- Large lots
- Thriving agricultural areas
- Strong tax base with reasonable taxes
- Wildlife in the northern part of the Township
- No floodplain issues
- Strong fire department
- Larkin Township Park
- Proximity to excellent schools
- A cooperative Township Board
- Favorable business climate
- Good roads
- Lighted intersections throughout the Township
- High, sustainable property values
- Availability of City of Midland water
- Park facilities for Little League are available
- Good reputation
- High quality housing stock
- Vast areas of State of Michigan owned land
- The lack sanitary sewer protects rural areas from development
- A diversity of lot sizes characterizes the area
- Good well water is available
- The commercial corridor is limited in scope and is compact

*WEAKNESSES*

- Lack of a consistent police presence
- Lack of City of Midland water in some areas
- Lack of sanitary sewer in some areas
- No sidewalks
- Few parks
- Natural gas is unavailable in some areas
- A high water table characterizes many areas of the Township
- Mediocre farm property can be found in some areas
- Many undeveloped rights-of-way exist; new roads have not been constructed
- No incentives to keep open spaces are offered in Larkin Township
- Too many deer result in many deer-car collisions
- Poor wells in some areas
- The prevalent road design is too narrow and does not accommodate bicycles
- No major east west road is easily accessible in Larkin Township
- The MUGA Line complicates development in the Township
- Roads have not been improved to accommodate growth in some areas
- A lot of wetlands exist in the Township, which often makes a problem for septic systems
- Land is expensive in the Township
- Little public space is available

*OPPORTUNITIES*

- A lot of land is available to accommodate growth
- Farmland and open space preservation could play a significant role in future development
- Purchase of Development Rights or Transfer of Development Rights programs could be developed
- Existing rights-of-way provide opportunities for new roads to be built
- Water could be provided throughout the Township
- Concentration of growth is in certain areas could allow for expansion while preserving rural character in most areas
- New zoning provisions could be put in place to curb negative aesthetics and nuisances

- New information resources could be developed for existing and future residents
- Drainage systems could be improved
- Recreation opportunities could be developed
- Bike paths can be integrated within new developments
- A neighborhood square could be fostered having light shopping and convenience goods
- Light pollution ordinances could be considered
- Interconnection of routes could be improved
- Commercial development could be concentrated on corners and in nodes, rather than in long strips.
- Cluster development could be used
- Conservation easements for greenways and wildlife preservation could be considered

*THREATS*

- Annexation is continuing
- Overcrowding could characterize some newer areas
- Crime may rise with additional population
- Well contamination could surface
- Increasing area industrial development
- Tax increases may be necessary to accommodate needed changes
- Overcrowding of schools may result from population growth
- The community is dependent on few major employers and therefore susceptible to a weak economy
- Loss of farmland and loss of wildlife is changing the character of the Township
- Cuts to revenue sharing will limit the Township budget
- Potentially, insufficient funds to maintain roads could result in deterioration of older routes
- Traffic congestion due to unplanned growth could complicate access and transportation
- Proliferation of commercial zoning will change the community

# THE RESULTS

Synthesizing the input of the Goals and Objectives Workshop, the results of the in-depth analysis of the Township and its environs gained in the Community Profile, and sound planning principles, the Planning Commission adopted the following goals and objectives.

## COMMUNITY GOALS

1. Maintain a high quality of life for both present and future Township residents.
2. Preserve the physical, social, and environmental character of the Township.
3. Meet the land use needs of the community by guiding new development in a manner that protects established development, conserves natural features, and does not sacrifice long-term well-being for short-term gain.
4. Balance the rate of land development with the availability of public facilities and services such as roads and utilities. Encourage development where infrastructure currently exists.
5. Cautiously expand housing, employment, consumer, recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities for Larkin Township residents.

## OBJECTIVES RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

- Encourage retention of productive agricultural lands and open space.
- Discourage the rezoning, development, or expansion of infrastructure into prime agricultural areas for non-farm related uses.

## OBJECTIVES RELATED TO RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

- Use code enforcement, rehabilitation programs, and community reinvestment resources to improve all existing housing which falls below minimum quality standards and to maintain existing residential areas.
- Support development in existing residential areas that fills in undeveloped gaps and complements and enhances established neighborhoods, also known as infill development.
- Guide the development of housing towards densities that relate to established neighborhoods, rural atmospheres, and natural features.
- Permit cluster housing and other creative forms of development to allow higher density housing in a more limited geographic area and capture new residential growth with less overall community impact. Accommodate new housing starts whenever possible in smaller, higher-density development in limited locations to permit new construction while protecting the Township's rural character, retaining open space, and balancing the needs of the agricultural and rural residential community with the interests of the new residents.
- Designate higher density housing only on land that has or is planned to have the infrastructure capacity to support such development at a minimal level of responsibility for the Township.
- Encourage local incentives to encourage residential development that complements the Township's rural character without compromising the provision of public services and facilities.
- Provide for a range of residential products, styles, and densities to meet the needs of the Township's evolving population.
- Encourage new residential developments to blend into the character of existing neighborhoods in terms of architectural styling, construction materials, building setbacks, pedestrian walkways, street patterns/network, etc.

