

# Questions And Answers About The Master Plan Process

Prepared By:  
**Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.**  
Community Planning Consultants

## What Is The Difference Between A Zoning Ordinance And A Master Plan?

Zoning is a regulatory mechanism for controlling the classification and regulation of land use. The focus of the zoning ordinance is on identifying permitted and special approval uses by district, defining the location and boundary of districts based upon a Master Plan, and regulating the bulk, height, and density of various permitted land uses. The zoning ordinance controls land uses based on today's conditions.

The Master Plan is comprehensive in nature. It is a blueprint for the future, and it is the plan for a wide range of development issues including land use, community facilities, community services, utilities, transportation, recreation, etc. It also provides the technical data and analyses necessary to support land use decisions that are eventually reflected in the zoning ordinance. The adoption of a new Master Plan does not change the zoning of any property in the municipality.

## What Is The Purpose Of The Master Plan?

1. Promote public health, safety and welfare.
2. Encourage use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.
3. Avoid overcrowding of land by buildings or people.
4. Lessen congestion on public roads and streets.
5. Facilitate provision of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements.
6. Consider the character of each township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trend in land and population development.

Source: Township Planning Act of 1959

## Why Should The Township Prepare And Adopt A Master Plan?

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

Furthermore, the Township Zoning Act of 1943 states that "the zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and welfare; to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, and to limit the improper use of land;"...etc.

## How Can A New Master Plan Benefit The Township?

- 1) It can improve the Township's legal basis for zoning decisions. With a Master Plan in place, zoning decisions consistent with the plan are presumed by the courts to be valid - it is up to the challenger to prove the Township's action is not valid. Without a Master Plan, presumptive validity may be lacking, leaving the Township more vulnerable to a negative ruling.
- 2) It provides a unique opportunity for the Township to plan for future development with the involvement of interested residents, business persons, and Township officials.
- 3) It makes a clear statement of the Township's needs, problems, and opportunities. Research into existing land uses, natural features, population, community facilities, and thoroughfares provides the documentation upon which to base land use decisions.