

Introduction

As used throughout this document, the “Greater Thompsonville Area” constitutes the jurisdictional area of the Village of Thompsonville, Colfax Township and Weldon Township. However, for the purpose of this plan and future planning and development efforts, the Greater Thompsonville Area refers to one, larger cooperative community.

This master plan represents a framework for the development of the Greater Thompsonville Area through a series of objectives, strategies and action policies. The master plan is intended to take a long-range view of the community and guide development for the next 10 to 20 years while providing flexibility to respond to changing conditions, innovations and new information.

The master plan also establishes the vision and expectations for the future development of the Greater Thompsonville Area. It serves as the basis for local land use regulations and capital improvements. The master plan also establishes expectations and responsibilities for its administration and follow-through. Finally, the master plan is comprehensive, providing plans and action strategies for new development, improvements to the downtown, sense-of-place, recreation, and land use.

The Greater Thompsonville Area Master Plan has been adopted under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008, as amended (P.A. 22 of 2008, M.C.L. 125.3801 et seq.), which states that the planning commission shall, “make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction.”

The Greater Thompsonville Area Master Plan has been prepared under the direction of and with direct participation by the Community Joint Planning Commission. The master plan and planning process were established by the Planning Commission under the following directives.

Build on the Past. The *2005 Weldon Township Land Use/Master Plan* and the *2020 Benzie County Comprehensive Plan* are thorough and comprehensive documents, describing existing socio-economic trends and goals for existing land use, public utility infrastructure, recreation and natural resource preservation. While these documents are still relevant, the Greater Thompsonville Area continues to deal with a number of new challenges and opportunities. In addition, the community (like other communities across the state) is working to figure out its role in Michigan’s transition from the Old Economy to the New Economy.

A plan is an adopted statement of policy, in the form of text, maps, and graphics, used to guide public and private actions that affect the future.

A plan provides decision makers with the information they need to make informed decisions affecting long-range social, economic, and physical growth of a community.

- American Planning Association (APA)

Community Joint Planning Commission (CJPC) - Community Joint Planning Commission was established by ordinance in March 2011. The Commission was established, in part, in response to recent changes in zoning authority (Colfax was left without a zoning ordinance when Benzie County eliminated planning & zoning) and an interest from the Village and Weldon Township to update their zoning ordinances.

Due to these changing dynamics (and a commitment to work collaboratively) local officials feel it is important to establish a master plan that reflects the growing changes in the Greater Thompsonville Area.

Solicit Public Input. The Joint Planning Commission facilitated a public planning process that encouraged citizen participation and open dialogue. During the planning process, a public meeting was held, providing an opportunity for citizens to identify community assets and submit input on a wide variety of community goals, objectives and future development strategies. A full list of notes from the public meeting can be found in *Appendix A*. Citizens were also invited to attend and participate in each monthly Joint Planning Commission meeting. Finally, after a lengthy public comment period, the Joint Planning Commission hosted a formal public hearing prior to the adoption of the plan by each jurisdiction.

Consider the Region. With the creation of the Joint Planning Commission, the three participating jurisdictions have made a concerted effort to work together on a number of future land use, zoning and governmental initiatives. These initiatives will include the development and administration of a new joint zoning ordinance. Future initiatives may also include community-wide code enforcement and the expansion of infrastructure. In establishing the Joint Planning Commission, the three jurisdictions recognize that land use planning across jurisdictional boundaries is the most effective way to plan for and protect cultural and natural resources and encourage community-wide economic development. Therefore, while this master plan addresses the future development of the Greater Thompsonville Area, many of the concepts, objectives and strategies outlined in this document have implications for nearby jurisdictions, Manistee County and Northwest Michigan.

Implement New Ideas. The Joint Planning Commission acknowledges that significant changes have occurred in the Greater Thompsonville Area over the last decade. As the area continues to evolve, the Joint Planning Commission must continue to be flexible and respond to changing conditions, innovations and new information. In an effort to set the stage for the future, they agreed to utilize the following guiding principles and strategies for growth and development in the community:

Smart Growth - Smart Growth Network (adopted by the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council) According to *This is Smart Growth*, a publication from the Smart Growth Network, growth is smart *when it gives us great communities, with more choices and personal freedom, good return on public investment, greater opportunity across the community, a thriving natural environment, and a legacy we can be proud to leave our children.*

March 1st - Public Meeting - Meeting participants work to identify and map their “community assets.” Meeting participants also review and make suggestions to the draft goals, objectives and strategies.



