

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY VISION AND PLANNING GOALS



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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the planning process, the community must identify, understand, and work toward a long-term vision that is agreed upon by the city as a whole. The vision statement and the community planning goals and strategic actions were developed after careful analysis of existing trends and conditions in Marine City, as well as through a series of community visioning exercises that served to ascertain the desires and aspirations of city residents about what they want for the future of their

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

In 2040, Marine City is a community that provides an exceptional quality of life for its residents and extends a warm welcome to the great number of tourists it attracts. It is a city that has preserved its rich heritage as a coastal community and celebrates its beautiful architecture, ample cultural resources, and its unique waterfront location. We take pride in celebrating the marine heritage and nature of our community, as well as enjoying the social, walkable nature of the downtown and neighborhoods in Marine City.

Downtown Marine City is a jewel on the St. Clair River - an attractive and vibrant urban center that contains a mix of shopping opportunities, busy office spaces, and an array of high-quality and affordable housing options located in the central business district. In between shopping and dining at one of downtown's great restaurants, visitors enjoy spending quality time with their friends and family along the riverfront at one of the many green spaces that are intermingled with storefronts.

Commercial facilities are well-designed and have a very clean appearance. Signage fits the character of the community and buildings are exceptionally maintained. The shops on Water Street, Broadway Street, and South Parker Street also serve as community gathering spots where residents meet up with friends and neighbors or have the opportunity to make new friends.

Marine City is a business-friendly community that supports entrepreneurs and attracts talented individuals who want to live amidst the city's wide array of amenities and its proximity to cultural and natural resources.

Residents and visitors alike have easy access to a multitude of recreational opportunities along the St. Clair and Belle Rivers. It is a common sight to see people enjoying each other's company while fishing, canoeing, or walking along the banks of the river. In the summer months, the City Beach is full of people young and old - soaking in some sun or cooling off by taking a swim.

There is an overwhelming community spirit that permeates throughout Marine City. There is a deep sense of voluntarism and civic pride that further exemplifies the high quality of life found in the city. City officials commonly cooperate with officials from neighboring communities on a variety of issues. People in Marine City respect the views and needs of others and work hard to ensure that the community is a welcoming place for all.

community. The vision statement and associated planning goals and strategic actions are also based on a survey of local leaders. They were then refined throughout the planning process following input from the City Commission, the Planning Commission, and city residents.

MARINE CITY 2040 VISION

The vision statement is an attempt to capture in words, what Marine City will be like in 2040 if the goals of this Master Plan are achieved and the policies are implemented. When reading this vision, it is necessary to imagine that you are living in the future and describing what the community is like at that point in time, in 2040. This approach is intended to present a better sense of the desired future.

PLANNING GOALS

INTRODUCTION

Communities are continually facing problems associated with growth and development or changes to the community as a result of an ailing economy. In the effort to provide essential municipal services, adequate and efficient areas for business and industry, pleasant living conditions and recreational facilities, communities have looked to planning as a process to prepare for these developmental pressures and economic transitions. The planning process, in turn, helps the City to better manage change in a well thought out manner that will most equitably benefit the entire community.

The goals formulated by the Planning Commission and the community at large are the cornerstone of the planning process. They are intended to provide the basic framework for public and private decision-making. The Master Plan's arrangement of future land uses is based on the community's goals for the future. As such, the goals will effectively direct both public and private decisions regarding land use and development.

PURPOSES OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan is the official document that serves as the long-range comprehensive policy guide to the day-to-day decisions about the future development of the city. The Plan is written to be flexible in order to meet changing future conditions and is designed for the community as a whole, not specific parcels. Through its text and graphic aids, the Master Plan explains the City's philosophy and desires concerning future development.

The Marine City Master Plan was prepared under the provisions of Public Act 33 of 2008, better known as the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which gives the Marine City Planning Commission the authority and obligation to prepare and officially adopt a master plan. The plan is comprised of text and supporting graphics and maps; however, the most significant map is the Future Land Use Map, which shows the location and relationship of land in the city for the next 25 years.

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006) provides that "the zoning ordinance shall be

based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability” and “to limit the improper use of land.” A zoning ordinance is more likely to be defensible when based upon a well-conceived plan. Too often, local officials and citizens find themselves dealing with development proposals with no firm direction and they must either succumb to development pressure or arbitrary denials. The Master Plan will establish policies that promote continuity when issues regarding growth arise. To be implemented effectively, the Master Plan must encourage the joint participation of both public officials and citizens. Only through this participation will the desirable use of land occur within the city.

Specifically, the purposes of the master plan are:

- ▶ To improve the physical environment of the city as a setting for human activities, minimize conflicts caused by growth and change and promote the general health, safety and welfare by making the city more functional, beautiful, vibrant, healthy, interesting and efficient.
- ▶ To promote the interest of the community at large, rather than the special interests of specific individuals or groups within the community.
- ▶ To facilitate the democratic determination and implementation of community policies and physical development. The Plan is primarily a policy instrument. The Plan constitutes a declaration of long-range goals and objectives and provides the basis for a program to accomplish the goals. By providing opportunities for citizen participation, the Plan facilitates the democratic process.
- ▶ To effect political and technical coordination in community development.
- ▶ To inject long-range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.
- ▶ To bring professional and technical knowledge to bear on the making of decisions concerning the physical development of the community.

