

MEMORANDUM

To: City of The Village of Douglas Planning Commission
Date: October 24, 2023
From: Tricia Anderson
RE: 2016 Master Plan Audit

About a year ago, the Planning Commission discussed a 5-year review and update of the City's 2016 Master Plan. Members of the Planning Commission discussed varied areas of the 2016 Master Plan that they felt would be warranted for updates, as well as topics/issues that the 2016 Master Plan did not cover. From this discussion, the Planning Commission has already had a head-start in determining the topics that demand attention in the 2023 Master Plan Update:

Open Space Preservation:

- ▷ Open Space Preservation – perhaps an update could include areas that property owners have a strong desire to see undeveloped, particularly the sensitive lands within the City.

Planning and Implementation:

- ▷ The zoning map must be updated.
- ▷ It would be helpful for the Planning Commission to be able to participate in a survey that allows them to order the action items to determine what should have the highest priority in terms of implementation.
- ▷ The action items should be implemented incrementally.
- ▷ It's hard to justify spending money on a new plan when the action items in the current plan are not complete.
- ▷ The Planning Commission should take the three major projects that are in the pipe for approvals and ensure that they align with the goals of the 2016 Master Plan.

- ▷ Importance of implementing the wayfinding signage.
- ▷ An audit of the 2016 plan should be done to see if the City is actually trending toward the implementation of the goals of that plan.

Affordable Housing:

- ▷ Strong desire to somehow work in affordable housing and year-round occupancy in the Master Plan.
 - ▷ The city could provide incentives for new developments to maintain a proportion of units that would be occupied by year-round residents.
 - ▷ More ideas are needed to bring affordable housing so that folks who work in Douglas can also live in Douglas.
 - ▷ Sutton's Bay is doing a community land trust program that creates opportunities for affordable housing – the City should look into this.
 - ▷ The Planning Commission would be interested in attending a workshop related to affordable housing or contracting with a professional consultant.
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- ▷ MML held a session on housing at their conference in Muskegon. Pattern Books were the topic of discussion.

Short-Term Rentals

- ▷ The State has a bill that would take the right away from local units of government that wish to regulate short-term rentals.
- ▷ The Short-term rental program should be examined to reduce the number of licenses we issue to deter more property owners from maintaining a home as a second home.
- ▷ More than 75% of the homes in Douglas are second homes and the 20%+ are still going somewhere warm for the winter.

Infrastructure and Technology:

- ▷ Cell phone coverage is an issue – how do we plan for improvements to the wireless and broadband infrastructure?

- ▷ What are the City’s goals for sustainable energy when it comes to electricity? How do we prepare the community for the change to electric vehicles?

- ▷ We should have an inventory of public utilities and identify areas where utilities could be extended as part of a CIP and where it would be the responsibility of a developer to extend if desired before implementation of CIPs.

- ▷ Areas should be identified where sidewalk infill is needed to connect to existing areas.

- ▷ Inventory and map of the county drains should be included

Economic Viability and Tourism:

- ▷ Tourism as the number one factor in economic viability should be taken into consideration when updating the plan.

Audit of the 2016 Master Plan

Having previously held a discussion related to the items listed above was very helpful in establishing a sense of what’s important to the Planning Commission in terms of planning for the future of Douglas. The purpose of an audit is to provide a professional review of the entire document, make recommendations, and provide comments on the following:

1. Areas for reconsideration for change based on current trends and issues.
2. Areas that warrant an update due to new data from the 2020 Census.
3. The addition of topics that may not have been covered in the 2016 Master Plan.
4. Formatting, graphics, and images.

The 2016 Master Plan was reviewed in accordance with the goal of making recommendations on the above four areas while viewing the content through a lens of current issues and trends that help identify potential conflicts with or shifts in the City’s priorities for future planning. Any areas not mentioned are not recommended for change.

Chapter	Recommendations
<p>Foreword</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ <i>Our Douglas Vision</i> 	<p>The majority of the content in this section describes how the name of the plan came to be. We feel that the update should modify this section to reflect the fact that the name came from the 2016 plan, and keep that language, but reference the date of the update and</p>

▷ **Executive Summary**

include language that makes it clear that the focus and the word “vision” remain the same.

