



VISION STATEMENT

Long-range planning must take place in a public forum, with opportunities for public participation, if it is to be representative. The support of the community can also foster improved implementation opportunities. An approach that has been used successfully when planning for the future of a community involves preceding the planning process with an exercise designed to develop "a vision of the future" for the Township. The basic components include the following:

- Identify the "stakeholders", that is, those groups that have a stake in improving the quality of life in the Township.
- Involve the stakeholders in a process designed to identify what the future should be like in the Township.
- Build consensus among the stakeholders in setting forth the important characteristics of any new planning program.
- Prepare a vision statement from the stakeholders' consensus that will serve as the underlying direction for the Planning Commission's work of preparing a new Master Plan.

On September 26, 2000, the Bridgewater Township Planning Commission hosted a meeting, at which approximately 100 individuals representing various interests, organizations, and businesses in the community discussed the future of Bridgewater Township. The participants divided into fifteen groups and were asked to organize their discussion and come to a consensus about four topics: Community Character and Features, Residential Development, Traffic and Circulation, and Non-residential Development.

The Community Vision Statement has been formulated based on the consensus presentations by the fifteen vision groups. While the statements

of the participants were often specific, the vision statement is intended to present a set of general goals in order to offer a blueprint for the future physical arrangement of the community's land use. Programs, policies, and ordinances are then used as the implementation tools to help achieve the Future Vision.

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

The following statements are intended as a guide to provide direction to the Planning Commission as they formulate a new Master Plan for Bridgewater Township. This chapter does not constitute the official goals and objectives of the Planning Commission. Rather it was intended to be used as a resource to develop the goals and objectives contained in the next chapter.

Community Character and Features

Agricultural activity defines Bridgewater Township and helps to maintain its rural and scenic character and small hometown feel. Preserving open space and a rural character is a high priority for Bridgewater residents. Future residential growth should be planned to minimize impacts on natural features and open space. The Township should consider cluster development options in order to preserve open space and promote farmland preservation. In addition, special measures should be taken to protect the Township's water resources, such as the River Raisin and wetland areas, as well as other natural features. Anticipating future growth and preparing for the impact that it could have on Bridgewater is the best way to preserve the existing rural character of the Township.



Residential Development

Residential growth is likely to increase, and residents are concerned with how development will impact the Township's rural character. Conscientious planning of future residential uses must take place if Bridgewater's open space and country atmosphere are to be maintained. Enhancing the Township's codes and policies to provide incentives for innovative development techniques instead of typical large-lot rural development may help to maintain agricultural land and open space. Clustering of single family houses on smaller lots may be an effective method. Appropriate areas for higher density residential development also needs to be identified. In addition, the establishment of land trusts as an alternative to development should be explored.

Traffic and Circulation

Bridgewater Township's road infrastructure is rural in character with primarily unpaved roads and a lack of sidewalks throughout the Township. Residents value the existing gravel roads because they help to maintain the rural atmosphere. Improvements can be made, however, to enhance traffic circulation within and through the Township. A durable limestone base should be considered to control dust, and regular maintenance should be performed to prevent and alleviate potholes. There should be a regular bridge maintenance program. Speeds along Clinton and Austin Roads are too high, and measures are needed to slow traffic along these paved roads. Due to the existing road conditions and rural character of the Township, sidewalks and bike paths should not be located alongside the roads.

Non-residential Development

There does not appear to be a need for significant additional commercial and industrial uses in Bridgewater Township. However, future commercial and industrial uses should be located away from agricultural areas and concentrated near the village of Clinton. Limited commercial and industrial uses could be located around the Hamlet of Bridgewater subject to water and sewer constraints. Future development should be in character with the rural atmosphere of Bridgewater, and strip development should be avoided. Recreational land uses that have little impact on the Township's agricultural character are the preferred type of non-residential development. Township services are adequate for such a rural Township. A sewer system to serve the Hamlet area is being planned. No water service is planned. Police patrol and emergency services serving the Township may be enhanced.