POLICY PURPOSE

Administration by City officials, legislative action by the City Commission, quasi-judicial rulings by the Zoning Board of Appeals and administrative action and recommendations by the Planning Commission are frequently criticized as being arbitrary and capricious. Clear-cut statements of policy can go far to minimize the apparent arbitrariness of certain planning and planning-related actions. They can guide and substantiate honest, intelligent decisions. They can also serve the community planner and the Planning Commission as an anchor of objectivity. Another useful function performed by policy statements is to inform the public about the thinking of the Planning Commission with regard to land development.

DETERMINING POLICY

The Master Plan is not just a series of maps. Rather, it is first a series of policy statements of objectives. Policy statements, of course, have limitations. They cannot cover every situation. Certain areas are so complex that it will be impossible to know what sort of policy decision can be made until all of the facts are assembled. Also, there must be agreement and consensus in the first place before a policy statement can be adopted. Obviously, this concurrence will not always exist. None of this negates,



however, the desirability of formulating and adopting policy statements in as many areas of planning concern as possible.

PLANNING GOALS

Relying on input from Marine City residents and City officials, combined with a thorough analysis of demographic, economic and land use trends, a series of community planning goals has been developed. These goals should guide decision making relative to land use, transportation, and overall change management. They should be reviewed when examining development proposals, administering or amending the zoning ordinance, and considering public input.

GOAL 1: PLACEMAKING AND LIVABILITY WILL BE CONSIDERED IN ALL DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS TO ENSURE A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

- ▶ Preserve the historical character of Marine City by promoting the restoration and/or preservation of all historic buildings in the city and encourage any new construction in historic districts to have exterior designs compatible with those historic districts.
- ▶ Reinforce the nautical character of Marine City by utilizing the attractiveness of the Belle and St. Clair Rivers within development schemes and recognize these rivers as unique and important resources.
- ▶ Maintain and promote Marine City as a pleasant place to live, work and visit through a proper and thoughtful arrangement of land uses within the city.
- ▶ Identify the city's existing assets and promote those assets as unique quality of life drivers that differentiate Marine City from other communities in the region.
- ▶ Continue to define and implement streetscape standards that transform the central business district into a more walkable, vibrant, and interesting place to frequent.
- ▶ Ensure that downtown is clean, safe, and welcoming.
- ▶ Ensure the street level of buildings relates to the pedestrian as a primary focus.
- ▶ Emphasize public art and integrate it with public buildings, community parks, and public works.
- ▶ Highlight the St. Clair and Belle Rivers as unique natural assets that enhance recreation, tourism, and quality of life and provide transient boating facilities.
- ▶ Identify and participate in targeted neighborhood reinvestment and stabilization programs that improve the quality of the housing stock and overall neighborhood character.
- ▶ Continue to increase housing opportunities in the central business district through the utilization of second and third floor spaces above street-level retail.
- ▶ Where appropriate, identify and pursue new opportunities for public transit, bicycling and other modes of transportation alternatives to automobiles.

GOAL 2: LEADERSHIP WILL PURSUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIES THAT PROVIDE SUSTAINED AND STABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

- ▶ Promote policies that lead to the sustained economic health of Marine City's assets and to the natural revitalization of vacant, low density, obsolescent and deteriorated property. When possible use existing amenities as the focus for the development.
- ▶ Embrace the Green Economy and its focus on alternative energy.
- ▶ Recognize the important role that placemaking strategies play in attracting talent and economic development.
- ▶ Promote and support entrepreneurship in Marine City. Create regulations and implement policies that are entrepreneur-friendly and work to connect entrepreneurs looking to start or expand a business to the organizations or resources that are required to be successful.
- ▶ Ensure that Marine City has a wide variety of amenities including recreation, shopping, cultural resources, entertainment options, and "third places," all of which will help in attracting and retaining talented workers.
- ▶ Attract tourists by focusing on place-based strategies that highlight Marine City's existing assets and unique resources and enhance opportunities for expanded accommodations such as bed and breakfast establishments, hotels/motels, and other tourist-related services.
- ▶ Highlight the importance of post-secondary education and skills-development to all residents to help the community adapt to and compete in a globalized, knowledge-based economy.
- ▶ Communicate and collaborate with other local units of government across the region and leverage new and existing public-private partnerships to promote and implement regional strategic growth initiatives.
- ▶ Work toward full certification through the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program.

GOAL 3: THE CITY IS HOME TO A THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY THAT PROMOTES INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND PROSPERITY

- ▶ Encourage the retention of a viable central business district with adequate parking which serves the convenience needs of the population within the trade area and which will become increasingly able to draw shoppers and tourists from beyond the local trade area.
- ▶ Encourage owners of businesses and structures within the business district to improve and maintain their properties in a manner that promotes the aesthetic appearance of the district.
- ▶ Encourage use and/or redevelopment of existing underutilized, vacant and dilapidated buildings whenever possible.
- ▶ Provide areas within the city for commercial development outside the central business district for those types of commercial uses requiring the large areas of land (e.g. car dealers, grocery stores, lumber yards, etc.)
- ▶ Encourage long-term growth of the commercial tax base of the city.
- ▶ Maintain and improve the public infrastructure within the central business district such as sidewalks, lighting, municipal parking and other amenities.
- ▶ Encourage a concentration of smaller, specialty type retail shops in the central business district.
- ▶ Encourage service type businesses to locate on the fringe of the central business district.

