



Executive Summary

Introduction

The City of Midland adopted this edition of the Master Plan in 2007 by resolutions of both the Planning Commission and City Council. The Master Plan provides a comprehensive long-range guide to managing growth, development, redevelopment, and public investments in the community for a period of about 20 years.

The Master Plan includes analysis, recommendations and proposals for Midland's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, natural resources and land use—focusing on the physical layout of various land uses and the compatibility of activities anticipated for the land.

Plan recommendations provide a sound basis for any subsequent regulations, policies and programs intended to help achieve the land use goals and other objectives.

The Public as Foundation

In keeping with the longstanding philosophy of the City, officials turned to its residents and business community to help shape the Plan's goals and objectives. In addition to the common public outreach strategies that rely on public meetings, the Internet and news media, two unique steps were used to gather public attitudes regarding land use and related issues.

Early in 2006, the planning process reached literally into the living rooms of Midland residents to learn their interests and concerns. A technique called *Meetings in a Box* introduced the public to the Master Plan and invited their detailed thoughts and descriptions of the community and their neighborhoods. The approach meant that people who otherwise could not attend a typical city hall meeting still participated in determining the City's future. Nearly 50 households and others hosted a meeting in their living rooms, classrooms and meeting halls, with an average of almost eight people attending. Detailed instructions for the hosts accompanied questionnaires completed by everyone in attendance, along with guidelines to encourage discussion among members of each group. Priorities were set by the groups themselves, with all materials returned to the City for later analysis.



The results from Meeting in a Box helped guide the next stage of public outreach. Two evenings of *Topic Workshops* were held. Essentially focus group discussions, those in attendance offered comments and clarifications on ideas raised through initial surveys and Meetings in a Box. Those



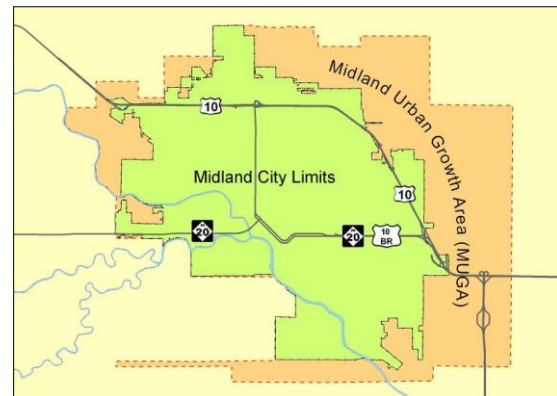
involved also reacted to some initial analysis prepared by the project team. The outcome from the Topic Workshops served to amplify opinions on several issues, expand on the detail associated with specific topics, and temper the concerns raised seen as less vital to the Master Plan process.

The goals and objectives developed through these two methods served as the foundation for preparation of every chapter in the Master Plan. Natural features, housing, transportation, economic development, community facilities and future land use drew upon the results of the public outreach. Finally, public opinion combined with the City's land use history and the informed consideration of the Planning Commission and others to form the amalgam that is the City of Midland 2007 Master Plan. Two public open houses to obtain additional comments on the draft plan, and a joint meeting between the Planning Commission and City Council, helped solidify the Plan's recommendations. Finally, there was a public review period that included review by Midland, Bay, and Saginaw Counties, all adjacent Townships, and all local public utility companies, followed by public hearings. Throughout the process, comments were considered and in some cases the draft plan was revised before final adoption. More than most, this is a Plan built on the foundation of Midland's residents.

Recommendations

Thorough analysis of the existing demographics, land use patterns, and projected trends resulted in specific goals related to land use, transportation, and community facilities.

Future Land Use. Future Land Use is the core of Midland's Master Plan. Land use designations shown on the Future Land Use Map offer a guideline as to the intended activity and density on properties throughout the City and within the Midland Urban Growth Area. They are described in detail Chapter 5: Future Land Use.



While nearly all land use categories are shown to expand in terms of total acreage, much will remain the same the Midland. For example, *Low Density Residential* properties—single family housing—will remain the predominant land use. *Parks and Recreation* space may experience modest growth, responding largely to meets the needs of future residential development and changes desired be residents as needs change.

The Master Plan includes two new land use categories:

- **Downtown** emphasizes the importance of this area to the City's vitality long term sustainability. In the Future Land Use Map, it connects the existing downtown with the new ballpark. Downtowns typically host a dense mix of retail, restaurants, civic uses, offices, services and residential. These characteristics see renewed emphasis in the Master Plan.
- **Multi-Use Center** areas will benefit from redevelopment into urban-style multi-use districts. The Ashman Circle area is expected to contain a variety of compatible and supportive uses that increase the density and viability of the Circle. A second Multi-Use Center focuses on redeveloping the Ballpark Area from the existing industrial use and look to commercial and



consumer trades. This could include restaurants, art studios, offices, and the types of commercial and light industrial uses that compliment and support the area.

One important change is a reduced emphasis on *Heavy Industrial* for new development. While some locations remain available for this use in southeast Midland, most of the future industrial development is categorized as *Light Industrial*. Light Industrial is compatible with the goals of diversifying the local economy, while at the same time providing opportunities for research, light assembly, warehousing and other activities that will support this industrial sector and the community.

Transportation. In support of the Future Land Use goals of the Midland Master Plan, recommendations are included that maintain and improve the safety and efficiency of the transportation system. Some specific street improvements are described. Gaining efficiencies in the system are touted through expanding multimodal options, enhancing access management (control of driveways), and introducing traffic calming for some residential streets. Also, community facilities such as parks, public safety and utilities are planned to match the pace of growth in the City.

Community Facilities. As the City plans for the future, maintaining existing high quality park and utility systems must be a high priority. The quantity and diversity of parks and recreation facilities across the City are the envy of many other communities in Michigan. The continued excellence in coverage and integration into existing and developing neighborhoods must be a focus for the future.

Implementing the Plan and Measuring Midland's Success

A Master Plan is a compact with the community. Maintaining the focus on the Plan is a promise made to the residents, property owners, business people and institutions in Midland. Its routine use is essential to achieve ultimately the collective goals defined by everyone who participated in developing the Master Plan. A Master Plan is not a zoning ordinance or set of regulations—it is intended to be a guide that is flexible to respond to new information, trends, and opportunities. This Plan must be evaluated, and amended if needed, at least every five years. To this end, the City of Midland Master Plan includes specific tasks and checklists to provide every opportunity to implement the plan, enhance the City's vitality and achieve long term sustainability.



Its preparation may have concluded, but for Midland, this Master Plan is a beginning.

