

City of Mason Master Plan

April 19, 2004

City of Mason Master Plan

Prepared By The
**City of Mason
Planning Commission**

Adopted By The
**City of Mason
Planning Commission**
April 13, 2004

Adopted By The
Mason City Council
April 19, 2004

VISION STATEMENT

Mason will improve its position as an attractive small town surrounded by rural countryside in which families and businesses enjoy and value a sense of history, a healthy central business district, a strong regional economy, conservation of natural resources, diversity of recreational opportunities, fair and effective land development laws, safety, and efficient government services.

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Chapter One

OVERVIEW

Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the City of Mason and the Master Plan's role, importance, preparation process, and principal policies. It presents the framework for what follows by defining what the Master Plan is and what it is intended to accomplish. Understanding the fundamentals of the Master Plan will enable City of Mason residents and officials to appreciate the role it plays in ensuring the future welfare of the City, its residents and its resources. Embracing this Plan as a vital tool in preserving and enhancing the public health, safety, and welfare of the City is essential if this Plan is to be effective.

What is the Master Plan?

Purpose

Just as individuals and families plan for their future well being, so must municipalities. Just as individuals may open savings accounts to save for an addition to their house for a growing family, municipalities must look to the future and take specific actions to address current and future needs. Such actions may involve improvements to the roadway network, improvements to the level of emergency services, and the pursuit of new local employment opportunities.

This Master Plan is a policy document that identifies how growth and associated land development should be guided to enhance the future welfare of Mason. The following key words and phrases can generally describe the Master Plan:

FUTURE ORIENTED: The plan concerns itself with long-range planning to guide and manage future growth and development. The plan is a picture of Mason today and a guide to how the community should evolve over the next ten to twenty years in response to growth and community aspirations.

GENERAL: The plan establishes broad principles and policies to address future land use and public services.

COMPREHENSIVE: The Plan is comprehensive in that it addresses all principal types of land use and the practical geographic boundaries of each.

A PLAN: The Plan is a specific tangible document which consists of both text and maps, a key portion of which presents and illustrates the City's policies regarding its planned future land use pattern and associated public services.

DYNAMIC: The Plan is intended to be continually evolving in light of the aspirations of local residents, changing conditions in the City, and new strategies to manage growth.

The City of Mason Planning Commission, under the authority of the Municipal Planning Act, P.A. 285 of 1931 (as amended), prepared this Master Plan. The Act provides for the development of plans by a Planning Commission:

"The commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of the municipality. The plan, with the accompanying map, plats, charts, and descriptive matter shall show the commission's recommendations for the development of the territory...The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in ac-

cordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development; including, among other things, adequate provision for traffic, the promotion of safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of the healthful and convenient distribution of population, the promotion of good civic design and arrangement, wise and efficient expenditure of public funds, and the adequate provision of public utilities and other public requirements.”

Though the Planning Commission is the principal body authorized to develop a Master Plan, the City Council had opportunities for input throughout the planning process (See “How the Plan was Prepared” on page 1-3.).

This Master Plan is not a law or regulatory document, but a “*policy plan*” to be implemented through, in part, zoning and other regulatory tools. For example, though the Master Plan is not a zoning ordinance, the Master Plan’s recommendations and policies serve as a basis for updating the current City of Mason Zoning Ordinance. In fact, the City and Village Zoning Act which provides Michigan cities and villages with the statutory authority to adopt zoning regulations stipulates that a municipality’s land development regulations “...*shall be made in accordance with a plan designed to promote and accomplish the objectives of this act.*” This Master Plan addresses this statutory requirement and ensures a strong legal foundation for the City’s zoning regulations.

Elements of the Master Plan

This Master Plan consists of the following key components:

- 1) *Chapter One – Overview*, presents an overview of the purpose and role of the Plan, the process followed in its preparation, key planning policies, and a summary of City conditions.
- 2) *Chapter Two – Planning Issues, Goals and Objectives* presents a discussion of important planning issues facing the City today, and associated goals and objectives that address these issues.
- 3) *Chapter Three – Future Land Use Strategy* presents the planned future land use pattern for the City.

- 4) *Chapter Four – Implementation Strategies* presents implementation measures to effectuate the policies of the Plan.
- 5) *The Appendices* present background studies that provide a review of existing conditions and trends including matters pertaining to demographics, land use, public services and utilities, history, and development build-out studies. The Appendices make occasional references to policy issues that arose in committee meetings during the preparation of the Plan. These policy issues are included in the Appendices for informational purposes only and do not represent the official planning policies of the City.

Importance and Application of the Master Plan

The importance and application of the City of Mason Master Plan are demonstrated in: 1) the long-term interests of the City; and 2) the day-to-day administration of the City’s planning and zoning program.

Long Term Interests

There are a number of interests shared by residents and officials of Mason today that can be expected to continue for years to come and be similarly shared by future residents and officials. Some of these important interests include:

- Protecting the City’s small-town and historic character.
- Minimizing tax burdens.
- Ensuring appropriate land use and adequate services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors.
- Managing growth and development.

The Master Plan supports these long-term interests by providing a future-oriented strategy that aggressively seeks to further these interests. Intensive development without adequate public services to meet the demands of such development, as well as development which places excessive demands upon the City’s infrastructure and services can lead the City into a future of tremendous social and environmental risks which will seriously threaten the public’s health, safety, and welfare. Chapter Three establishes future land use and public services strategies to secure these and other long-term interests.

Day-To-Day Administration

In addition to furthering the long-term interests of the City, the Master Plan also plays an important role in the day-to-day planning and zoning efforts of the City:

- Advisory Policies: The Plan is an official advisory policy statement that should be readily shared with existing and prospective landowners and developers. The Plan informs them of the long term intentions of the City regarding land use and encourages development proposals more closely integrated with the policies of the Plan.
- Regulatory Programs: The Plan establishes a practical basis for the City to revise, update, or otherwise prepare regulatory programs, including zoning and land division regulations, intended to ensure that the policies of the Plan are implemented.
- Review of Land Development Proposals: Chapter Two includes a list of City goals and objectives which should be reviewed when consideration is given to future proposed rezoning requests, site plans, and related land use proposals, to further establish a record upon which the proposal can be evaluated. Equally important, Chapter Three provides policies regarding the planned future land use pattern in the City. This Chapter also provides valuable reference points upon which land use proposals should be evaluated.
- Public Services Improvements: The cost-effective use of Mason's tax dollars requires the identification of a planned future land use pattern. Residential, commercial, and industrial land uses have varying public services needs. The identification of a planned future land use pattern enables the City to pinpoint areas that may be in need of current public services improvements. The identification also enables the City to better determine areas of future need, rather than playing "catch-up" while the City's health, safety, and welfare may be at risk. Chapters Three and Four provide important guidance in this area.
- Intergovernmental Coordination: This Plan provides the basis for Mason officials to communicate effectively with nearby communities regarding both the impact of their planning and zoning actions and opportunities for mutual gain through coordinated efforts in the areas of land use and public services.

- Factual Reference: The Plan includes a factual overview of relevant trends and conditions in Mason. This factual profile can educate local officials and residents and aid in the review of development proposals, encourage constructive discussion of planning issues and policies, and serve as a base line for future studies.

How The Plan Was Prepared

Early in 2000, the Mason Planning Commission began reviewing its 1991 Comprehensive Development Plan. During the review process, a consensus emerged that a new Plan was needed to address changes that had occurred in the community during the previous ten years and to ensure growth, development and preservation strategies that reflect the aspirations of the citizenry. After considerable discussion and deliberation, the Planning Commission established a strategy for preparing the new Plan. From the beginning, the strategy included opportunities for public input and sought the involvement of the City Council. Both residents and City Council members participated in the planning process.

In September of 2001, a special two-day "town hall" visioning workshop was conducted by Dr. Harvey Liss from the MSU Extension Program. Participants included residents and local officials, including City Council members and officials from nearby communities. At the conclusion of the workshops, five committees were formed around the following issues: utilities; transportation; land use, housing and zoning; downtown; and quality of life. The committees consisted of local officials and residents. A sixth committee evolved to focus on the matter of municipal services.

The committees met regularly and worked diligently. Considerable time was expended by committee members to collect data and identify important issues that pertained to their particular subject area. Each of the committees developed reports that presented their initial findings including issues of concern and recommendations. These reports were prepared and revised until the committees determined they were suitable for use during the balance of the planning process.

A second "town hall meeting" was held in January of 2002 to share information collected to date, promote interaction among the committees, update residents on the status of the planning process, and continue to encourage citizen involvement. Attendees included residents, local officials from the Planning

Commission and City Council, and officials from neighboring communities.

The committees continued to meet and refine their reports. The City subsequently sought the assistance of a planning consultant to facilitate the completion of the Plan. Several workshops were held with the consultant and local officials in the winter and spring of 2003 to further explore and clarify the future land use strategy and applicable goals and objectives of the Plan. Participants included members of the Planning Commission and City Council, as well as the Planning/Zoning Director. A complete initial draft Plan was then prepared, reviewed, and further refined. In the interest of regional coordination and compliance with the Municipal Planning Act, the City then forwarded a copy of the draft Plan to neighboring municipalities to solicit their review and comment, and held a public hearing on the draft Plan on October 14, 2003. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission revised the draft Plan and held an additional public hearing on April 13, 2004. The Planning Commission subsequently recommended adoption of the Plan to the City Council and the City Council adopted the Plan on April 19, 2004.

City of Mason Overview

The following is a brief overview of the City of Mason. A more detailed review of City trends and conditions can be found in the Appendices.

The City of Mason is located in the central region of Ingham County in the south-central portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The City covers approximately five square miles. The 2000 U.S. Census recorded 2,806 households, 1,826 families, and a population of 7,164 persons (following a successful challenge to the initial Census count). Mason is the county seat of Ingham County and this contributes to the stability of the community's growth.

The City is located in the north central portion of the congressional borders of Vevay Township, and extends north to include approximately 200 acres in the congressional borders of Alaiedon Township. Aside from the greater Lansing area (capital of Michigan) eight miles to the northwest, the landscape of the surrounding communities is dominated by agriculture and scattered residential development. Michigan State University (MSU), one of the nation's pioneer land-grant institutions and formerly known as Michigan Agricultural College, is approximately nine miles to the north in East Lansing. MSU is a major employer in the greater Lansing area and aspects of university life including housing for students and pro-

fessors, sports programs, and campus events impact Mason and the many other surrounding communities.

The City's topography can be generally described as level to mildly rolling. Drainage is facilitated through a network of watercourses, the most significant of which is Sycamore Creek. Sycamore Creek flows through the City in a northerly direction and, along with its tributaries, drains all of the City. The most significant of these tributaries are Willow Creek and Rayner Creek. Willow Creek drains southwest portions of the City, and Rayner Creek drains southeast portions.

Regional access to Mason is via US-127, I-96, and M-36. US-127 travels north-south through the western periphery of the City with two interchanges within or abutting the City (Kipp Road and Cedar Street). Interstate 96 (I-96) travels east-west across the state, and within six miles of the City's north border. I-96 intersects with US-127 approximately eight miles northwest of the City. M-36 provides additional regional access, traveling across the eastern half of Vevay Township from Gregory and Dansville into Mason where it continues as Cedar Street and extends to Lansing.

