

CHAPTER TWO

LAND USE PLANNING AND MORAN TOWNSHIP

What is a Master Land Use Plan?

Communities are constantly changing and must plan for their future. Planning for the future is a broad and far reaching activity that focuses on a wide range of concerns, issues, and disciplines.

Land use planning is critical in determining the most appropriate use of a community's land resources based upon a set of goals and objectives. It is a process that examines a community's characteristics and establishes a strategy for present and future land uses. A Master Land Use Plan establishes the guidelines and policies for the location and placement of new and/or expanded land uses within a community.

The function of this master land use plan is to provide guidance for the use of lands within Moran Township based upon the needs and concerns of the local residents, accepted land use planning standards, and the continuance of the general health, safety, and welfare of the residents and visitors.

Moran Township: The Need for a Master Land Use Plan

Since the advent of the automobile in the early 1900's, this century has witnessed an unmatched transformation. This generation enjoys the luxury of relative ease in travel and arriving at destinations within hours or days. This would have been unthinkable in earlier times. With such ease of mobility and access, the automobile has allowed for unrestrained land development and increases in tourist activity. Even areas that were considered isolated and protected from such forces are now experiencing development pressures.

The Upper Peninsula's history, charm, scenic and recreational resources, in association with the Great Lakes and other natural resources, and general atmosphere has attracted a growing tourist population as well as persons looking for permanent residency. Moran Township's location at the southern periphery of the Upper Peninsula is directly impacted by these trends, especially along U.S. Route 2.

Moran Township is at a critical phase where land use planning is fundamental in preserving the areas natural and scenic resources. The future development of the area and the health, safety and welfare of the Township's residents and visitors are dependent on planning.

Preparing A Master Land Use Plan

The first phase in developing a master land use plan is data collection. Data collection includes gathering information on, but not necessarily limited to, natural features, soils, topography, vegetation, demography, and population trends. This data provides the needed base information in understanding the municipality.

The second phase is the careful study of this information to gain insight into the critical issues and concerns of the area. The third phase is creating a set of goals to provide direction and clarity for the development of the Master Land Use Plan itself.

The final phase is developing specific policies for future land uses. These policies are a result of an analysis of the findings in Phase 1 and Phase 2 and reflect the needs and concerns of the existing natural and socio-economic conditions. In this fashion, a future land use plan is developed that is responsive to the health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors.

The Master Land Use Plan consists of a graphic future land use plan and accompanying text to support and clarify the Plan and its intentions.

Land Use Plan Study Scope

Moran Township has several unique characteristics. The most evident of these characteristics is the Township's size. The vast majority of Townships in the United States were established on a grid network providing for a hierarchy of land areas from one square mile sections to 36 square mile Townships to 1,296 square mile counties. Generally, each county consisted of 36 Townships, each one being approximately six miles long by six miles wide and referred to as a congressional Township.

Moran Township, on the other hand, is referred to as a civil Township. Its boundaries are not wholly guided by the U.S. Public Land Survey Program but by political jurisdiction as well. Because of this, and the fact that the Township abuts Lake Michigan, the shape of Moran Township is quite unique and covers over 125 square miles. It is more than three times the traditional land area of most Townships.

Another unique characteristic is that approximately 80 percent of land in the Township is publicly owned. As Figures 2 & 3 illustrate, the vast majority of privately owned lands are located near or along the Township's coastline. It is these lands that are subject to the increasing pressures of development. Finally, while the Township is very large in area, its population is quite low.

The focus of this plan is on areas of the Township where there is the greatest degree of privately owned land. It is these areas where growth pressure is most forceful and where the potential for deterioration of the natural environment is greatest. These areas, referred to as the North and South Study Zones, are illustrated in Figures 2 & 3. While these Study Zones served as the primary focus during the plan development, all lands within the Township were examined and reviewed relative to their natural and cultural characteristics and their implications for overall land use planning in the Township.