MASTER PLANNING:
THE CRITICAL ROLE OF ELECTED LEADERS AND THE PLANNING COMMISSION

2018 Planning Michigan Conference

Today's Presenters:

Chris McLeod, AICP, Sterling Heights City Planner

Gerald (Jerry) Rowe, Sterling Heights Planning Commissioner

Mark Vanderpool, Sterling Heights City Manager

Adam Young, AICP, Wade Trim

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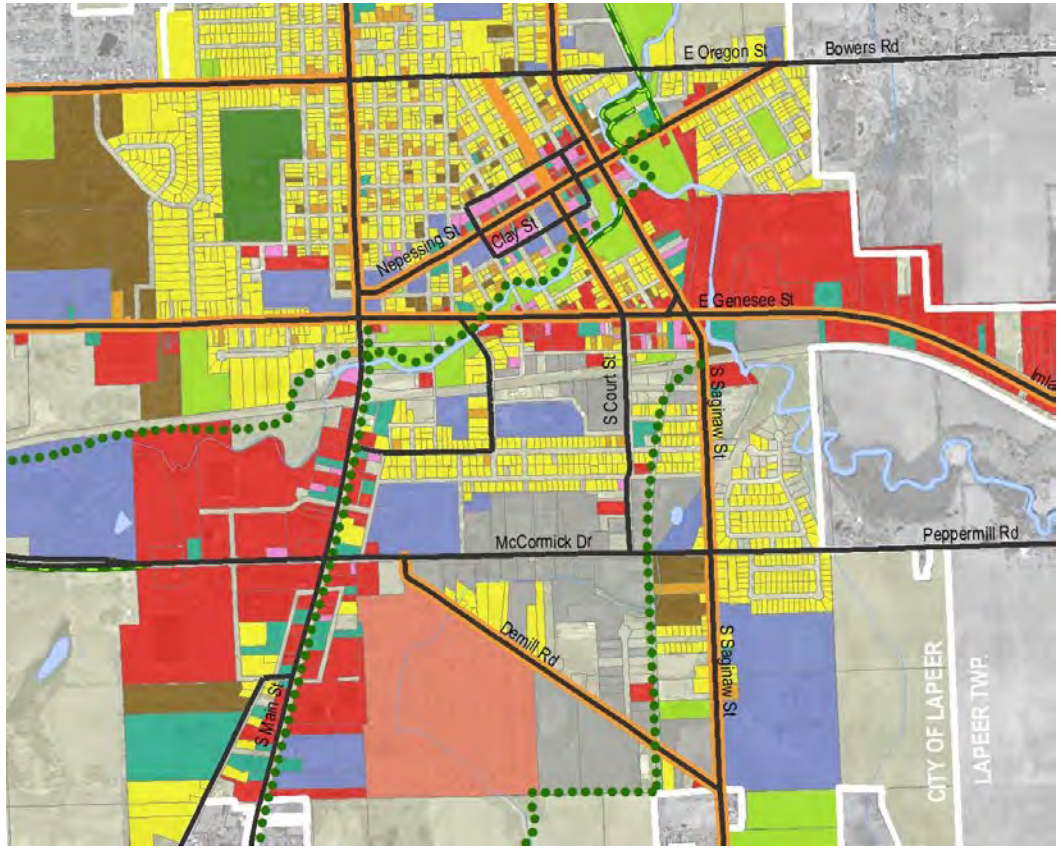
MASTER PLANNING 101

2018 Planning Michigan Conference

What is a Master Plan?

- A comprehensive, long-range plan which provides a framework for growth, development, and the community vision
- A master plan describes…
  - Where the community has been
  - Where the community wants to go
  - How the community plans to get there
- May also be known as…



Authority to Plan

- Authorized by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)
- May be adopted by cities, villages, townships, and counties
- The Act outlines the required content for a master plan and the process to prepare and adopt a plan

Statutory Requirements for Planning

- The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006) states that a “zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare”
- Zoning has to be based on a plan!
- Once adopted, the Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) requires a review of the master plan every 5 years

Difference Between the Plan and Zoning Ordinance

- The master plan is a statement of policy. The zoning ordinance is a law.
- The master plan refers to future land use. The zoning ordinance affects current land use.
- The master plan shows the intended land use at the end of the planning period. The zoning ordinance shows land as it is intended to be used today.
- The master plan is a policy document that states the general principles on which development will be based and identifies specific issues affecting development.

Why Plan?

- Set the community's vision for the future
  - The vision guides all decisions! Especially the "day-to-day" and seemingly minor decisions
- Protect and enhance community character, the environment, and quality of life
- Envision placemaking
- Establish a blueprint for development and redevelopment
- Promote collaboration within and between communities

The Value of a Master Plan

- With competing and limited resources, communities must plan in order to determine the wisest use of their resources to reach established goals
- Provides support/increases likelihood of funding
- A word of warning…
  - The value of the master plan is directly related to the community's willingness to follow it and its diligence in keeping the plan current by anticipating changing conditions
  - A plan that is ignored has no value

The Impact of a Master Plan

- Aesthetic
- Economic
- Political
- Social
- Physical

Master Plan Responsibilities: Elected Body

- Responsible for making policy decisions, adopting ordinances, and laws
- Can assert its right to adopt the master plan (Section 43 of the Planning Enabling Act)
- Appoint members of the Planning Commission
- Provide direction for community needs that should be addressed (work plan)
- Approve/allocate resources for planning

Master Plan Responsibilities: Planning Commission

- Advise governing body on needs that should be addressed in the master plan (work plan)
- Oversee and participate in the plan development process
  - May delegate responsibilities to subcommittees, steering committees, staff, consultants, etc.
- Conduct required public hearing
- Adopt the master plan
  - Unless the governing body has asserted its right to adopt

Master Plan Responsibilities: Planning Commission (cont.)

