

SECTION III. FUTURE LAND USE

This section of the Plan builds on the Community Profile presented in Section II and extends the Township’s vision into the future. It begins with the broad policy foundation upon which the future land use plan is formed. This foundation is found in Chapter 10, which includes the goals of the Township and the objectives or milestones that support them.

Section III extends the Township’s vision into the future ... and outlines a series of approaches to realize that vision.

Based on the goals and objectives of the Township, the future land use element is presented in Chapter 11. That section includes the Future Land Use Map (Map 15), and a description of the general land uses planned for the Township. Finally, this section concludes with Implementation Strategies, or the action plan, which is a series of approaches that outline a course of action to realize the vision of this Master Plan.

The future land use plan is general in scope. It is not, in most cases, intended to establish precise boundaries of land use or exact locations of future uses. The timing of a particular land use is dependent upon a number of factors, such as availability of public utilities, provisions for adequate roadways, effect on public services, and the demand for a particular land use as determined by market forces. Additional factors must be considered when reviewing a request for rezoning a parcel of land.

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The Relationship of Planning to Zoning. The relationship between land use planning and zoning is an important one. Planning is guiding land uses from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by law or ordinance. The laws of the State of Michigan require that a community engage in land use planning activities, including the preparation of a Master Plan, prior to the administration of a zoning ordinance in a community.

The following narrative provides a better understanding of the terms planning and zoning.

Land Use Planning. Land use planning is the process of guiding the future growth and development of a community. Generally, the Master Plan addresses the various factors relating to the growth of a community. Through the processes of land use planning, it is intended that a community can preserve, promote, protect and improve public health, safety and general welfare. Additional considerations include comfort,

good order, appearance, convenience, law enforcement, fire protection, preventing overcrowding of land, facilitating the adequate and efficient provision of transportation, water, utilities, open space, and utilization and protection of natural resources within the community.

Zoning implements the goals and policies of the Master Plan.

Zoning. Zoning is one of the instruments, along with capital improvements programming and the administration of local subdivision regulations, which implements the goals and policies of a Master Plan. The enactment and administration of the Zoning Ordinance are legislative and administrative processes conducted by local units of government relating to the implementation of the goals and policies of the Master Plan. Zoning ordinances accomplish the separation of land uses or a planned mixing of uses by creating different zoning districts within a community. Each zone district has a listing of standards that usually include setbacks, lot coverage, permitted and special uses, lot size requirements and structural standards. A zoning ordinance also includes general requirements pertaining to parking, site plans, special processes, general land use rules, and landscaping.

CHAPTER 10. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As a result of the Township’s efforts to form a community consensus opinion on growth and development in the community, a series of fifteen broad goal statements has been crafted. Each broad goal statement is supported by specific objectives. This Master Plan is founded on the policies presented in the following statements. The goals are meant to portray a desired end, or the preferred condition of the Township within the next twenty years or so. They are intentionally general, but are believed to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements are intended as more detailed milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

The goal statements are the policy foundation of the Plan, as they define the values the Plan must support and accomplish. Goal statements should be comprehensible and compelling in order to inspire action. As such, the most effective goal statements will:

- Define a desired end;
- Be stated in positive terms;
- Be bold, but realistic; and,
- Reflect a consensus.

If a goal may be thought of as a desired destination, objectives may be thought of as critical milestones along the way.

Byron Township has developed the following goal statements, keeping the above standards in mind, and in consideration of significant public input - including a community opinion survey and two visioning workshops.

The following declarations express the goals and objectives of this Master Plan and describe the community that Byron Township seeks to become within the next twenty years, or so.

A. OPEN SPACE, TRAILS AND RECREATION

Goal 1. The preservation of large tracts of interconnected woodlands will be strongly encouraged throughout the Township as development occurs.

Objectives:

- a. Create a detailed inventory of the key natural features located outside areas of significant development and utilize the inventory via regulatory structures to preserve natural features.
- b. Develop and adopt a tree protection ordinance to minimize land clearing and mass grading to preserve natural terrain, and to require tree planting within proposed development.

