

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
AGENDA**

**WORK SESSION MEETING**

**March 16, 2015**

**Meridian Asset Resource Center (MARC)  
4675 Okemos Rd. Okemos, MI.  
517-853-4560**

1. Call meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.
2. Approval of agenda
3. Discussion
  - A. 2005 Master Plan Update
5. Public remarks
6. Adjournment

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM:



Gail Oranchak, AICP  
Principal Planner

DATE: March 13, 2015

RE: Master Plan Chapter Review

Chair Scott-Craig has indicated he plans to discuss the following topics under the discussion item "2005 Master Plan Update" during the Monday, March 16, 2015 work session agenda:

- Chapter 1 suggested design
- Structure of additional chapters
- Planning Commissioner chapter assignments
- Organization and members of working groups
- Introduction of updated Existing Land Use Map

A copy of Commissioner Deits' proposed chapter structure and a copy of the Planning Commission's adopted version of the Goals and Objectives with original January 9, 2015 cover memorandum are attached to assist in preparing for the meeting. Suggestions for candidates to populate the working groups have being requested.

Staff has completed the Existing Land Use Map update and will introduce to the Planning Commission on Monday evening if time permits.

Attachments

1. Commissioner Deits' proposed chapter structure
2. Goals and Objectives adopted by the Planning Commission on January 9, 2015

Possible organization of Master Plan using goal-directed structure. Current goals are in bold, suggested elements of 2005 Master Plan to be incorporated under each goal in italics.

## **1. Preserve and strengthen residential neighborhoods**

### **Introduction**

Meridian Township is rich in residential neighborhoods that provide housing in a variety of settings, from large lot suburban homes to multi-family housing and assisted living facilities. Meridian Township neighborhoods are considered some of the most desirable in the Tri-County region. [some neighborhood pictures]

In addition, Meridian Township has a number of historic neighborhoods and residences, including architecturally significant homes by such figures as Frank Lloyd Wright. [insert some historical building pictures]

Meridian Township is viewed as a community based on single-family suburban residences, which reflects the history of development of the Township. However, both the demographics of Township residents and the types of housing that have been added in recent years have changed.

Demographically, the Township has aged and become more diverse. During the period from 2000 – 2010 the following trends emerged:

- Township population has remained essentially unchanged, increasing 1.5%, in sharp contrast to the steady and significant population growth seen from 1930 to 2000 (Demographics Table 1)
- The average age of Township residents increased by 2.8 years 2000 -2010 while the Tri-County Region median age has been essential unchanged during the same period (Demographics Table 2).
- There have been significant increases in the number of racial minority residents (Demographics Table 3) from 11.9 to 17.5%.
- Township residents are, on average, more highly educated than average for the Tri-County Region. There is a slight increase in the number of residents completing college (Demographics Tale 4)
- Township median income is 34% higher than that of the Tri-County region but income trends in the Township have not kept pace with inflation, showing a net shortfall of 12 % (Demographics Table 5)
- The number of owner-occupied housing units paying more than 30% of their income for housing (a benchmark for non-affordable housing) has increased 85% (Demographics Table 6)

Reflecting in some measure this change in demographics, the residential housing mix and construction trends have changed in the 2000-2010 time frame as well:

- The mix of housing types in the Township is largely unchanged with the exception of a decline in smaller multifamily units and mobile homes and a corresponding modest increase in larger multifamily complexes. (Housing analysis Table 1)
- Single family home construction declined from 63.85% to 48.05% of total residential construction in the 2001-2010 period compared to the 1991-2000 period and the share of new multifamily construction increased from 36.15% to 51.9%. (Housing analysis Table 2)
- The proportion of Township residences composed of families with children declined 11.6 % from 2001-2010 (Housing analysis Table 3)
- The proportion of single-person households increased by 7.3% with the most dramatic increase seen in single person households over age 65, which increased 29.4% (Housing analysis Table 4).
- Median single family home values increased 13.7% from 2000 – 2010 but this does not reflect the subsequent impact of the 'Great Recession' on home values. (Housing analysis Table 5)
- Monthly rental costs increased 23%, comparable to trends elsewhere in the Tri-County region (Housing analysis table 6)

Based on this analysis and other supporting data provided as appendices, the Township has established a set of strategies to accomplish Goal 1, Preserve and Strengthen Residential Neighborhoods

1. Prevent inconsistent uses from encroaching into residential areas
2. Continue to support the designation and preservation of historic neighborhoods and residences
3. Designate appropriate neighborhoods as special land use areas and adopt zoning specific to their needs
4. Encourage cluster developments, mixed use and other compact residential choices closer to shopping, public transit and other services
5. Ensure that the Future Land Use Map has a range of residential densities which will result in a diversity of housing that metes the needs of various income levels and housing types.

