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ZONING QUICK SHEET

BEST PRACTICE 2.1: Alignment with Master Plan



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Zoning Quick Sheets

Best Practice 2.1 – Alignment with Master Plan

Introduction

What is this best practice?

With a good foundation of Best Practice 1 (Plans and Public Engagement), Best Practice 2.1 calls for the alignment of a community's *master plan* (the long-range guide for the future) and *zoning ordinance* (the rules and standards for development).

Why is this a best practice?

A master plan serves as the basis for the local zoning ordinance to ensure that existing and future development move the community towards its vision. According to the *Michigan Planning Enabling Act* (MPEA), master plans are to contain a "future land use plan" and map (or maps) that describes the characteristics and locations of desired land uses. Further, the MPEA requires master plans to include a "*Zoning Plan*" where the future land uses categories are matched and compared with the community's existing zoning districts. These comparisons assist communities in identifying the zoning changes that may be necessary to achieve future land-use goals.

The master plan establishes a vision and intent for policy, but the zoning ordinance includes the regulatory framework to achieve development goals and applies the force of law. Once a new plan is adopted, it should be used as a tool to inform decisions made by the planning commission regarding ordinance amendments, site plans or special land uses. Any zoning changes should have common intent and correlate with the vision for development. If the master plan and ordinance are implemented with shared intent, changes in the built environment will be required to adhere to regulations that support the community's long-term goals.

What are terms to know?

Master Plan: A master plan is a document that establishes a community's long-term vision by prioritizing goals and recommending policies that will guide development.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA): The legislation that allows communities to plan. <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-33-of-2008.pdf>

Zoning Ordinance: A zoning ordinance regulates the permitted uses of land in different geographic sections of a community and provides requirements for the dimensions, placement, architectural features, and other characteristics of a development that are consequential to the public interest.

Zoning Plan: A document within the Master Plan that illustrates how the future land use designations generally correspond to the existing zoning districts. It highlights specific key or priority areas where existing zoning is significantly lacking appropriate standards or would inhibit development in accordance with the Master Plan

Criteria and Expectations for Essentials and Certified

Under Michigan law, zoning ordinances must be based on an adopted master plan. Ensuring such coordination reduces uncertainty and risk for development.

CRITERIA: The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the current master plan.	
ESSENTIALS EXPECTATIONS	CERTIFIED EXPECTATIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> The community has evaluated the master plan's recommendations to determine if changes to the zoning map or ordinance are needed.	<input type="checkbox"/> The community has made updates to the zoning ordinance to align with the goals and zoning recommendations from the master plan.

BP 2.1 Zoning Tool: Zoning Plan

How do communities create a Zoning Plan?

1. Create a matrix or table to illustrate how the **future land use categories** match up with the existing **zoning districts** by reviewing the descriptions of the future land use categories and the intent of the respective zoning districts.
 - Are there any future land use categories that don't correspond with an existing zoning district? Why? Is there an existing zoning district that needs to be updated to accommodate the future land uses desired or does a new district need to be created?
2. Describe what changes are needed to better align the vision for the future (master plan) with the rules for development (zoning).
3. Prioritize needed changes and identify if there are any other conditions that need to be met before zoning changes are made. For example, if utilities need to be extended in an area of the community to accommodate growth as envisioned in the master plan, that should be noted in the Zoning Plan.

Once aligned with the master plan, the zoning ordinance will provide a legal framework to progress towards established community goals.

Application in Communities

How can communities of various sizes apply this zoning tool to their communities? Please note that master plans and zoning codes are highly customized documents designed to advance each community's unique vision for their future. The examples included here also include some general description of the communities and how their application of the zoning tool could be a starting point for other communities.

Name of Community: Munising, MI

Population: 1,986 (2020 Census)

Description: The City of Munising is in the Upper Peninsula along the Southern shore of Lake Superior. Like many waterfront cities in Michigan, Munising has a quaint, small-town identity and a traditional downtown. Munising is the County Seat of Alger County and serves as the primary hub for commercial establishments, tourism, and civic and cultural activities in the County. Lake Superior and the Hiawatha National Forest directly border the City of Munising, limiting the potential for physical growth and

expansion outside its boundaries.

Date of master plan adoption: November 2020

The City of Munising met this best practice by providing a detailed Zoning Plan in its 2020 master plan. The Zoning Plan includes a table comparing the City's existing zoning classifications with proposed future land use classifications. In a third column, the Zoning Plan lists strategic priorities for each district and summarizes prospective zoning changes that will help the City progress towards meeting these goals.

In Munising, there are no new zoning districts needed; however, there are several opportunities identified to update the zoning map (see the **Commercial** land use description and the area noted for rezoning to **R-1** and several other areas where aligning district boundaries are noted). Almost all the zoning districts have zoning text changes highlighted (see the **Downtown** category and the zoning changes related to building form and placement as well as the addition of short-term rentals as conditional uses).

By having a directive and forward-thinking master plan, the community is well-prepared to craft a zoning ordinance that is in alignment. Future efforts towards implementation could include a priority evaluation to help the planning commission stay focused on needed amendments and request additional resources as needed. To see Munising's master plan, click [here](#). The Zoning Plan starts on page 34.

