
Chapter 1 Introduction

Change is an inevitable fact of life. Communities will change over time, regardless of whether they *plan* for change or not. Jonesfield Township and the Village of Merrill are no exceptions – the communities have changed over time and will continue to do so.

At this point, it is appropriate for the Township and Village to examine present community conditions, evaluate the problems and opportunities facing the community, and develop strategies for the future.

This document, the Merrill-Jonesfield Community Master Plan, is an attempt to quantify, assess, and respond to change. Also, the plan is both a statement and a vision concerning the community's desire for its future growth and development. Furthermore, this Master Plan is a "basic plan" intended to serve the following purposes:

- Help members of the Township Board, Village Council, Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards of Appeals, and area residents make informed decisions about how the community develops over time.

- Provide a better legal foundation for the Township and Village Zoning Ordinances.
- Encourage the establishment and implementation of land use and development policies that promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community's residents.
- Establish goals and policies relating to land use, development, and public services.
- Provide guidelines for the preservation and enhancement of the community's character.
- Define a vision of the community's future.
- Provide guidance to the process of reviewing land development project proposals.
- Identify positive actions that can be taken to assure that future development is consistent with the goals and policies expressed in this plan.
- Identify areas of the community that are suitable for different types of land use and development.
- Provide a basic plan consistent with the requirements of the Township Planning Act and the Municipal Planning Act.

Representatives of Jonesfield Township and the Village of Merrill have also taken an important step by electing to prepare their Master Plan as a cooperative endeavor by both units of government. The Township and Village are closely linked by many physical, social, and economic factors. Also, many of today's community development issues are not restricted by political boundaries. In most cases, neighboring communities are facing many of the same problems. In brief, it makes a great deal of sense for Jonesfield Township and the Village of Merrill to prepare a joint Village-Township plan on a cooperative basis.

This Master Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of both the Township Planning Act (P.A. 168 of 1959, as amended) and the Municipal Planning Act (P.A. 285 of 1931, as amended). The plan is designed to present a shared vision of the community's future development while also addressing the specific needs of the Township and Village as separate political entities.