- Oversee and participate in plan implementation activities
  - May delegate responsibilities to subcommittees, steering committees, staff, consultants, etc…
- Report progress on the master plan annually to the governing body
- Review the master plan at least every 5 years
- Participate in the capital improvements planning (CIP) process, ensuring consistency with the master plan

Plan Timeframe

- Per the Planning Enabling Act:
  - *A master plan shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project **20 years or more into the future**. A master plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the planning jurisdiction.*
- Although long-term oriented, specific short-term recommendations should be included in the plan

Required Plan Content

- Required content/subjects are outlined in the Planning Enabling Act
- Minimum elements include:
  - Existing conditions (existing land use, environment, transportation, services)
  - Socioeconomic analysis
  - Goals and objectives
  - Future land use plan
  - Zoning plan
  - Implementation recommendations

Plan Content – Going Beyond the Minimum

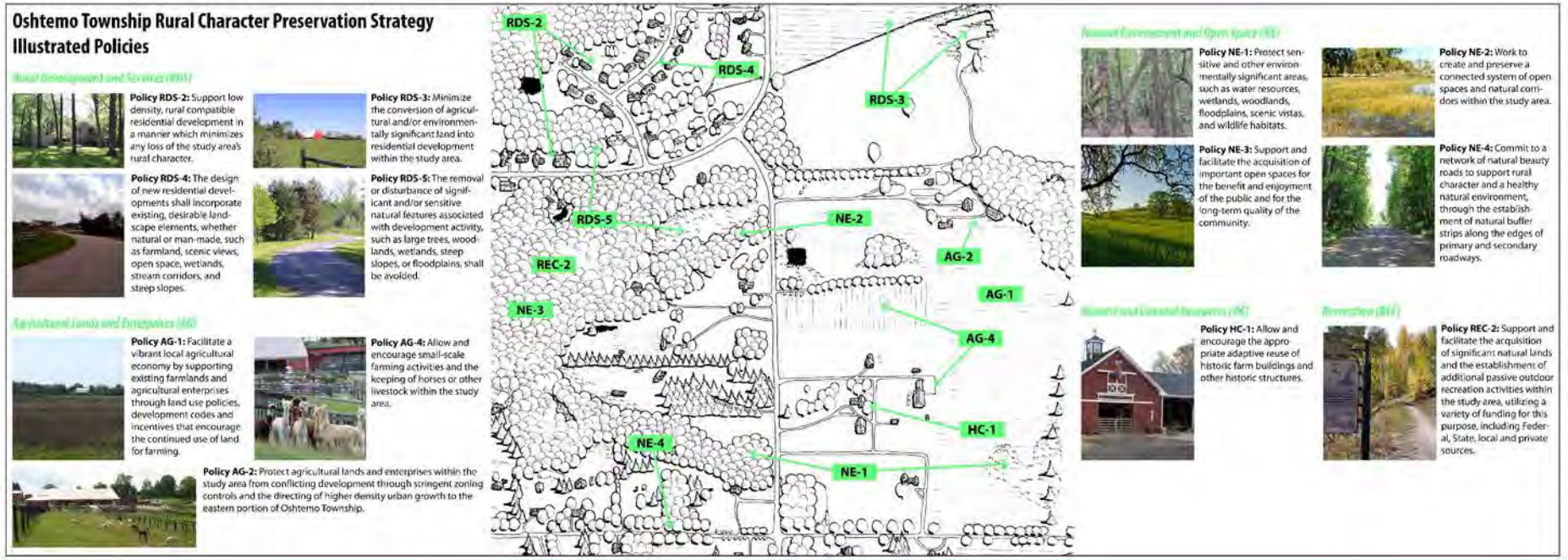
- A plan should tell you what a place, a community, is all about. It should focus on what elements of a community's character are important and should be retained
- Because every community faces unique issues and challenges, the content of a plan will vary depending on the community and its needs

Optional Plan Elements – Examples

- Sub-area plans (downtown, corridors, neighborhoods, historic districts)
- Design guidelines
- Housing studies
- Market studies
- Build-out/fiscal impact analysis

Optional Plan Elements – Examples

- Greenway/open space plans
- Recreation plans
- Farmland preservation plan/rural character plan



