

ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP

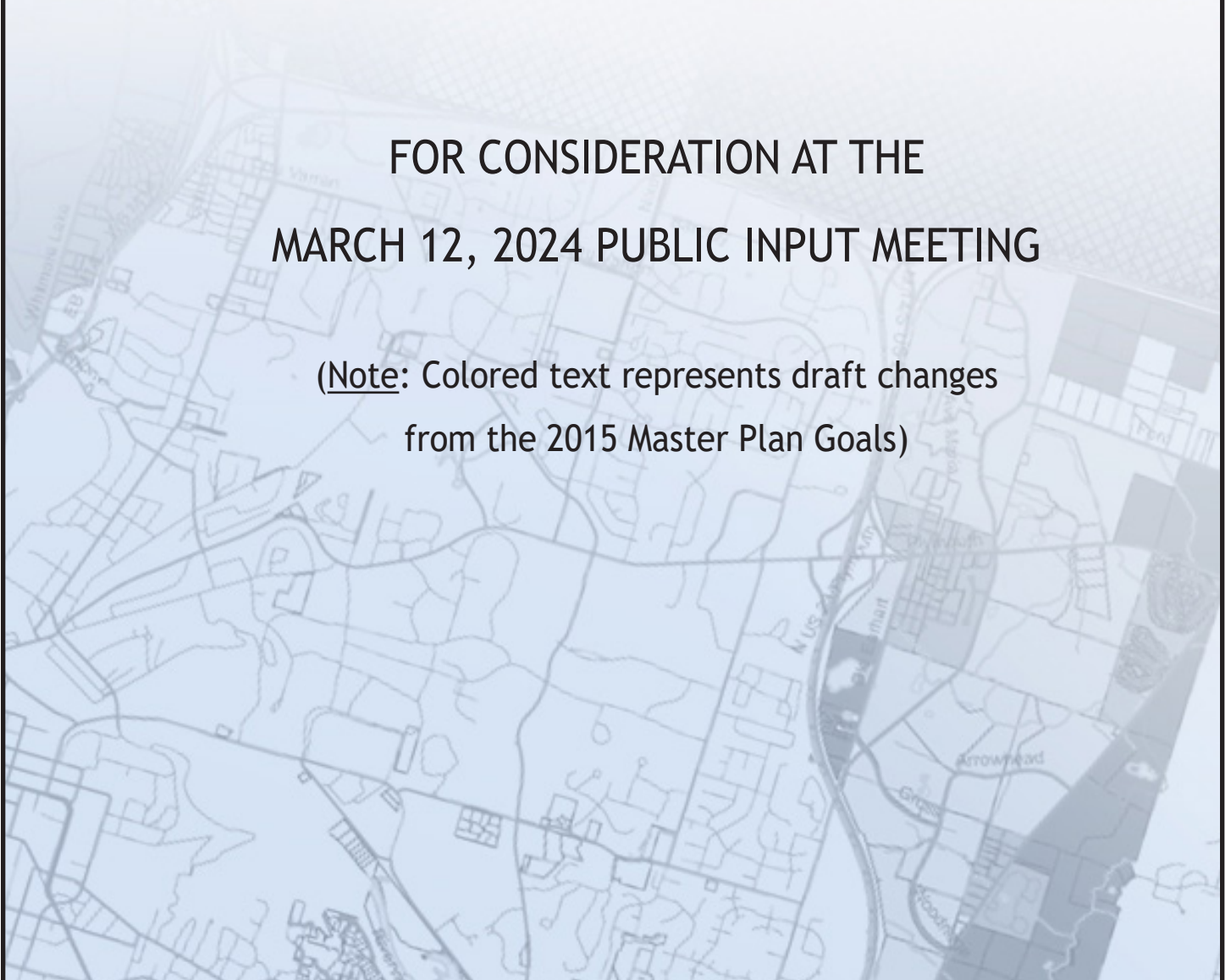
2024

MASTER PLAN DRAFT GOALS

DRAFT: FEBRUARY 21, 2024

FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE
MARCH 12, 2024 PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

(Note: Colored text represents draft changes
from the 2015 Master Plan Goals)



PART 4: GOALS

Goals are broad, fundamental statements a community has identified to accomplish a desired future. Goals express long-term rather than short-term expectations and are often expressed in such general terms that it is difficult to measure the degree to which they have been attained. However, goals establish the overall framework and basis for more specific elements of the Plan.

