

Introduction to the Luna Pier Master Plan

Introduction

The City of Luna Pier was incorporated in 1963 and will be 50 years old in just a few years. While this time as a City is short compared with many in the area, Luna Pier eagerly anticipates the coming years and the opportunity to create the future with this new Master Plan. The process producing this Master Plan unveiled tremendous opportunities, stirring local enthusiasm for what Luna Pier can be in the future. Partly because of geography and location, and partly because of strengths and opportunities discovered during this collaborative planning process, Luna Pier is poised to take major strides, becoming an even more livable and attractive Michigan community.

While Luna Pier has not been an incorporated City very long, it already has a compelling story to tell. In fact, the historic elements of Luna Pier are perhaps among its greatest strengths. Luna Pier sprang up along the shores of Lake Erie in the early parts of the 1900's as a seasonal destination. This community offered Detroit and Toledo residents an escape from urban congestion to a place of recreation, summertime relaxation and casual lakeside living. The unique 200 foot pier stretching out into Lake Erie provided a one-of-a-kind entertainment venue for major performers. Boarding the interurban train system, people came in large numbers to experience memorable times in Luna Pier.

Today the world is different. The pace of living is much faster and the image of Luna Pier has changed for many. Like all mid-western communities, local leaders worry about maintaining a tax base to support local services, and express concern over a struggling economy in which jobs are scarce. However, looking back over history, it is clear that Luna Pier is a place where creative community vision is welcomed.



The original concept to build a pier into Lake Erie as an entertainment venue was a bold statement about what could be in this community. It was a statement that resonated with people and ultimately proved to be successful. It helped put Luna Pier "on the map" and gave this community an identity that remains today. Had it not been for a lack of modern engineering practices that made the structure vulnerable to the forces of Lake Erie, this pier might still exist.

Today, this same kind of vision is called for again at many levels. This Master Plan is being prepared at a time that represents some of the worst economic conditions in 25 years or more, and most are aware that Luna Pier has attracted only modest levels of new private investment in recent memory. At the same time, many residents and community leaders see the huge potential this community has, and there is a growing sense that Luna Pier may have reached the tipping point that will result in greater levels of community-building efforts. Participation in this planning process was extensive, and residents offered remarkably consistent and similar feedback when presented with ideas and concepts about how they would like to see Luna Pier develop and redevelop. This consistent and similar feedback was interpreted to suggest substantial support for the future articulated by this Master Plan.

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Two aspects of this Master Plan make it unique:

First, local leaders went to substantial lengths to listen carefully to what residents had to say about their community. Surveys, formal meetings, newsletters and countless informal conversations helped provide a deep understanding and appreciation for the thoughts and attitudes of local residents.

Secondly, sincere and deliberate efforts were made to rediscover local history and use these elements as building blocks for the future. Luna Pier may be a young city, but it is a place where local history can shape the future in a powerful way. This reliance on local history along with the very real and direct connections to Lake Erie provide a strong foundation for the future by creating a compelling and authentic sense of place.

Community Planning in General

Communities are constantly changing. They grow, age, develop and redevelop. Sometimes physical change is subtle and nearly imperceptible. Other times, physical change is dramatic, as large development projects are completed. Apart from the matter of how fast community changes occur is the larger question whether any change is making the community more livable, economically stable, attractive and desirable. Development and redevelopment in a community is driven by all types of decisions, and the Luna Pier we see today is the product of large and small decisions made by both public and private entities. City Council and various boards and commissions have made decisions over the years about how to regulate land use, what public infrastructure to build and maintain, and what ordinances to pass. Private entities and residents have also made important decisions concerning how to improve or develop property.

Given this environment of change and decision-making, it is not unusual for community leaders to question the overall direction of community development as well as to seek a sense of direction and overall vision. The purpose of a Master Plan is to provide this vision, capturing and articulating desired community goals, based on community attitudes and preferences. Effective Master Plans serve as a guide for day-to-day decisions to be made in the context of a sense of long-term community goals and objectives.