Optional Plan Elements – Examples

- Community health assessments
- Resiliency/vulnerability assessments

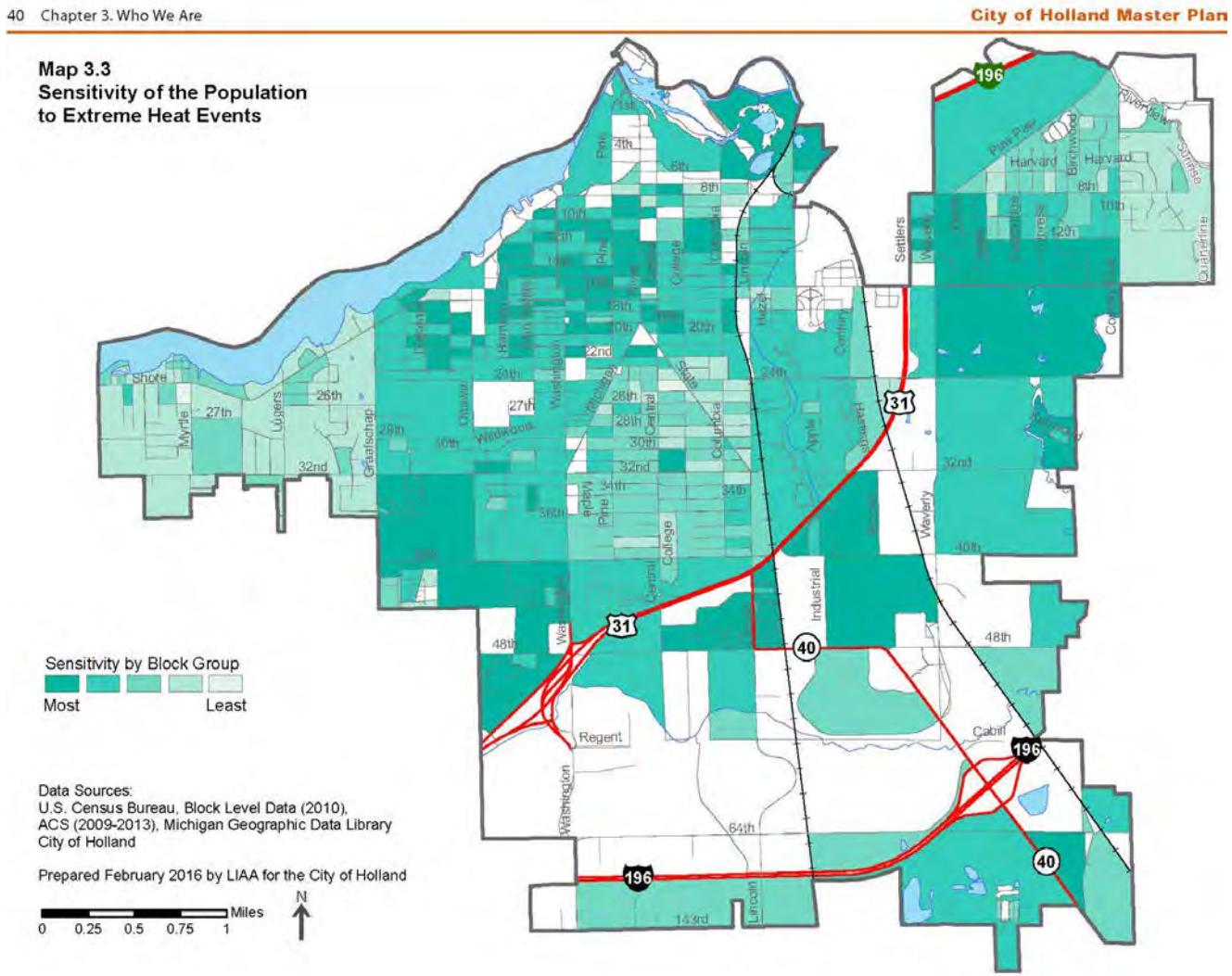
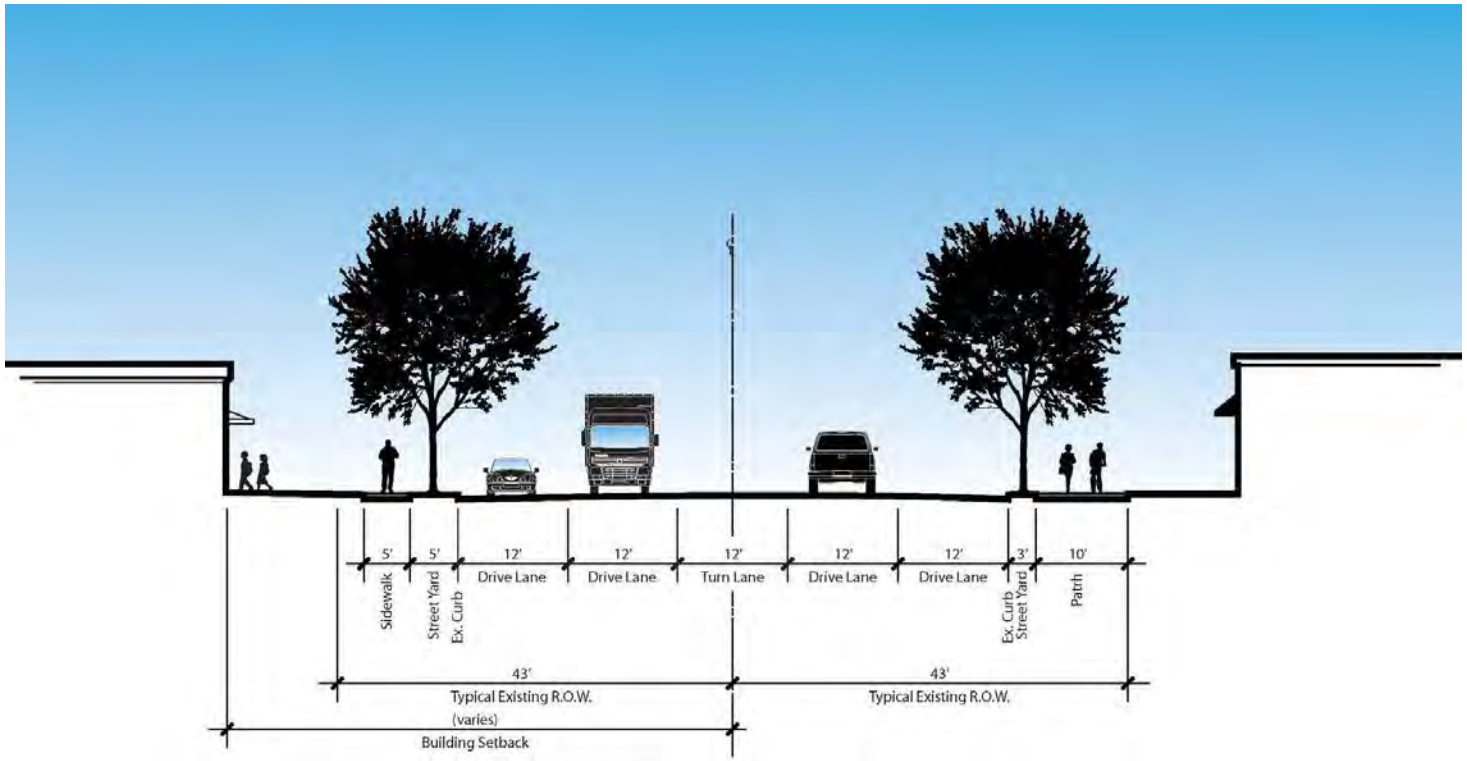


