

## CHAPTER 12. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The strategies described on the following pages are established to implement the goals, objectives and land use recommendations of this Plan. Many strategies will be long-term in nature and in many instances, entities in addition to Byron Township and its boards, commissions and staff will need to cooperate in order to fully implement this Plan. For other strategies to be implemented, the Township’s role is that of facilitator or administrator.

**The Township Board, Planning Commission and Township staff are accountable for executing the Plan.**

Generally, the Township Board, Planning Commission and Township staff are accountable for executing the Plan. The Plan must be implemented, and its recommendations and objectives achieved, in order for the Plan to serve as a successful and meaningful tool to guide growth and development. Chapter 12 will function as an action plan for the Township, and it includes many approaches and tactics that will require significant public and private investment. In some instances, implementation of the Plan will involve the collaboration and support of property owners and neighboring communities.

Following are the implementation strategies that the Township must achieve to carry out the policies of the Plan.

### 1. AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE

**Description.** The Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for the goals of this Master Plan. This strategy contemplates a comprehensive evaluation of the entire Zoning Ordinance in connection with the Township’s goals, objectives and future land use recommendations. As appropriate, this task will include a revision of the official Township Zoning Map to better support the future land use map designed by the planning participants, and a revision of some zoning classifications to better conform to the future land use descriptions in this Plan.

**This strategy contemplates a comprehensive evaluation of the entire Zoning Ordinance.**

Evaluating and modifying the Zoning Ordinance should be viewed as a long-term assignment. This task should be achieved with broad community support. The following paragraphs describe many of the amendments needed to ensure that the Zoning Ordinance supports and provides the regulatory tools necessary to carry out this Plan.

- a. **Tree Protection.** A General Provision should be added to the Zoning Ordinance that would minimize land clearing and mass grading to preserve the natural topography and landscape of a proposed development site, require tree planting along streets and in

other areas of proposed development, and measures to better ensure or encourage that significant stands of mature trees are kept and integrated in new development.

b. **Access Management.** Access management regulations should be added to the General Provisions article of the Zoning Ordinance. Standards should regulate distance between access points; distance between access points and intersections; driveway consolidation; shared service drives; throat length; and other features pertinent to the concerns of ensuring safe, efficient, and proper traffic flow and function. Requirements should especially focus on key segments of roadway in the Township and may only apply to development within certain zoning districts.

c. **New Districts.**

1. *Rural Conservation.* The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to reflect the Rural Conservation future land use designation. Specifically, a new district should be created which would permit open space residential development by right and conventional development as a special land use. The purposes of the district would include, preserving open space and rural character; allowing innovation and flexibility in the design of residential development; and protecting scenic views from development. Standards for open space calculations should exceed those of the current Planned Unit Development District. Moreover, prior to submittal of a site plan, an applicant and the Township should be required to collaborate on a step-by-step design process in the layout of a neighborhood: identify areas to be preserved; locate houses; locate streets and trails; and, draw lot lines. This approach may better ensure the preservation of significant features.

2. *Mixed Use Planned Unit Development.* A new zoning district may be created to reflect the Mixed Use PUD future land use designation. This district may be “form-based,” meaning that standards would focus primarily on the form of the buildings and how buildings interact and relate to streets and public spaces. Site placement and architectural requirements are anticipated.

d. **B-1, Central Business District.** The B-1, Central Business District should be revised to include more specific requirements for buildings located in downtown Byron Center. Landscape features, pedestrian amenities, and architectural articulation and embellishment would be required or incentivized; up to three stories would be permitted

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for buildings fronting on a major roadway; and, residential uses would be permitted in the upper two stories.

- e. **Commercial and Industrial Districts.** Regulations applying to Business, Office and Service, and Industrial zoning districts should be adjusted to reflect the aesthetic desires of the planning participants. These include, restricting signage in certain areas to ground- and building-mounted signs; strongly encouraging or requiring special architectural features on buildings, especially where visible from any nearby residences; requiring parking areas be placed behind or at the side of buildings; limiting square footage; and, requiring landscape islands within parking lots to avoid views of large expanses of concrete.