The executive summary provides a purpose and references legislation that gives the Planning Commission the legal authority to adopt a Master Plan. This summary is still relevant in its purpose. The Planning Commission may wish to point out any areas for additions or changes.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

▷ **Community Background**

The Community Background gives a broad overview of the location, culture, and the importance of the growth of the City as a destination and as a place to live and work. These elements have not changed, and we recommend keeping this section as-is.

▷ **Master Plan Process**

The 2023 Master Plan update will have a smaller scale as it pertains to process, since it is an update, as opposed to a full rewrite. Therefore, we would recommend that the process be updated with the current engagement strategies and the process by which the Planning Commission pursued while updating the plan in 2023.

▷ **Master Plan in Context Graphic**

There is a reference in this graphic to a plan called ExtremeLA, which is indicated as “not formally adopted”. The Planning Commission should determine whether the public engagement associated with ExtremeLA is still relevant to the Master Plan, even though the plan was not formally adopted. If not, then the reference to ExtremeLA should be removed.

▷ **Vision Statement**

The Planning Commission should discuss whether any updates should be made to the vision statement to accurately reflect today’s vision for the City.

Chapter 2 – Community Elements

▷ **Community Trends**

- *Our Community*

This subsection should be updated with new population data if it has changed from 1,250.

- *Demographics and population data*

The U.S. Census was conducted in 2020 and will provide new data for this entire subsection to be updated. New data will also be analyzed for its implications on a variety of community elements as well as indicate any trends that the data is showing.

▷ **Public Engagement**

- *Intro and Background*

The introduction and background should be updated to reflect current information and selected platforms used for public engagement, and the number of stakeholders the City engaged as part of the 2023 Master Plan Update.

- *Community Engagement Framework*

This section provides some information that sheds light on *why* the City engages the public in the process of developing a master plan. This information is relevant, however, it should be modified to reflect the selected formats and dates (if applicable) of the 2023 Update.

- *Results and Strategic Directions*

The 2016 Master Plan process engaged the public in varied ways, informing the City's stakeholders about the planning process and allowing a substantial amount of active participation. This deep dive into public engagement rendered a significant amount of useful feedback, as is warranted for a brand-new Master Plan. Since the process for the update is scaled-back in terms of scope, planned public engagement will not be as extensive. As such, we do not anticipate reporting out on the survey results and the open house (if desired) to the same extent as it has been done in this subsection. This subsection is where we would include our public engagement report, which summarizes the input received, identifies key themes, and may include some quotes from open-ended survey questions and photos from the open house if one is held.

▷ **Goals & Objectives**

- *Existing Conditions, Strategic Direction and Community Values*

This subsection contains a description and photographs of existing conditions, the strategic direction, and community values as they pertain to each of the community elements that the associated goals and objectives have been developed around. These elements include:

1. Economics
2. Housing and Neighborhoods
3. People, Arts, and Culture
4. Waterfront
5. Transportation and Mobility

We would recommend that the existing conditions, strategic direction, and community values be revised to reflect today's conditions where applicable. Areas that have already been implemented are warranted for an update.

- *Goals & Objectives*

The Planning Commission will have an opportunity to actively participate in the review and evaluation of the 2016 goals and objectives to determine whether they remain valid and not yet implemented, or should be revised to be reflective of current trends and forces that are driving the housing market and economic development. The Planning Commission may also wish to develop new goals and objectives, which are strategic action statements meant to serve as implementation strategies. Input from stakeholders obtained through the survey and other public engagement methods will also guide the Planning Commission in changing or adding new goals and objectives.

Consistent with current trends and hot-button issues, the Planning Commission may wish to place special focus on the topics of housing affordability and attainability, control of short-term rentals, infrastructure, preservation of natural features, and shoreline resiliency. The Planning Commission also expressed an interest in documenting the inventory of several public facilities and services, including water and sewer, pedestrian pathways, and road infrastructure, and

identifying gaps, planned extensions, and planned connections. These inventories as part of the Master Plan update will provide much-needed guidance with future land use proposals.

The City has also expressed a desire to ensure that roads and other types of public infrastructure are constructed in accordance with approved plans. The Planning Commission may wish to propose action steps that would allow the City to implement this policy decision.

