

Master Plan Goals Workshop Results

Ann Arbor Township

On March 12, 2024, the Planning Commission hosted a public input workshop to gather resident's thoughts about the draft Goals in the Master Plan.

Residents were invited to attend the workshop through a number of different channels, including the Township's website, poster/flyer at the Township Hall counter, social media, and a post card mailing. The workshop agenda and draft goals were posted on the Township's website.

Workshop Format

Chairs in the room were organized around small tables, accompanied by an easel with a large display board. Written on each display board was one Master Plan Goal topic (i.e. Agriculture and Rural Life, Community Identity and Relationship, Environment, Transportation, Neighborhoods and Housing, and Climate Resiliency), and the associated Goal Headings. The text explaining the Goal Headings and Goals was also provided to each workshop participant in a handout. Each table accommodated approximately six people. One Planning Commission member joined each group as the discussion facilitator. As people entered the room, they sat down in the available chairs, organizing themselves into six small groups. Approximately 40 people, including five Planning Commissioners and two Township Board members, attended the workshop.

The workshop began at 7:00pm with a welcome by the Planning Commission Chair and introductions all around. Then, the planning consultant gave a short context presentation about the community's Master Plan, its role in land use planning, and the purpose of the workshop. Lastly, the consultant described the desired flow of the small group discussions.

The small group discussions started with the Planning Commissioner reading the Goals under the Goal Topic assigned to that table aloud. The small group members could follow along on the handout. The Commissioner then facilitated a discussion of each Goal, asking participants what they found to be important, valuable, troubling, or lacking in the draft Goals, or other reaction to the Goals. As ideas emerged during the discussion, participants recorded them on sticky notes provided, and adhered them to the display board. The sticky notes became the record of each small group's discussion. Once the discussions ended (after approximately 40 minutes), the large group reconvened and a spokesperson for each small group reported their results to the large group.

The workshop ended with a description of the next steps in the master planning process, and how the ideas generated during the discussions will be used to craft the Master Plan document.

Workshop Results

The ideas reflected on the sticky notes are recorded on the following pages, and organized by Goal Topic. The Goal Topic and each Goal Heading is listed first, followed by the workshop results for that Goal Topic. Note that some ideas provided may relate directly to the draft Goal, or it may be more appropriate as a Policy, or Action Item that could be included in other sections of the Master Plan document.

The Township also received input via emails from residents who were unable to attend the workshop. Their comments have been summarized and integrated into the results below *in italics*.

A. Agriculture and Rural Life

A.1 Preserve the Township’s Rural Character

A.2 Preserve Farmland and Encourage and Enhance Farming Operations

RESULTS:

- Noble goal. How to protect rural areas?
- *Township to fully invest in community-centered, proactive and preventative (vs. reactive) policies that anticipate and prevent problems (in particular preserving agriculture, rural life and the Townships natural environment through community gatherings and outreach, and greater cooperation with neighboring governments*

Rural Character:

- Have policy for native species/woodlot as part of agriculture
- Agricultural zoning: With animals – 10 acres; without animals – 2 to 3-acre minimum
- Need to make farming economical!
- *Go further to safeguard existing farms*
- Keep taxes low on ag properties
- Encourage small farm operations
- Extend growing season with hoop houses
- Consider ag tourism?
- Hold farms to stewardship standards to protect land and water resources.
- Encourage organic certification

Sewer & Water:

- What controls on water extractions? What controls ag waste disposal?
- What is the plan for sewer & water?
- Stable & safe well water
- How to develop “research” + “office” without services.

B. Community Identity and Relationships

B.1 Preserve and Enhance the Township’s Identity

B.2 Maintain Cooperative Relationships with Neighboring Municipalities

RESULTS:

Township’s Identity:

- Maintain the Township’s rural & low density residential character
- Need a map of potential annexation areas
- Make Twp. Boundary Policy available on Twp. website
- Worry about spread of urban growth into township
- Increase green belt area.

Cooperative Relationships:

- Enhance outer municipal services with Twp.