#### *Demographics*

#### *Housing analysis*

- 2. Preserve open space and natural areas**

#### *Existing land use*

#### *Natural features*

- 3. Enhance the viability of township businesses**

#### *economic analysis*

- 4. Maintain and expand a diverse park system**

*Community facilities related to parks*

**5. Maintain essential public services**

*Infrastructure except transportation*

*Community facilities other than parks*

**6. Support multimodal transportation**

*transportation infrastructure*

**7. Promote efficient and sustainable growth practices**

*future land use*

*implementation*

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Gail Oranchak  
Gail Oranchak, AICP  
Principal Planner

DATE: January 9, 2015

RE: CR #14083 (Planning Commission), amendments to the 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives

The following changes have been made to the attached draft:

- Caps have been removed from the title of Goal 6 in the introductory section on Page 1.
- "And" has been removed from the last line of Goal 2, Objective A, Strategy 1.
- "Spaced" became "spaces" in the first line of Goal 2, Objective E.
- Added new Strategy 3 to Goal 3, Objective D to read, "Continue to adopt Township ordinances and zoning practices to facilitate efficient decision-making and to incorporate greater flexibility where appropriate."
- The numbering of strategies was corrected in Goal 7, Objective A.
- Strategy 5, of Goal 7, Objective A was revised to read, "Establish ordinances providing incentives for development that emphasize redevelopment, infill development, alternative energy, and building material reuse."
- In Strategy 9 of Goal 7, Objective A, "site plan" became "site plans" and "development" became "developments."
- Punctuation has been revised in several locations within the document.

Vice-Chair Deits suggested the following changes which have not been incorporated into this draft pending approval by the Planning Commission.

- To reflect broad to specific actions, revise the order of strategies under Goal 3, Objective B so that Strategy 1 becomes 3, 2 becomes 1, and 3 becomes 2.
- Replace "demands" with "needs" in Strategy 1 of Goal 4, Objective 1.
- Delete "property for the" from Strategy 2 of Goal 4, Objective 2.
- Merge Objectives B & C under Goal 5
- Replace "determined" with "needed" in Strategy 1, Goal 6, Objective D

**2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives**  
**Township Board (1/9/15)**  
**Page 2**

A resolution has been provided to adopt the revisions and subsequently transmit them to the Township Board for review.

**Attachments**

1. Draft Goals and Objectives dated 1-9-15
2. Resolution to approve

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## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The fundamental statement of community values, the personal values, the values relating to government and the vision for the year 2020 provide the foundation upon which subsequent policy decisions in this Plan rests. To guide the formulation of specific policy decisions, the Planning Commission established a more detailed set of goals and objectives and strategies for pursuing them.

The Planning Commission presents the following set of specific goals, which are derived from the statements of community values (no priority is implied):

- *Goal 1:* Preserve and strengthen residential neighborhoods.
- *Goal 2:* Preserve open space and natural areas.
- *Goal 3:* Enhance the viability of Township businesses.
- *Goal 4:* Maintain and expand a diverse park system.
- *Goal 5:* Maintain essential public services.
- *Goal 6:* Provide and support an efficient, safe, and environmentally sensitive multi-modal transportation network.
- *Goal 7:* Promote efficient and sustainable growth principles.

For each of these goals, a series of objectives is stated, and for most of the objectives one or more strategies for achieving this objective are specified.

### **GOAL 1: PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

#### **Objective A: Maintain a community of desirable, attractive residential neighborhoods.**

##### **Strategies:**

1. Prevent inconsistent uses from encroaching into residential areas.
2. Continue to support the designation and preservation of historic neighborhoods and residences.
3. Designate appropriate neighborhoods as special land use areas and adopt zoning specific to their needs.
4. Encourage cluster developments, mixed use and other compact residential choices closer to shopping, public transit and other services.
5. Ensure that the Future Land Use Map has a range of residential densities which will result in a diversity of housing that meets the needs of various income levels and household types.