Master Plans are communicated with words, graphics, and maps to describe a desired future state or condition for a community. They provide an overall and long-term vision of development in a way that recognizes the interrelated elements of community fabric. This includes how land is used, how people move from place to place and what public infrastructure should be built to support human needs. Master Plans also seek to develop and articulate a sense of place in a community that can be a foundation for economic development.

Typically, Master Plans are adopted by a City Planning Commission and City Council after a substantial period of information gathering, public engagement and consensus-building. Once adopted, a plan becomes a document that public officials, citizens, the business community, and other interests look to when they consider taking actions or adopting policies affecting the future of the community. Master Plans should be reviewed and amended regularly to address changing conditions and changing attitudes.

Characteristics of a Good Master Plan

Some of the best examples of Master Plans have common characteristics and do an especially good job of:

Focusing on the “Big Picture”: Most day-to-day local government decisions that relate to community development focus on very specific issues in specific areas. A master plan offers the rare opportunity to look broadly at issues like housing, economic development, public infrastructure, commercial corridors and mobility in terms of how they relate to each other. This larger view of the community can help give a new perspective toward individual day-to-day development proposals and issues.

Accurately Identifying Existing Conditions and Relevant Trends:

Master plans generally include information regarding how an area is changing and how it might be impacted by local, regional and even national trends. Communities constantly change. Populations grow or decline in terms of numbers of residents and the characteristics of the average resident also change. As residents change (i.e., age or other social characteristics) what they want from their community also changes. Other characteristics of a community such as housing choices, public amenities, and job opportunities also change over time and impact the livability and quality of life of a city. Master plans also identify trends that are taking a community and a region in a certain direction.



Engaging the Public: The development of a Master Plan typically includes opportunities for the general public to weigh in on key community issues. The consideration of “big picture” community development issues is frequently accomplished with the benefit of public consensus-building efforts. Often the development or update of a Master Plan affords the rare opportunity for residents to speak out about community development priorities and concerns.

Guiding Zoning Decisions: Zoning regulates how property owners may use and develop property. In many states, zoning ordinances must be based on a Master Plan to make sure that zoning decisions are well reasoned and legitimately related to a public purpose. In Michigan, zoning decisions that are supported by a Master Plan are less likely to be challenged on the basis of being arbitrary and unrelated to a public purpose.

Guiding Public Investment Decisions: The identification of redevelopment areas or possible growth areas implies something about where new public investment should be directed. Often, the need to simulate new development or to support the needs of community growth means that there should be more investment in infrastructure. This ranges from the need for new or upgraded transportation improvements, water/sewer lines or plant upgrades to expanded open spaces or park facilities.

Guiding Private Investment Decisions: As the private sector considers decisions about buying or developing land, a Master Plan can be a source of information with regard to relevant public policy. This may help gauge the likelihood of a specific rezoning approval and expectations for future public infrastructure investment.

Supporting Grant Proposals: Communities with a strong and relevant Master Plan often are more successful in obtaining grant funding for key projects. Funding agencies are particularly drawn to supporting projects that are clearly part of a long-term community development strategy identified well before a specific grant application is written. Funding agencies are generally drawn to work with communities who articulate shared goals in an accepted plan. They look for the partnership that is established when they can provide funding for projects that meet both the agency’s programmatic goals and the community’s needs.



Defining Needed Public Initiatives and Follow-up Planning: Because of its more general nature, a Master Plan often points the way toward the need for more focused public initiatives and/or follow-up planning. Some might include regulatory initiatives (i.e., create new zoning districts to apply to a redevelopment area), while some initiatives might be more organizational in nature (create a new entity to help address a particular redevelopment concern). Another initiative might be the need for a more focused planning effort (i.e., downtown plan, bikeway plan, shoreline plan or corridor plan).

Time Frames

A community’s master plan provides a long-term perspective of community change. Typically, the planning horizon considered by a Master Plan is 20 years. Support for this time frame is found in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 which states that “A Master Plan shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 years or more into the future” (Sec. 33(1)). It is important to note that depending on the subject matter, time horizons for planning purposes can differ. For example, planning decisions regarding new public facilities (city halls, libraries, recreation facilities, etc.) have very long-term consequences; often well beyond 20 years. Similarly, transportation planning decisions (new roads, widening, etc.) have long term and nearly permanent consequences in a community.