Image taken from City of Holland Master Plan

Optional Plan Elements – Examples

- Connectivity/non-motorized plans
- Transportation/mobility studies
- Parking studies
- Community facilities plans (public services, utilities, etc.)



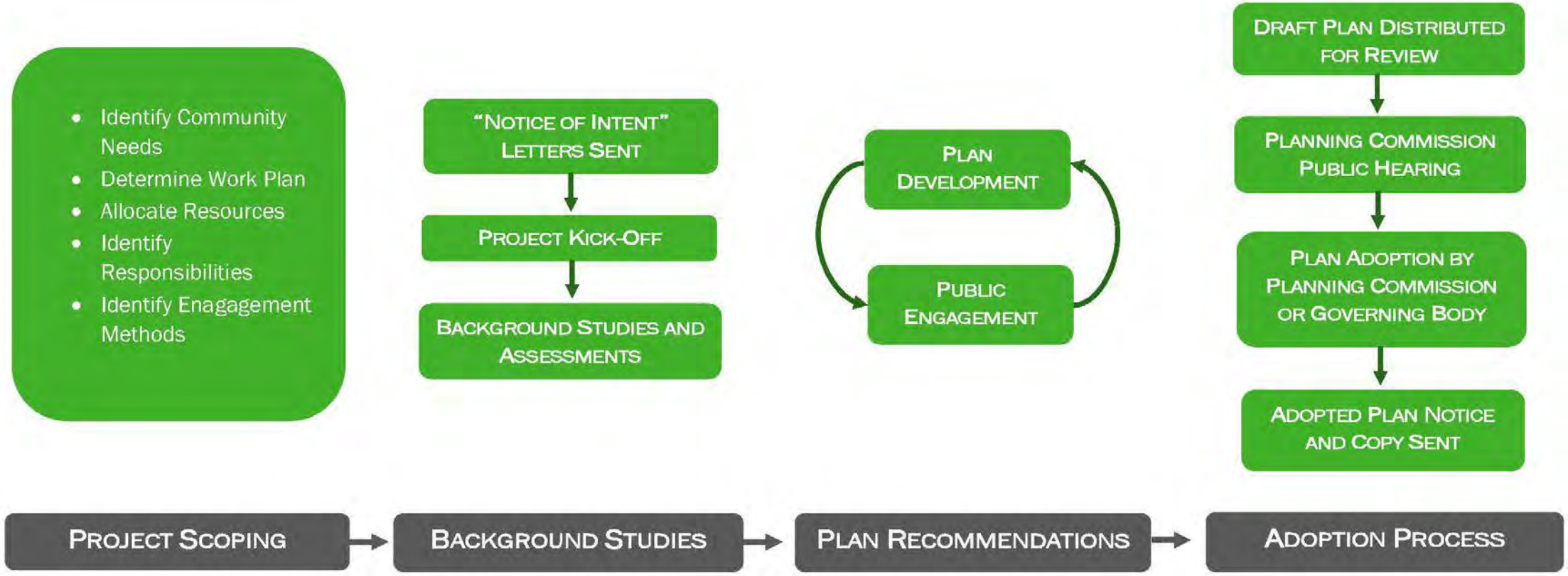
Principles for Effective Planning

- Plan comprehensively… all community elements
- Plan broadly… a general plan for public and private decisions
- Plan practically… reality based
- Plan with public support
- Plan with adequate funds

Principles for Effective Planning (cont.)