**Objective B: Ensure new residential developments meet high standards of visual attractiveness, health and safety, and environmental sensitivity.**

**Strategies:**

1. Minimize erosion and the intrusion of roads, pathways, houses, and driveways into wetlands and floodplains in residential developments.
2. Continue to require the planting of trees along rights-of-way, and the replacement of trees when they are damaged, destroyed, or diseased.
3. Encourage residential design that enhances use of outdoor areas for recreation, community walkability and integration with public transit.
4. Lay out new residential developments to accommodate public transit, for example, by providing pedestrian connections to bus stops and by designing for curb side bus stops near entrances.
5. In all subdivisions and residential developments, encourage layouts which maintain maximum green space and/or common open space.

**GOAL 2: PRESERVE OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS**

**Objective A: Adopt policies and programs that maximize the preservation of open spaces, natural areas, other undeveloped areas and agricultural land uses in the Township.**

**Strategies:**

1. Continue to develop and implement Township policies regarding the protection of open space land and natural areas via zoning, the public purchase of land, conservation easements, development rights and other appropriate techniques.
2. Encourage landowners to donate natural areas or open spaces to the Township, and to place their properties under the protection of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation (Part 361) or the Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement (Part 21) of PA 451 of 1994 Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, where appropriate.
3. Encourage landowners to donate land or development rights to non-profit land trusts.
4. Continue to coordinate efforts with the Park Commission to support and promote the preservation of open space and environmentally sensitive lands in the Meridian recreation areas through donations of land with natural, open space and ecological and/or historical significance.
5. Preserve the ecological integrity of the Red Cedar River through zoning, voluntary agreements with landowners, donation of land to the Township, or the purchase of land, scenic easements, and development rights, where appropriate.
6. Develop a tree preservation ordinance to protect significant mature trees.
7. Work with the Park Commission, Department of Public Works and Engineering and the school districts, where appropriate, to encourage developers and

builders to maximize the amount of land left in a natural state as common open space.

**Objective B: Conserve wetlands, floodplains, and other water retention areas.**

**Strategies:**

1. Identify all wetlands, floodplains, and other water retention areas.
2. Continue to communicate and coordinate with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality on activities affecting lakes, streams, and wetlands.
3. Discourage development within wetlands, floodplains, floodplain fringe areas, and water retention areas.
4. Support the Environmental Commission's educational efforts to minimize infiltration of salt, fertilizer, herbicide, and pesticide.

**Objective C: Link open spaces and natural areas into a network of continuous greenways throughout the Township.**

**Strategies:**

1. Continue to use the Greenspace Plan as a guide for determining how natural areas can be linked into continuous greenways throughout the Township.
2. Work with the Land Preservation Board and Park Commission to continue the establishment of a continuous greenway along the Red Cedar River through the identification of additional parcels of land which are important to the ecological and visual integrity of the Red Cedar River.
3. Utilize land planning methods, purchases of land and development rights, and plat, site plan, and other review processes to create and maintain continuous greenways.
4. Encourage the Environmental Commission to develop educational programs about the importance of protecting endangered animals and plants, ecosystems and other unique or sensitive natural features.

**Objective D: Protect groundwater recharge areas in the Township.**

**Strategies:**

1. Support regional efforts to protect groundwater recharge areas.
2. Continue to educate citizens about the importance of protecting groundwater recharge areas.
3. Use zoning and other appropriate land management techniques to protect important groundwater recharge areas.

**Objective E: Preserve greenbelts, open spaces and natural areas and create pathways by encouraging the use of planned unit development or other suitable zoning strategies for new residential developments.**

### **GOAL 3: ENHANCE THE VIABILITY OF TOWNSHIP BUSINESSES**

#### **Objective A: Upgrade commercial areas.**

##### **Strategies:**

1. Participate in regional efforts to redevelop the Grand River corridor and incorporate results where appropriate.
2. Improve and enhance the Haslett Road commercial area while maintaining its traditional character.
3. Encourage redevelopment of the downtown Okemos area using the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Integrated Plan as a guide.
4. Evaluate opportunities for walkable urban design in commercial areas.
5. Encourage the use of the commercial planned unit development ordinance.
6. Identify specific areas where the form-based code technique may be appropriately applied.

#### **Objective B: Develop the Township's commercial core into a viable and vibrant district.**

##### **Strategies:**

1. Explore the viability of upper floor(s) residences in the commercial core.
2. Continue to engage the public in deciding the direction for development in the commercial core.
3. Explore options for public-private partnerships to revitalize the Township's commercial core.