As with many urban communities, Mason has an integrated development pattern. The focal area of the City is its historic central business area in the core of the City, located across from the historic county courthouse square and surrounded by the City's residential neighborhoods. This central business area began to take shape as early as the 1840's and many of its buildings today approach 120 years in age. In addition to the retail and office businesses in this central business area, two other principal retail areas are present. The Cedar Street business corridor extends from the central business area's west side to the US-127 interchange in the City's northwest corner. This business corridor has a predominantly office and neighborhood-service character in the City's central area and changes to a highway-commercial character toward the interchange. The City's other US-127 interchange, Kipp Road, is the location of a large department store and several small commercial businesses.

Industrial development is limited to three principal locations. The majority of the City's industrial businesses is located in the area generally defined by Howell Road to the north, the Conrail Railroad to the east, and the Cedar Street business corridor to the southwest. Additional industrial areas include the historic grain elevator facilities along the railroad just west of the central business area and the newly con-

structed industrial facility at Kipp and Hull Roads near US-127.

Portions of the developed areas of Mason are a result of “425 Agreements” with Vevay Township. Public Act 425 of 1984 enables two local units of government to conditionally transfer property by written agreement for the purpose of economic development projects. During the period that a particular agreement is in effect, the municipal boundaries of the respective city extend to encompass the agreement acreage. As part of the conditional transfers of the properties to the City, both municipalities receive certain tax revenues and the City is the primary body responsible for public services to these properties. Since 1989, the two governments have entered into four such agreements that account for, in part, Kipp Road development including a large department store and auto part manufacturer, Eden Road development including a packaging plant and concrete manufacturer, and expansions to a manufactured housing community on Columbia Road.

The 2000 Census recorded 2,961 dwelling units. 155 of the units, or 5.2% were vacant. 62.6% of the vacant units were available for sale or rent. Of the occupied dwellings in 2000, 67.3% were single family dwellings, 1.4% were two-family dwellings, and 32.3% were dwellings within multiple family structures. 16.9 % of the single family dwellings consisted of mobile homes and all were located in the manufactured housing community on the City’s west side along Columbia Road. The 2000 Census reported that 23.0% of the dwelling units in 2000 were constructed prior to 1940, and 31.0% were constructed since 1980. The median construction year for owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units in 2000 was 1962 and 1973 respectively. For Michigan as a whole, the median construction year for owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units in 2000 was 1964 and 1967 respectively. The median value of the City’s owner-occupied dwellings in 2000 was \$113,300. This compares to \$98,400 and \$115,600 for the county and state respectively.

In addition to the commercial, industrial and residential development, farming continues to be evident in several locations including along Okemos Road on the City’s north edge and along M-36 in the City’s east side. Also situated on the east side of the City is the Ingham County Fairgrounds site, extending from Kipp Road to M-36. Farming is evident throughout the township areas surrounding the City.

Public services and facilities in the City are wide in scope. These services and facilities include public sewer and water, police and fire protection, road maintenance, parks and recreation facilities, and cemetery services. These public services, and the City as a whole, are managed by a City Administrator and a seven-member city council. The City also owns and provides the land and building facilities for the Mason branch of the Capital Area District Library (CADL).

Mason Planning Area and Overview of Planning Policies

Preparation of this Plan involved the identification of a planning area larger than just the City of Mason itself. This planning area extends approximately one mile from the City’s boundaries and is called the Mason Planning Area. The City recognizes that its future is linked to the future of the land surrounding the City, and that the City and the Townships of Alaiedon and Vevay can all mutually gain when planning programs are coordinated. The Municipal Planning Act authorizes a city to plan for areas beyond its borders when it is determined such areas bear a relationship to the city’s planning efforts. It is in the interest of coordinated planning that the Mason Planning Area is established.

This Plan presents a coordinated strategy that addresses growth, development and preservation. The Plan supports the continuation of Mason as a close-knit community with a strong residential base, and reasonable opportunities for new commercial and industrial development to further encourage economic stability.

The Plan supports the stability of existing commercial and industrial centers in the City and infill and redevelopment as opportunities arise to improve the visual impact and viability of business areas. Similarly, the Plan supports preservation of existing residential neighborhood areas and the redevelopment of neighborhoods that may undergo decline and no longer offer healthy housing environments for residents and families. Opportunities for new residential development are to be provided by vacant land within the City not otherwise planned for non-residential use, and through the incremental expansion of the City through annexation or cooperative agreements with surrounding townships. The Plan supports the provision of varied housing options to address the differing needs and preferences of current and future residents. These options include

traditional village neighborhoods and neighborhoods that incorporate the preservation of open spaces. These open space areas may include park and natural areas, and linear open spaces that may follow creeks or otherwise link larger open spaces to one another.

The Plan identifies several “mixed-use” areas throughout the City to accommodate the majority of new commercial and industrial development, including the land areas north of and adjacent to the Mason-Jewett Field (airport), southeast of the US-127/Cedar Street interchange, and northwest of the US-127/Kipp Road interchange. All of these areas represent viable opportunities for mixed development patterns, including industrial, commercial and residential, with appropriate design measures to ensure compatibility among the uses.

Future development should recognize the small-town character and historic areas of Mason. Development should complement the desired character of the community and, in association with the City’s historic areas, be sensitive to the historical character and significance of these areas. In addition, special care should be exercised to ensure complementary entrances into the City. These goals can be reached through appropriate building design, scale, lighting, landscape amenities, and streetscape improvements.

Chapter Two

PLANNING ISSUES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Introduction

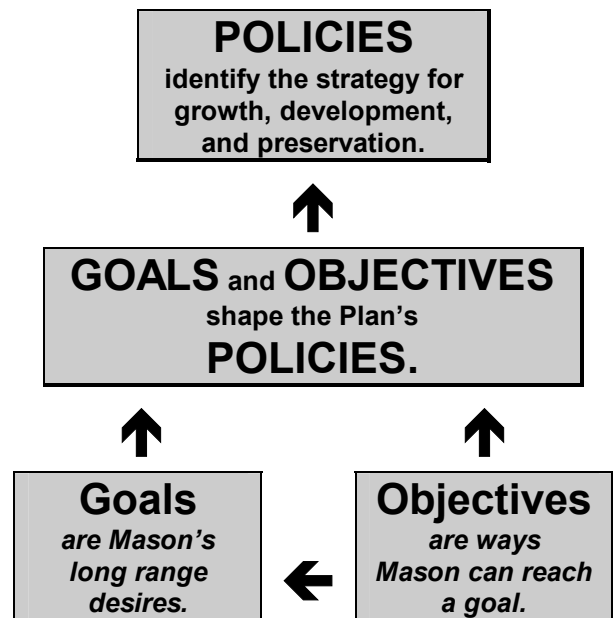
The purpose of this Plan is to establish a basis for future land use and public services in the City of Mason. The City wants to guide and shape future growth and development and not allow the community to evolve merely by chance. To effectively plan for the City's well being with regard to future land use and public services, it is necessary to identify key goals and objectives in response to important planning issues facing the City. Following is a summary of these planning issues and related goals and objectives.

The goals and objectives are important for several reasons:

- The goals and objectives provide current and future residents of Mason with an overview of the intended future character of the City.
- The goals and objectives identify and outline the basic parameters which should be used in guiding land use and public services policies.
- The goals and objectives serve as references upon which future rezoning, land development, and public services decisions can be evaluated.

Planning Issues, Goals & Objectives

Each issue presented in this Chapter is followed by a set of goal and objective statements. Planning goals are statements that express the City's long range desires. Each goal has accompanying objectives which are general strategies that the City can pursue to attain the specified goal. For example, a goal of Mr. Smith may be to open a destination restaurant in downtown Mason, while two of his objectives may be to seek a bank loan and meet with a real estate agent to discuss the purchase of a suitable building.



Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Plan

The planning issues, goals and objectives, are divided into the following major categories:

- Growth Management, Public Services, and Quality of Life
- Community Character, Historic Preservation, and the Environment
- Residential Development
- Economic Development
- Commercial Development
- Industrial Development
- Streets and Circulation
- Regional Coordination

The planning issues presented in the following pages are not intended to be all inclusive. Rather, they are presented as the primary issues that Mason should address as it establishes a future for itself. These issues will evolve over time and should be reexamined periodically and the appropriate modifications made.

Growth Management, Public Services, and Quality of Life

Since 1970, the City of Mason has experienced average 10-year growth rates approaching 10%. Mason is a very desirable place to live for those seeking the comfort of a small town with ease of access to regional employment and retail centers. It is reasonable to anticipate that the population of Mason will continue to increase in the coming years.

The character and quality of life will be affected by the way the City chooses to manage future growth and development. Managed growth can preserve the City's existing small-town and rural character; retain its historic charm and resources; encourage orderly land development; assure adequate public services and wise expenditures of funds; and improve economic stability. This Plan must provide a strategy for effectively shaping and guiding future growth and development in a feasible manner, consistent with the aspirations of the citizenry of the City and the opportunities and constraints presented by its natural and cultural characteristics.

Successful growth management is dependent upon a coordinated public services program. Municipalities offer varying levels of public services. In Mason, city-operated public services include public sewer and water, street maintenance and improvements, parks, and police and fire protection. The extent of public services has two primary impacts. First, public ser-

vices impact land use choices. For example, affordable housing opportunities are significantly lessened in the absence of public sewer. Secondly, the extent of public services also impacts the perceived quality of life within a community. For example, response times by a local fire department and the availability of recreation opportunities affects the quality of life experienced by local residents. In maintaining and expanding public services, it must be recognized that public service improvements will likely encourage additional growth and development.

Tax revenues dictate, in part, the extent and quality of public services. Although development will increase the City's tax base, the same development will place additional demands upon public services. Contrary to traditional planning wisdom and thought, recent research has shown that development does not necessarily "pay its way". This conclusion was similarly reached, for example, by Dr. Robert Burchell of the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. Dr. Burchell developed a "Cost-Revenue Hierarchy of Land Uses" based on an analysis of hundreds of fiscal impact studies including case studies of 18 Michigan communities. The hierarchy concluded that traditional single family residential development typically generated less municipal revenue than the costs for the public services it requires.

GOAL: *Manage growth in a manner that encourages the preservation of Mason's small-town character, and ensures appropriate maintenance and improvements to public services and facilities, compatibility among land uses and coordination between land use and public services programs, enhancement of community quality of life, and the cost-effective use of tax dollars.*

Objectives

- 1) Identify locations in the City by sound planning and zoning that are appropriate for residential and non-residential use, taking into account the constraints and opportunities presented by the City's natural and cultural features.
- 2) Preserve the City's natural resources through a coordinated future land use strategy and related implementation tools that permit reasonable use of land while discouraging unnecessary destruction or loss of natural resources, including wetlands and the Sycamore Creek corridor.
- 3) Maintain effective land use and development review regulations to ensure development is compatible with the policies, goals and objectives of this Plan.