Legal Authority

The legal authority for Luna Pier’s Master Plan is derived from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008. This Act replaced earlier legislation and was intended to create a more uniform process for preparing and adopting Master Plans among local governments in Michigan and to define minimum plan content.

Legal Significance of Master Plans

Nationally, the weight and significance of a Master Plan varies from state to state. All states have enabling legislation addressing Master Plans (also called Comprehensive Plans or similar terms), but in some states (such as Oregon and Florida), state law actually requires Master Plans with prescribed content. In Michigan, recent passage of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006 and the New Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008 has helped to clarify the relationship between local planning and zoning in Michigan. Of particular importance is the need for the Master Plan to address how land use categories shown on a future land use map relate to the districts shown on the zoning map. This requirement represents an important link between local planning and zoning in Michigan that can help address the legal risks associated with zoning decisions that are made without regard for long-range community planning. Generally, zoning decisions that are consistent with a well-reasoned Master Plan are more likely to withstand legal challenge, than those made in a more arbitrary and subjective manner.

Five-year Review

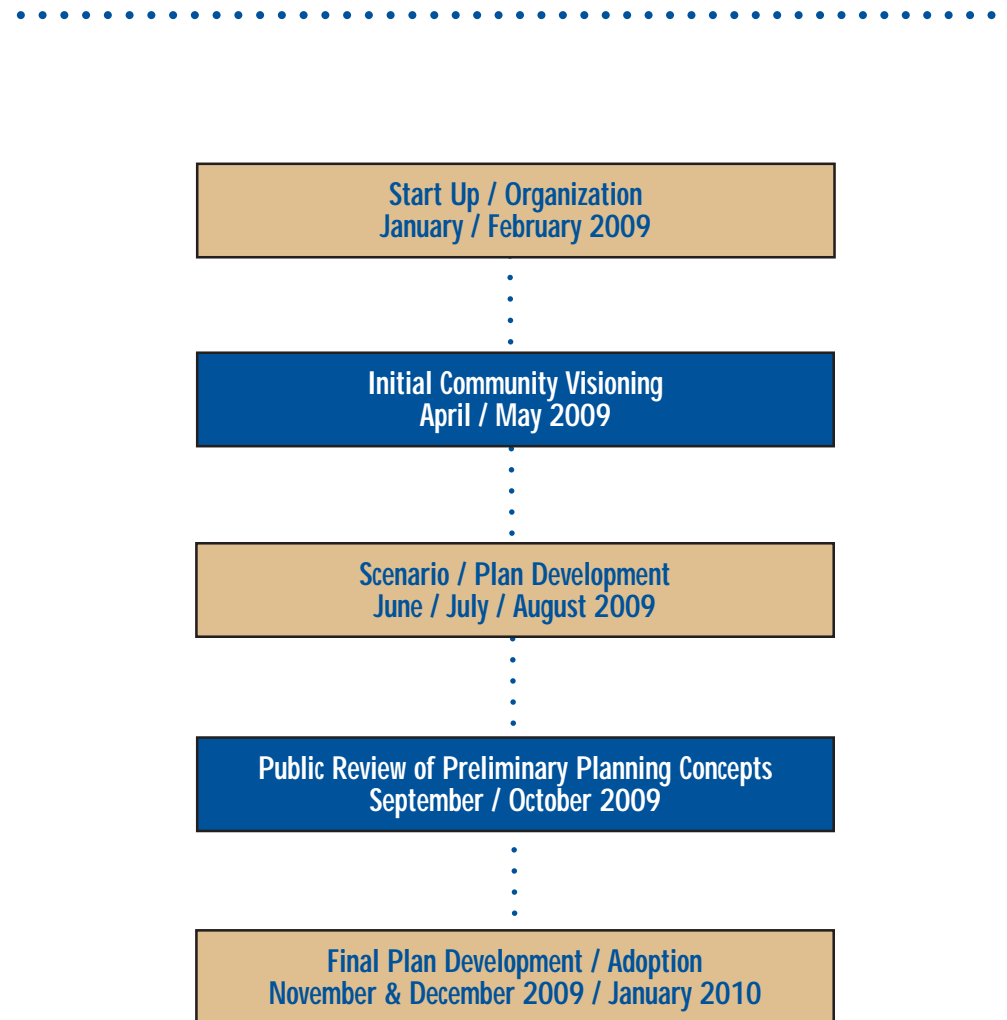
The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 (Sec. 45 (2)) states that “At least every five years after the adoption of a Master Plan, a planning commission shall review the Master Plan and determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the Master Plan or adopt a new Master Plan.”