#### **Objective C: Improve the attractiveness of the Township's entrances and transportation corridors.**

##### **Strategies:**

1. Investigate grant-based funding opportunities to improve landscaping along major thoroughfares.
2. Create well-designed entrances along the main roads entering the community.
3. Promote opportunities for public art.

#### **OBJECTIVE D: Promote economic development**

1. Communicate with and utilize the resources of the Economic Development Corporation, Downtown Development Authority, Meridian Area Business Association, and Meridian Asset Resource Center to encourage economic development.
2. Provide businesses with the information necessary to invest in the community.
3. Continue to adopt Township ordinances and zoning practices to facilitate efficient decision-making and to incorporate greater flexibility where appropriate.

**GOAL 4: MAINTAIN AND EXPAND A DIVERSE PARK SYSTEM**

**Objective A: Continue to expand the Meridian Township park and recreational system to meet the recreational needs of residents into the future.**

**Strategies:**

1. Pursue acquisitions that target current and future demands of residents.
2. Employ acquisition strategies that leverage available dollars to secure maximum property for the value.
3. Support Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway linkages to parks and recreation facilities.
4. Provide accessible facilities and leisure opportunities for persons of various physical and socio-economic capabilities.

**Objective B: Develop and support Meridian Township park development and recreation programming that is diverse, widely distributed, fiscally responsible, and represents community needs.**

**Strategies:**

1. Support the Park Commission's continuing efforts to pursue public input in determining park and recreation development needs.
2. Utilize cooperative methods of providing recreation facilities by working with local recreation associations, schools, businesses, neighborhood groups and associations to provide diverse recreation programs.
3. Increase coordination between the Township Board, Park Commission and Land Preservation Advisory Board to maximize the potential benefits and enhance stewardship of open space, natural areas and park lands.
4. Encourage developers to incorporate parks and recreation amenities in new developments to complement the efforts of the Park Commission.
5. Continue to promote fiscal responsibility through partnerships and collaborative opportunities, grant support, sponsorships and donations, and encouraging volunteerism.
6. Provide resources to maintain and develop a diverse parks and recreation system to maintain and develop a diverse parks and recreation system to deliver a high quality of life for our community residents and necessary support for maintenance and operation of these amenities.

**GOAL 5: MAINTAIN ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES**

**Objective A: Ensure that any future growth is consistent with the Township's present or planned capacity for sewage treatment, public water, and other utility systems.**

**Strategies:**

1. Focus growth into an urban services district to ensure efficient and fiscally responsible use of public services.
2. Routinely assess the demands on the utility systems from developments to determine available capacity for future development based on demographics.
3. Routinely inventory water, sewer and other utility systems capacity.
4. Maintain and upgrade the infrastructure (water, sewers, roads, community facilities) of the Township through the Capital Improvements Program's systematic scheduling of infrastructure construction, maintenance, and renovation.
5. Continue to use Special Assessment Districts to finance infrastructure projects.
6. Incorporate appropriate recommendations from Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's Wellhead Protection Audit for regional best practices to protect the public water supply.

**Objective B: Maintain police, fire, and ambulance service to all areas of the community.**

**Objective C: Maintain quality library service for the community.**

**Objective D: Use land use policies to assist the public school districts which are a valued community asset that makes Meridian Township a unique and desirable place to live.**

**Strategies:**

1. Continue and/or initiate land use policies that attract families with students.
2. Support the Park Commission's agreement with the School Districts to coordinate park facilities and programs.
3. Support street and pathway improvements that provide safe access routes for school children.

**Objective E: Promote cooperation between adjoining communities, school districts, and appropriate agencies.**

**GOAL 6: PROVIDE AND SUPPORT AN EFFICIENT, SAFE, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK**

**Objective A: Evaluate the existing transportation network and identify problems, including traffic congestion, safety, environment, and aesthetics, which can be solved at acceptable cost.**

**Strategies:**

1. Cooperate with county, regional and state entities to develop strategies to improve traffic flow.
2. Consider zoning and other design strategies such as Complete Streets as effective means of ensuring safe and efficient travel for all modes of transportation.

**Objective B: Maintain local roads.**

**Strategies:**

1. Support improvements to local streets when a special assessment district request has been received from local residents.
2. Review reconstruction and expansion of local non-subdivision streets through the Capital Improvements Program process when 50 percent of the improvement's funding will be paid for by the Township or its residents through special assessment districts.