The following goals are categorized by topic heading. The listing order does not reflect or imply relative importance.

A. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE

A.1 Preserve the Township's Rural Character

The Township's predominant character is rural. The rural character is created by lands still in agricultural use, very low density residences, large areas of publicly owned open space and an abundance of natural features—primarily stream corridors, wetlands and wood lots. These characteristics also create an environment with a desirable low level of noise and artificial lighting.

The Township wishes to retain a largely rural character when it is fully developed while accommodating a diversity of residential, office, research and recreational uses. The overall low population density associated with this vision would not require costly amenities. Large green belt areas, either devoted to agriculture or rural residences, will provide habitat for animal and plant life that cannot survive in an

urban setting, even in parks. The continuing presence of a tranquil, rural setting close to the center of a large urban area will improve the quality of life for both Township residents and residents of the City and neighboring townships.

A.2 Preserve Farmland and Encourage and Enhance Farming Operations

Preservation of farmland and enhancing farming operations are Township priorities.

Doing so:

- Protects valuable and irreplaceable agricultural land,
- Protects an important economic contributor to the area's agricultural economy,
- Maintains the rural character of the Township,
- Protects the local tax base,
- Retains the natural character of the Township, and
- Discourages unplanned growth.

The Township believes that farming, including smaller scale farming operations, is feasible and should be supported and enhanced. Such operations serve an important market need in the nearby urban area and provide a useful balance and contrast to the more intensely developed urban area. Farming provides important economic support for the goal of preserving the Township's rural character and is a facet of the goal of preserving open land.

B. COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

B.1 Preserve and Enhance the Township's Identity

The Township cannot achieve its other goals unless it preserves itself as a viable political entity. Many elements comprise the character of a municipality and create its identity. In Ann Arbor Township's case, the rural character is a major element; the physical shape, the "L" shaped land that wraps around the north and northeast sides of the City is another major element. The freeways and the Huron River provide a distinct, physical separation between the relatively low density of the Township and the higher density of the City. The contrast helps define the Township's identity. The **Township Boundary Policy Statement** between the City of Ann Arbor and Ann Arbor Township will ensure orderly annexation of properties to the City and protect the remainder of the Township from annexation, so as to preserve the integrity of Ann Arbor Township and maintain the urban edge of Ann Arbor.

B.2 Maintain Cooperative Relationships with Neighboring Municipalities

Achieving each of the preceding goals will require cooperation with neighbors. **Many land-based features don't respect political boundaries -- such as traffic, streams and development pressures to name a few.** An on-going planning and working relationship with its neighbors is essential if Ann Arbor Township is to have a reasonable chance at achieving its other goals. The City and Township Boundary Policy Statement **that ensures orderly annexation of properties** provides a significant example of cooperative community planning.

C. ENVIRONMENT

Natural features are often thought of as independent landscape features. However, they work together and function as an interrelated environmental system. Ann Arbor Township has goals for individual natural features, as well as for broad environmental systems.

C.1 Protect, Preserve, and Restore Natural Features

Existing natural features, such as woodlands, fence rows, wetlands, stream corridors, and groundwater should be protected and preserved as both unique landscape features and as components of larger, interrelated environmental systems. They should be respected in farming activities, in daily living in rural residential areas, and in development planning and construction. These features are important as visual amenities, are critical elements in sustaining the rural character of the Township, and are essential in protecting water quality, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors. Most communities, especially townships, have natural features but the patterns and relationships between various natural features that they collectively create are usually unique to each community. So it is with Ann Arbor Township. Its natural features play a vital part in establishing the Township's character and identity.

C.2 Preserve and Protect Groundwater

Groundwater plays an important role in the Township, as many of its residents rely on individual drinking water wells. Groundwater is also the source for all agricultural irrigation. Groundwater is interconnected with all natural features on the ground's surface, providing a constant flow of clean, cold water to streams and lakes. Both the quality and quantity of aquifer resources should be protected and preserved.

C.3 Protect the Natural Conditions of Watersheds

Watersheds, or the drainage sub-basins in the Huron River drainage basin, are important systems on which to focus for protecting the Township's natural features, especially wetlands and stream corridors. The Fleming Creek and Traver Creek watersheds are the two largest in the Township.