Luna Pier Planning Commission

The Luna Pier Planning Commission oversaw the creation of this master plan and is established in accordance with the provisions of Act 285 of the Public Acts of 1931 (M.C.L. 125.31 et seq.) and Act 110, Public Acts of 2006 (M.C.L. 125.3101 et seq.), as amended and consists of seven (7) members selected upon the basis of the members’ qualifications and fitness to serve. One member is also a member of City Council selected by resolution of City Council to serve as a member ex officio. The remaining regular members shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to approval of City Council by majority vote.

General Planning Process

The planning process followed to prepare this Master Plan began in early 2009 with an organizational meeting held by the Luna Pier Planning Commission. Following this meeting, a community survey was conducted via the municipal web site and newsletter, while baseline community information was assembled to serve as a foundation. A substantial amount of effort was put forth in April and early May to conduct visioning sessions. Three separate public meetings were conducted and were designed to encourage open community dialog about key issues facing the City. Residents and community stakeholders could attend one or all of these sessions and share thoughts about how Luna Pier should look and feel in the future. Participants were divided into small working groups and asked to discuss a wide range of community issues. Following the visioning sessions, consultants and city leaders took information gained from the survey, focused on compiling more specific information, and began a process of more in-depth discovery. This information was then used to begin to draft general planning concepts and strategies that were presented to the public again in late September and early October. These two events provided residents with the opportunity to see emerging concepts and ideas that flowed from earlier efforts. In November, the Planning Commission and Council held a joint meeting to review a working draft of the Master Plan and discussed priorities for implementation.



Public Engagement

As stated, one unique aspect of this master plan relates to efforts to engage Luna Pier residents in a substantial discussion about the future. Apart from the community survey, three visioning sessions took place on three separate evenings in the spring and two planning workshops were conducted in the fall. Additionally in September, Luna Pier held a special public meeting to discuss the possibility of ferry service to Lake Erie islands and other destinations. This specific issue-oriented meeting was held with state, county and local leaders to explore the potential for such service and its relevance to long-term community development.

Initial Visioning Sessions

The three visioning sessions were conducted in more or less the same manner. Sessions began with a brief presentation concerning key characteristics of the City of Luna Pier and the larger region. Some basic trends and challenges were also identified. Then residents were asked break into small groups and respond to questions. Each group recorded its conclusions and reported these findings to everyone present. Often, these group presentations resulted in larger discussions. Participants were given aerial photos of Luna Pier to help provide frame of reference and aid in discussions. At the end of each of the sessions, participants were given sticky dots to indicate preferences for the best ideas generated during the evening.

Community Visioning As a Planning Tool

Community visioning is a technique that offers communities a way to promote greater awareness of change, deepened citizen involvement and a stronger sense of control over a community’s destiny. Some benefits of visioning exercises include the opportunity to:

1. Bring the community together in a unique context to consider the future
2. Explore new ideas and possibilities and enrich public involvement
3. Create a shared sense of direction
4. Produce shared goals and strategies
5. Encourage new civic leadership and promote partnerships
6. Strengthen community cohesion and "social capital"

Source: *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, John Wiley & Sons, 2006, page 55.

Community Visioning Processes Often Define a Direction, But Not Necessarily a Specific Destination.

