

Introduction

In 2002, the Michigan Legislature amended the Municipal Planning Act, PA 285 of 1931, to revise the legal processes necessary to adopt a municipality's new or amended master plan. Sometimes referred to as "The Coordinated Planning Act," the amendment greatly expanded the notification process and the degree of involvement of the legislative body. Communities undertaking development of a new master plan, or amending their existing plan, must now follow this process (See One-Pager *Plus* entitled *Updating the Master Plan – Mastering the Process*).

An additional provision of the act (MCL 125.329(2)) requires each community to review its master plan every five years to determine if it needs to be amended or if it is time to institute the process for a new master plan.

The Five Year Review

First, note that the act requires this review every five years following adoption of the master plan. It does not exempt plans adopted prior to the effective date of the act. As a result, the five-year review became retroactive resulting in the fact that a master plan adopted in 2001 (prior to the amendment of the Municipal Planning Act) will "expire" in 2006, unless a five-year review is conducted. The entire "coordinated planning process" is not required for this review and no notifications need be made. Instead, the planning commission need only conduct the review and document it in the minutes of the meeting.

Although the five-year review may be considered perfunctory, a necessary "fill in the blank" action, communities should take advantage of this opportunity to thoroughly review their plan to make sure it is still relevant. Involving the legislative body in this review is also critical. At a minimum, the following questions should be considered:

- Have there been major changes in the community not anticipated in the current master plan? This could include events such as new utilities, major road improvements, or large development approvals among other things.
- Are there instances where the planning commission has departed from the master plan? Do the reasons for these departures demonstrate a need for an overall revision of the master plan?
- Are the goals and policies set out in the plan still relevant? An effective master plan will have a series of carefully crafted goals and policies describing the community's vision for its future. Is the community still willing to take the actions necessary to implement them?
- How does the future land use map and text compare with zoning actions taken since the plan was first adopted? Do the land use descriptions need to be revised to account for new development? This element contains the land use descriptions and map that depict specific land use arrangements.

There may be minor changes, e.g. changes in demographics or other statistical information, but if they do not appear to affect the overall intent of the plan, going through the entire amendment process may be delayed until more substantive changes are needed. If, after a careful review is conducted, it is determined that changes are necessary – the process outlined by the Municipal Planning Act must be carefully followed.

Finally, while the Act requires this review every five years – communities should consider conducting this review annually, particularly in areas where development is active. As with the five-year review, this review should be documented to "refresh" the plan for the next five years.

Based on material provided by Steve Langworthy, LSL Planning, Inc.