- Plan with community goals… not on ideals of any specific individual or group
- Plan a continual process
- Plan with implementation in mind
- Plan with government policies in mind

Typical Master Plan Development Process



Master Plan Development Process

- Questions to ask at the beginning of the process:
  - What needs to be accomplished?
  - What elements should be included (work plan)?
  - Who should be involved in the process?
  - What public involvement methods will be used?
  - How much time and money can be committed?
- The Planning Enabling Act requires a “notice of intent to plan” to be sent to adjacent communities, county/regional planning commission, and utilities/transportation entities operating in the community

Public Engagement Methods

- Use of media (including social media)
- Public visioning (“brainstorming sessions”)
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Personal interviews
- Public workshops/town meetings
- Project website/web tools
- Design charrettes
- Presentation to civic groups
- Public hearing

Master Plan Adoption Process

- After a draft plan has been prepared, the Planning Commission must send it to the governing body for review and comment
  - Adoption process cannot proceed until the governing body has approved the distribution of the draft plan
- Draft plan is sent to the same entities that were provided the original notice of intent letters
  - These entities have 63 days to review and provide comments

Master Plan Adoption Process (cont.)

- After the required review period is complete, the Planning Commission notices and holds a public hearing
- After the public hearing, the Planning Commission may adopt the master plan
- If the governing body has asserted its right to adopt the plan, the Planning Commission will provide a recommendation to the governing body.
- After adoption, a notice/copy of the adopted plan is sent to the same entities that were provided the original notice of intent letters

CASE STUDY:
CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS VISIONING, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

2018 Planning Michigan Conference

City of Sterling Heights

- Located in Macomb County in Southeast Michigan
- Michigan's 4th largest City (pop. 132,631)

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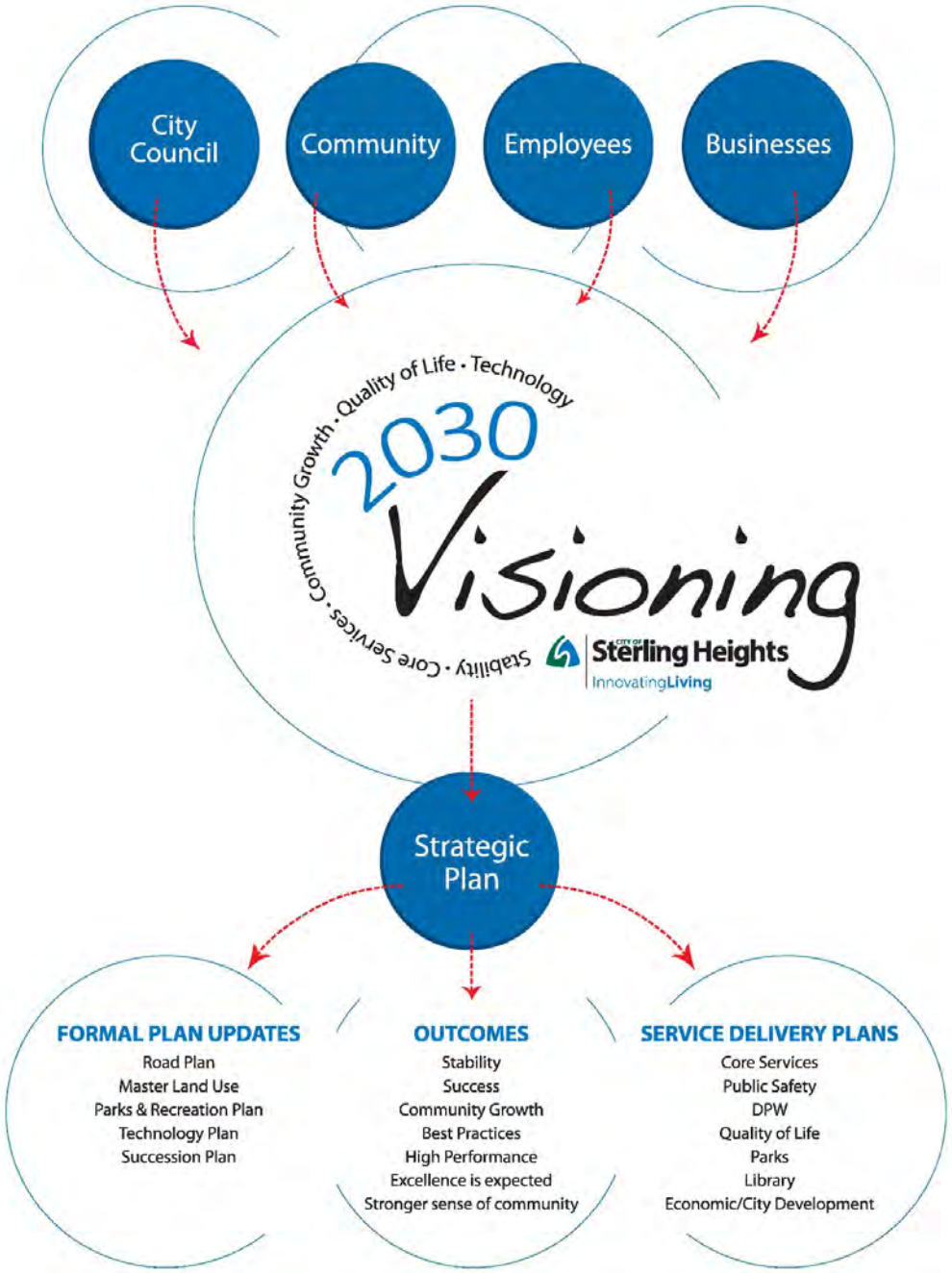
2030 Visioning

- Strategic planning effort involving citizens, business leaders, City officials, and employees
- Established a vision statement and guiding principles for the City



Vision Statement

A vibrant, inclusive community for residents and businesses that is safe, active, progressive, and distinctive. Sterling Heights – a bold vision for an exceptional quality of life.