Results From Initial Visioning Sessions

The initial visioning sessions were designed to provide a foundation and direction for subsequent efforts to develop the Master Plan. Based on a combined total of nearly 8 hours of community conversations with many residents, the following planning principles emerged. This list of 16 principles is in no particular order of importance, but served as important guideposts for the development of this Master Plan going forward.



Luna Pier's MASTER PLAN
 What Does the Future of Luna Pier Look Like?
 Enhancing the Lakeshore...Community Livability...Luna Pier Road Redevelopment...Tax Base Development...Local Identity
 The City of Luna Pier will be hosting three Community Visioning Sessions that will provide residents with a unique opportunity to think about their home town in new ways. These meetings will begin with a brief background presentation and factual account of where the City of Luna Pier is today and how trends are shaping the future. Following this, small groups will engage in discussions about what should be done to make Luna Pier an even better place to live.
 Three meetings are scheduled so that everyone can have a chance to participate—so don't let the discussions about the City's future happen without you. Gather up your ideas about what you would like the future to be like and make plans to join with your neighbors for fun and interesting evenings of discussion about your hometown.
Community Planning Sessions
 April 7, 2009.....7:00 PM City Hall
 April 28, 2009.....7:00 PM City Hall
 May 5, 2009.....7:00 PM City Hall

- Lake Erie is the key - it's why people live here and why people visit.
- We need better pedestrian and bike access and we need sidewalks, trails and paths to provide connections to parks, to the beach, commercial areas and other attractions. Harold Drive is the bike and pedestrian spine connecting the City.
- The "Taste of Michigan" concept is a great idea and would serve the community as a nucleus to redevelopment.
- Luna Pier Road needs to be transformed into a place that looks and feels like a downtown. This is where we can look our best and we need to treat this as our front door.
- We need to look seriously at rebuilding a Pier in Lake Erie as a focal point and tourist draw. Ideally it should also be accessible by car, bike, foot and boat. There are many design options.
- There are residential areas with a unique identity that add to community character. We need to reinforce these when possible.
- Despite being a new city, Luna Pier has a historic story to tell. Drawing attention to historic roots will help reinforce the uniqueness of the City.
- In the next 20 years, many buildings will be renovated or replaced. As this happens, nautical themes (colors, architecture, signage, etc.) should be encouraged.
- Whatever is done along Luna Pier Road and in terms of new pier, it should strive for a four-season orientation.
- The International Wildlife Refuge and other natural features in the area can help draw visitors. The City should connect with nature where it can.
- The future of Consumers Power is both a concern and opportunity that could involve alternative energy
- As much as we want visitors to come to town and spend money, we don't want our quiet neighborhoods or casual living style disturbed. Narrow streets and higher residential density should be maintained and through traffic should be discouraged.
- We need to carefully use signage and other visual signals to help draw attention to key community features.
- The potential reduction of the tax base is the biggest issue facing the City over the long term. At the same time, the long-term redevelopment of Luna Pier Road is the best option to build a new tax base.
- Development for the sake of drawing tourists is nice but we need a place for every day goods for residents too.
- Luna Pier has some image-building to do. The past has left scars that need to be healed by pulling together toward a new vision.

Visioning Session #1



Visioning Session #2



Visioning Session #3



Another element of the final visioning session that proved to be significant was the response to the question *...what do you most want to see happen in Luna Pier in the next 20 years?* Answers to this revealing question included the following **(most popular answers are in bold)**:

Gas Station Reopen

DDA grants for new facades

Post Office, Market, Office Buildings

Annex to Victory Road

Marketing and Branding

Venice Canals

Rehab. Downtown Sidewalks

Recycling

Annual Festivals

Signage On I-75 And Locally

Becoming State Welcome Center

A New Commercial Pier

Volunteer Maintenance/Project Corps/Brochures

Identification of Revenue Options (Short/Long Term)

Better Curb Appeal (Storefronts, Residential, Luna Pier Road).

Walk/bike Path from Toledo Beach along old Trolley Line to Erie Road

Annexation vs. Becoming Erie/Lasalle/Bedford Twps.