Name of Community: Madison Heights, MI

Population: 28,468 (2020 Census)

Description: The City of Madison Heights is a northwestern suburb located in Oakland County, just two miles outside of the City of Detroit. Madison Heights is characterized as a dense, inner-ring suburb, with predominantly residential uses located between major commercial corridors. In recent years, the City of Madison Heights has worked to enhance the identity of these thoroughfares to create a walkable and distinctive downtown area. The City of Madison Heights is largely built-out and future growth considerations focus on the redevelopment of existing sites.

Date of master plan adoption: February 2021

The City of Madison Heights adopted a new Master Plan in 2021 which includes actionable steps for zoning reforms that align with the community's future vision. In the plan, the City provided an implementation matrix to outline action steps, responsible parties, and timelines for tasks necessary to accomplish established community goals in the plan.

In Madison Heights, the Zoning Plan shows three new zoning districts needed to implement the future land use plan. One future land use category is existing (**Multiple-Family Residential**) and two are new categories (**City Center** and **Mixed Use Innovation**). Additional action strategies are illustrated in the Implementation Matrices, where they are subcategorized by the type of action needed (zoning, advocacy, capital improvement, or other), providing clear guidance for zoning changes that will need to be considered in the next ordinance update. For example, under "Housing and Neighborhoods," the first action item is "Develop zoning standards for "missing middle" housing, including duplex, triplex and quadplex dwellings. This may require the development of a new district (see the Zoning Plan)." To see Madison Heights' Master Plan, click [here](#). The Zoning Plan starts on page 128.

Name of Community: Charlevoix, MI

Population: 2,348 (2020 Census)

Description: The City of Charlevoix is the County Seat of Charlevoix County in the Northern Lower Peninsula along the coast of Lake Michigan. Charlevoix is characterized by predominantly single-family land uses and a vibrant downtown. As a popular summer destination for tourism, Charlevoix has a seasonally transient population, with many residents living elsewhere during the winter months.

Date of master plan adoption: 2022 Plan Review in Progress

The City of Charlevoix recently released a draft of its 2022 Master Plan for community feedback; the draft plan provides the community with a clear outline of zoning changes that will be needed to achieve the goals established for each future land use. The Future Land Use section includes a brief overview of each

land use category, with a summary of the key characteristics and goals for land use, building and site design, housing character, transportation and mobility, and natural features within each district. At the end of the section, the Zoning Plan aligns current and future land uses with zoning changes that will help meet the goals for each district.

The Zoning Plan shows the nine future land use categories and multiple zoning districts. In most cases, several zoning districts align with each land use category (only the last four on the list align with one zoning district). Zoning changes include adapting “residential districts to permit ‘missing middle housing’ types and allow neighborhood commercial and mixed uses.” Note that the following page on other zoning-related changes includes a recommendation to “collapse” zoning districts into fewer categories; this can be helpful to make the ordinance easier to understand, apply and update as well as promote more consistency with development throughout a community.

To see the Charlevoix Master Plan, click [here](#). The Zoning Plan starts on page 104.

Name of Community: Bay City, MI

Population: 32,207 (2020 Census)

Description: Bay City is the County Seat of Bay County on the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. Bay City is one of the three cities that make up Central Michigan’s “Tri-Cities Region,” along with Saginaw and Midland. Its key location along the transportation routes in Saginaw Bay and the deep waters of the Saginaw River led Bay City to experience early economic growth and prosperity following its incorporation in 1865. For many decades, Bay City had a thriving industrial sector, but when the automotive industry began to decline in Michigan, the impact was devastating for the City. Since this period of disinvestment, Bay City has focused on the revitalization of Downtown and the Riverfront, with notable success. Most recently, the Michigan Strategic Fund provided a \$1.5 million grant to help support the renovation of two historic buildings into new loft-style housing with two restaurants below.

Date of master plan adoption: June 28, 2017

The Bay City Master Plan has a Zoning Plan that indicates how current zoning relates to each proposed future land use category. The Zoning Plan also establishes key goals for the future zoning ordinance, and an explanation of intent was provided for three major Future Land Use changes:

- The Riverfront is proposed to be used as recreational/open space. The intent is to preserve natural resource, while providing the opportunity for potential recreation or open spaces or innovative stormwater features.
- A mixed density overlay is proposed for residential neighborhoods to create opportunities for new housing types and to increase housing supply.
- The Urban Form Mixed Use areas are proposed as areas that may benefit from a Form Based Code to encourage a greater mix of uses.

The Zoning Plan aligns each proposed Future Land Use category with current land uses on the zoning map. Proposed permitted uses for each category are also listed, with a description of the density and a brief overview of “key characteristics” for each district. Although the Master Plan does not go as far as to provide specific standards for each district, the context is informative and directive enough to guide future changes to the Zoning Ordinance. Chapter 2, Page 9 of the Bay City Master Plan includes the Zoning Plan, here: [Bay-City-Master-Plan \(baycitymi.org\)](http://baycitymi.org/Bay-City-Master-Plan)