
Chapter 7

Action Program

Introduction

The Merrill – Jonesfield Community Master Plan has been prepared to serve as a guide on both short-term and long-range issues which the Village and Township will face as they develop in the future. Community planning issues were identified and discussed in Chapter 4 of this report. These issues were then used to formulate a set of general goals and more specific objectives that have been presented in Chapter 5. *These goals and objectives should serve as the basis for the tasks that the Township and Village will undertake, both individually and jointly, to translate the Master Plan into action.*

In addition, implementation of the Merrill – Jonesfield Community Master Plan should involve the following major elements:

A. Public Involvement and Education

Public involvement and education are critical to the success of any plan. The community must be aware of the plan's existence and it must also accept the plan's findings and

recommendations. The Township and Village Planning Commissions have the main responsibility for working to achieve community involvement in the planning process and support for planning in general. This is a never-ending task.

B. Acceptance and Use of the Plan by the Township Board and Village Council

The current statutes do not specifically require adoption of the plan by the Township Board and the Village Council, although they may assert their right to approve the plan. However, as the elected legislative bodies of the Township and Village, it is imperative that the Board and Council members accept the Master Plan and use it in the governing process. As a first step in this direction, the Township Board and Village Council should each be asked to endorse the plan, following its adoption by the respective Planning Commissions.

C. Plan Updates

Community planning is a dynamic process. In order for the Master Plan to remain a viable document, it must be periodically updated. The Planning Commissions should conduct a basic review of the document on an annual basis. Modifications should be made as necessary. The result is a plan that is

always current and based on the best available information.

Also, the Municipal and Township Planning Acts (Acts 285 of 1931 and 168 of 1959, as amended) now state that *“at least every 5 years after adoption of the plan, the planning commission shall review the plan and determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the plan or adopt a new plan.”* This means that a more formal review of the plan should be done, with proper documentation, at least every five years.

Periodic plan updates or amendments do not need to be lengthy or elaborate. Depending on the subject matter, an update might be presented in a memo of a few pages, unless the community elects to prepare an entirely new plan. Since the plan has been prepared as a joint effort by the Township and Village, proposals for updates and amendments should also be discussed jointly by the two governmental units.

The local Planning Commissions should note that plan updates and amendments must be handled in the same manner as the adoption of the original plan with respect to coordination with neighboring communities, review periods, public notices and hearing requirements.

D. Annual Implementation Program

As an extension of the annual plan review process mentioned previously, the Planning Commissions should also evaluate the implementation progress that has been made in the previous year. Following this review, the Planning Commissions should prepare a list of specific objectives to be accomplished in the coming year and over the next five years. This list should then be ranked to identify the Planning Commission's priorities, and it should include both capital and non-capital projects. Again, this process should be coordinated between the Township and the Village Planning Commissions.

The Planning Commissions should submit the draft implementation program to the Township Board and Village Council for review. The Township and Village legislative bodies should then meet with their respective Planning Commissions to discuss the program and to reach a consensus on the priorities for plan implementation in the coming year. Like the plan updates, the annual implementation program can be a simple report in a memo format.

E. Review the Township and Village Zoning Ordinances and Update Them As Necessary

The Township and Village Zoning Ordinances will probably remain the single most important tools for plan implementation. As such, it is extremely important to update and revise the ordinances to reflect the Master Plan's land use recommendations.

Following adoption of the Master Plan, it will be appropriate for the Village and the Township to each pursue an in-depth review of its ordinance.

The land use districts presented in the Master Plan have been designed to reinforce and strengthen the current Zoning Ordinance. However, it is likely that a number of desirable changes will be identified in the ordinance review process.

F. Use the Master Plan In Zoning Decisions

The Master Plan should be consulted prior to making zoning decisions. Experience indicates that the lack of such consultation often results in decisions that are in conflict with the plan's recommendations. Zoning actions that are contrary to the

Master Plan will diminish the public credibility of the document and will also limit the plan's potential benefit if the Township or Village became involved in zoning litigation.

G. Maintain Consistency Between the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinances

Once each community's Zoning Ordinance is revised to be consistent with the plan, this consistency must be maintained. If zoning decisions are made that are contrary to plan recommendations, it is important that the appropriate Planning Commission review the documents and consider a possible plan revision to reflect the zoning action. Plan amendments will also be necessary if issues arise where the plan does not offer sufficient guidance. In such a case, new or expanded material should be added to the plan to address the new issues.