Guiding Principles

- Safe, well-maintained, and desirable neighborhoods enhanced by great schools
- Plentiful leisure and recreation opportunities featuring fully utilized parks
- Abundant pathways for biking and walking
- Focal points that are both public and private to serve as destinations for residents and visitors
- Well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing roads and green spaces
- Successful, vibrant, and attractive commercial centers with unique offerings
- Destination for high-tech and emerging industries and entrepreneurs

2030 Visioning (cont.)

- Key implementation recommendations for the Visioning 2030 Plan included several long-range plan updates, including:
  - Road plan
  - Technology plan
  - Master land use plan
  - Parks and recreation plan
  - Non-motorized plan

Master Planning for Sterling Heights

Approach to the Master Plan

- The vision statement and guiding principles of the Visioning 2030 Plan served as the foundation for the City's master planning effort
- City master planning effort included a Master Land Use Plan and a separate Parks, Recreation & Non-Motorized Plan
  - Summary report was prepared as a concise statement of the City's plan and recommendations
  - Technical report documents were also prepared

Approach to the Master Plan

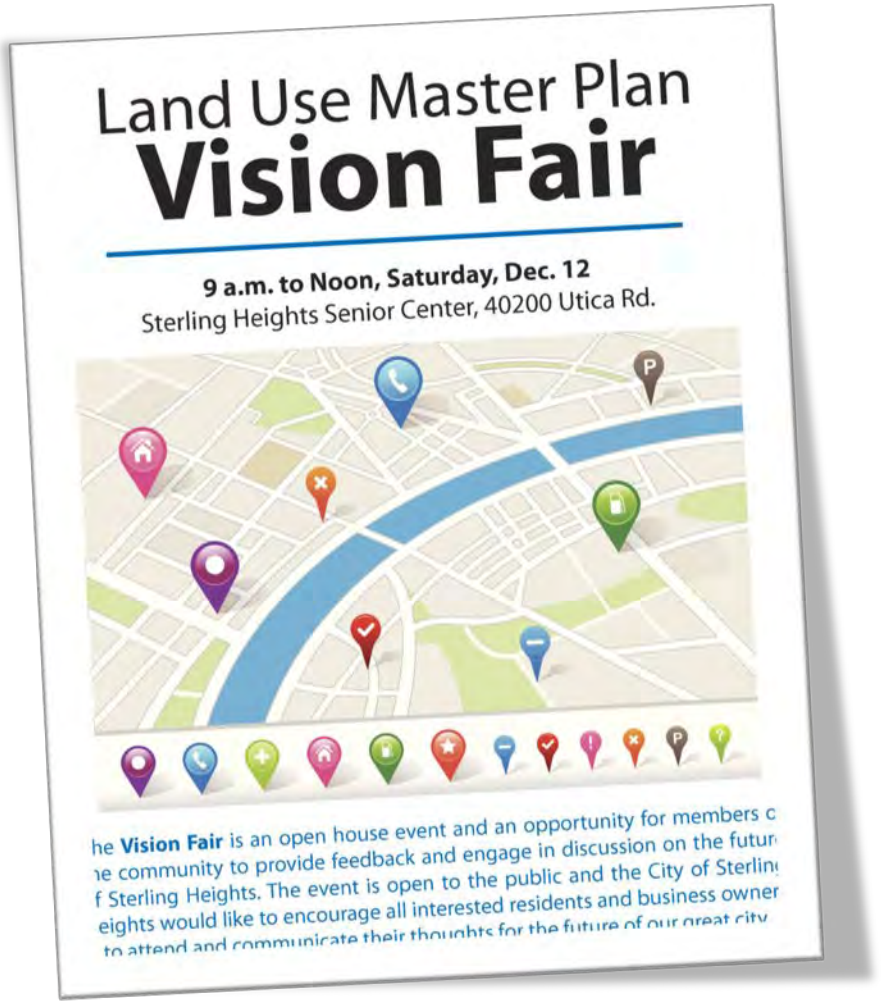
- Vision 2030 guiding principles significantly impacted the key components of the plan
  - Desirable neighborhoods – Housing profile/housing quality assessment
  - Recreation opportunities – Parks & recreation plan
  - Abundant pathways – Non-motorized plan
  - Focal destinations – Placemaking assessment
  - Roads and green spaces – Natural systems/infrastructure assessments
  - Vibrant commercial centers – Placemaking assessment
  - Destination for emerging industries – Market conditions analysis

Collaboration Between Council, Planning Commission and Staff

- Vision, resources, and funds established/allocated by the City Council
- Plan development process led by the Planning Commission with assistance from the Planning Department
- Early stages of the project began with City officials/staff completing a master plan evaluation checklist
- Council & Planning Commission members commitment to attending public engagement activities
- Council & Planning Commission members taking on work assignments