- 4) Separate incompatible land uses by distance, natural features, or man-made landscape buffers that adequately screen or mitigate adverse impacts.
- 5) Guide development into areas where public facilities and services have adequate capacity to accommodate the growth and increased development intensities, and where the expansion of public facilities is cost-effective.
- 6) Encourage compact development of the city through infill of property along existing water and sewer systems first, and then the compact development along new sewer and water lines.
- 7) Identify those areas of the City which, due to existing conditions and the planned future land use pattern presented in this Plan, may be in need or will be in need of improved public services such as police and fire protection.
- 8) Continually monitor local attitudes with regard to public services and facilities and take appropriate planning and capital improvement actions to address identified and projected needs.
- 9) Recognize the special needs of senior citizens in the provision of public services and facilities.
- 10) Maintain efforts to encourage citizen-awareness of development proposals and issues, and to provide substantive public involvement and input opportunities on such matters.
- 11) Maintain a regular meaningful communications program with adjoining municipalities and regional agencies to discuss and investigate public facilities and services needs, opportunities for new or additional shared facilities and services, and alternative strategies for improving local public services, including contracted services, shared services, and City-operated services.
- 12) Recognize that recreation is an integral component of the City's public services program and the importance of the City to continue to provide recreation facilities in coordination with program providers.

Community Character, Historic Preservation and the Environment

The City of Mason is a unique community with a rich character. It includes both an historic central business area bounded by quiet residential neighborhoods, and areas devoted to highway interchange commercial development, industrial uses, and park development. The historic county courthouse square is a daily reminder of the history of the community and its role within the regional framework

of Ingham County, and is the foundation by which the community's character is defined. The protection of Mason's small-town and historic character is important to local residents. "*Small-town character*" is a subjective quality, but in Mason, "*small-town character*" refers to high levels of peacefulness, quiet, pedestrian activity, community identity, comparatively small and inviting buildings, and awareness and concern for one's neighbors and fellow residents. Also of importance in defining the City's small-town and rural character is the nearby farm operations.

While the City's historic and small-town features are strong positive influences on the City, the City's natural features are also important components. These natural features include woodland and wetland areas, the Willow, Rayner, and Sycamore Creek corridors, and open field areas. Not only are these elements important in shaping the character of the City, they provide vital environmental roles including wildlife habitats, flood control, water purification, groundwater recharge, and improved air quality. Preservation of these resources can be very difficult because the process of encroachment can occur slowly. Substantial damage to an entire region and/or ecosystem frequently occurs over an extended period.

Residents strongly support the small-town character of the community and its natural resources, and want these features to be important parts of the City's future. Effective protection of small-town character and the natural environment does not require the prohibition of growth and development. Managed growth and development, including effective site development practices, encourages the continuation of the City's desirable features.

GOAL: *Preserve the quiet, historical, and small-town character of Mason and the integrity of its environmental resources.*

Objectives

- 1) Emphasize land development designed in scale with existing developed areas and the dominant character of the City, through reasonable standards addressing density, building size, height, and other development features.
- 2) Preserve the small-town and historic character of the Court House square, including the surrounding business district, by appropriate land use and development standards.
- 3) Support the efforts of the City Historic District Commission and encourage the maintenance of historically significant structures.

- 4) Maintain a structurally sound housing stock and encourage the rehabilitation or removal of blighted structures.
- 5) Ensure that the quantity and quality of new development does not unreasonably create increases in air, noise, land, and surface and underground water pollution, or the degradation of environmental resources.
- 6) Encourage a greater sense of community identity and character by streetscape improvements to commercial and other activity centers, and provide attractive entranceways into the City.
- 7) Encourage the continuation of agricultural operations in peripheral areas of the City by complementary zoning provisions, until alternative use of the farm acreage is deemed more beneficial.
- 8) Encourage development that enhances the desired small-town character and identity of the area, considering such features as building size and height, architectural design, setbacks, signage, and open spaces.
- 9) Continue the preservation of the historical integrity of the courthouse square and its visual role in defining the City's downtown business area.
- 10) Provide for code development and ordinance enforcement necessary to ensure the general maintenance and appearance of the City.
- 11) Maintain and beautify established and new parking areas through appropriate landscaping and screening.
- 12) Encourage landscaping and screening programs in association with new commercial and industrial development to minimize negative impacts on community character.
- 13) Encourage the preservation of open spaces and natural resources (such as woodlands, wetlands, and stream corridors) as part of the land development process, including the use of clustered housing design.
- 14) Recognize the significance of special natural resources associated with park facilities in the City, including the Ingham County fairgrounds and the county-owned Rayner Park, and encourage the preservation of these resources as part of the City's park and recreation planning efforts.

Residential Development

Mason is a very attractive place to live for those seeking a small town and rural environment, and excellent regional access to near and distant employment, retail, and cultural centers. Both rural and urban residential lifestyles are readily available in the City and additional rural lifestyles are plentiful in the surrounding townships. The available public sewer and water in the City provides opportunities for varying housing densities and lifestyles, and housing that addresses the varying economic and family structure conditions of current and future residents. It is the desire of the City to provide a mixed-use pattern of housing, with alternative housing options throughout all residential areas, and encourage a cohesive and integrated residential population. All housing should provide adequate open space and yard areas and be compatible with surrounding land use conditions. However, creative planning for clustered housing may provide such open spaces in non-traditional patterns.

***GOAL:** Establish a residential environment that recognizes the varied economic and family structure conditions of current and future residents and affords persons and families with healthy and stable surroundings that nurture personal growth.*

Objectives:

- 1) Identify areas for future residential use that, with appropriate levels of public services and surrounding land use conditions, encourage healthy residential environments.
- 2) Provide opportunities for varied housing types and patterns to address the varied housing needs of current and future residents.
- 3) Discourage residential development that relies on on-site sewage disposal. In the absence of public sewer, coordinate housing densities with the natural carrying capacity of the land.
- 4) Encourage innovative residential development that incorporates mixed housing forms, the preservation of natural resource systems and open spaces, and the preservation of the City's rural and small-town character.
- 5) Prevent random commercial encroachment into established residential neighborhoods.
- 6) Encourage the upkeep of residential structures and yards, and the rehabilitation of blighted areas.
- 7) Encourage the preservation of historically significant dwellings.

- 8) Discourage main thoroughfares through residential areas and the use of residential streets for commercial or industrial traffic.

Economic Development

The economic stability of Mason directly affects the quality of life experienced by its residents. Economic stability is a function of many elements including property tax revenues, public services costs, employment, and consumer spending. As noted previously, traditional planning wisdom that supported the position that development “pays its way” has been replaced by considerable research to the contrary. Traditional single-family development has been found to frequently generate greater public services costs than the tax revenue it produces. On the other hand, commercial and industrial development has been found to typically generate equal or more revenue than the increased public service costs. In addition, commercial and industrial development can provide close-to-home employment opportunities.

Thus, accommodating reasonable opportunities for commercial and industrial expansion is important. However, merely designating areas for such development may not be adequate, particularly as applied to commercial development. Prospective businesses and consumers must be attracted to the commercial areas. Effective crime control, convenient parking, cultural amenities, and attractive streetscapes can be very important.

***GOAL:** Strengthen and expand upon the area’s economic base by strategies that attract new businesses and encourage consumer activity.*

Objectives

- 1) Identify areas appropriate for commercial and industrial development, taking into consideration existing land use patterns, infrastructure, accessibility and other factors.
- 2) Reevaluate zoning regulations that impede reasonable commercial/industrial development.
- 3) Maintain open communication between the private business sector and the City regarding economic development opportunities.
- 4) Encourage industrial and commercial development that provides employment opportunities to the local population, strengthens the City’s tax base, and coordinates with available public services.

- 5) Encourage retail services in close proximity to places of significant employment.
- 6) Encourage site development practices that create inviting areas and corridors for consumer activities.
- 7) Encourage the upkeep of commercial properties and the rehabilitation of blighted and deteriorating areas.
- 8) Explore the development of a bed and breakfast program to further encourage tourist trade, while protecting the desirability of nearby neighborhoods.
- 9) Coordinate planning efforts with the Mason Downtown Development Authority to implement a sound strategy for downtown development.

See “Commercial Development” and “Industrial Development” below for additional goals and objectives specific to commercial and industrial development.

Commercial Development

Commercial development in Mason consists primarily of its historic downtown business district and highway commercial areas associated with Cedar Street and the U.S.-127 interchanges. Addressing future commercial development effectively requires consideration of need, location and character.

There are no universal standards that identify the appropriate amount or need for commercial development in a particular community. Each community is unique, with its own set of circumstances including infrastructure, existing land use pattern, growth, and public perceptions. While there may be varying perceptions about the appropriate levels of commercial development in the City today, there are several conditions that are very apparent: 1) A viable business district requires retail and office services; 2) The presence of U.S. 127 creates opportunities to address regional commercial needs, as does the greater Lansing population; and 3) Increased commercial development will strengthen the economic stability of the City, with more employment opportunities and a larger tax base. Commercial development is recognized as one of the comparatively few uses which produces tax revenues that approach or exceed the cost of providing adequate municipal services to such uses (unlike traditional single family residential development).

The City's commercial areas reflect conditions characteristic of viable commercial development with access, visibility, and an adequate population base. While encroachment of existing commercial areas into residential areas is not generally supported, it must be recognized that the long-term viability of the City's central business district may well require opportunities for expanded retail and office development.

Commercial uses can vary significantly in character, ranging from retail to office, professional and other services, and ranging in size and scale from a small local hardware store to a large department store or multiplex movie theater. As commercial uses are of varying character, so are their impacts. Interest in preserving the overall small-town character of the City should affect decisions regarding the location of future development according to its character and type.

GOAL: *Provide opportunities for new commercial development in a manner that recognizes the overall small-town character of the community and existing dominant land use pattern, strengthens the economic stability of the City, and addresses the consumer needs of both local and regional populations.*

Objectives

- 1) Limit commercial growth primarily to existing commercial centers until such time that new planned centers may be determined to be beneficial.
- 2) Encourage commercial development to locate in targeted areas rather than indiscriminately encroach into residential and industrial areas.
- 3) Encourage commercial development in the downtown area that is coordinated with the desired small-town and historical character and identity of the area, considering such features as building size and height, architectural design, setbacks, signage, and open spaces.
- 4) Encourage commercial development in the downtown area to be of a retail, office and entertainment character to draw people and improve its economic vitality.
- 5) Encourage commercial development in the downtown area that facilitates a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- 6) Encourage more vibrant downtown areas by providing opportunities for residential dwellings and offices above first floor businesses.

- 7) Encourage improvements to downtown buildings to facilitate safe access and use of second stories.
- 8) Develop a downtown parking plan that provides convenient parking facilities to improve the downtown area's attractiveness as a place to shop and gather while not undermining its small-town character and unique identity or nearby residential neighborhoods.
- 9) Provide appropriately located opportunities for commercial uses that predominantly target local day-to-day consumer needs, with a focus on the downtown business area.
- 10) Provide appropriately located opportunities for commercial uses that draw from a more regional market with a focus on Cedar Street and highway interchanges.
- 11) Establish landscaping and screening measures to ensure commercial development that is sensitive to the desired character of the community and minimizes adverse impacts on the normal use and enjoyment of adjoining land.
- 12) Coordinate the intensity of commercial development with available public facilities and services, including road infrastructure.
- 13) Provide opportunities for the limited and incremental expansion of the downtown business area to provide increased opportunities for new businesses while maintaining its integrity and encouraging the enhancement of nearby residential neighborhoods.
- 14) Encourage pedestrian and visual linkages between the downtown business area and the antique shopping area to the northwest.

Industrial Development

The City of Mason has two primary areas of industrial development: 1) near the City's southern border in the Kipp Road vicinity; and 2) near the City's northern border in the vicinities of Howell Road and U.S. 127. Manufacturing activities include a broad mix related to automotive, agriculture, construction, and general consumer industries. Benefits of industrial expansion in the City include city wide economic stability and close-to-home employment opportunities. However, it is important that future industrial uses do not undermine the character and stability of residential and commercial areas and are coordinated with public services and available capacities. The presence of both rail and highway access along with public sewer and water establishes a strong foundation for reasonable industrial expansion.

