



8 TRENDS, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNERS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the Planning Commission with a series of observations compiled by the consultant team. These observations resulted from the data collection and analysis phase of the Master Plan program, correlated with the public input solicited during the Community Vision Fair and the focus group workshops for the Northeast and Southwest planning areas. The consultant team's observations are designed to supplement the Planning Commission's formulation of goals and objectives statements, and assist in establishing the basis for the land use patterns to be shown on the Land Use Plan and Corridor Plan Maps.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Throughout the Master Plan's three major public involvement events, participants were encouraged to concentrate on the community's characteristics that were responsible for drawing them, their family, their neighbors, and/or their business to Shelby. They were asked to identify positive and negative aspects of the Township today and to concentrate on what the preferred future should be like in the Shelby Township of tomorrow.

Through surveys, conversations, visioning exercises, and active brainstorming sessions, the participants gradually assisted the Planning Commission in identifying the challenges

facing the community as it continues to grow and evolve. These exercises also concentrated on positive strategies for change. This concentration on positive contributions led the community to focus on potential solutions designed to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead.



Community Vision Fair

The Appendix at the end of this chapter includes summary results of the survey instruments used during the public participation meetings, as well as identification of Issues and potential Solutions offered by the many individuals and work groups.

CHALLENGES FOR PLANNERS

As the metropolitan region of Detroit continues to change and evolve, professional and lay planners are presented with a host of problems and hurdles to overcome. It is important to view these problems as "challenges" rather than insurmountable obstacles. Challenges can have positive results while obstacles are usually viewed with despair. The principal challenges that the Planning Commission must confront during the Master Plan program will likely include:

- Shelby Township is gradually losing much of its identity that was associated with its agriculture, woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors, wildlife, and similar natural features that originally drew residents to the community.
- Unlike older, historical settlements, Shelby Township lacks an activity center that people remember when they think about the community.
- The Township needs a common reason and identifiable center to provide a stronger sense of identity and community for its citizens.
- As Shelby Township has grown from an agricultural community to a full-service suburb of 65,000 people, it has experienced its share of problems related to traffic congestion, loss of natural character, deterioration of older development, and inappropriate mix of incompatible uses.
- With increasing residential property values, the community finds that its young adult children and its senior citizens struggle to find affordable home ownership options.
- Corridors of non-residential development that were once the state-of-the-art are beginning to experience physical deterioration, changes of use, and higher than desirable vacancy rates.

- ❑ New retail development often raids tenants from existing retail areas that have not kept pace with changing consumers preferences and modern site design.
- ❑ As the community’s residential population demands facility and service improvements, a properly balanced tax base is essential to keeping tax rates reasonable.
- ❑ Non-residential growth and development must occur in a well-planned manner that provides needed jobs and tax base without adversely impacting the quality of life in Township neighborhoods or adding congestion to its roadways.
- ❑ The Township is in danger of losing its historical identity, and the time is right for preserving the historical record and physical resources for the education and enjoyment of future generations.
- ❑ Development frequently outpaces road upgrades and other infrastructure improvements, leaving residents to suffer through congestion or service cut-backs.
- ❑ Development must bear its fare share of the cost for infrastructure improvements, and development timing is likely the key to avoiding a disproportionate share of the burden falling upon residents.
- ❑ The community’s cultural resources are beginning to lag behind its physical growth, leaving some of its citizens with an empty feeling about the Township.
- ❑ Societal changes in the new “Information Age” take place so rapidly that the community’s young people often lack places and activities that are relevant to their needs today.
- ❑ The way the community has grown in the past need not be the blueprint for its future.

FYI

To receive input from residents, property owners, and other stakeholders in the Township, the Planning Commission hosted three major public involvement events including a general Vision Fair and two focus group meetings. On May 29, 2002, the Community Vision Fair was held to inform the public of the planning process and to gain input regarding the Township’s natural features; community facilities and recreation; traffic and circulation; residential development; community character and identity; and commercial, office, and industrial development. Nearly 100 people attended and participated during the Fair’s afternoon and evening sessions. A visioning session was conducted on July 17th to identify challenges and opportunities for future development in the Northeast corner focus area. Over 100 residents and property owners participated. On July 31st, a visioning workshop was held with over 60 residents, property owners, and business owners of the Southwest quadrant focus area. The workshop resulted in the identification of important issues and potential solutions for future development and redevelopment in the Southwest focus area.