We would also recommend the addition/modification of specific sub-areas where the focus has shifted or conditions have changed. Some examples include the former Haworth property, the Kalamazoo Lake shoreline, and certain areas of Blue Star Highway.

Chapter 3 – Future Land Use

▷ **Existing Land use**

The Existing Land Use map on the first page of this chapter will be updated to reflect any changes in land use that have occurred since 2016, particularly in areas that were vacant at that time and are now developed.

▷ **Future Land Use**

The Planning Commission must carefully evaluate the parcels and their 2016 Future Land Use designations and determine if any should be modified. There are currently nine different future land use designations. The Planning Commission will also need to determine if those nine designations accurately characterize the direction of land use throughout the City. The City may wish to add other designations as a way to identify areas of special consideration, such as the lakeshore, sensitive lands such as wetlands, critical dunes, non-critical dunes, high-risk erosion areas, brownfields/areas of known contamination, and waterfront properties, regardless of land use.

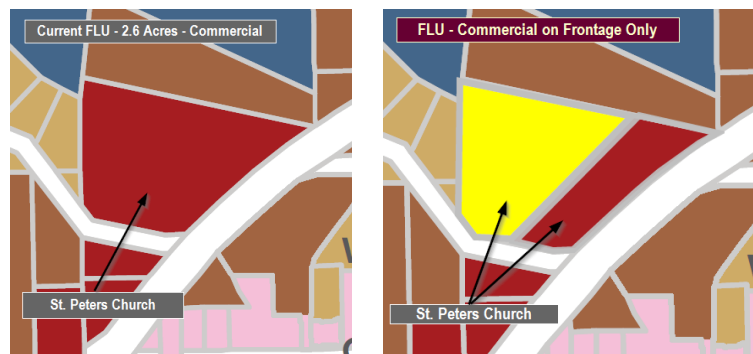
The City should evaluate whether entire parcels should be dedicated to a specific future land use designation. In some areas, particularly where parcels have frontage on

major roads, such as Blue Star Highway, or major City collector streets, like Center Street, and Ferry Street, it may make sense to designate only frontage areas with

commercial uses, instead of entire parcels. For example, the St. Peters Church on Blue Star Highway and Saint

Peters Drive is a 6.2-acre parcel that is surrounded primarily with residential land uses, and the Saint Peters Drive frontage is soon to be developed with additional residential uses. Keeping future commercial land use designations along Blue Star Highway and assigning a

future residential land on the western remainder of the parcel will ensure compatibility with the surrounding residential uses if the Church property changes hands and is sought for a rezoning to commercial (it is currently zoned R-4, Harbor Residential)



▷ **Residential Land Use**

Future residential uses are broken into five different designations:

- Suburban Residential
- Compact Residential
- Urban Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Residential Mix

Each designation is described in terms of the intent and desired building type. The Planning Commission may wish to consider the removal of the “desired building type” and instead shift the focus to the desired character, to perhaps permit varied building types in all residential future land use designations.

For example, suburban and urban residential both list “single-family detached houses” as the only building type that is envisioned within these designations.

Calling the focus to the desired character may open the door in compatible zoning districts for retrofitted two-family homes or missing middle tri-plex housing

(new or retrofitted). Redefining the intent and changing building types to the desired character could aid with goals and objectives related to attainable housing and with policy decisions related to a major shift away from “single-family only” zoning regulations.

▷ **Commercial Land Use**

The two commercial future land use designations are as follows:

- City Center
- Corridor Commercial

The City is comprised of several unique commercial sub-areas. The built environment does not necessarily reflect the path that the future land use map has created for some commercial areas, however, the natural progression over the years with the re-use of buildings, the presence of unique uses that have historically been in place for decades, and the success of certain businesses has added to the City’s unique character.

- *Corridor Commercial*

The Corridor Commercial designation is intended to provide areas for large-scale commercial, as well as smaller-scale uses, such as restaurants, personal service establishments and offices, that would serve the larger Tri-Community area. The primary compatible zoning district is C-2, General Commercial and potentially compatible zoning district is C-1, Village Center.

Recently the City approved a rezoning of the parcel located on the southwest corner of Blue Star Highway and Fremont Street from C-2 to C-1 and R-5, Multifamily Residential. The rationale behind the support for this rezone is that the small-scale downtown area seems to

spill from its boundaries over the Blue Star Highway to Ferry Street and both north and south from Randolph Street to St. Peters Drive.