Industrial development can range from low to high intensity, and its impacts upon adjoining and near-by land uses can similarly vary. Certainly, in light of the small-town fabric of the City and the welfare of its residents and residential areas, industrial uses that are characterized by comparatively limited infrastructure demands and low levels of traffic and waste products are preferred. These may include, by example, informational and communication technologies and light assembly operations. Irrespective of the intensity of future industrial uses, industrial development should recognize the desired character of the City in scale, design, and operations, and minimize negative visual and other operational impacts on nearby land uses.

GOAL: *Provide opportunities for the reasonable expansion of light industrial development in a manner that is sensitive to the predominant small-town character of the community, minimizes new public service costs, and protects the viability and desirability of residential and commercial areas.*

Objectives

- 1) Recognize the significance of key corridors such as U.S. 127 and the Conrail Railroad as potential opportunities for the location of new industrial development.
- 2) Emphasize industrial development that is in character and scale with surrounding land uses and the City as a whole, considering such features as building size and height, architectural design, setbacks, signage, lighting, landscaping, and open spaces.
- 3) Encourage industrial development to be located in targeted areas rather than indiscriminately encroach into residential and commercial areas.
- 4) Emphasize industrial uses that have comparatively low public services and infrastructure needs.
- 5) Emphasize industrial uses that minimize negative impacts upon adjacent land uses, taking into consideration such factors as noise, traffic, lighting, fumes and shadow patterns.
- 6) Encourage industrial uses to locate within well-designed industrial parks, characterized by ample open spaces, landscaping and buffering, and interior road systems.
- 7) Ensure through site plan review proceedings that new industrial uses reflect a visual character that is complementary to the City as a whole.
- 8) Encourage the redevelopment and upgrading of deteriorating and unsightly industrial properties.

Streets and Circulation

As new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced into the City, demands upon the street network will increase. This increased traffic may encourage congestion along some of the City's roads. Conversely, it must be recognized that street improvements may attract new development that will place additional demands on the network. This can be particularly true in the case of commercial and industrial development. Increased traffic demands can be minimized by adequate road maintenance and the coordination of road improvements with the planned future land use pattern.

Good land use management can maximize the potential of the city's street system and minimize adverse impacts to other road segments. Locating higher intensity land uses close to key thoroughfares will minimize future maintenance costs and traffic levels along the City's other streets. Improperly managed, the City's principal thoroughfares have the potential to evolve into corridors of strip residential and commercial development, with excessive signage and lighting, driveways and curb cuts, and expansive parking areas. Such a development pattern will undermine the function of these corridors, encourage congestion and traffic hazards, and alter the essential perception of the dominant rural and small-town character of the City.

Proper land use management and site development plans along important corridors can enhance the entry experience into the City, strengthen its identity and charm, and improve economic stability.

Affording bicycle and pedestrian movement throughout a community, and between communities, has long been identified as an important goal in improving quality of life. The past 20 years have witnessed an unprecedented surge in interest in trail systems on the local, state, and federal level as their value gains greater understanding. These trails can limit the reliance on the automobile, improve the health of local residents, improve the quality of leisure time, facilitate economic activity, and encourage a vibrant community.

GOAL: *Maintain a transportation network throughout the City including vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel, that encourages efficient and safe travel consistent with the small-town character of the community and coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.*

Objectives

- 1) Identify priority road segments for systematic maintenance and improvement, based upon the planned future land use pattern and existing and projected traffic patterns.
- 2) Discourage high-traffic generating land uses and development patterns along the City's secondary roads until the time when such roads have been improved to accommodate such development.
- 3) Pursue measures to minimize the potential for traffic congestion and safety hazards along adjacent roadways, including limitations on the number, size, and shape of new land divisions, the discouragement of "strip" development, and limitations on curb cuts.
- 4) Encourage future residential lot split patterns that maintain the integrity of the City's roadway network and rural character.
- 5) Discourage major road improvements that will increase growth and development pressures in areas of the Mason Planning Area not specified for such growth.
- 6) Implement access management principles, including the use of combined service drives to minimize new curb cuts.
- 7) Encourage the construction of collector streets in conjunction with land development to foster efficient traffic circulation and ensure the public health, safety and welfare.
- 8) Ensure appropriate and coordinated ingress and egress to serve development, including the number and location of access points and the efficient movement of traffic between adjacent neighborhoods and other developments.
- 9) Continue emphasis on Mason as a "walkable community," supporting initiatives to facilitate safe and convenient non-motorized movement including sidewalk installation and maintenance.
- 10) Encourage integration and connection of new residential neighborhoods with the rest of the City, including pedestrian/bicycle paths to facilitate safe and convenient non-motorized movement.
- 11) Encourage the linking of residential and commercial centers with pedestrian/bike paths.

- 12) Explore and pursue the development of a streetscape improvement program along important thoroughfares to improve pedestrian activity and safety, heighten the City's identity and visual character, and attract shoppers to the area.
- 13) Continue to communicate and coordinate with the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) to maintain and enhance the various public transit services it provides to the City.
- 14) Support activities of the Capital Region Airport Authority (CRAA) that do not undermine the local road network or otherwise negatively impact quality of life in the City, including noise and safety risks.

Regional Coordination

The City of Mason must recognize that it exists within a regional network of communities, none of which are islands unto themselves. Mason abuts the Townships of Alaiedon and Vevay, and the Mason Planning Area abuts Aurelius Township. The City and nearby municipalities can greatly benefit by cooperatively pursuing common goals in the areas of land use and public services. Planned land use and public services should take into consideration conditions in abutting communities such as existing land uses, development densities, available infrastructure and public services, and land use planning policies.

GOAL: *Guide future development and public services in a manner that recognizes the position of Mason within the larger region, and the mutual impacts of Mason's planning efforts and those of neighboring communities.*

Objectives

- 1) Where practical, identify a planned future land use pattern that seeks to ensure compatibility among land uses along municipal borders.
- 2) Establish a formal and regular communication program with area policy makers to discuss local and area-wide public facilities and services needs, land use conditions and trends, and contemporary planning issues. Identify mutually beneficial strategies to address short and long-term needs and issues.
- 3) Recognize that the City's economic well-being depends upon growth and the expansion of the City's current borders and public service areas, and that the preservation of farmland and rural character in surrounding communities is tied to the reasonable expansion of the City. Strive to accommodate City expansion incrementally through mutually beneficial strategies with neighboring townships.

Chapter Three

FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

Introduction

The City of Mason's principal planning components are contained in the Master Plan's Future Land Use Strategy. The Future Land Use Strategy identifies the desired pattern of land use and development throughout the City and in the greater Mason Planning Area. The Future Land Use Strategy also presents guidelines regarding future infrastructure and public services improvements. These guidelines are to help ensure that future public services are coordinated with the planned future land use pattern, and the achievement of the Plan's goals and objectives.

The Future Land Use Strategy consists of policies regarding future land use and development in the City. Implementation of these policies largely rests with the regulatory tools of the City – most importantly the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance will be the primary implementation tool of this Master Plan, including appropriate changes that may surface due to the policies of this Plan. The Zoning Ordinance generally regulates the type, location, bulk, and intensity of land development. The City may also adopt other supporting regulatory tools to further the implementation of the policies of this Plan, as well as pursue specific public services and capital improvements. Chapter Four addresses implementation strategies in greater detail.

The goals and objectives presented in Chapter Two are the foundation on which the Future Land Use Strategy is based. These include, in part, the desire to guide future development in a manner that insures the compatibility between land uses, the coordination between development patterns and public facilities and services, the cost-effective use of tax dollars, and the preservation of the City's small-town/rural character.

The Future Land Use Strategy is based upon an analysis of the City's natural and cultural features such as community attitudes, existing roadway network, and existing development patterns. The opportunities and constraints presented by these and other characteristics were evaluated in the context of the goals and objectives in Chapter Two to arrive at a planned future land use pattern.

In the interest of regional planning and governmental coordination, and consistent with the Mason Planning Area concept, the abutting conditions in Alaiedon and Vevay Townships were also considered. The recommendations of this chapter generally complement the principal planning policies of the Alaiedon Township Master Plan and Aurelius Township Comprehensive Development Plan, and the initial policies emerging from Vevay Township's current Master Plan update efforts.

Land Use Areas

The Future Land Use Strategy divides the City and abutting township lands into "Areas" and identifies the predominant land use pattern planned for each. However, no development should occur unless adequate measures are provided for sewage disposal and potable water. These land use areas collectively make up the planned future land use pattern for the Mason Planning Area. These areas are:

- Commercial Areas
- Industrial Areas
- Public Areas
- Residential Areas
- Mixed-Use Areas

It is not the intent of this Plan to identify the specific land uses that should be permitted in each of these Areas. This Plan makes broad-based recommendations regarding the dominant land use(s) to be accommodated in each of these Areas. Specific permitted land uses will be determined by zoning provisions, based upon considerations of compatibility. There may be certain existing land uses that do not “fit” with the planned future land use pattern. This should not be necessarily interpreted as a lack of City support for the continuation of such uses. Zoning regulations should clarify this matter.

The approximate borders of these Areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map at the end of this chapter. The Future Land Use Map depicts the boundaries in more detail than the explanatory text of the chapter. The boundaries are described as approximate since the exact demarcation is best reserved for the City’s zoning regulations and the detailed review and analysis of zoning and development proposals. There is frequently room for discretion at the exact interface between the boundaries of two planning areas and appropriate uses at these points of interface. However, the approximate boundaries as presented in this Plan have been considered carefully. Significant departures are strongly discouraged except for unique circumstances and where the public health, safety and welfare will not be undermined. It is also important to understand neither the Future Land Use Map nor the explanatory text is intended to stand on its own. Both the policy discussions and map are inseparable and must be viewed as one.

Commercial Areas

All commercial development should reflect design measures to encourage compatibility with adjacent and nearby land uses and the desired small-town character of the community. Similarly, commercial development in historic districts should seek to continue the historic integrity of the area. Adequate buffers and/or screening mechanisms should ensure new commercial development minimizes impacts on residential properties. Limitations on signage, building heights, size, and related architectural qualities should be continued and enhanced to ensure compatibility of new land uses with the desired character of the surrounding areas and the City as a whole. Special attention should be directed to preventing future commercial development from undermining public health, safety or welfare due to poor road access practices such as excessive curb cuts and conflicting turning patterns.

The Future Land Use Strategy identifies four Commercial Areas. Each of these is discussed in the following pages.

Downtown Center: The Downtown Center includes the City’s principal business district, defined by the historic Courthouse Square and surrounding businesses and civic buildings, and extending down State Street to encompass the old railroad depot district (Cobblestone Village area). The Downtown Center embodies the identity, charm and character that makes Mason such a unique community. Mason has been the county seat for Ingham County since 1840 and the county’s governmental affairs have since been centered at the courthouse square. This business area is marked by a small-town character, and a pedestrian friendly environment. It is a meeting place for many. The long-term viability of the Downtown Center is a key component of the Future Land Use Strategy. The Plan strongly supports the continued role of the Downtown Center as a thriving center of commercial and community activity within the greater fabric of the City.