Better Relationships (Twp, County, State, Business)

Better Downtown (For Local Needs)

Widen Street & Open Views (Luna Pier Rd.)

Community Survey

To supplement the community conversation about key issues and local attitudes, a web-based community survey was conducted. This survey was included on the City of Luna Pier's web site and contained a number of questions that could be completed on line. The survey was left open during much of the planning process and all together, 53 responses were given. Residents were informed of the existence of the survey in the municipal newsletter. A complete list of responses gathered is provided in the Appendix.

A number of key findings from the community survey generally supported attitudes and preferences expressed at the initial visioning sessions. Some of the most striking observations from the survey included the following:



1. Generally, respondents felt that things have pretty much stayed the same in Luna Pier in terms of overall quality of life.
2. The top three major issues facing residents of the City of Luna Pier in the future include: commercial area redevelopment, general community appearance and lack of a tax base.
3. The key strengths of the City of Luna Pier include Lake Erie; being small and quaint; and the park and recreation facilities.
4. The key weaknesses of Luna Pier include the condition of commercial areas, limited retail options and property maintenance.
5. Residents overwhelmingly support the thought that Luna Pier should advance a community image based on nautical themes (architectural styles, street lights, building colors, signage and banners) that reinforce the feeling of being near the Lake.
6. In the next ten years, Luna Pier should try to make the waterfront more of an attraction, make the commercial area more active and vibrant, and create a stronger tax base.

7. Since Luna Pier is the first City that a visitor to Michigan encounters when north bound on I-75, the idea of promoting the City as a “A First Taste of Michigan” is widely supported.
8. The idea of making Luna Pier Road look and feel like a downtown has wide support. This means parking in the rear of buildings, wide sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly, buildings pulled forward toward the street, smaller businesses in individual buildings or combined in multi-use structures, and pedestrian orientation.

Community Meeting on Ferry Service

One key community development issue that surfaced during initial phases of this planning process (and in fact sometime before it began) was the concept of ferry service from Luna Pier to Lake Erie destinations. Residents, business leaders and community officials had discussed this concept for some time, noting that some popular destinations such as Put-In-Bay, could potentially be reached faster by ferry than by vehicle. Interest in this potential service prompted community leaders to hold a “discovery meeting” to provide opportunity to explore thoughts and concerns and delve deeper into this issue with key stakeholders and interested residents. Chief among the reasons to pursue such service is expectation that ferry service would help draw people to Luna Pier and support local economic development.

This meeting was held on September 9, 2009 and attendees included local businesses, state and county officials and representatives from the Jet Express (which currently provides ferry service from Port Clinton, Ohio and Lorain, Ohio). This meeting was regarded as a success, prompting follow-up discussions and investigation into this concept. The possibility of future ferry service to Luna Pier is included in this Master Plan.



Monroe Evening News, September 10, 2009

Community Planning Sessions

Community Planning Sessions took place on both September 22 (as part of the Regular Planning Commission Meeting) and on October 7, 2009. These meetings differed from prior events in that preliminary planning concepts were presented to participants and feedback was requested. These sessions began with rather extensive presentations of planning concepts, sketches, illustrations and preliminary ideas about future development and redevelopment. Following the presentation and general group discussion, participants could take time to review material posted on walls and provide comments on sticky notes.

Business Association/DDA Coordination

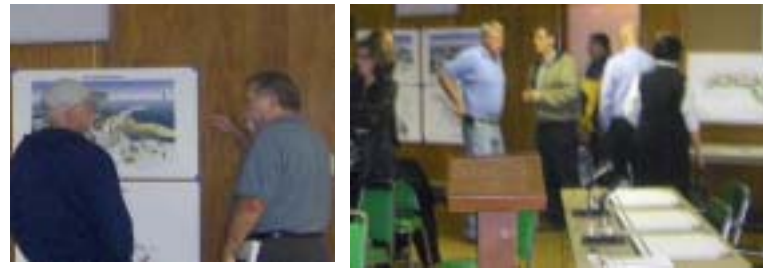
Apart from general community outreach, specific efforts to engage the local business community in the Master Planning process were made. Specifically, in June 2009, a special presentation was made before the members of the Luna Pier Business Association. This presentation helped