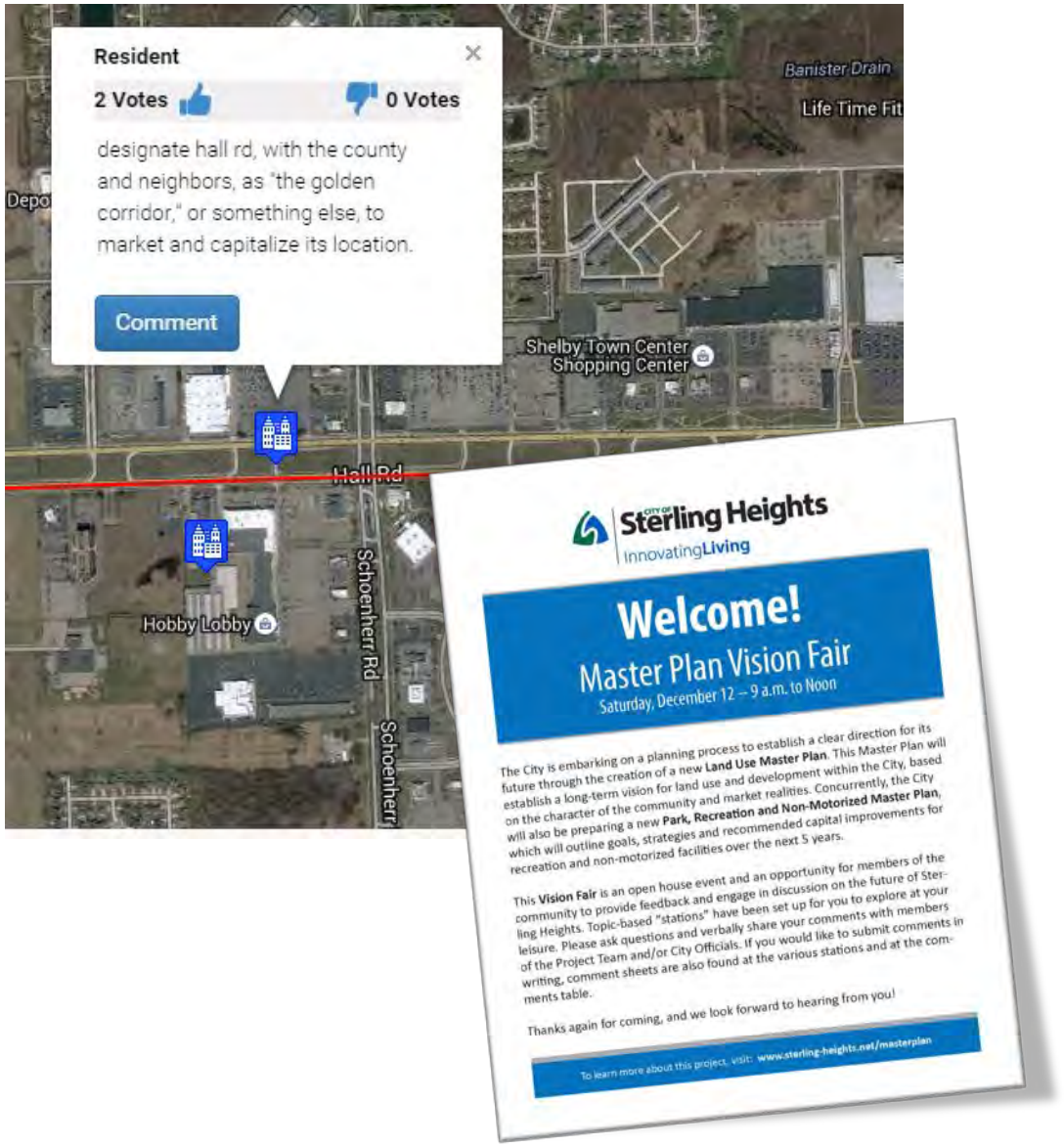
Collaboration Between Council, Planning Commission and Staff (cont.)

- Reporting between bodies (PC/Council liaisons)
- Draft reports submitted by PC to Council
- Plan development and implementation greatly benefited from the activities of the City's Community Relations Department
  - Press releases, advertisements, brochures, videos, and social media posts



Public Engagement Methods

- Community comment map
- Community surveys
  - Parks & recreation questionnaire
- Vision fair
  - Culmination of background studies analysis
  - Beginning of plan development process
- Community workshops
  - Held at key points in the plan development process



Public Engagement Methods (cont.)

- Sub-area planning meetings (Lakeside Mall)
- Formal master plan “status” presentations to Planning Commission and Council during public meetings
- Public hearing

Master Plan Content – Required Elements

- Regional context
- Existing land use analysis
- Natural systems assessment
- Infrastructure assessment
- Socioeconomic trends/projections
- Goals and objectives
- Future land use proposals
- Zoning plan

