

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN.

Every community has a responsibility to look beyond day-to-day issues and focus on the long-range consequences of their land use and zoning decisions. Similarly, the community must have a document that provides guidance for land use and development by considering a wide range of possible futures. For the City of Charlevoix, this long-range view is provided through the Master Plan. The Master Plan serves as the document that guides development and land use in a community. The Plan covers community issues and concerns of all kinds, and provides guidance for future housing needs, economic development, transportation needs, infrastructure improvements and changes, and changes in zoning. The Master Plan performs several important functions:

1. The Master Plan is a general statement of the community's vision, goals, and policies. It provides a single, comprehensive view of the community's desires for the future.
2. The Plan aids in daily land use decision-making. The vision and goals outlined in the Plan are intended to guide the Planning Commission and the City Council in their deliberations on zoning, subdivisions, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development. Accordingly, the Plan provides a stable, long-term basis for decision making which will provide a balance of land uses and an orderly development process.
3. The Plan provides the statutory basis upon which zoning decisions are based. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Act 110 of 2006) requires that the zoning ordinance be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. It is important to note that the Master Plan and accompanying maps do not replace other City Ordinances, specifically the Zoning Ordinance and map. Zoning is only one of the legal devices used to implement the Master Plan.
4. The Plan attempts to coordinate public improvements and private developments. For example, public investments such as road or utility improvements should be located in areas identified in the Plan as resulting in the greatest benefit to the City and its residents. The Master Plan is also a component

used in making decisions about public services. To be fiscally responsible and give the City a measure of control over future growth, new infrastructure should correspond with the Master Plan.

5. The Plan serves as an educational tool and gives citizens, property owners, developers, and adjacent communities a clear indication of the City's future direction.

It is very important for the public to understand that the Master Plan itself is not a regulation, but rather a formal plan that guides future land use regulations, capital improvement plans, operations, and other City policies. Any future zoning, land use regulations, or any other City ordinances will have to follow a separate legislative process that will include the opportunity for the public to weigh in before passage by City Council.

The City is also in the process of creating a separate Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which will outline future goals and direction for City parks, trails, Mt. McSauba, the marina, public beaches, and the City Golf Course. The Airport Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is currently working on an Airport Master Plan that will outline future goals and operations of the City Airport. Since these plans will govern parks, recreation, and airport operations they are not covered in this master plan.

The authority to develop and adopt a community's Master Plan is given to the Planning Commission and City Council by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (M.C., 125.3801).

Ultimately, the Master Plan is unlike any other document. It is not an assortment of recommendations by planning experts, politicians, or special interest groups with personal agendas far-removed from the actual interests of the Charlevoix community. Instead, the Plan has been formed and crafted by input from members of the community, from year-round and part-time residents, to renters, business owners, elected officials, and City officials. The Plan, in this way, represents the community's vision. This vision helps ensure that planning efforts are firmly lodged in the middle of a delicate push-and-pull between the community's social and economic needs. Communities that seek a healthy and sustainable future must account for each voice within the community. The community vision serves this purpose. (See Chapter 3 for Community Vision and Goals)

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The City Planning Commission discussing the draft Master Plan contents in 2009.

Fulfilling the vision outlined in the Plan will not occur overnight. The Master Plan provides a sense of direction for the present and is a guide for the future. Understanding this, the Plan should not be rigidly administered; changing conditions that can affect its original intentions should be acknowledged and addressed.

However, a plan that is not referenced on a continual basis, or one that is outdated, can weaken decisions. Over time, goals may be achieved and new ones needed, or individual zoning decisions may change the direction of development in a certain part of the community. Where decisions lead to land use approvals that are contrary to the Plan, those sections should be amended to reflect these changes.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission make an annual report to the City Council concerning its operations and the status of planning activities. As part of preparing this report, the Planning Commission should hold an annual meeting to review the Plan and identify changes that should be considered and amendments that must be made to keep it current and consistent with City of Charlevoix philosophies. The Planning Commission should periodically solicit public opinion about the Master Plan using surveys, public meetings, or other means. By routinely following these procedures, the Master Plan will continue to be an up-to-date and reliable planning tool.

The Planning Act also requires municipalities to review their current Master Plan at least every five years to determine if amendments are needed, or if the process

for a new Plan should be started. An annual Planning Commission review, documented through meeting minutes, will not only fulfill this requirement, but will also ensure that the Plan remains a relevant and useful document.

1.2 HOW THIS PLAN WAS CREATED.

The first steps in creating the Master Plan began in 2006 when the City Planning Office published a community survey in the newspaper and worked with the Planning Commission to generate the 2006 Plan Revision document. (See Appendix D) Over the next couple of years, due to budgetary constraints, other projects, and changeover in the City's administrative staff, minimal progress was made.

Then in early 2008, a new Planning Director was hired and charged to work with the Planning Commission to create a draft Master Plan. During 2008 and 2009 multiple meetings and training sessions were held with the Planning Commission concerning topics and community issues later addressed in this Plan.

Since several years had passed and Michigan's economy was changing, a fresh look at community preferences and opinions was warranted. It was determined that a more detailed and current survey would help gauge community opinions about City services and programs, as well as infrastructure, growth, and development. It would also help provide a basic foundation for the new Master Plan.