OPPORTUNITIES

The most difficult task of any planning program is identifying ways to capitalize on opportunities that reverse negative development patterns. The secret always seems to be related to identifying the positive aspects of the trends associated with

local and regional change. Change must be viewed as a natural, evolutionary process. The fact that circumstances in the community change does not automatically mean that all change is bad. There are a number of opportunities available to Shelby Township and its neighbors that result from ongoing change locally and regionally. Some of the opportunities that will be presented to the Planning Commission in the future are likely to include:

- ❑ New development must be encouraged to use state-of-the-art techniques for integrating natural features, wildlife corridors, and resource preservation into essential community design.
- ❑ The Township must pursue an aggressive policy of finding its own center, then concentrate governmental services, cultural resources, community events, housing, retail goods and entertainment opportunities so they can be enjoyed by its residents.
- ❑ Certain older areas of the Township require special emphasis to retrofit new planning and development techniques intended to improve the quality of life for residents who have made significant financial and emotional commitments to these mature neighborhoods.
- ❑ Affordable housing opportunity in Shelby Township must reach beyond a two-bedroom rental apartment or a leased site in a mobile home park. Existing neighborhoods are expected to be receptive to new ownership housing options that address affordability issues for families, young adults, and older persons at or near retirement.
- ❑ Special attention must be paid to the Van Dyke corridor if its future is to be one of opportunity and continued support to the Township's retail and service needs. The corridor's older retail centers are fertile ground for the latest trends in reuse and redevelopment of suburban "strip" or linear centers.
- ❑ Evaluation of the business mix in older retail areas of the Township can help to identify changes in land use and zoning that would encourage reinvestment in existing retail centers.
- ❑ Rising residential property tax rates are one of the components that is fueling the outward expansion of the metropolitan Detroit area. By providing an appropriate balance of residential, commercial, office, high tech, and industrial land use, the Township can maintain desirable levels of service without an ever escalating menu of special millages.
- ❑ The Township already hosts several significant non-residential development corridors. Sensitive site design and aggressive buffer and screening standards must be applied to prevent new non-residential development from negatively impacting neighborhoods while it is positively influencing the tax base.

- ❑ The Township's development history and architectural and cultural reminders of its past must be preserved for their value in establishing the character of the Township. As cultural and tourist attractions, these historical resources can be planned to give back to the community as a return on preservation.



- ❑ Proper timing of new development should become the principal tool for preventing infrastructure improvements from lagging behind growth. Proper timing is the Township's best insurance that development pays their fair share for infrastructure extensions and improvements.
- ❑ The community has an unsatisfied appetite for cultural facilities and events. Development of cultural resources should become a catalyst for drawing the community together as an identifiable whole.
- ❑ Today's young people need to feel they have an ownership interest in the Township's public places and daily public activities. Retail developers have responded with special "teen zones" to capture young people's spending potential. The Township needs to respond in a similar way to capture their civic potential.
- ❑ Growth and change require a new set of plans for the future of the Township. Not all of the old ways of doing things can adequately serve the community's needs in the 21st Century. The Township must be open to and searching for a more relevant plan for the future as the best way to avoid the missteps of the past.

CONCLUSION

Growth and development in Shelby Township is inevitable over the next 10 to 20 years. The Township can choose to stand back and watch it occur, effectively letting the market decide what the community will look like 20 years from now. The alternative to this laissez faire approach involves the Township establishing a positive development policy to lead the way to the year 2020. By planning for its growth and regulating the development that occurs, the Township can protect and preserve the characteristics of the community that its citizens value most. At the same time, it will discourage destructive, market-driven development patterns that are out of touch with the community's needs. These can only result in loss of that special community character that was responsible for attracting past and current residents to Shelby Township in the first place. This Planning Process is intended to introduce a small dose of common sense and a healthy dose of self-determinism into the process of the community's growth and change.

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