



# I INTRODUCTION

**W**hite Lake Township's Master Plan represents an opportunity to set the course for new development and redevelopment of the community through the establishment of goals, objectives, strategies, and plans. The Master Plan is comprehensive, providing for future land use, housing, transportation, and other community features in a coordinated fashion. It portrays a clear statement of community goals and objectives, establishes a vision of the future, and includes plans to achieve the vision. In addition, the Plan promotes a land use pattern that is consistent with the community's goals.

The information and concepts presented in the Master Plan are used to guide local decisions regarding public and private uses of land and the provision of public facilities and services. The Plan is long-range in its view and is intended to guide development in the Township over a period of 10 to 20 years. If followed carefully, the Plan will have a lasting, positive impact on the built and natural environment.

## WHY DO WE PREPARE A MASTER PLAN?

The Township Planning Act of 1959 states that the planning commission shall "make and approve a basic plan as a guide for the development of unincorporated portions of the township."

In addition, the Township Zoning Act of 1943 requires that the zoning ordinance be “based upon a plan designed to”:

- ◆ Meet the needs of residents for food, fiber, energy and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land;
- ◆ Ensure that uses of land are situated in appropriate locations and relationships;
- ◆ Limit the overcrowding of land and congestion of population, transportation systems, and other public facilities;
- ◆ To reduce hazards to life and property;
- ◆ Facilitate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, water supply, education, recreation, and other public improvements;
- ◆ To conserve the expenditure of funds for public improvements and services, and;
- ◆ Promote public health, safety and general welfare.

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE

Zoning is a regulatory mechanism for classifying and controlling the use of land. It has the force of law. The Zoning Ordinance controls land uses based on today’s conditions.

The Master Plan is not an ordinance, does not change the zoning of anyone’s property, and does not have the force of law. It is a set of policies, strategies and plans to enhance and improve the community over a long planning horizon. While the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map regulate current and proposed land use, the Master Plan and its maps and policy statements are intended to guide land use decision-making for between 10 and 20 years. The Master Plan is the community’s “vision”, while the Zoning Ordinance governs the path to that vision.

State law requires that a zoning ordinance be based on a plan. Therefore, the Master Plan forms the basis upon which zoning decisions are made. With a valid Master Plan in place, zoning decisions consistent with the Plan and Ordinance are presumed by the courts to be valid. In order to retain this “presumption of validity”, the Planning Commission shall review the plan at least once every five years after its adoption.

#### THE PLANNING PROCESS

The White Lake Master Plan process began in July 2004 with an inventory and analysis of existing conditions. The Planning Commission reviewed the Township’s regional setting, population and housing characteristics, economic data, existing community facilities, and natural resources and features. A survey of existing land use was also conducted. Problems, opportunities, and community assets were then identified. The complete findings of the existing conditions analysis are provided in the Appendix of this document.

Upon completion of the existing conditions analysis, the Planning Commission reached out to the public for input via an Internet Vision Program & Survey and a Future Vision, Issues & Solutions Workshop. Representatives from a variety of interests within the community came together in October 2004 to discuss planning issues in the Township. Through an internet web page, the Planning Commission has kept the community current regarding the progress of the Master Plan Program.

Taking account of existing conditions, public opinion from the Vision Program, and the experience of Township officials, goals and objectives were formulated to guide the “Plan” elements of the Master Plan.

Based on the goals and objectives, the Planning Commission developed proposals for future land use; pathways; community facilities; access management; thoroughfares and non-residential and mixed use design guidelines. The Master Plan also includes recommendations regarding economic development and natural features protection. The Land Use Plan Map shows recommended future land use, while a variety of other maps are found in other Plan chapters to help illustrate the concepts that are discussed. Recommendations for implementation are included in the final Plan chapter.

The final task in the planning process was to obtain additional public opinion through a public hearing, which is required by the Township Planning Act, prior to the adoption of the plan.

By working closely with residents, business owners, Township officials, planning experts, surrounding communities, and other stakeholders, White Lake Township has developed a plan that balances the competing interests that affect land use decisions. These include, for example, jobs and tax base on one side and protection of quality of life and natural resources on the other. Through careful implementation of the Master Plan, the Township can build on its tax base and provide for high quality new growth, while preserving important existing natural assets and protecting the overall health, safety and welfare of its citizens.

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