Development should be designed of such scale, architecture and amenities to preserve the Downtown Center as a historic and pedestrian-friendly commerce center. Development and redevelopment efforts should be coordinated with the desired small-town character and identity of the area, considering such features as building size and height, façade treatments, lighting, signage and related development features. Uses should primarily address the day-to-day retail, office and entertainment needs of the local population and visitors, including restaurants. Opportunities for complementary institutional and civic uses compatible with the intended character of the Downtown Center should remain. Uses that are characterized by the generation of traffic patterns that may undermine pedestrian safety should be discouraged.

Opportunities for the expansion of the Downtown Center should be carefully considered. Development proposals involving expansion should generally focus on properties immediately abutting existing businesses rather than occurring haphazardly or in a leap-frog pattern. Expansion of the Downtown Center should be limited and incremental only. Expansion should occur only where compatibility among land uses can be ensured and the stability and desirability of nearby residential neighborhoods and businesses can be maintained.

Cedar Street Business Corridor: The Cedar Business Corridor includes most of the land along Cedar Street from the US-127 interchange to South Street. This corridor presents varying conditions as one travels its length. The Plan establishes differing policies for the northern and southern portions of the corridor.

The northern half of the corridor, generally extending from the highway interchange to North Street, is afforded excellent regional access by the presence of the US-127 interchange. This segment has evolved as a business corridor catering to the convenience needs of the highway traveler and uses that particularly benefit from proximity to the highway because of the regional market on which they rely. The Plan supports the continued role of this portion of Cedar as a highway business corridor. The Plan supports the redevelopment of properties in this area to enhance their impact on the City's overall character.

Future commercial development and redevelopment should be characterized by predominantly highway-oriented uses and uses that are particularly dependent on regional access. However, this corridor segment should undergo improvements to heighten public safety and visual amenities. These improvements should include streetscape improvements that address, in part, landscaping and lighting, signage, limitations on the frequency and number of driveways, and the use of shared service drives. This portion of Cedar Street serves as one of the primary entrances into the City. Its visual character impacts perceptions of the community as a whole and its desirability as a place of commerce.

The southern half of the Cedar Street Business Corridor reflects a very different character from that to the north. This segment of Cedar Street is characterized by a greater portion of businesses that cater to the day-to-day retail and office needs of the local population. Businesses are comparatively smaller in size than those to the north and parking requirements are typically less. Smaller buildings and development areas should be encouraged between North and South Streets. In light of this established development pattern and the proximity of residential neighborhoods to the east and west, the Plan supports the continued neighbor-service orientation of this business corridor. Office and small retail/service business should be encouraged and all new or redevelopment areas should be responsive to the local and city-wide interests in protecting the stability and desirability of nearby residences and neighborhoods. Special care should be taken to assure adequate buffers between these commercial uses and nearby residential areas.

Expansion of this portion of the business corridor to the east and west along intersecting streets is not encouraged. It may be reasonable if it occurs in a limited, controlled and incremental manner, and where such expansion does not harm adjacent neighborhoods.

The principal commercial component of this portion of the corridor is between North and Ash Streets. Portions of the Cedar Street frontage south of Ash Street are characterized by a mix of residential, public, office and retail uses. This Plan supports the continuation of the dwellings as places of residence. The Plan also supports opportunities for the incremental conversion of these dwellings to small retail, office or similar commercial or institutional uses in character with the intent of this corridor segment.

Hull Road Commercial Area: The Hull Road Commercial Area includes the land area generally defined by Hull Road to the east, Kipp Road to the north, US-127 to the west, and the water tower to the south. This commercial area is established in recognition of the existing commercial development in this location and the Plan's support for its long term stability as a commercial center on the periphery of the City. The Hull Road Commercial Area includes a regional retail store and nearby strip commercial development on the north side of Kipp Road. These uses, including fast-food restaurants and service stations, are appropriately located near the Kipp Road highway interchange to serve the needs of the highway traveler and the greater regional area. Opportunities exist for additional development of similar character on vacant land just north of the water tower. However, with the industrial facility to the east and the water tower to the south, the Plan recognizes that this vacant land may also function reasonably well for appropriately designed light industrial purposes.

East Columbia Office Area: The East Columbia Office Area is centered at the E. Columbia/Washington Streets intersection. It is designated as a specialized office area in recognition of its existing status as a small office center providing medical services. The Plan supports the continued use of this area for office purposes. However, due to the surrounding residential character of the area, expansion of this office center or conversion to higher-intensity uses, including retail, is discouraged.

The "Mixed-Use Areas" section of this chapter discusses additional opportunities for commercial development within designated "mixed-use" areas.

Industrial Areas

Future industrial development should be of a character that compliments the City's interests in environmental protection, and the protection of nearby and city-wide property values and the use and enjoyment of such properties. Site development practices that are sensitive to the City's small-town character and adjacent land uses should be encouraged. Reasonable limitations on signage, building heights, size, and related architectural qualities should guide future industrial development to ensure compatibility. Richly landscaped and abundant open spaces, along with properly placed parking areas and screens should guide future development. Industrial uses that have minimal external impacts are strongly encouraged. These may include service-oriented industries such as communication and information technologies and manufacturing operations that focus on the assembly of pre-made parts versus raw materials operations.

The Future Land Use Strategy identifies three "Industrial Areas" and are discussed below.

North Railroad Industrial Area: The North Railroad Industrial Area is generally defined by Howell Road to the north, Conrail Railroad to the east, the Cedar St. interchange and Cedar Street Business Corridor to the west and southwest, and North Street to the south. This geographic area is the principal existing industrial center of the City. There are opportunities for new development on vacant land and redevelopment of existing sites. This area has both public sewer and water and benefits from rail access and its proximity to US-127. Comparatively few residences are present in the area. The Area includes the existing industrial facility at the northeast corner of Cedar and North Streets and the former Mason Plaza site directly north. The Area also includes the site of the City's former landfill on the east side of the railroad. The previous landfill operations may present environmental limitations to the further use of the site. However, should they exist, the limitations may not necessarily preclude future industrial use as part of a coordinated redevelopment program. Further studies should be undertaken to gain greater insight into this matter.

South Railroad Industrial Area: The South Railroad Industrial Area incorporates the majority of the land along the Conrail Railroad from Tomlinson Road north to Jefferson Street, including the land south of the airport. This Area is established in recognition of the extensive industrial development present and the appropriateness of accommodating additional industrial development. This Area benefits

from public sewer and water, rail access, close proximity to the US-127 and the "county primary" designation of Kipp and Eden Roads and the presence of the Mason-Jewett Field (airport). There are comparatively few residences in this Area and surrounding land uses are predominantly agricultural, commercial, and public (Mason High School).

Mason Elevator Site: The Plan identifies the Mason Elevator site for industrial use. However, the circumstances surrounding this site are unique and the Future Land Use Strategy establishes special policies addressing the future use of this site. The grain elevator facility has been part of the Mason community since its early development and adds a special historical dimension to the community as a whole. Situated just northwest of the Downtown Center Area and adjacent to the railroad on which its viability depends, operations continue today. However, the Plan also recognizes that the use of this site for industrial purposes, located in the midst of a predominantly residential and retail area, is not the ideal situation. While the use of the site as a grain elevator may be reasonable in light of its operational characteristics and the site's historical significance, re-use of the site for alternative industrial uses may be unreasonable (depending upon their specific character and operational characteristics).

This Plan supports the continued use of the site as it presently operates. Should elevator operations cease at some time in the future, special care should be exercised in authorizing alternative uses for the site. Continued use of the site for industrial purposes should occur only upon a finding that such use and the specific development plans associated with site improvements do not further undermine the enjoyment, use and value of adjacent and nearby properties. Utilization of the site for commercial purposes, compatible with area businesses and the intended character of the Downtown Center, is an alternative use for the site.

Public Areas

Public Areas encompass substantial portions of the City. The specific properties vary in character but are all related to governmental functions. Nearly all are owned by the respective governmental agency providing the function. These properties include parks such as Rayner Park and the Fair Grounds, schools, religious institutions, fire stations, City Hall, Mason-Jewett airport, water towers, and county offices such as the Road Commission, Drain Commissioner, Courts, and the Sheriff's Office including jail facilities. All of the publicly designated properties provide important community services. The Public Areas

classification is established to recognize the presence of these facilities, the critical services they provide to the City and regional area, and the Plan's support for their continued presence in the community.

The classification of properties as Public Areas is not intended to prohibit the conversion of these properties to alternative uses if sites or facilities become outdated or otherwise undermine the continued delivery of the public service in a cost-effective and sound manner. The conversion of such properties should generally coincide with the planned use of immediately surrounding properties to ensure compatibility. However, the conversion of the City and County owned park land or Fair Grounds to alternative uses is strongly discouraged as is any change to the function of the County Courthouse and its historical integrity. Conversion of the Fair Grounds to a park is compatible with the overall planned land use pattern for the City.

The presence of the Mason-Jewett airport in the Mason Planning Area presents unique conditions. The airport presents benefits to the surrounding communities. It facilitates regional access to the area and provides recreational pilots with the opportunity to pursue their interest. The airport encourages consumer spending in local business areas and encourages a stronger tourist economy. However, the proximity of the airport to the City itself and the increasing residential development in the area highlights the sensitive relationship between airport facilities and surrounding land use patterns. Future proposals for expansion or other changes in airport operations should be evaluated carefully within the framework of the existing and planned future land use pattern for the Mason Planning Area.

Residential Areas

The Future Land Use Strategy identifies the largest portion of the Mason Planning Area as "Residential Area." The majority of the land developed for housing is characterized by single family dwellings, with multiple family dwellings primarily limited to the south central and northeast portions of the City. The Plan recommends continued opportunities for new and varying housing options and that the options be integrated with one another to encourage a cohesive community.

The Residential Area is to accommodate varying development densities. Because of the City's interest in facilitating an integrated and cohesive community, the Future Land Use Strategy does not specify particular areas for specific density ranges. The Future

Land Use Strategy encourages a mixed housing pattern of varying densities composed of predominantly single family dwellings, along with an appropriate mix of two-family and multiple family dwellings. Where comparatively large housing projects are proposed, the Plan supports the integration of these varying housing options on the project site. However, the Plan also recognizes that the current proportion of the City's dwelling units in multiple family and manufactured housing community developments (approximately 32.5% and 9.6% respectively) reflects a comfortable housing mix and exceeds the proportionate mix state-wide. The Plan does not support large new developments of this nature. To the extent that there is expansion of manufactured housing development in the City, such expansion should be limited in location to similar high-density housing areas.

As the Plan supports a mixed-density development pattern, special care must be exercised during rezoning and development plan review proceedings to ensure compatibility between existing and new development. This compatibility can be encouraged through reasonable density transitions, landscaping and screening, and other site design measures. The development densities and scale of future housing projects should be coordinated with available levels of public services including sewage disposal, potable water, and road infrastructure.

The provision of opportunities for new residential development on existing vacant and/or agricultural land should not detract from the importance of appropriate maintenance and improvements to the City's existing housing stock and neighborhood quality of life. It is the residents of Mason that shape its character and the quality and stability of the City's housing affects all persons and families residing within. The City's existing residential neighborhoods impact the real and perceived character of the City as a whole, thereby affecting the City's overall stability as a place of commerce and housing. The quality of the City's housing stock affects abutting and nearby property values. When deterioration becomes excessive, individuals and families lose a sense of pride in their community. Redevelopment of existing neighborhoods that may undergo excessive decline should be considered as a means to improve the City's housing environment. Such redevelopment includes encouraging the maintenance of existing homes; encouraging the enhancement of older, historic homes; as well as constructing new "in-fill" housing.