C. Environment

C.1 Protect, Preserve, and Restore Natural Features

C.2 Preserve and Protect Groundwater

C.3 Protect the Natural Condition of Watersheds

C.4 Preserve Open Space

RESULTS:

- Limit noise, light, air pollution & surface water impacts of transport infrastructure
- Education. Info. sharing.
- Q: Should goals be different in 2 different sections of Twp?
- *Concerned about environmental impacts of encroaching development and increased traffic generated by new development.*
- *Cherish rural features and quiet beauty of Ann Arbor Township*

Natural Features:

- Renewable energy interaction w/natural areas
- Integrate alternative energy options in order to protect environment
- Rural character is north of M-14 & farming
- Restore habitat, land quality, ecosystems; holistic
- *Concerned about noise, air pollution and endangerment of groundwater from increasing encroachment of development [east side of Township]*

Groundwater:

- Distinguish between water & sewer district
- Important!
- Integrate environment goals with climate resilience goals
- *Keep development small to protect watershed/groundwater resources to ensure water needs are met.*
- *New developments with single-family homes of 3,500 s.f. or more to provide plans ensuring they are not unreasonably using water resources.*

Watersheds:

- Enhance plantings/wetlands restoration
- Flood mitigation. H2O quality protection

Open Space:

- Deer/wildlife management
- Acquire
- More public access open spaces

D. Transportation

D.1 Coordinate Transportation Improvements to Support Land Uses

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

D.3 Develop Off-Road Non-Motorized Trails

RESULTS:

Improvements:

- Add shoulder to paved section of Warren Road between Pontiac Trail and Whitmore Lake Rd.
- Recommend AATA bus service to East Ann Arbor Clinic on Earhart Rd.

Support County Agencies – Non-Motorized:

- Cycling across Nixon/US-23 overpass is dangerous. Add fence or other action.
- Vehicle speed limits are high in certain regions (55mph too high in places).
- Suggestion: Sidewalks along Plymouth Rd. between US-23 overpass and Dixboro Rd.
- Suggestion: Post speed limit on Earhart Road between Plymouth Rd. and US-23 overpass.
- Urge UM to offer regular bus transportation from Botanical Gardens to Central Campus
- Better Communication with County to have a plan to repair County Roads
- Prioritize bike & pedestrian paths for any development.

Off-Road Non-Motorized:

- Add walking trails around protected greenbelt and farm shares.

E. Neighborhoods and Housing

E.1 Protect Existing Residential Areas

E.2 Maintain a Diverse Mix of Housing

RESULTS:

Existing Residential Areas:

- How can we decrease the sound from the highway (sound barrier)?
- Lighting, noise, traffic etc. should be appropriate for the use of the property, as the use previously approved by the Township
- Commercial support of residential housing
- Long-term financial preservation of farm land
- Distinguish between agriculture farming and agriculture non-farming
- Encourage gardening open spaces

Diverse Mix of Housing:

- Provide for senior housing in a small community – somewhat self-sufficient
- *Provide affordable senior housing; increase choices*
- Consider golf course with housing around the course
- Ability for the aquifer to support the housing
- Keep A2 Twp rural. Do not expand water & sewer. Don't turn A2 Twp into the City of Ann Arbor
- Watershed protection. No large development outside water & sewer areas. (*)
- On Open Space & Ag zoning, 1 house per 10-acres leads to building McMansions. Create special incentive of green, net-zero, less than 2,500 s.f. Allow 4 home-density bonus. (*)
[(*) = priority].
- *AAT doesn't have a diversity of housing in north/northwestern rural sections of the Township, particularly a lack of rental housing options. No affordable housing is available for purchase. Particularly difficult for farmers, and their employees. Consider adopting Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) ordinance, using City of Ann Arbor's ordinance as an example.*

F. Climate Resilience

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

RESULTS:

- Value statement about climate resilience in a section (***) = priority)
- Resilience shouldn't be afterthought
- Identify & incentivize best practices
- Is there an imperative requiring
- Need more about resilience
- Overly focused on greenhouse gas
- Pro-active incentives to influence behavior
- Mechanism for capturing carbon

Vegetation/Landscaping/Gardens:

- Preserve natural landscapes
- Percentage of land preservation in A2 Twp
- Plant trees
- Rain Gardens/bees butterflies
- Bee & butterfly garden program
- No mow summer
- Set rules on 1) Snowblowers; 2) Leaf blowers; 3) Lawn mowers; 4) Only electric?
- Outreach on programs for greener gardens

Development:

- No new development
- New development. Why new development?
- N'field development adjacent to us
- Trade-offs: # buildings/acre vs. strong ordinance

Master Plan/Ordinances:

- Leverage City of AA plans
- Master Plan zoning ordinance map all together
- More climate focused ordinances

Renewable Energy/Utilities:

- Home solar
- Solar farms
- Grey water
- Community education; grey water, etc.
- Water sequestration @ home

Transportation:

- Emissions – traffic huge contributor
- Increase in traffic - Not
- Sidewalks
- Bike trails
- Electric bike chargers
- Non-motorized transport – public
- Create public transportation