Solicit Public Opinion - Prior to the development of the Master Plan, the Joint Planning Commission distributed questionnaires to area residents at the June 2011 Summerfest and August Street Fair. Among other things, the questionnaire asked citizens what they liked and didn’t like about the community, what improvements are needed and their vision for the community. The common thread for most responses were: more things for kids to do; more jobs; more affordable housing; and more retail.

The Smart Growth Tenets (at right) have been widely adopted and promoted by a number of planning, environmental and development organizations as well as local, regional and state governments - including the Community Joint Planning Commission.

Eight Assets That Make Communities Vibrant Places in the 21st Century Center for 21st Century Communities (21C3) - Michigan Municipal League

The Michigan Municipal League has identified eight essential assets that make communities vibrant places in the 21st Century. The “eight essential assets” were developed through the League’s Center for 21st Century Communities Program. The Program is designed to assist local officials in identifying, developing and implementing policies and strategies that will enhance the state’s communities as vibrant places for the 21st century. Listed below are the general *eight essential assets*:

1. *Physical Design and Walkability*: Whether your community is big or small, it is important to create a physical fabric that promotes social connections where people can live, work, shop and play.
2. *Green Initiatives*: Thinking green is a critical asset of any viable community. It impacts natural resources, quality of life and the financial bottom line.
3. *Cultural Economic Development*: Arts and culture should be part of any long-term economic development strategy for sustainability. Cultural Economic Development plays a big role in developing and preserving a community’s identity and uniqueness.
4. *Entrepreneurship*: In the new economy, we need to focus on growing jobs in our communities by ones and twos for long-term sustainability.
5. *Multiculturalism*: Our global economy is fueled by the talent and ingenuity of people from around the world. Welcoming those from different backgrounds and disciplines can result in a whole new level of innovation.
6. *Messaging and Technology*: Technology allows people to connect and collaborate like never before. Communities have powerful opportunity to connect and engage with their citizenry and beyond.
7. *Transit*. People are choosing where they want to live, play and work in communities that embrace all modes of transportation - walking, biking and public transit.
8. *Education*. Our educational institutions are key to growing a knowledge-based state. Leveraging these institutional resources is critical.

Ten Tenets of Smart Growth

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense-of-place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration

Strategic Growth - Michigan State University Land Policy Institute & People and Land Program. This initiative combines the ten tenets of *Smart Growth* with the *six pillars of growth*, the *seven pillars of the New Economy* and the *five principles of strategic growth* as established by the People and Land Advisory Group and the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute.

Six Pillars of Growth

1. *Attractive Cities and Neighborhoods*: From major cities to small towns, we need vibrant neighborhoods where people want to live and raise families
2. *Highly Competitive Schools and Lifelong Learning Opportunities*: Education creates the skilled workers we need to compete in the global marketplace
3. *Knowledge-Based Technologies and Michigan's Future*: Job growth in Michigan will come from new and creative businesses
4. *Thriving Agriculture to Grow Michigan's Economy*: Michigan's second-largest industry can provide food, fuel and innovation while preserving beautiful rural landscapes
5. *Natural Resources for Recreation and Job Creation*: Michigan is blessed with natural resources that enrich our quality of life and enhance our economy
6. *Inclusive and Entrepreneurial Culture*: Innovation, new ideas, new people, new businesses: this is the currency of the new economy.

Seven Pillars of the New Economy

1. Knowing the region's economic function in the global economy
2. Creating a skilled workforce
3. Investing in an infrastructure for innovation
4. Creating great quality of life
5. Fostering an innovative business climate
6. Reinventing - and digitizing government
7. Taking regional governance seriously

Principles of Strategic Growth

1. Regionalism
2. Urban-rural interdependency
3. Strategic assets, assessment, industry clustering and a regional strategic growth plan
4. Placemaking
5. Targeting of resources