

Chapter 11 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To be effective, this Plan must be used as part of daily decision-making in the Township. Policies in the Master Plan are implemented, for the most part, by day-to-day administrative actions of the Township officials and staff, decisions made by the Planning Commission, and the actions of the Board of Trustees. Although the Township may have responsibility to prepare and maintain this Plan, implementation also necessitates coordination with the outside agencies that have some jurisdiction in the Township. For this reason, this Master Plan should be viewed both as a communication tool and as a reference document for policy implementation.

The following is a summary of some of the plan implementation tools available to the Township:

ZONING ORDINANCE

See Chapter 10 (Zoning Plan).

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The policies of this Master Plan can be implemented in part through careful review of proposed subdivision plat and site condominium development projects. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act includes specific provisions associated with subdivision plat review that apply most effectively to townships that maintain a local subdivision ordinance.

Subdividing, or platting, is a more complex method of land division and is regulated by the Land Division Act and any Township subdivision regulations. This method of subdividing involves technical review by the Township Planner, Planning Commission recommendation, and Township Board action on the various stages of the plat. This process is aimed primarily at zoning compliance, compliance with the Master Plan, proper vehicular and pedestrian circulation, future street extensions, buildable lots, proper relationship with neighboring properties, and provision of all public facilities and utilities.

The site condominium process is an alternative to the subdivision plat, but the end result is intended to be equivalent to a platted development. Since the issues and interests are the same from the Township's point of view in either approach to land division, the Township's review process for site condominiums should be as similar as possible to that exercised in subdivision review.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP)

One of the most important non-regulatory tools the Township has available to implement this Plan is a "Capital Improvements Program" (CIP). The Township can use a CIP to implement Master Plan recommendations for new or expanded public facilities, plan for major expenditures, ensure that public funds are used wisely and efficiently, and to be prepared with "shovel-ready" projects when unexpected sources of funding appear.

What are Capital Improvements?

Capital improvements are physical facilities that require substantial investments to construct/develop, and are intended to last/be used for a long period of time. Typical project examples include:

- fire engines, bulldozers, and similar large equipment purchases;
- treatment plants, water and sewer lines, landfills, street construction or reconstruction, and similar infrastructure improvements;
- libraries, schools, government buildings, and similar building projects; and
- replacement, expansion, or major repair of existing facilities and equipment.

“Gray area” projects that could also be considered “operating” expenses outside the scope of a CIP include vehicle and small equipment purchases, repairs, and remodeling projects.

What is a Capital Improvements Program?

A CIP identifies the community's capital needs; ranks them by priority; coordinates their scheduling over a specific number of years; and determines the best funding method(s) to pay for them. The first year of the CIP is the capital budget, and as each year is completed a new year is added at the end. Many CIPs are organized into three (3) sections:

1. Overview of the CIP process, along with a list of the benefits the community will derive from the capital improvements;
2. Financial data, including charts outlining historical revenue and expenditure data, projected revenue, expenditure, and debt service; and a
3. Description of projects recommended for funding in the CIP period, including a justification for a project's inclusion in the CIP, the project's relationship to the community's master plan and other long-range plans, and how the project will be financed within the community's fiscal capacity.

The CIP should cover a six (6) year period, updated annually, with the first year representing the community's capital budget. The document lists the proposed capital improvement projects and expenditures by:

- Location, date of construction, and relationship to other existing and proposed facilities;
- Cost, means of financing, and sponsor; and
- Priorities over the CIP time period and geography of the Township.

Per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, any municipality with jurisdiction may prepare and adopt a CIP, but it is typically mandatory for most cities and villages and for those Michigan townships that “alone or jointly with one or more other local units of government owns or operates a water supply or sewage disposal system.” For this reason, Bridgewater Township is required to prepare a Capital Improvements Program.

What are the Benefits of Using a CIP?

The CIP is a tool to enable and improve the local government’s ability to balance its capital needs and available financing over a multi-year period. The following are some of the additional benefits of adopting and maintaining an up-to-date capital improvements program:

- ✓ A CIP helps to ensure that new public facilities and infrastructure improvements meet Master Plan objectives, spreads large capital expenses over time, and breaks large projects into phases.
- ✓ An up-to-date CIP will alert residents and developers of the Township’s intention to make certain improvements in particular places at particular times. This helps coordinate private investment, minimize inappropriate development proposals, and restricts development from occurring at a too rapid rate.
- ✓ The process of adopting and updating a CIP increases opportunities for public input on and public support for proposed capital improvements.
- ✓ The CIP process helps to separate the good from the “it seemed like a good idea at the time.” Some “good ideas” cost more than their benefits. A public facility may turn out to be unnecessary, over-designed, or may not meet the community’s actual needs.
- ✓ Use of the CIP “tools” by the municipality enables private businesses and citizens to have some assurance as to when public improvements will be undertaken.

FINANCING

Successful implementation of these projects will depend on the ability of the Township to secure the necessary funding for community planning and project implementation. Besides the Township’s General Fund, there are an ever-changing range of potential federal and state government sources, community foundations, and other sources for grant funding and loans which the Township may be eligible for to complete a particular project.

The first step is to develop a capital improvements program (see above) to identify potential projects, anticipated costs, and potential sources of funding. Once a specific project has been identified, the most appropriate sources of grants and other revenues to supplement local funds can be considered. The following are examples of potential financing tools:

- ❑ **Millage.** A special millage can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose.
- ❑ **Special Assessments.** Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefited by specific public improvements to defray the costs of such improvements, apportioned according to the assumed benefits to the property affected.
- ❑ **Bond Programs.** Bonds are one of the principal sources of financing used by communities to pay for capital improvements. General obligation bonds are issued for a specific community project and are paid off by the general public with property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for construction of projects that generate revenues. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project.
- ❑ **Grant Programs.** The State of Michigan periodically makes grant funding available for park development, land acquisition, and other public purposes. Local community

foundations and private foundations may also have funding available for projects that fit their specific grant-making criteria.

PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM

To be effective, the planning process must be continuous. and must be part of the day-to-day decisions that affect the physical character of the Township. The Master Plan is a representation of the Township’s policies for the future. If the Master Plan is to perform its proper function, it must be reviewed regularly and updated as conditions warrant.

The Planning Commission should evaluate the Master Plan regularly to ensure that Township policies are consistent with the objectives of the Master Plan. A comprehensive Master Plan review is required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act at least once every five (5) years.

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

The necessity of citizen participation and understanding of the planning process and the Plan cannot be over-emphasized. A carefully organized public education program is needed to build support for and ease implementation of planning proposals. Residents’ failure to support planning efforts, special assessments, zoning, or public improvements is more often than not the result of public misunderstanding of long-range plans. To organize public support most effectively, the Township must emphasize the reasons for the planning program and encourage citizen participation in the planning process.

Public education can be achieved through an informational program involving talks by the Township Planner and other experts, preparation of newspaper articles, and presentations at public meetings on current issues. Periodic community opinion surveys should be considered as another means by which Township officials can gauge changing attitudes and priorities.

A significant share of the responsibility of implementing this Master Plan rests on private efforts. Even one resident can have substantial influence in determining the appearance of the Township and influencing public opinion. The influence of an alert and informed citizenry may well compensate in a large part for limitations in the authority vested in the Township.