GOAL 4: MARINE CITY IS HOME TO GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY

- ▶ Encourage the construction of new residential development in the city so as to provide an opportunity for those employed in the city and surrounding areas to become residents.
- ▶ Promote a residential environment designed to fulfill basic needs with special attention focused on maintaining or restoring viability of developed residential areas.
- ▶ Require new residential development to be visually attractive and environmentally acceptable, preserving the natural features of each site, such as woods, topography, natural drainage and retention areas.
- ▶ Allow for a variety of dwelling unit types and sizes for ownership and rental by all age groups and income levels, including: site built and factory-built, single family, two-family, and multiple family development.
- ▶ Discourage incompatible non-residential uses from locating in residential neighborhoods.
- ▶ Discourage uses that would increase traffic on residential streets beyond that which the street was designed or intended to carry.
- ▶ Restrict aesthetically incompatible housing types, such as units having a width of less than 20 feet, to locations within licensed mobile home parks.
- ▶ Permit manufactured housing that is aesthetically compatible with site built housing to be located in the community wherever comparable housing is located.
- ▶ Seek out and participate with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) in the establishment and operation of neighborhood improvement and housing rehabilitation programs.
- ▶ Promote “infill” development of adequately sized vacant lots in existing developed areas that are served by public sewer and water.

GOAL 5: THE CITY HAS A DIVERSE INDUSTRIAL MIX THAT ADDS VALUE TO THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY

- ▶ Work with partners to support a stable and diversified economy emphasizing an industrial mix minimally affected by fluctuations.
- ▶ Work with partners to support manufacturing and services capable of serving the needs of the residents and businesses in the area.
- ▶ Work with partners to market available cost-effective, adequately-sized industrial sites that are compatible with the surrounding area.
- ▶ Provide adequate roads, utilities and transportation facilities to service existing and planned industrial areas.
- ▶ Provide adequate buffering of industrial uses from adjacent residential uses and from less intensive land uses through the use of appropriate setback standards, landscaping, and by locating industrial uses adjacent to other intensive land uses.
- ▶ Require future industrial developments to provide adequate onsite off-street parking facilities.
- ▶ Ensure that future industrial development does not emit excessive amounts of noise, fumes, smoke, vibrations or other pollutants.
- ▶ Encourage the proper redevelopment/rehabilitation of abandoned industrial sites, so as to limit/mitigate the negative impacts on neighboring lands and assist in actively marketing these sites for re-use.

MARINE CITY MASTER PLAN

GOAL 6: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY FOR ALL USERS ARE CONSIDERED IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

- ▶ Plan for a network of roads by type and function that will provide a complete road system including major, collector and local roads.
- ▶ Obtain necessary right-of-way dedications and reservations.
- ▶ Cooperate with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the St. Clair County Road Commission to ensure that a proper relationship exists between planned road improvements and the city's desired future land use pattern.
- ▶ Increase pedestrian safety by providing opportunities for pedestrian circulation along existing and planned road systems through a coordinated program of sidewalk construction and maintenance.
- ▶ Limit points of ingress/egress on major roads to improve safety and retain the traffic carrying capacity of the roadway.
- ▶ Provide a transportation system that recognizes the need for both auto and truck traffic and eliminates as many points of conflict between the two as possible.
- ▶ Improve the road system to better serve residences and businesses through a regular program of scheduled pavement maintenance, paving, repaving, curb and gutter construction, etc.
- ▶ Recognize the relationship between land use patterns and the availability and adequacy of the transportation system.

GOAL 7: THE CITY OFFERS HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

- ▶ Provide parks and recreation opportunities and amenities for citizens of all ages and abilities.
- ▶ Promote Marine City as a waterfront "Trail Town" that offers experiences other communities cannot.
- ▶ Ensure Marine City has adequate financial resources for parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- ▶ Deliver outstanding recreation programming and quality public services to all stakeholders.
- ▶ Develop existing park facilities with features and amenities that bring citizens and visitors back on a regular basis.
- ▶ Support the continued development and utilization of an interconnected system of land and water trails in Marine City and beyond.
- ▶ Expand the range of recreation facilities available to residents.

GOAL 8: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES ARE PROVIDED EFFICIENTLY AND COST-EFFECTIVELY

- ▶ Provide a water and sewer system that meets the needs of current and future City residents and businesses and protects the environment.
- ▶ Stage any sewer or water installations to provide efficient growth and revenues to pay for the system.
- ▶ Develop an updated marina study to identify an appropriate location for a transient marina facility.
- ▶ Identify an appropriate location for a new City Hall building and develop a long-term plan for financing its development.