A watershed is a hydrologic unit that can also serve as a unit for land use planning. By focusing on watersheds as units for planning, many policies relating to preservation of natural features can be realized. If not carefully planned, land use activities and development practices within an area can have a very detrimental effect on a watershed. The watersheds in Ann Arbor Township face the specter of continued degradation due to increasing impervious surfaces from the roads, parking lots, and rooftops accompanying growth.

The protection of elements within a watershed, such as steep slopes, woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands, is essential to maintaining stream flow, restricting stormwater runoff, and preserving surface water quality. Stream flow, runoff prevention, and overall surface water quality have a direct correlation to the long-term health of the local and regional community. The safe recharge of groundwater resources, preservation of prime soils, and conservation of habitat for flora and fauna are all benefits of strong watershed protection.

C.4 Preserve Open Space

Open spaces are an important part of the Township's rural character. Preservation of open spaces supports all the other goals – preservation of rural character, preservation of the Township's identity, encouragement of farming operations, protection of natural resources, protection of the natural conditions of watersheds, protection of existing residential areas, and maintaining a cooperative relationship with neighboring government entities.

D. TRANSPORTATION

D.1 Coordinate Transportation Improvements to Support Land Uses

Future road improvements should be compatible with and supportive of the Township's land use policies. Too often land use policies must be adjusted to fit road improvement plans. Planning for traffic flows and necessary road improvements should be consistent with transportation policies of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti urban area. Road improvements should respect natural features, especially trees and brush, and the natural character of road corridors. Existing residential areas should be protected from road widening and realignments.

D.2 Support County Transportation Agencies in Developing Non-Motorized Facilities Along Township Roadways

All modes of transportation should be considered integral elements of the entire transportation system, and all improvements to this system should be considered opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility for all travelers within the Township and throughout the region. To this end, future road improvements should include non-motorized transportation facilities to accommodate the needs of residents for walking, biking and public transportation riders of all ages and abilities.

D.3 Develop Off-Road Non-Motorized Trails

Where feasible, the Township should partner with other entities, such as the Washtenaw County Road Commission, Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS), adjacent communities, the University of Michigan, and others to plan, design, and implement off-road, non-motorized transportation facilities. The locations of potential facilities are illustrated on Map 11 in the Appendix. These facilities would coordinate with on-road facilities to create a looped system of non-motorized trails to allow for recreation, pedestrian and bicycle transportation throughout the Township, and to important local destinations.

E. NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING

E.1 Protect Existing Residential Areas

Existing residential areas should be protected from potentially adverse impacts of incompatible development, such as unreasonable increases in traffic, activity, or excessive noise and light. Where higher density residential development or non-residential development is close to existing residences, land use policies should be designed to create a secure and stable environment for those residences.

E.2 Maintain a Diverse Mix of Housing

The presence of a wide variety of housing options in Ann Arbor Township encourages a vibrant community. The current mix with regard to density, unit size, location, and other features allows Ann Arbor Township to foster an inclusive sense of community and should be maintained.

F. CLIMATE RESILIENCE

F.1 Support Land Use Practices and Techniques that are Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient

Natural feature preservation is important in responding to climate change. Nature-based solutions are a fundamental pillar of fighting the climate crisis, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, deploying renewable energy, and increasing energy efficiency. Natural solutions can reduce emissions, remove carbon from the atmosphere and lock it away, make ecosystems more resilient, and lower climate change risks for people. The Township's environmental goals (Pg. 43) have the added benefit of addressing climate change.

Where and how land is developed can work with or against natural features -- and their ability to provide ecological and climate benefits -- on and around a site. The extent, location, and design of new development should work to preserve natural features on the developing property, and, where possible, the surrounding area and the ecological benefits the preserved features provide.

The Township should also play its part in supporting renewable energy generation, non-motorized transportation, and clean and energy-efficient buildings, among other techniques that support the goals and policies of the Township's Climate Action Plan.

Increase in the volume of stormwater runoff is one result of climate change that is directly linked to the development of land. The Township will implement ordinances, techniques, and practices to increase sequestration, infiltration, and management of stormwater runoff in new development.