Consequently, in winter 2009, the Planning Department created and distributed a new Community Survey. It was made available to residents, property and business owners, renters, as well as churches, clubs, and other community organizations. Nearly 700 copies were mailed, and more than 100 others were hand-delivered. Roughly 300 surveys were returned and tabulated during the summer of 2009. (Survey results can be found in Appendix A)

Given the importance of what a younger generation resident thinks about the City's future, Staff also engaged four Charlevoix High School government classes in the planning process and conducted a smaller scale survey that was completed by about 88 students. (Survey results can be found in Appendix B)

Based on the survey results, the content of the 2006

Plan Revision document, and input from the Planning Commission, Staff began drafting the Master Plan over a six month period. Due to limited Staff and other priorities, the City contracted with LSL Planning in February 2010 to assist in drafting certain sections and provide technical assistance.

Due to the influx of seasonal property owners and visitors it was important to carefully time the release of the draft Plan for early summer so public review and input could be maximized. Therefore, the draft plan was presented to the public and introduced by the Planning Commission on June 14, 2010.

1.3 HOW DOES THE MASTER PLAN AFFECT YOU?

How the Master Plan affects you depends on your particular situation:

- If you are a *property owner*, you may have several interests, including not only your property, but also properties that are similarly designated.
- As a *homeowner*, you may be interested in the properties in your immediate neighborhood and you may wish to know what uses are proposed for vacant land.
- As an *owner of vacant property* you may want to know what land uses are proposed for your property.
- As a *resident* you may be interested in the overall planning concepts, as expressed by its goals. These statements should give you an indication of the



Downtown Charlevoix Circa 1922.

community's vision of the City now, and in the future.

The Plan serves many functions and can be used in a variety of ways, but its usefulness is determined by the willingness of City residents to actively support and implement its vision and goals. A plan that is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems in the future. Failure to follow the Plan may discredit attempts to use it as a defense for legal actions that may result from challenges by property owners or developers.

Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the Plan will lend credibility to implement controversial land use decisions and rezonings. While the courts of the State of Michigan do not recognize the absolute authority of the Master Plan, they do lend much more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those that appear to be taken arbitrarily against an individual property owner.

1.4 HOW SHOULD YOU USE THIS PLAN?

Again, use of the Plan depends on your interest in the future of Charlevoix. Generally, here is a procedure you should follow:

Step #1 What land use is proposed for your property, or the area surrounding your property?

This information is on the Future Land Use map in Chapter 4. This map is divided into separate land use categories. Find the land use category in which your property is located.



Downtown Charlevoix Present Day.

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Step #2 Determine how the City views development in your area.

The Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 4) and map indicates the type of development planned for your area; it may be fairly specific, or somewhat general. This part of the Plan provides some reasonable direction to the Planning Commission, as well as information to property owners about development within the City.

Step #3 Determine the meaning of the land use designation for your property.

In Step #1 you were asked to determine the land use category for your property. Find the category that applies to your property and read the land use designation. Depending on the nature of your interest, this may be as far as you want to go. If you have a specific proposal that does not match the expectations of the Plan, you may want to look at it in more detail.

Step #4 Determine how your property is affected.

The Future Land Use designation indicates the planned use for your property. This does not mean that you cannot continue the use that you currently have. Land use within the City of Charlevoix is also affected by zoning, so see the Zoning Ordinance or call the City Planning Office for more information.

The Master Plan may have a profound impact on the future of your property, regardless of whether you are a developer, landowner, or homeowner. As a resident and property owner in the City of Charlevoix, it is important that you become familiar with the Plan and what it may mean to you and your community.



Aerial photo from the 1960s. What will Charlevoix look like in the future?

HISTORY OF PLANNING AND ZONING EFFORTS

- 1954 City passes Resolution 203 establishing the first Zoning Ordinance.
- 1970 Charlevoix Regional Comprehensive Plan is published covering the City and Charlevoix Township. Plan includes Implementation measures such as government consolidation, subdivision regulations, zoning and capital improvement programs.
- 1978 City passes Resolution 369 repealing the original Zoning Ordinance and establishes a new Zoning Ordinance. Specific provisions of this Ordinance have been amended many times over the years.
- 1982 First Waterfront Area Management and City Master Plan is passed.
- 1990 City Planner provides portions of an updated draft Master Plan to the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee.
- 2002 A second effort was made to update the City's Master Plan. A mockup master plan was created, along with a future land use plan. The plan was not officially updated.
- 2004 City takes part in a Regional Multi-Jurisdiction Smart Growth Planning Initiative with Charlevoix, Norwood, Marion, Eveline, and Hayes Townships. This regional planning process addressed issues relating to transportation, housing, economic development, environmental protection, and the delivery of public services.
- 2005-06 City Planner works with the Planning Commission to publish a community survey, holds a community meeting to gather public input, and drafts the 2006 Plan Revision- Goals, Objectives and Policies.
- 2008 Planning Commission has multiple meetings and training sessions on master plan topics to help define goals, objectives, and policies.
- 2009 In February, the Planning Office distributes a new 85 question community survey to roughly 800 property owners, residents, business owners, and civic groups.
- 2009 In April the City Planner does master plan presentation for four high school government classes, distributes surveys, and answers questions from students.
- 2009 In the summer, surveys are tabulated and organized into a report format and made available to the public.
- 2009 Planning Staff organizes and reviews all prior documentation from previous master planning efforts. Staff begins drafting a Master Plan based on all public input, previous planning efforts, and direction from the Planning Commission.
- 2010 February: Staff sought approval to contract with LSL Planning to expedite the process of creating a draft and to provide technical assistance on the Master Plan.
- 2010 May-June: City Planner and LSL Planning finalize draft Master Plan.
- 2010 Draft Master Plan released to the public on June 14 with educational forum held at the Charlevoix Public Library.