Content Customized for Sterling Heights

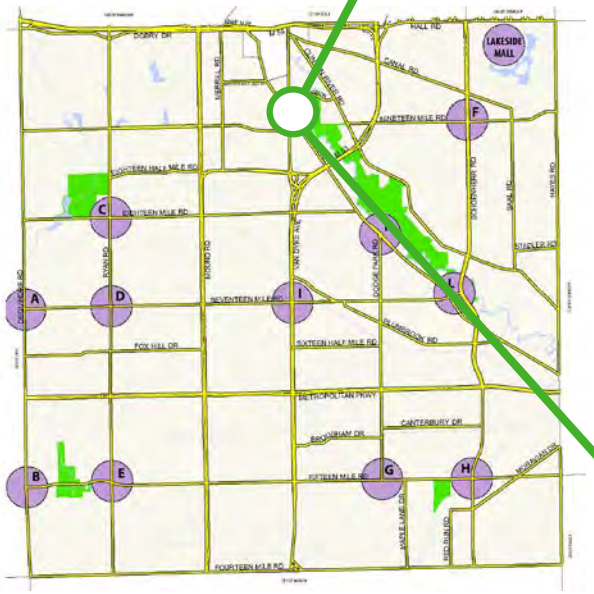
- Non-conforming use analysis
  - Identify locations for existing land use does not conform with existing zoning
  - Goal to ensure compatible land use throughout the City
- Community tapestry profile
  - A more detailed profile of the population revealing unique preferences and needs
  - Can be used to develop policies targeting specific populations
- Housing profile
  - Structural quality survey of the City's neighborhoods
  - Housing gap analysis

Content Customized for Sterling Heights (cont.)

- Market conditions analysis
  - Used to reveal strategic opportunities related to retail, office and industrial development and redevelopment

Content Customized for Sterling Heights (cont.)

- Placemaking assessment
  - Rethinking suburban development from a placemaking perspective
  - Identified 13 nodes with the potential for placemaking enhancements
  - Specific concept plans prepared for nodes



Content Customized for Sterling Heights

- Non-motorized plan
  - City's first non-motorized planning effort
  - Established a hierarchy of planned non-motorized connections throughout City
- Parks and recreation plan
  - Outlined an ambitious plan for recreation facility development in line with the City's vision

Example Pedestrian Oriented Treatment:
PROTECTED BIKE LANES AND MID-BLOCK CROSSINGS

Designated Ped/Bike Oriented Streets
Several road corridors within the City have been highlighted as corridors that should be Ped/Bike Oriented. These are corridors where the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists should be accentuated and where a lower level of service for vehicles may be acceptable in order to provide better mode balance. Treatment details will be unique to each corridor and determined during design, but could include elements such as narrower vehicular lane widths, mid-block crossings, refuge islands, wide paved shoulders, on-street protected bike lanes, wide sidewalks, tree plantings, medians, bioswales, lighting, respite areas, etc.

Priority Amenities
There are a number of amenities proposed to enhance the comfort and safety of non-motorized users and encourage greater use of a connected network. These elements include:
- A comprehensive wayfinding signage system
- Bike "fix it" stations at key locations
- Bike rental at/near Dodge Park
- Secure and convenient bike parking at public parks, public buildings, schools, retail destinations, places of employment and major transit stops

Blue Infrastructure (Water-Related) Improvements
The Plan seeks to expand upon the County-wide blue infrastructure initiative as well as the successful efforts of the Clinton River Watershed Council to promote and improve the Clinton River Water Trail. Numerous water-related improvements have been proposed, including:
- A new canoe and kayak livery and landing, to include the purchase of a passenger bus, canoes, kayaks and related equipment
- New canoe/kayak landings along the Clinton River

PARKS, RECREATION & NON-MOTORIZED PLAN 45

Content Customized for Sterling Heights (cont.)

- Lakeside Mall sustainability assessment
  - Driven by the City's desire to ensure the continued success of this regional shopping center and major City landmark
  - Outlines a long-term vision to transform the Lakeside Mall into a mixed-use town center district

Plan Implementation

- Numerous implementation steps have continued the momentum established by the Visioning 2030 and Master Plan efforts
  - Zoning ordinance updates (i.e., non-residential landscaping standards)
  - Entrance into the RRC program
  - *Re*creating Recreation Initiative
  - Setting the stage for redevelopment of Lakeside Mall

*Re*creating Recreation

- Sought to leverage the City's existing natural resource assets to provide City residents with year-round recreation opportunities
- Led to the approval of a dedicated parks and recreation millage
- Funding source has led to an ambitious construction program

*Re*creating Recreation (cont.)

Lakeside Mall

- Continued planning efforts to refine the preferred character and potential for redevelopment
- Working collaboratively with City officials and property owner
- City Council, Planning Commission members and staff participated in site visit to Belmar in Lakewood, CO
- Goal is to prepare/adopt zoning regulations offering flexibility for redevelopment in line with City vision

PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A

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Panel Discussion and Q&A

1. With limited budgets and resources, why should a community dedicate time and effort toward long-range planning?
2. Beyond the state law mandates (i.e., we have to), what type of factors drive the need for a long-range planning effort (visioning, strategic plan, land use plan, etc.)?

Panel Discussion and Q&A

3. As a City Manager…

   Council Member…

   Planning Commissioner…

   Planning Department…

   …what elements of the master plan do you utilize most?

4. What common weaknesses or deficiencies do you find in master plans?

Panel Discussion and Q&A

5. What “optional” or “non-traditional” elements should be considered as part of a master plan?
6. During the master plan preparation process, what methods have you found to be most beneficial to ensure engagement and collaboration between elected/appointed officials and citizens?
7. What are some ideas or best practices for communication between the Council, Planning Commission and Staff?