

Montcalm County Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Master Plan? Land is our county's most basic natural resource. The use of land determines to a large extent the character and quality of life within the community. The County Master Plan is both a reference and policy document. It contains appropriate maps, charts, and supporting text, which present the recommendations of the County Planning Commission based on broad citizen input, and offers guidelines for community decision makers for future land use, infrastructure development and the protection of natural resources.

Why do we need a Master Plan? The rate, location, and type of growth, and protection of unique natural features affect not only our county's physical appearance but also its need for public services and facilities. A municipality that plans wisely for its land use will be far better equipped to anticipate and deal with future demands and problems. The Master Plan will help to promote and enhance the health, safety, and general welfare of the community, and will help to control the unintended consequences of unplanned growth. Good planning also provides a solid foundation for creating effective strategies to increase the number of jobs in the County.

How is the Master Plan being developed? Montcalm County commissioners established an ordinance creating a County Planning Commission in September of 2003. Eight members have been appointed and meetings began in January of 2004. This group decided that their priority was to develop and maintain a plan for the future development of Montcalm County. The County Planning Commission selected the Planning and Zoning Center, Inc. (PZC) of Lansing from among a group of planning consultants who submitted bids to assist the Commission with the writing of the plan, and the Board of Commissioners approved and funded a contract with PZC in September of 2004.

Who will participate in the development of the plan? The County Planning Commission feels that citizen and local unit of government input into the planning process is a key to the development of a relevant and useful plan. PZC has developed a planning process that includes a written survey of local leaders to develop issues and opportunities to be addressed by the plan. Visioning town meetings to obtain public input into what citizens want the county to be like in 20 years will be held in April. Issues of concern will be discussed at the County Township Association and with the County Board of Commissioners.

How can I be involved in the planning process? The public is encouraged to attend County Planning Commission meetings and other meetings that will be scheduled to solicit input for the plan. Minutes of County Planning Commission Meetings and Planning Documents as they are developed are posted on the www.montcalm.org website, and reports and announcements will be sent to news media. When a draft plan is developed, the County Planning Commission will seek input and discussion from local

units of government and the public to refine the proposed plan. The County Planning Commission desires to keep the planning process as open and accessible as possible.

Will the Master Plan restrict our economy? No. In fact, a Master Plan that is implemented can provide greater certainty in the market so that companies/employers experience less risk in making decisions about whether to locate or expand in a particular community. A community can also have a better sense about the types of economic activities it wants to support and pursue in the future.

Who will make land use decisions if we have a Master Plan? The decision process will be the same as it is now – local units of government in the County will continue to exercise authority through their own Planning and Zoning Commissions. The Master Plan will seek to be a resource to the local decision making process by providing common interjurisdictional information and encouraging that consideration be given to the recommendations of the County Master Plan. The relationship will be one of cooperation and not one of authority over the local decision making process. However, the County Planning Commission will encourage local units of government to coordinate planning decisions with neighboring municipalities as is now required by laws of the State of Michigan.

How will the role of townships, cities and villages be impacted by a Master Plan? Again the County Planning Commission will seek the voluntary consideration of the County Master Plan by local units of government, in the spirit that the community quality of life can be enhanced by everyone working together to implement the desires of the local citizenry that are spelled out in the plan. But the County Planning Commission does not have authority over the local decision power of local Planning and Zoning Commissions, and the County Planning Commission cannot and will not coerce units of local government that presently do not have Master Plans or Zoning Ordinances to develop them. However the County Planning Commission stands ready to support local units that on their own volition see a need to develop or modify local Master Plans or Zoning Ordinances.

Where can I get more information?

Please look at the website: <http://www.montcalm.org/government0265.asp>

To contact the County Planning Commission use this link: planning@co.montcalm.mi.us

To contact by phone call the Montcalm Controllers Office at (989) 831-7300.