It was noted that large-scale commercial in this area, may not align with the desired character of the City and that the future land use designation of Corridor Commercial may open the door to some uses that could be detrimental to the City's charm. Some of the lots on

Blue Star Highway, such as the St. Peters Church parcel (in the example shown above) are large enough to support a large-scale, visually dominant commercial use and may introduce elements that challenge the character and scale of this section of Blue Star Highway. An example might be an automotive dealership or a commercial recreation facility

- *City Center*

The City Center future land use designation essentially encompasses the downtown area between Blue Star Highway and east to Washington Street. This area contains a mix of uses and comprises the businesses within the Downtown Development Authority boundaries. The built environment matches the intent of the FLU, and is the City's center for shopping, restaurants, art galleries and mixed uses in a single building. This area is well connected to the adjacent neighborhoods through sidewalks and a segment of the Beach to Bayou Trail.

As noted above, the small-scale nature of existing businesses and the community's desire to occupy and provide neighborhood commercial amenities along Center Street seems to be expanding past Blue Star Highway to the west, all the way to Ferry Street. The current FLU map depicts parcels along Center Street between Blue Star Highway and Ferry Street with a FLU designation of Residential Mix. This designation would appear to be appropriate as it aligns with the direction growth is headed on the west end of Center Street, however the Zoning Plan seems to offer compatible zoning districts that may not exactly fit this stretch of Center Street. The City should consider some effective strategies in the implementation of this FLU designation, such as a new zoning district that fits the transitional small scale nature of this mixed use area.

▷ **Industrial Land Use**

This designation and the location on FLU map appears to be appropriate in terms of location with regard to proximity to the downtown and residential areas (with a few exceptions), however, as noted above, some parcels

with frontage on Blue Star Highway may be better served with a partial Corridor Commercial designation. This would allow splits from larger industrial parcels and decrease the visibility of the industrial uses if commercial development were to be permitted on the Blue Star frontage.

Additionally, the City will want to evaluate the land within this designation and determine whether industrial uses are appropriate, given the presence of hydric soils and proximity to Tannery Creek.

▷ **Zoning Plan**

The Zoning Plan acts as the primary guide for evaluating rezoning requests. It lists each future land use designation and corresponding “primary compatible zoning districts” and “potential compatible zoning districts”. The Planning Commission will evaluate this chart for alignment with the goals and objectives related to land use, as well as with the intent and character of each future land use designation. Some members of the Planning Commission have already identified an issue related to the Compact Residential designation, and that describes a desired density that would not be achievable in the listed primary and potentially compatible zoning districts.

An inventory of large undeveloped parcels will help the City, developers, and land owners prepare for anticipated land uses and residential densities. This inventory can be placed into a table along with acreage, future land use designation, and compatible zoning districts, and could be used to guide growth and development so that parcels have a more predictable developed future.

Chapter 4 – Implementation Strategies

▷ **Sub Areas**

- *Gateway*
- *Blue Star Highway*
- *Waterfront/Harbor*
- *Downtown Sub Area*
- *Action Plan*

Each subarea contains a section that describes existing conditions and elements that are noted as needing improvement or change. Recommendations are made for improving the less-than-ideal existing conditions. Many of these recommendations have been implemented, however, some have not.

The City should evaluate this chapter and the recommendations listed and determine whether the ones that are not yet implemented still align with the City's goals and objectives. Recommendations that have been implemented should be removed and the City could consider any other specific areas that need attention to resolve current issues.

Next Steps

- A. *Public Engagement: Survey Instrument.* A survey is the pre-selected form of public engagement for the update. We will refine the survey instrument to include questions related to current issues and carefully craft the questions to render the most usable data. According to the revised timeline, we are anticipating going live with the survey by the end of November 2023. The survey window will then close in mid-December.
- B. *Public Engagement Report.* We will discuss the results of the survey and review the public engagement report at the January 2024 meeting.
- C. *Goals & Objectives:* The Planning Commission will use information from this audit and the public engagement report to help formulate/modify goals and objectives.

As always, please feel free to reach out with questions! We appreciate the opportunity to assist the City in this important task to update the Master Plan and prepare for the future!