**Objective C: Develop a Complete Streets policy for all users of Township roads.**

**Strategies:**

1. Define a vision for a Complete Streets program.
2. Review current policies to identify inconsistencies and impediments to implementing a Complete Streets policy.
3. Conduct planning, regulatory and physical audits of current street designs as needed and financially feasible.
4. Coordinate the Pedestrian-Bicycle Pathway Plan with Safe Routes to School policies and other Township plans.
5. Share the Township's vision and work with transportation and road authorities.

**Objective D: Expand and improve the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Plan.**

**Strategies:**

1. Continue to implement the requirement for sidewalks as determined necessary.
2. Continue to implement the pedestrian/bicycle pathway system through site plan review.
3. Continue to support the pedestrian/bicycle pathway millage for construction and maintenance of the Township's pedestrian/bicycle pathway system.
4. Investigate alternative surfacing materials to reduce the amount of impervious surface materials used in the construction of the pedestrian/bicycle system.
5. Continue to investigate strategies for safe and efficient travel for bicyclists and pedestrians.
6. Coordinate the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Plan with parks, schools, preserves, Greenspace Plan, neighborhoods, and other destinations.

**Objective E: Encourage the use of public transportation.**

**Strategies:**

1. Encourage and promote public transportation service to any new developments and in conjunction with redevelopment via site plan review.
2. Institute design standards for site plan review to ensure public transportation access to all segments of the population but particularly those with physical disabilities.

**Objective F: Coordinate Meridian Township's transportation planning with regional planning efforts administered by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and recorded in the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.**

**Strategies:**

1. Coordinate transportation planning and road improvements for all non-local streets with the region's long range plan.
2. Advocate and promote the Township's needs and interests in transportation improvements with transportation and road authorities.

**GOAL 7: PROMOTE EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH PRACTICES**

**Objective A:** Implement sustainable energy and environmental practices throughout the Township utilizing the most current best practices

**Strategies:**

1. Budget funds to have Township buildings assessed for energy efficiency a minimum of once every five years.
2. For Meridian Township procurement purposes, when equivalent products or services are available, preference should be given to the more sustainable services or products.
3. Encourage electric car charging stations.
4. Establish a minimum level of LEED certification or the equivalent for all projects undertaken by the Township.
5. Establish ordinances providing incentives for development that emphasize redevelopment, infill development, alternative energy, and building material reuse.
6. Increase the use of alternative transportation modes for commuting and recreation by encouraging the use of mixed use planned unit developments and implementing the Greenway Plan.
7. Explore methods through ordinances or by providing incentives for existing businesses to upgrade their parking lots and landscaping to increase tree cover and shade to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

8. Explore incentives for new or redeveloped projects to be LEED certified or equivalent.
9. Work with developers to consider alternative energy in site plan and construction of new development
10. Encourage the use of alternative energy throughout the township.

**Objective B: Develop Township policies to balance and manage growth.**

**Strategies:**

1. Integrate information technology including geographic information systems to facilitate continuous improvement of the Master Plan.
2. Use the Self-Assessment of Sustainability Toolkit as a guide to evaluate growth in the Township.

**Objective C: Maintain open spaces and natural features in suburban and rural areas of the Township.**

**Strategies:**

1. Continue to develop zoning standards and Township policies.
2. Continue to encourage and support voluntary citizen land conservancy efforts which maintain the Township's open spaces, natural features, and rural areas.

**Objective D: Define an urban services district to promote walkable community development and dynamic community improvement through redevelopment.**

**Strategies:**

1. Promote land use policies that emphasize compact infill development.
2. Investigate opportunities to maximize the use of existing infrastructure through development and redevelopment within the urban services district.
3. Investigate additional strategies to provide incentives for development and redevelopment within the urban services district.

**Objective E: Encourage development in Meridian Township that leads to sustainable land use.**

**Strategies:**

1. Engage all stakeholders to study new techniques for the control and management of development.
2. Review the legality and suitability of these techniques for Meridian Township.

**Objective F: Prepare and implement a redevelopment strategy**

**Strategies:**

1. Eliminate inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations.
2. Identify priority redevelopment sites.



3. Expand public participation.
4. Prepare annual reports to the Township Board reporting progress towards the stated benchmarks and recommending any needed changes.

g:\planning\gloCR\CR 14083\1-9-15 Draft