- Encourage the incorporation of existing vegetation, topography, and other natural features into the design of new residential developments.
- Limit and closely monitor lighting intensity in and around residential areas to prevent light pollution and glare.

#### *OBJECTIVES RELATED TO COMMERCIAL LAND USE*

- Provide reasonable opportunities for the establishment of commercial uses that meet the demonstrated market needs of Larkin Township residents.
- Focus new commercial development in locations where compact and coordinated development can occur, preferably near areas of existing non-residential development. Do so to promote more efficient vehicular circulation and to concentrate commercial development in smaller “nodes” where they can most effectively meet the needs of Larkin Township while having the least overall negative consequences with regard to safety, light pollution, noise, and other nuisances.
- Discourage individually isolated commercial uses.
- Whenever possible, permit additional commercial development only in areas that have or are planned to have the infrastructure capacity to support such development.
- Review the architecture, landscaping, and signage associated with commercial establishments to ensure compatibility with the Township’s rural and residential character.
- Limit the establishment of multiple access points for freestanding commercial uses; encourage the use of shared access and service drives.
- Promote, plan for, and require transitional uses, landscape screening, and/or related buffering techniques between non-residential and residential uses.

#### *OBJECTIVES RELATED TO INDUSTRIAL LAND USE*

- Provide locations for light industrial uses that are adequately served by public facilities and services..
- Locate industrial areas where they have reasonable boundaries and are not subject to encroachment by incompatible land uses.
- Discourage industrial development that will negatively impact established residential areas, environmentally sensitive areas, or will require substantial changes to natural systems or infrastructure.
- Consider the impact new industrial developments will have on the Township’s ecosystem.

#### *OBJECTIVES RELATED TO PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC LAND USES*

- Promote public and semi-public uses offering a variety of recreational, worship, cultural, and educational opportunities.
- Supply public facilities and encourage private community facilities in size, character, function, and location suitable to their user populations.
- For Township provided facilities, plan, locate, and provide public areas based on a long-range general plan, short-range project plans, and capital improvements programming.
- Assist and guide semi-public and citizen groups in their efforts to provide needed community facilities.
- Continue to maximize the utilization of public buildings for multi-functional services.

## *OBJECTIVES RELATED TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE*

- Plan for the efficient location of public facilities and delivery of public services.
- Require road networks of contiguous new residential development to connect to adjacent residential road networks to promote overall neighborhood interconnectivity.
- Work cooperatively with other public agencies to facilitate the improvement of existing public facilities and services, and the development of new ones.
- Require that adequate public infrastructure be installed concurrently with the initiation of any new residential, commercial, and/or industrial land development.
- Consider the construction or extension of public utilities, outside the boundaries of the MUGA line, only to those areas where the existing population densities and natural resource conditions require such facilities to protect public health.
- Continue to improve the transportation network to promote the safe and efficient movement of people and commodities through various modes of transit (pedestrian, automotive, bicycling, etc.).
- Encourage the provision of non-motorized pathways in developing areas, especially planned residential areas, to create safe, alternative options for Township residents. Promote pathways that provide opportunities for interconnectivity between separate developments. Whenever practicable, suggest links between educational, recreational, and commercial land uses to residential neighborhoods via these pathways.
- Allocate costs of infrastructure improvements to those receiving the direct benefit of the services through the use of such mechanisms as special assessment districts.

## *OBJECTIVES RELATED TO NATURAL FEATURES*

- Maintain the Township's scenic and rural character by minimizing the impacts of development on environmental features such as wetlands, woodlands, and scenic views.
- Encourage the retention of important farmlands, forestlands, and open space areas.
- Sustain the quality of surface and groundwater resources in the Township from development related impacts.
- Protect Township residents and property from natural hazards associated with development that infringes on natural systems.
- Where appropriate and where utilities are available, promote the use of cluster designs to conserve scenic views, agricultural lands, wetland areas, groundwater recharge areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Encourage the use of native plant species and naturalized landscape designs, where appropriate, to enhance the community's existing character.
- Continually ensure that all county, state, and federal environmental regulations are adhered to in the development of land.
- Consider impervious surface ratio limitations on private land development to reduce storm water runoff and to improve water quality.