The Planning Commission should specifically work with business owners along South Division Avenue to facilitate redevelopment which is pedestrian-friendly and which respects the integrity of the residential neighborhoods to the west. In addition to the requirements described in the paragraph above, standards to this effect should be incorporated into the ordinance.

- f. **Rural Road Aesthetics.** A goal expressed during the planning process is to protect some of the natural features adjacent to roadways that make the corridors appear rural. The Township could take several approaches in achieving this objective. Greater front yard setbacks could be required for properties along a roadway designated as having special rural road characteristics. The Township may allow flexible site utilization and adjust side and rear setback requirements under certain circumstances to permit the preservation of key features and vegetation abutting the roadway. These approaches could be implemented via an overlay zoning district or in the General Provisions article of the Zoning Ordinance.

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Conservation easements for land directly adjacent to a roadway may be sought. These would be legally binding restrictions which provide for the preservation of a specific feature or corridor while permitting appropriate development. Easements may be voluntarily offered or purchased from the landowner; and may be referenced in the ordinance.

- g. **Standards for Open Space, Facilities, and Entries.** The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed for references to open space and evaluated in terms of the effectiveness of regulations. Where standards have not yielded the desired result, the ordinance should be amended. Standards for minimum dimensions of open space areas; pathways and trails; defining usable open space; and other common facilities should be contemplated.

The ordinance should be reviewed and amended where requirements for signage or other related elements prevent a “sense of entry” from being established at development entrances. The ordinance may also be amended to require certain entrance features, such as boulevards.

- h. **Day Care Centers.** The ordinance should be amended to permit day care centers – and potentially other service uses – in residential zoning districts along key segments of roadway as special land uses.

**Responsibilities.** The Planning Commission should lead this effort with support from staff and consultants. This is an extensive task with multiple elements that will require careful coordination with the public. Each element brings along a unique set of challenges that may require each activity to be addressed independently. Any resulting amendments to the Zoning Ordinance will involve the Township’s legal counsel and ultimately adoption by the Township Board.

## 2. DEVELOP TRAILWAY PLAN

**Description.** This strategy suggests that the Township engage in developing a formal Trailway Plan, which would identify a range of opportunities for non-motorized trail linkages throughout the Township and build upon and expand the pedestrian connection recommendations of this Plan. Quality of life and recreational opportunities would be enhanced by formation of a trail network that connects neighborhoods with certain natural features, as well as with schools, downtown, Cutlerville, the future Village Center, and other service areas. Trails offer users a wide range of rewards including mobility, recreation, and an alternative form of transportation that encourages people to exercise. A trail right-of-way network protecting and exhibiting significant features is anticipated as a result of this strategy. Uses of the trails may include nature interpretation, equestrian, biking, walking, hiking and cross country skiing, adding to the Township’s established recreational heritage.

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A Trailway Plan should evaluate current land use patterns, environmental characteristics, potential greenway corridors, and other features of the built and natural environments to identify best locations for future construction of trails. In addition, a Trailway Plan should recommend alternative funding sources, staging and other recreational areas, and mechanisms for the preservation of greenways. The Trailway Plan should identify needed sidewalk improvements and connections;

recommend staging area enhancements; and orchestrate pedestrian connection to Brewer Park in Gaines Township.

The Township Board should establish a Trails and Greenways Commission or expand the authority of the Recreation Commission, to work in conjunction with the Planning Commission in the development of a trails and greenways network. It will be imperative to involve all established stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the Kent County Parks Department and Byron Center School District; their experiences and resources may help in the achievement of this task. Further, an independent non-profit entity may be formed to help address liability and to support maintenance responsibilities.

**Responsibilities.** Initial responsibility for implementation will rest with the Township Board, with support from the Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and Township staff. The work to develop the Trailway Plan would be undertaken by Township staff with policy guidance from the Planning Commission and Recreation Commission and with assistance from environmental and planning consultants.

### 3. PREPARE INVENTORY OF NATURAL FEATURES

**Description.** Citizen input and extensive public participation clearly documents that the natural features are important to the residents of Byron Township. To help identify those natural features that may or may not be currently recognized, the Township should prepare a comprehensive inventory of natural features. The inventory would include identification and location of wildlife corridors, wildlife species, plant species, wetlands and associated features, and other substantial components of the natural environment. The natural features inventory would also include a prioritization of features to support judgments guiding development to the least sensitive portions of particular sites, within a regional context.