Goal 2. The residents and visitors of Byron Township will enjoy a network of trails, pathways and sidewalks between neighborhoods and services and safe, inviting and non-intrusive connections to local and regional natural areas and recreational facilities.



Objectives:

- a. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for the inclusion of pathways throughout new development to promote pedestrian connections.
- b. Conduct an analysis of sidewalk facilities and determine where sidewalks are needed for pedestrian safety and enjoyment. Work with the Township Board in support of sidewalk improvements along critical corridors, including Byron Center Avenue, 84th Street, and other locations as identified in the Byron Center Sub-Area Plan.
- c. In conjunction with the Recreation Commission and the Kent County Parks Department, develop and implement a Township-wide trail route plan incorporating a broad range of non-motorized trail connections, taking into account emerging growth areas, and potential trail segments which may be appropriate for snowmobile or other motorized recreational uses.
- d. Work with the Kent County Parks Department, the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and other entities in support of a trail that would run parallel to M-6. Ensure proper linkages are established.

Goal 3. Public parks and recreation facilities and private recreation lands will be conveniently located, safe and well-maintained to serve existing and emerging neighborhoods.

Objectives:

- a. Township policies will recognize and support publicly sponsored facilities and non-intrusive, lawful recreation activities on private lands. Township policies will favor trail, pathway and sidewalk construction, neighborhood playgrounds, youth centers and developed sports fields.
- b. The parks and recreation planning function of the Township will be coordinated with its land use planning and the planning of Byron Center Public Schools facilities.



Goal 4. Byron Township residents and visitors will be greeted with attractive, safe and well-maintained trailhead staging areas.

Objectives:

- a. Work with the Kent County Parks Department to improve the existing staging area at 84th Street. Improvements may include modern restrooms, expanded parking facilities, a farmer’s market, pedestrian furniture, a water fountain, a covered stage or gathering place, or other elements that will create an attractive place for people to visit.
- b. Seek grant dollars for the above-described improvements and to develop additional staging areas as additional trailways are constructed throughout the Township.

B. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Goal 5. A safe, efficient, aesthetically attractive and well-maintained system of roadways will serve the businesses and residents of Byron Township, providing effective linkages between and among neighborhoods, shopping and employment areas and within the larger West Michigan region.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and implement access control regulations which would require shared access and access drives and limit curb-cuts along such primary roadways as Byron Center Avenue, 84th Street, 68th Street and Division Avenue, among others.

- b. Build and strengthen the relationship with the Kent County Road Commission to facilitate cooperative approaches to transportation improvements and design.
- c. Develop and implement standards to preserve the rural road aesthetics of key roadways.

C. PEOPLE, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Goal 6. Neighborhoods in Byron Township will include housing for the entire spectrum of our community arranged in walkable patterns.

Objectives:

- a. Identify impediments to the location of housing to serve elderly residents and develop mechanisms to encourage facilities that allow aging residents to remain in the community.
- b. Review and expand, as appropriate, zoning, subdivision and site condominium ordinances to incorporate standards for such common facilities as parks, play areas and community buildings.
- c. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for the inclusion of pathways throughout new development to promote pedestrian connections. (repeat of A, 2, a)

Goal 7. New development will be designed in a manner that maximizes the retention of the rural character of the Township.

Objectives:

- a. Review and expand, as appropriate, zoning, subdivision and site condominium ordinances to incorporate standards for natural open areas.
- b. Develop and adopt a tree protection ordinance to minimize land clearing and mass grading to preserve natural terrain, and to require tree planting within proposed development. (repeat of A, 1, b)
- c. Open space residential development will be encouraged as a technique to preserve selected natural features and maintain rural character.
- d. In appropriate locations, the Township will explore the possibility of increasing minimum lot size and setbacks from major roadways to preserve the community's natural character.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 8. Downtown Byron Center will be a quaint and vibrant shopping and living area with an attractive streetscape.