The outer regions of the Mason Planning Area classified as “Residential” are primarily characterized by active farm operations. Their residential classification is not intended to suggest that the farm operations are inappropriate or should otherwise be converted to residential use. Local farming activities have a positive impact in defining the overall character of the City and the greater Mason Planning Area. On the other hand, the Plan recognizes that some farm activities may not be compatible with encroaching high density residential areas. The Plan further recognizes that the long-term viability of these nearby farm operations may slowly decline due to the presence of the City and its future growth and development. Except where specifically recommended elsewhere in this Plan, residential development is the preferred alternative use where farm operations may give way to development. In light of the operational characteristics of large-scale intensive livestock operations, such uses are strongly discouraged in or near the City. Potential new residents in the Mason Planning Area should recognize that the traditional smells, noises, pesticide applications, and generally recognized agricultural activities associated with responsible farming may well continue on a long term basis.

In addition to the Plan’s support for varied housing densities, the Plan supports varied development patterns to address housing preferences and market conditions. Two such options include “open space communities” and “traditional neighborhood design.”

Open Space Communities: The residents of Mason have clearly expressed an interest in maintaining the City’s small town character. This character is shaped in part by the abundant open spaces including farmsteads, open fields, farmlands, woodlots, and natural wildlife habitats that surround the City’s urban fabric. As the City incrementally expands, the potential to undermine this small-town character and the area’s natural resources significantly increases. Residents are concerned about being surrounded by suburban development that will eventually make it difficult to define Mason as different from nearby communities. Residents are equally concerned about the impact of suburban expansion on area creeks, wetlands, floodplains and other open spaces. While some of these resources are regulated by state and/or federal law, such as wetlands of five acres or more in size, the preservation of other open spaces are subject to the decisions of local officials and developers.

Development patterns that incorporate the preservation of open spaces are strongly encouraged. To this end, the Plan supports opportunities for what is frequently referred to as “clustering” and “open space communities.” This form of development provides for the clustering of dwellings on a portion of the development parcel, so that the balance of the parcel can be retained in an open space status. The open space can include natural areas such as woodlands and wetlands, wildlife habitats, park areas, and in some cases, farmland. These open space areas can be reserved by the use of conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar tools. Open space communities have been shown to be economically viable and perhaps more profitable than typical low-density subdivision developments, while simultaneously enhancing nearby property values and the preservation of the local environmental integrity. This form of development may be particularly beneficial in the outlying portions of the Mason Planning Area.

Traditional Neighborhood Design: There is another development alternative to typical subdivision design that is very different from open space communities yet is equally effective in fostering the preservation of Mason’s small-town character. This form of development is frequently referred to as “traditional neighborhood design” (TND) and incorporates and fosters a unique sense of neighborhood. The principles of TND are reflected in traditional village development patterns, many of which are evident in Mason’s core area. TND supports comparatively high density residential development centered around a town square consisting of a central public space devoted to commercial and civic uses. The residences include a mix of housing styles including single family, townhouses and apartments. Streets are very “walkable” and pedestrian linkages are evident throughout. Streets typically follow a grid-like pattern and alleys are encouraged instead of driveways.

These village development patterns are generally recognized as offering an exciting alternative to otherwise sprawling subdivisions of little character. These village nodes provide convenient consumer services, foster a sense of mutual caring for one another, and embody a sense of vitality and identity. They offer opportunities for cost-effective public services and housing for all family stages. The higher density residential development within these village patterns encourages less encroachment of housing in the more rural and farm-based surroundings.

What may be equally effective in accommodating residential development while preserving the overall small town character of the City is the incorporation of a sense of unique identity within each evolving neighborhood. This may be accomplished through housing design, open space buffers, pedestrian-friendly circulation and linkages to nearby civic areas, and other development tools.

Mixed – Use Areas

In addition to differentiating between areas of the City for commercial, industrial, public and residential use, the Future Land Use Strategy establishes a number of planned “mixed-use” areas. As the phrase implies, these areas are recognized as being potentially appropriate for one or more land use types depending upon market conditions and the character and merits of specific development proposals. These areas are characterized by one or more conditions that support a heightened degree of flexibility as to their use and development. These include: 1) a surrounding land use pattern of a mixed character; 2) the absence of significant existing residential development; and 3) proximity to the highway interchanges and/or Mason-Jewett airport.

In light of the potential mixed-use development of these areas, special care must be exercised during all phases of the review and approval of specific development proposals. This will ensure that the arrangement of such uses and the interface between them enhances their compatibility and the viability of each. Where light industrial uses may be pursued, they should generally be limited to those with minimal external impacts such as service-oriented industries, communication and information technologies, and manufacturing operations that focus on the assembly of pre-made parts. Where commercial uses are pursued, emphasis should be upon non-retail development such as offices, lodging facilities, and conference centers. Commercial uses of a convenience nature, such as fast-food restaurants, service stations and convenience stores are generally discouraged unless they are intended to foster ease of access for neighborhood residents and local workers.

Five mixed-use areas are identified on the Future Land Use Map. Their locations, and recommended land use programs are as follows:

1) Cedar Street Interchange: This mixed use area is immediately southeast of the Cedar Street/US-127 interchange, situated between US-127 and the Cedar Street business corridor and extending south. Its development could be based upon one or a combination of uses including residential, re-

tail, office, industrial and institutional. However, it must be recognized that existing access from Cedar Street is limited due to, in part, the site’s limited frontage and the presence of the Cedar Street boulevard just south of the interchange. Any future use of the site must be evaluated for access compatibility. Additional and/or improved points of access may be necessary to realize the full development potential of this site.

- 2) Kipp Road Interchange: This mixed-use area lies directly west of the Kipp Road/US-127 interchange, with frontage along Kipp Road, US-127 access ramps, and Jewett Road in Vevay Township. Frontage areas could be suitable locations for appropriately designed commercial and/or industrial use. However, commercial uses of a convenience nature, such as fast-food restaurants, service stations and convenience stores are not considered appropriate. As Kipp Road is a primary thoroughfare into the City, special care should be taken during the review and approval of development proposals in this area to ensure the Kipp Road corridor provides an attractive and inviting entrance into the City. This can be achieved through proper signage, lighting, placing of buildings and parking areas, and ample landscaping and open spaces along the road.
- 3) Airport: This mixed-use area is on the north side of Kipp Road, adjacent to the Mason-Jewett airport, and extending to Dexter Trail. This area also includes land on the east side of Dexter Trail across from the runway. The area may be used for light industrial, commercial and/or public park developments that would provide for high quality jobs with minimal negative impacts from traffic, noise or similar nuisances. Frontage areas could be suitable locations for appropriately designed commercial and/or industrial use. However, industrial uses should be situated closer to the Kipp Road frontage for access purposes, with appropriate commercial development to serve as a transition to the residential area planned to the north. Land uses east of the runway should function as a buffer between the airport and future residential development to minimize resident complaints about noise.
- 4) Alaiedon/Vevay Cedar Corridor: This mixed-use corridor follows Cedar Street from the US-127 interchange west into Vevay Township and across the southwest corner of Alaiedon Township. This area is intended to accommodate limited commercial and light industrial uses. The corridor is substantially developed in Vevay Township with highway-oriented uses and industrial uses along Legion Drive. In Alaiedon Township, this area contains several small businesses near College

Road as well as large outdoor recreation and industrial uses. The current land use and land division pattern does not support substantial development of either commercial or industrial use at this time.

- 5) County Fairgrounds East Buffer Area: This mixed use area serves as a buffer between the entertainment functions at the county fairgrounds and single-family residential development located further to the east, while complimenting the residential uses in surrounding neighborhoods. Only appropriate commercial, office, and multi-family transitional housing should be located here. Streets in this development should be encouraged to have outlets on both Kipp Road and Ash Street but commercial developments on Ash Street (M-36) should be carefully evaluated for their potential impact.

Coordinated Public Services

This chapter describes the planned pattern of land use throughout the Mason Planning Area. Since the character and feasibility of land use and development is directly influenced by the extent to which public services are available, special attention should be directed to the manner in which public service improvements occur. An important principle of the Future Land Use Strategy is that no new development should occur unless public services are adequate to meet the needs of that new development. Similarly, public service improvements, and the increased development that may result from such improvements, should not jeopardize the City's interest in managing growth and development. Thus, it is very important that future public service improvements be coordinated with the planned pattern of future land use. Further, the extent of public services also impacts the perceived quality of life within a community as it pertains to recreation, police and fire protection, and other services.

As new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced, demands upon the road network will increase. Appropriate maintenance and improvement programs should be developed to maintain and enhance the road and pedestrian circulation network. Conversely, it must be recognized that road improvements may well attract new development which, in turn, will place additional demands on the road network.

Excepting emergency conditions, such as an impassable road, the functional classification of roads should dictate the priority of improvements when all other conditions are generally equal. Priority improvements should be assigned to the City's principal thoroughfares, including their impact as entranceways into the community. Also of importance is the establishment of a truck route around the downtown area.

The future expansion of public sewer and water should occur in a phased and incremental manner so that an overly large geographic area should not be intensely developed at a rate beyond the City's ability to effectively manage growth and development. In the absence of public sewer or water, on-site sewage disposal and potable water facilities should be constructed and maintained in accordance with the requirements and standards of the Ingham County Public Health Department and other applicable local, county, state or federal agencies.

As community growth and land development increases, so does the demand for emergency services. It is important that the City assure that adequate fire and police protection services are available to existing and future residents and property. To prevent emergency services deficiencies, the City should continually monitor police and fire protection needs and service, and explore improving service levels. Considerations for improved services should include the expansion of joint services with neighboring municipalities, the establishment of additional fire and police stations as service levels dictate, and the purchase of new equipment.

Demands can be expected to increase in the areas of recreation facilities and programs, services to the elderly, recycling, and others. In collaboration with other agencies and organizations, coordination between the City's growing population and the programs that serve it should be closely monitored and improvements should be pursued where deficiencies are identified.

Chapter Four presents both general and specific strategies that address the implementation of the Future Land Use Strategy, including public services coordination.

Chapter Four

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Introduction

This Master Plan establishes a strategy for growth, development and preservation in the City of Mason Planning Area. The Plan is comprised of policies that are presented in both graphic and narrative form and are to provide basic guidelines for making reasonable, realistic community development decisions. It establishes policies and recommendations for the proper use of land and the provision of public services and facilities. The Plan is intended to be used by local officials, by those pursuing private sector developments, and by all residents interested in the future of the City. The Plan is a policy document. As a policy document, the Plan's effectiveness is directly tied to the implementation of its policies through specific tools and actions.

The completion of the Plan is one part of the planning process. Realization or implementation of the goals, objectives and policies of the Plan can only be achieved by specific actions, over an extended period of time, and through the cooperative efforts of both the public and private sectors.

Implementation of the Plan may be realized by actively:

- 1) Ensuring city-wide knowledge, understanding, and support of the Plan, and the continuing communication with and involvement of the citizenry.
- 2) Regulating the use and manner of development through up-to-date reasonable zoning controls, subdivision regulations, building and housing codes, other regulatory tools, and development incentives.

- 3) Providing a program of capital improvements and adequate, economical public services to encourage desired land development and redevelopment.