**The inventory would include a prioritization of features to support judgments guiding development to the least sensitive portions of particular sites.**

This strategy is anticipated to be longer term due to its scope, meaning that collection of information for the inventory may occur on an intermittent basis. Existing data pertaining to natural and environmental features should be reviewed and contemplated for inclusion into a mapped database of information that may serve as a foundation for the inventory. The Township should work cooperatively with the myriad regional associations and agencies, and possibly local schools or universities, that may have begun the process or that may be interested in inventorying aspects of the natural environment in Byron Township.

A product of the inventory will be a series of maps and recommendations for preservation areas, including methods for preservation for specific lands of the Township. As the catalog of natural features is developed, it will begin to serve as an overlay for staff. Staff will use the mapped inventory to relate development proposals and other site plans submitted by private property owners to the natural features in the Township. In this process, the Township will implement preservation goals throughout the Township as each development proposal is reviewed.

**Responsibilities.** The Planning Commission may lead this effort with ongoing support from staff and planning and environmental consultants, who should work in conjunction with local and regional entities, institutions and environmental groups in compiling the database.

#### 4. ENGAGE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Description.** The economic vitality of the community is central to the overall health, quality of life and sense of pride of residents. This Master Plan is not intended as a detailed tool for guiding economic development or structuring in the Township. However, an intent of this Plan is to foster the creative exploration of tax base expansion opportunities, while preserving and enriching the Township’s unique, small-town character and heritage of a strong work ethic. The following paragraphs begin to describe tasks that may be helpful in the Township’s economic development, as they pertain to land use planning.

**The Township should work with local, statewide and/or national conservancies to establish a nature center.**

- a. **Trademark.** The Township should endeavor to establish a “brand” for Byron Township, while working in conjunction with the Byron Center Chamber of Commerce, the Cutlerville Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority. This should be utilized to create a marketing program which promotes the Township’s amenities, including downtown, Kent Trails, Van Singel Fine Arts Center, and other facilities and attractions.
- b. **Farmer’s Market.** The Township should continue to explore the opportunity to facilitate the development of a farmer’s market. This would involve coordination with area farmers, the Downtown Development Authority, local Chambers, and other local interested groups.
- c. **Nature Center.** The Township should work with local, statewide and/or national conservancies to establish a nature center. The

nature center would be an educational resource and may serve as a local or regional tourist attraction and recreational facility.

- d. **Evaluation of Tax Base.** The Planning Commission should review growth in the tax base annually and evaluate growth patterns and the success of the Township in establishing a well-balanced and prosperous community. If it is determined that additional growth in any one sector would be desirable, the Planning Commission should consider amending the future land use map to provide for land uses in that sector, as appropriate and as deemed necessary. This evaluation may also occur during the 5-year review of the Master Plan, which is required by State statute.

**Responsibilities.** Primary responsibility will rest with the Township Board in coordinating these projects, with assistance and counsel from staff, other Township board and commission members, and various entities and organizations who may have an interest in the above tasks.

## 5. EVALUATE AND REVISE UTILITY POLICIES

**Description.** Policies that regulate wastewater and potable water facilities are an important growth management tool and they may help to protect groundwater quality. This strategy recommends that the Township continue its exploration of a joint utility system with Jamestown Township and/or other adjacent communities, to provide public utility services to the northwest portion of the community.

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In addition, planning participants expressed concern regarding stormwater facilities, such as detention and retention ponds. Often, these facilities become engineering afterthoughts, placed to the side of a development and lacking any enhancements such as landscaping. This Plan encourages the Township to require improved engineering of these facilities, to establish the ponds as amenities for residents and users of future development. Further, the Township should incentivize green roof systems and other techniques that mitigate the effects of impervious surface runoff and reduce energy consumption. Finally, the Township should require or incentivize regional stormwater systems that would coordinate stormwater collection among several developments.

**Responsibilities.** The Planning Commission and Township Board should work jointly to implement this task, with engineering and planning staff support. Additionally, work may involve a cooperative effort with Jamestown Township and other neighboring communities.

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