Objectives:

- a. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide standards regulating architecture, site utilization, landscaping, fenestration (window coverage), and building form, so new buildings integrate well with existing structures.
- b. Modify the Zoning Ordinance to foster a more pedestrian-oriented and unique signage environment.
- c. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide standards for pedestrian amenities, such as bicycle racks, landscape features and pedestrian furniture.
- d. Analyze the feasibility of rezoning lands adjacent to and east of Byron Center to preclude big box retail and regional shopping centers. Implement if feasible.
- e. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to permit residential dwelling units above office and retail uses in downtown buildings.

Goal 9. Cutlerville will be a regional shopping destination with an attractive streetscape, consisting of viable businesses that are non-intrusive on nearby residences.

Objectives:

- a. Work with Cutlerville residents and businesses and Gaines Township to define the preferred future for Cutlerville. Establish and implement a plan for the improvement and beautification of Division Avenue and other elements of the area.
- b. Modify the Zoning Ordinance to foster a more attractive and unique signage and landscaping environment.

Goal 10. Byron Township will host a diverse range of private and public destinations for arts and recreation that foster a quality community image and establish a unique and attractive identity for the area.

Objectives:

- a. In conjunction with the Byron Center Chamber of Commerce, develop and implement a program to promote Byron Township's amenities, focusing on the downtown and the Kent Trail.

- b. Develop a Byron Township “brand” to express unique characteristics of the community and draw visitors to the downtown.
- c. Work with the Kent County Parks Department to improve the existing staging area at 84th Street. Improvements may include modern restrooms, expanded parking facilities, a farmer’s market, pedestrian furniture, a water fountain, a covered stage or gathering place, or other elements that will create an attractive place for people to visit. (repeat of A, 4, a)
- d. Explore opportunities to provide the amenities described in objective c. above in other locations throughout the Township.

Goal 11. Byron Township will be home to a diverse mix of businesses and industries, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.

Objectives:

- a. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to provide standards related to non-residential lands, which would regulate access, architectural elements, landscaping, signage and other features in support of the visions expressed throughout the planning process.
- b. Contemplate and implement polices which would encourage innovative industries and land uses to locate in the Township, as appropriate.
- c. Work with the Byron Center Chamber of Commerce and local and regional farmers to determine the feasibility of establishing a farmer’s market near downtown. Implement if feasible.
- d. Explore mechanisms for, and the feasibility and extent of, small farms advocacy which would encourage and support the continuation of smaller, independent agricultural enterprises.
- e. Work with conservancies and other organizations to research the opportunity of creating a nature center in the Township, which could be used as a regional educational resource and recreational facility.

E. ENFORCEMENT AND COOPERATIVE PLANNING

Goal 12. Planning and land use decisions and enforcement will continue to be conducted in a fair, efficient and consistent manner in support of the policies of the Township while maximizing flexibility to protect the rights of property owners ensured through the law.

Objectives:

- a. Adjust ordinances regulating activity in the Township to comport with the values and visions expressed throughout the master planning process.
- b. Expand electronic information exchange to disseminate consistent and useful information on the Township website.

Goal 13. Byron Township will assume a leadership role in nurturing cooperative and productive communication within the Township and with neighboring jurisdictions and regional agencies for the benefit of the Township and region.

Objectives:

- a. Strengthen communication with surrounding communities to enhance cooperation and coordination on key local and regional issues.
- b. Sponsor community issues forums with neighboring communities to facilitate dialog on pertinent issues.

F. UTILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal 14. The land use ambitions of the Township will guide and direct the rational and sequential expansions of the public water and wastewater systems in the Township; denser development will occur where utilities are present.

Objectives:

- a. Review and if appropriate, revise, the land use and zoning policies related to densities, development permissibility and utility system presence.
- b. Periodically evaluate what is essentially the Township’s urban growth boundary and prevent the extension of utilities beyond the boundary until objective and pre-determined threshold requirements are met.

Goal 15. Storm water will be effectively managed through advanced techniques that are sensitive to environmental impacts and offer aesthetic amenities to the community.

Objective:

- a. Develop and implement standards which recognize detention facilities as an amenity and encourage innovative and improved engineering, such as pond enhancement, landscaping, stream

restoration and green roof systems, to mitigate the effects of impervious surface runoff.

- b. Explore the possibility of regional storm water systems coordinated among developments.