The purpose of this Chapter is to identify implementation tools and where applicable, specific actions to be pursued and the body or bodies considered most appropriate to administer the action.

Public Support, Communication and Community Involvement

Citizen participation in and understanding of the general planning process and the specific goals, objectives and policies of the Plan are critical to the success of the City's planning program. Understanding and support of the Plan by local citizens can greatly enhance its implementation. This support may be found in citizen support for bond proposals, special assessments, zoning decisions, and development proposals.

In order to organize public support most effectively, the City must emphasize the necessity of, and reasons for long-range planning and the development of the Master Plan. The City must encourage citizen participation in on-going community planning efforts.

Specific actions to be undertaken to encourage public understanding and support of the City's planning program, and the continued communication with and involvement of the citizenry, are presented in the following list.

- 1) Ensure that copies of the Master Plan are readily available for viewing at the City Hall. (Zoning Administrator)

- 2) Post the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan in the City Hall where it is clearly visible. (Zoning Administrator)
- 3) Make the Master Plan and a listing of current events pertaining to planning and zoning matters available on the City's web site. (Zoning Administrator)
- 4) Apprise residents of meetings that will address development proposals as the projects move through each stage of review and deliberation, through public notices, the City's newsletter, City Hall postings, and other means. (Zoning Administrator)
- 5) Maintain a posting at the City Hall and on the City's web site that identifies proposed developments and land use decisions under consideration, and where individuals may acquire additional information on such matters. (Zoning Administrator)
- 6) Conduct an annual public hearing for the purposes of reporting on current planning efforts and the status of the Master Plan, and providing residents with the opportunity to share concerns and suggestions. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 7) Mail the Mason "City Newsletter" to all residents on a regular basis, and include articles in the newsletter that discuss the City's planning efforts and land use decisions currently under deliberation. (Zoning Administrator)
- 8) Post the newsletter at the City Hall, on the City's web site, and other public sites for public viewing by all. (City Administrator)
- 9) Utilize the City's cable channel to inform residents about community activities and programs. (City Administrator)
- 10) Support a Welcome Wagon program to greet new residents. (Community)
- 11) Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs in each neighborhood to promote cooperation and communication. (Police Department)
- 12) Encourage continued communication and cooperation with neighboring townships. (All local officials)
- 13) Ensure all City staff with direct citizen contact have a basic understanding of the Master Plan and related enforcement mechanisms. (Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator, City Administrator)
- 14) Make information available to the public on the City's various ordinances including their general purpose and scope, and the general procedures for resolving conflicts or violations. (Zoning Administrator, City Administrator).
- 15) Continue to foster the philosophy of community policing, including maintaining the bicycle patrol for increased and enhanced public contact.

Land Development Codes

Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is the primary tool for implementing a Master Plan through the regulation of the use of land. A zoning ordinance generally divides a community into districts and identifies those land uses permitted in each district. Each district prescribes minimum standards that must be met such as minimum lot area, lot width, and building setbacks. Zoning regulations for cities are adopted under the authority of the City/Village Zoning Act, P.A. 207 of 1921, as amended. The purpose of zoning, according to the Act, is to (in part): *"...regulate and restrict the use of land and structures; to meet the needs of the state's citizens for food, fiber, energy, and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land; to ensure that uses of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships; to limit the overcrowding of land and congestion of population and transportation systems and other public facilities..."*.

Permitted land uses in a district are generally designated as *"uses permitted by right"* and *"special land uses"*, and this differentiation is an important tool.

Uses Permitted by Right: Uses permitted by right are the primary uses and structures specified for which a particular district has been established. An example may be dwellings in a residential district.

Special Land Uses: Special land uses are uses and structures that have been generally accepted as reasonably compatible with the primary uses and structures within a district. However, because of their specific character, they may present potential injurious effects upon the primary uses within the district or are otherwise unique in character. These uses require special consideration in relation to the welfare of adjacent properties and to the City as a whole. An example may be a cemetery in a residential district.

Special land uses require a heightened level of scrutiny in their review. Officials are afforded greater discretion in determining whether a particular special land use is appropriate on a particular site.

Another important tool is the requirement for the submittal of a site plan illustrating proposed alterations and improvements to a parcel. Such a plan assists local officials to determine if the development complies with all standards of the Zoning Ordinance and if it is designed to encourage compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Adoption of zoning regulations by the City Council provides the legal basis for enforcement of zoning provisions. The ultimate effectiveness of the various ordinance requirements, however, is dependent upon the overall quality of ordinance administration and enforcement. The Planning Commission, City Council, and staff are responsible for carrying out zoning/development related functions including the review of development plans and site inspections, community/developer liaison, and other functions. Each of these functions can require a substantial investment of time. Adequate staff levels and/or consulting assistance are important to ensure that these essential day-to-day functions are met and appropriate development results.

The City first adopted zoning regulations in the mid-1950s and has periodically updated its zoning provisions to address changing conditions and policies in the City. The zoning ordinance underwent extensive updating in 2001 to incorporate the many amendments adopted over the years and address substantive deficiencies. With the adoption of this Master Plan, the City's zoning ordinance should again be reviewed to identify any amendments that may be beneficial to implement the policies of the Plan.

The Planning Commission should undertake an evaluation of the Zoning Ordinance to determine whether the Ordinance is in coordination with the Master Plan. If a lack of coordination is evident, a determination should be made as to whether amendments to the Zoning Ordinance or Master Plan are in order. If deficiencies in the Ordinance are identified, the Planning Commission should develop a program for addressing the deficiencies through prioritized amendments. However, depending upon the extent or character of the deficiencies, prioritization may be difficult due to the potential overlap and inter-relatedness of the deficient sections. Ultimately, the Planning Commission should develop a set of amendments to address the deficiencies. Once the amendments have been refined to the satisfaction of

the Planning Commission, taking into consideration public input received from at least one public hearing, the Planning Commission should then make a report of the amendments to the City Council for consideration. At a minimum, the following evaluations should occur to determine coordination between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

- 1) Evaluate the schedule of districts to determine if they implement the Plan's policies, including the clarity of each district's purpose statement.
- 2) Evaluate the delineation of authorized uses in each district, including those authorized as "*uses permitted by right*" and as "*special land uses*" to ensure the purpose of the District is implemented. For example, the allowance of boarding and rooming houses "*by right*" in the Central Business District may be contrary to the principal purpose of the downtown area and the policies of this Plan.
- 3) Evaluate the site development standards of each District to ensure the purpose of the District is implemented. For example, the absence of provisions addressing the size and bulk of commercial buildings (beyond just height) may contribute to development that is out of character with the site and/or surrounding conditions, and the policies of this Plan.
- 4) Evaluate site plan and special land use review procedures including the sufficiency of information required to make sound decisions, the scope of approval standards, the clarity of procedures, and the opportunities for comment by varied public bodies including police, fire, and public works departments.
- 5) Evaluate site development standards addressing:
 - a) landscaping/screening, outdoor lighting, environmental protection, access management along thoroughfares, signage, and off-street parking;
 - b) preservation of the City's character and environmental integrity;
 - c) measures to limit conflicts between land uses.
- 6) Evaluate opportunities for beneficial innovative development patterns, such as mixed-use areas and open space communities, through regulations that encourage desirable development patterns (incentive zoning).
- 7) Evaluate the clarity of administrative and enforcement provisions to ensure consistency in the application of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8) Evaluate provisions for the inclusion of adequate green space areas as part of new development,

including both residential and nonresidential development.

- 9) Evaluate the extent to which the Ordinance's provisions addressing open space areas, landscaping, screening, and buffering measures encourage city beautification and compatibility among land uses including: a) streetscape and alley improvements and long-term maintenance; b) landscaping and screening between properties; c) parking lot landscaping and screening; d) screening of air conditioners, dumpsters, and similar accessory structures; and e) sidewalk and other non-motorized circulation amenities.

Subdivision Ordinance

When a developer proposes to subdivide land, the developer is, in effect, planning a portion of the City. To ensure that such a development is in harmony with the Master Plan, the subdivision or resubdivision of residential and nonresidential land must be adequately reviewed. A subdivision ordinance establishes requirements and design standards for the development of plats including streets, blocks, lots, curbs, sidewalks, open spaces, easements, public utilities, and other associated subdivision improvements. The Land Division Act, P.A. 288 of 1967, as amended, provides the authority for municipalities to adopt local ordinances to administer the provisions of the Land Division Act.

With the implementation of a subdivision ordinance, there is added insurance that development will occur in an orderly manner and the public health, safety and welfare will be maintained. For example, subdivision regulations can help ensure developments are provided with adequate utilities and streets, and appropriately sized and shaped lots. Adopting a local ordinance addressing the creation of subdivisions can encourage a more orderly and comprehensive manner for the review and approval of subdivision plats.

The City of Mason adopted a subdivision ordinance in 1968 and it has been periodically amended since. At a minimum, the following evaluations should occur to determine coordination between the Master Plan and Subdivision Ordinance.

- 1) Evaluate the provisions addressing required improvements including the necessity or appropriateness for streetscape improvements (lighting, street tree plantings, etc.).
- 2) Evaluate the clarity of the provisions addressing all administrative and enforcement matters to ensure consistency in the application of the Subdivision Ordinance.

Other Special Purpose Ordinances

While zoning and subdivision regulations are the most frequently used tools for the regulation of land use and development, the control of land use activities can extend beyond their respective scopes. Special purpose rules and regulations can complement zoning and subdivision regulations and further the implementation of the Master Plan. The City of Mason has adopted numerous such ordinances including ordinances that address junk, weeds, noise, fire protection, historic preservation, use of parks, and streets and sidewalks. The City should evaluate its current special purpose ordinances and determine what new ordinances, and/or amendments to current ordinances, may be beneficial to further implement the Master Plan.

Areas of particular action are presented in the following list:

- 1) Adopt a light pollution ordinance to address excessive lighting, glare, and related nuisance issues associated with inappropriate outdoor lighting conditions. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 2) Adopt a "*clean creek*" ordinance, or amendments to existing City environmental codes, to address improper clearing and discharging of runoff or wastes in or near important water courses. (City Council, in coordination with the County Drain Commissioner)
- 3) Adopt a property maintenance ordinance, or amendments to existing City junk and blight codes, to address the proper maintenance of residential and nonresidential properties. (City Council)
- 4) Adopt amendments to the City's existing sign ordinance to address billboards and the proper size and character of signage in general. (City Council)
- 5) Adopt an access management ordinance to ensure safety along thoroughfares and minimize congestion. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 6) Explore opportunities for enacting amendments to existing ordinances that will provide incentives to developers (such as allowing greater densities for additional open spaces) to pursue desirable development patterns. (City Administrator, Zoning Administrator)
- 7) Adopt ordinances and policies to fund storm water management. (City Council)

Capital Improvements Programming

The orderly programming of public improvements is to be accomplished in conjunction with the Master Plan. The manner in which this occurs is called Capital Improvements Programming. In its basic form, a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a complete list of all proposed public improvements planned for a six year period (the time span may vary), including costs, sources of funding, location, and priority. It is a schedule for implementing public capital improvements that acknowledges current and anticipated demands, and recognizes present and potential financial resources available to the community. The CIP is not intended to encourage the spending of additional public monies, but is simply a means by which an impartial evaluation of needs may be made. The CIP outlines the projects that will replace or improve existing facilities, or that will be necessary to serve current and projected land use development within a community.