Planning Sessions September 22, 2009 and October 7, 2009



Planning Sessions
September 22, 2009
and October 7, 2009



inform members of the planning process underway and provided an opportunity to obtain input and participation in the process. Members of the Luna Pier Business Association include local businesses that are active in many civic functions and community activities. This organization was also a strong supporter of related local efforts to create a new Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in Luna Pier. Legislation creating a DDA received a first reading in September, 2009 and was later fully adopted by the Luna Pier City Council. This new DDA is viewed as being a key agent for planned improvements in the downtown area of Luna Pier.

Planning Commission/Council Work Sessions

During the planning process, the Luna Pier Planning Commission addressed a range of organizational and substantive issues during regular meetings in 2009. In October, the Planning Commission addressed a range of site-specific Master Plan/zoning issues and in November a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council took place. This meeting was conducted prior to formal hearings to ensure consensus around key issues emerging from the Master Plan and to address future capital improvement needs.

Master Plan Organization & Content

According to Sec. 33 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008, a Master Plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matters, and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the planning jurisdiction. Further, a Master Plan



Monroe Evening News - September 16, 2009

shall also include subjects that reasonably can be considered as pertinent to the future development of the planning jurisdiction. These generally include:

1. A classification and allocation of land for agriculture, residences, commerce, industry, recreation, ways and grounds, public buildings, schools, soil conservation, forests, woodlots, open space, wildlife refuges, and other uses and purposes.
2. The general location, character, and extent of streets, railroads, airports, bicycle paths, pedestrian ways, bridges, waterways, and waterfront developments; sanitary sewers and water supply systems; facilities for flood prevention, drainage, pollution prevention, and maintenance of water levels; and public utilities and structures.
3. Recommendations as to the general character, extent, and layout of redevelopment or rehabilitation of blighted areas; and the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use, or extension of streets, grounds, open spaces, buildings, utilities, or other facilities.
4. A zoning plan for various zoning districts controlling the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises. The zoning plan shall include an explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.
5. Recommendations for implementing any of the Master Plan's proposals.

Additionally, if a Master Plan is or includes a Master Street Plan, the means for implementing the master street plan in cooperation with the county road commission and the state transportation department shall be specified in the Master Street Plan in a manner consistent with the respective powers and duties.

This Master Plan is organized into Chapters and an Appendix. The Appendix provides background research on the existing conditions and trends in Luna Pier, along with other information that supports various conclusions and findings.

Chapter Organization

The following listing provides a brief description of each of the Chapters:

Chapter 1 **Introduction**
Introduces the reader to the Master Plan, planning process and organizational issues

Chapter 2 **Master Plan Summary**
Provides an overview of Master Plan elements.

Chapter 3 **Land Use**
Identifies and addresses issues related to development and redevelopment. Of particular importance are the relationships between different areas in the City.

Chapter 4 **Urban Design**
Considers not just how land is used, but also how buildings and structures create the form of the City. Urban design considers how buildings are designed, relate to each other, and communicate a sense of place.

Chapter 5 **Environment, Natural Resources, Energy.**
Examines City from the perspective of key natural systems and environmental issues and concerns.

Chapter 6 **Economics**
Considers local economic development strategies to attract new businesses and tourism, while supporting existing local businesses and meeting the consumer needs of current and future residents.

Chapter 7 **Public Infrastructure & Facilities**
Defines needed public infrastructure and public facilities to support community goals. This Chapter also addresses efficient and economical provision of public water, sanitary sewer, and surface water infrastructure systems.

Chapter 8 **Housing**
Considers the housing stock of the City and its relationship to existing and future households in the City.

Chapter 9 **Goals, Objectives and Implementation**
Summarizes long-term community vision in terms of goals and objectives. This Chapter also defines implementation measures which includes needed regulatory steps to implement portions of this plan, along with funding and financing approaches to help move key projects forward.