Advanced planning for public works through the use of a CIP ensures more effective and economical capital expenditures, as well as the provision of public works in a timely manner. Few communities are fortunate enough to have available at any given time sufficient revenues to satisfy all demands for new or improved public facilities and services. Consequently, most are faced with the necessity of determining the relative priority of specific projects and establishing a program schedule for their initiation and completion. The use of capital improvements programming can be an effective tool for implementing the Master Plan.

The following projects, identified as part of the Master Plan planning process, should be included in such a program:

Police Protection

- 1) Expand the police department facilities in the City Hall to address the increasing demand for office space and a photo/video room.
- 2) Install a carport structure at the City Hall to protect the vehicles from the elements and improve response times.
- 3) Explore the feasibility of a joint gun range with other area jurisdictions, such as Ingham County and Delhi Township, and pursue its development if determined feasible and practical.

Fire Protection

- 1) Purchase new vehicles to replace aging units of decreasing reliability.
- 2) Replace the SCBA compressor unit.
- 3) Expand Station 2 to enable the Hazmat truck to be housed more centrally and to create additional storage area.
- 4) Develop a back-up generator system for Station 1.
- 5) Develop a fire hydrant system in the Sycamore Village Mobile Home Park

City Hall

- 1) Expand City Hall to address increasing office and storage needs.
- 2) Include an elevator as part of future City Hall improvements.
- 3) Expand parking facilities.
- 4) Improve the sound system in the community room.
- 5) Develop a back-up generator system.

Water Service

- 1) Continue the process of looping the system as new development occurs to maintain adequate pressure.
- 2) Replace and upgrade the older and undersized pipe on an ongoing basis.
- 3) Maintain the well maintenance and replacement program to ensure adequate supply.

Sanitary Sewer Service

- 1) Expand the waste water treatment plant in phases, to increase available treatment capacity when warranted by future development.
- 2) Continue to investigate and eliminate cross connections to the system which are unnecessarily absorbing system capacity through inflow and infiltration.
- 3) Replace and upgrade the older and undersized pipe on an ongoing basis.
- 4) Plan for the replacement or possible elimination of the two older lift stations and continue to monitor the functioning of the other two.

Storm Water Management

- 1) Continue to evaluate, replace and upgrade storm sewer lines in conjunction with the street improvements program.

Transportation

- 1) Extend Eugenia Street or Franklin Farms Drive to Kipp Road to allow additional ingress/egress to the area as development occurs.
- 2) Implement strategies to reduce traffic accidents along Ash Street and Jefferson Street.
- 3) Continue full funding of the street improvement program, including sidewalks.
- 4) Develop a M-36 truck bypass route to discourage truck traffic in the downtown area.
- 5) Install sidewalks as part of an infill program to establish continuous pedestrian and non-motorized circulation networks.

Economic Development Programs

There are a number of programs available to the City to encourage economic development in coordination with the Master Plan.

Financing

The **Downtown Development Authority Act, P.A. 197 of 1975**, as amended, permits municipalities to establish a nonprofit development corporation called a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with broad powers, including those of taxation and bonding, to focus on revitalization and development within established "downtown" boundaries. The Act gives to an authority broad powers with regard to the planning and development of the downtown district. It may engage in downtown planning, promote housing and public facility developments, and encourage economic development projects. Operating revenues may be raised through public and private contributions or through properties the DDA may control. With the approval of the municipal governing body, an ad valorem tax may be levied on real and tangible personal property within the downtown district. Capital financing may be raised through revenue bonds, borrowing money, and tax increment financing. Tax increment financing involves the capture of increased property taxes resulting from new development to pay for the public facilities and other activities required for the development.

The City of Mason established a DDA in 1984. All DDA plans for economic development and financing should be reviewed and, if applicable, revised to maintain coordination with the Master Plan.

Other programs function similarly to those authorized by P.A. 197 of 1975. **The Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Act, P.A. 338 of 1974**, as amended, permits the creation of county or local corporations that can be used to assist financing of private development projects that will result in the creation of new jobs and an expanded tax base. **The Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) Act, P.A. 281 of 1986**, permits the creation of a local authority board to fund infrastructure improvement projects for industrial development.

Commercial Business Retention and Expansion

- 1) Continue support for the Downtown Development Authority, Historic District Commission, and the Mason Area Chamber of Commerce's efforts to preserve, enhance and protect our unique downtown center including:
 - a) Evaluate existing and encourage ongoing improvement of downtown facades. (Downtown Development Authority and City Council)
 - b) Explore opportunities to improve the clarity and attractiveness of direction signs for visitors to Mason for events and destinations, including locations of public restrooms and water fountains. (Downtown Development Authority and City Administrator)
 - c) Encourage building owners to install fire sprinkler systems for building and public safety. (City Administrator, Fire Chief, and Downtown Development Authority)
 - d) Continue maintenance of the downtown streetscape including street and sidewalk sweeping; planting/landscaping enhancements; and alley revitalization. (Downtown Development Authority and City Administrator)
 - e) Expand visibility of police patrols in downtown to enhance citizen perception of safety. (Police Chief)
- 2) Encourage additional development and improvement of the Cedar Street and Kipp Road commercial business corridors through sign ordinance regulation; streetscape improvements; access management; and architectural guidelines. (Planning Commission and City Council)

Industrial Development

- 1) Collaborate with county, regional, and state economic development organizations to identify opportunities for attracting new industrial development and for expanding existing Mason industries. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 2) Prioritize “clean” industries for City economic development efforts. (Planning Commission, City Council, and Downtown Development Authority)
- 3) Seek to limit encroachment of commercial and residential land uses into those areas identified in the Master Plan for industry. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 4) Consider infrastructure needs of future industrial expansion when opportunities arise, especially as related to electronic information transmittal and rail and highway transport. (Planning Commission, City Council)
- 5) Participate in “brownfield” programs to facilitate the redevelopment of abandoned industrial sites. (Planning Commission, City Council)

Other Implementation Strategies

In addition to the tools discussed in the previous pages, there are a number of other miscellaneous implementation strategies that should be pursued to further implement the Master Plan. These additional strategies are listed below:

Continuing Care for Senior Citizens

- 1) Encourage a privately developed extended care facility for older citizens in need of long term care services or accommodations. (Community)
- 2) Provide a safe and accessible walking trail for exercise and enjoyment. (City Council)
- 3) Increase activities for senior citizens, including a new Senior Night. (Community)

Entertainment

- 1) Promote the establishment of Bed and Breakfast facilities in the downtown area. (Planning Commission, City Council, and Downtown Development Authority)
- 2) Encourage the establishment of a movie theater and playhouse for live productions. (Planning Commission)

- 3) Encourage church groups to provide after school activities for youth, especially for pre-teens. (Residents)

Housing

- 1) Explore opportunities for encouraging compliance with any new property maintenance ordinance, or amendments to existing City junk and blight codes, to address the proper maintenance of residential and nonresidential properties. (City Council)
- 2) Develop strategies to encourage the conservation of older housing stock and explore community interest in expanding historic preservation efforts for older homes of significant architectural interest. (City Administrator, Zoning Administrator)
- 3) Pursue state and federal grant programs to assist in the enhancement of residential areas. These programs include:
 - a) *Community Development Block Grants, Housing Grant Program*: Under this program, CDBG funds may be used by a community that demonstrates housing needs. Neighborhood preservation and revitalization is a priority and may be addressed by implementing a variety of comprehensive neighborhood housing rehabilitation and community development activities such as home improvements, rehabilitation of rental units, programs for the homeless, and public facilities improvements if part of a comprehensive improvement program for a targeted neighborhood. (City Administrator)
 - b) *Community Development Block Grants, Neighborhood Builders Alliance Program*: Under this program, CDBG funds may be used to improve the quality of life by rebuilding neighborhoods. Funds may be used to support the efforts of neighborhood based and other non-profit organizations to undertake specific activities directed at general neighborhood improvements and crime prevention. (City Administrator)

Recreation

- 1) Evaluate and implement the City Recreation Plan. (City Council)
- 2) Continue to develop an open dialogue with the Mason Public School system and neighboring Townships about how we might best utilize sports and recreation facilities in and around the city for the good of the entire area. (City Administrator)

- 3) Work with the school district to provide safe and supervised recreation programs and facilities for all citizens. (City Administrator)
- 4) Continue to promote Mason as a “Walkable Community” by maintaining and developing city sidewalks on all streets where practical. Pursue projects such as Hayhoe Riverwalk, connecting existing park spaces in the community with walking and bike trails. (Planning Commission)
- 5) Adopt the concept of a proactive healthy community as proposed by the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports, outlined in its Promoting Activities Communities Award Program. (City Council, by resolution)
- 6) Pursue options for bringing YMCA services into the community to enhance and supplement our recreation facilities and programs. (City Administrator)
- 7) Maintain strong coordination with local service organizations to facilitate the provision of recreation programs in association with the City’s park facilities and library site. (City Administrator)
- 8) Pursue state and federal grant programs to assist in the enhancement of recreation facilities and opportunities. (City Administrator)
- 9) Establish a recreation board broadly representative of the community. (City Council)

Transportation

- 1) Pursue state and federal grant programs to assist in the enhancement of transportation corridors including roads, non-motorized trails, and streetscape improvements. For example, the Michigan Transportation Economic Development Fund, administered through the Michigan Department of Transportation, provides grants for road projects relating to economic development opportunities in agriculture or food processing, tourism, forestry, high technology research, manufacturing, or eligible office center developments.
- 2) Monitor activities of the Mason-Jewett Field and the Capital Region Airport Authority (CRAA), and communicate with airport authorities regarding operations, proposed changes, and anticipated impacts on the City.
- 3) Partner with CRAA and Vevay Township to develop and implement a plan to reduce the undesirable effects of airport operations on area residents, including the enhancement of airport rules and enforcement thereof, and to develop a process for effectively handling resident complaints regarding airport use.

Maintaining a Current Master Plan

Successful implementation of desired policies requires the maintenance of a current Master Plan. The Master Plan should be updated periodically. The Plan must be responsive to community changes if it is to be an effective community tool and relied upon for guidance. Periodic review of the Plan should be undertaken by the Planning Commission, City Council, and other officials to determine whether the Plan continues to be sensitive to the needs of the community and continues to chart a realistic and desirable future. Community changes that may suggest amendments to the Plan include changing conditions involving available infrastructure and public services, growth trends, unanticipated and large-scale development, and changing community aspirations. The importance of maintaining a current Plan is reflected by the 2002 amendment to the Municipal Planning Act that requires a Planning Commission to review its Master Plan at least every five years to determine whether amendments or a wholly new Plan is necessary. However, an annual review of the Plan is recommended to ensure the Plan stays current with the continuing evolution of the City.

Important questions that should be asked during a review of the Plan should include:

- 1) Does the Plan present valid and current inventory data (Appendices)?
- 2) Does the discussion of planning issues and goals/objectives (Chapter Two) continue to be appropriate for the City today and, if not, what additions, deletions or other revisions should be considered?
- 3) Does the Future Land Use Strategy (Chapter 3) continue to reflect the preferred strategy for addressing development and preservation and, if not, what revisions should be considered?

Amendments to the Plan, or the preparation of a wholly new Plan, should follow the procedures delineated in the Municipal Planning Act in addition to measures the City believes will enhance the planning process. The City should seek substantive community input on possible changes during the early stages of deliberations as it has done in the past.