

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT	DATE	
<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>EFFECTIVE</i>	<i>SECTION(S) AMENDED</i>
00-01	11/01/00	Chapter 2, (Add Goal 17) Chapter 5, Other Reports and Resources(Add 8)
01-01	05/02/01	Replace Watershed Map

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This Whitewater Township Master Plan has been compiled in accordance with Public Act 168 of 1959 and complies with Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) Section 125.326. Procedures for Township Zoning are established in the Township Rural Zoning Act, Public Act 184 of 1943. This Master Plan may also be referred to as a Basic Plan or Comprehensive Plan. The Whitewater Township Board established the Whitewater Township Planning Commission by resolution in 1971.

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP

MASTER PLAN 1999

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Whitewater Township prepared this 1999 update of its Master Plan as part of an ongoing planning process designed to maintain the Township's special quality of life, while responding to changes in the regional economy. The last substantial revision of the Township's Master Plan was prepared in 1987 and adopted in 1990. That Master Plan anticipated increased development pressure in the Township and laid out clear goals and policies to preserve Whitewater's rural character. While some conditions have changed in the past ten years most of these goals and policies remain valid today,

While the prior Master Plan laid out goals, policies, and a conceptual land-use plan, this Master Plan is more action-oriented. It contains goal statements, planning principles, and concrete actions that will enable Whitewater Township to achieve its goals. This Master Plan update will help the community to continue to deal effectively with the growth that is expected in the coming years and will lay a foundation for a revision of the zoning ordinance that will serve the Township's needs at the beginning of the 21st Century.

No Master Plan can guarantee what will happen in the future. For this reason, the goals and recommendations of this Plan are flexible and are not intended to be a fixed land-use plan. Rather, this Plan lays out the kinds of actions that public officials, business owners, and citizens need to take cooperatively to fulfill the community's goals.

The basic legal test of a Master Plan, or zoning ordinance, which implements the Plan, is "reasonableness." With this in mind, this Plan has been developed to ensure that the rights of individual property owners and the goals and policies of the community as a whole are given due recognition. It is one of the goals of this Master Plan that any zoning or other regulatory changes made to implement the Plan be guided by the principle of reasonableness.

This Plan is not designed to promote or restrict growth. The intent is to provide a way for orderly and satisfactory growth, which most see as natural and inevitable. Many people resent someone, or some authority, dictating the use of their land. At the same time, most people would also agree on a reasonable range of uses for any piece of land, given the characteristics and location of the land, and the best interests of the community. Furthermore, most people recognize that, in the absence of a Plan with strong community support, outside developers can reshape the Township for their own short-term financial gain rather than for the long-term interests of Whitewater Township.

In the years immediately ahead, much of the long-range character of the Township will be established and many difficult decisions will need to be made. We believe that adherence to this Master Plan will help guide those decisions so that the Township can look upon the growth and development of the community as an acceptable and, perhaps, even a desirable condition.

To ensure that this Master Plan is used by Township officials, this Plan has not only been adopted by the Planning Commission as required by state law, but has also been endorsed by the Township Board to guide decisions made by both bodies and by all Township boards and officials.

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

The Master Plan of Whitewater Township is composed of five chapters, summarized as follows:

1. OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

This part of the Plan discusses what has happened since the last Master Plan update and highlights important issues confronting the Township at the beginning of the 21st Century.

2. COMMUNITY GOALS

These goals guide planning for the future growth and development of Whitewater Township and build upon the goals adopted in the 1990 Master Plan.

3. PLANNING PRINCIPLES

These planning principles represent the best contemporary thinking about planning the future of a community, adapted to the rural circumstances of Whitewater Township.

4. ACTIONS

This chapter recommends concrete actions to be taken by the Planning Commission, the Township Board, other public officials, and private property owners to implement the Community Goals and Planning Principles in chapters 2 and 3 of the Plan. Where appropriate, recommendations are shown on maps.

5. SUPPORTING MATERIAL

This chapter lists maps, background information, and reports that support the action recommendations in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 1: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

Since the 1990 Master Plan was adopted there have been some important changes in the Township and the surrounding area. The Grand Traverse region has become increasingly attractive as a destination for vacationers, retirees, and new residents. This has increased pressure for development, particularly of tourist-oriented recreational facilities, second-homes, and homes for a rapidly growing population. While this type of development puts pressure on waterfront and water-view property more than on interior tracts, the overall effect of this development is to increase housing prices and development pressure in Whitewater Township and throughout the region.

Suburban sprawl development has been moving farther out from Traverse City and is now threatening Whitewater Township. The 1990 Master Plan anticipated commercial development pressure along M-72, and the Planning Commission and the Township Board implemented strict zoning controls on commercial development along the M-72 corridor. However, the previous Master Plan did not clearly address the issue of residential sprawl, which consists of tract developments on relatively large lots that permanently transform the rural landscape. Whitewater has so far experienced only a limited number of relatively small subdivisions, but that trend is likely to accelerate as townships closer to Traverse City fill up with new development.

Many have come to view the key concept of community development in the Twenty-First Century as “sustainability.” This involves ensuring that the environmental resources and special character of a place will be maintained and enhanced for the long-term, and not sacrificed for short-term gains. Sustainable development is the type of development where “if you keep on doing it, you can keep on doing it.” And by numerous tests, including air and water pollution, impacts on quality of life, and impacts on local tax rates, sprawl development is not sustainable.

An alternative approach is to rediscover traditional village settlement, with pedestrian-oriented streets, mixed-uses, and compact development patterns. Channeling development into these lively community centers (such as Elk Rapids or Suttons Bay) can enable Whitewater Township to increase its population and economy without consuming its natural resources, paving over its farmland, and despoiling the pristine countryside that make it an attractive place. More compact development reduces dependency on the private automobile and encourages more social interaction in a community center. This Master Plan proposes making the historic village of Williamsburg and its immediate surroundings into such a diverse community center, while taking measures to relieve development pressure and reshape growth in the countryside to preserve the Township’s rural character. To further this goal, the Township enacted a zoning amendment in 1998 that rezoned the historic village of Williamsburg from industrial to a new mixed-use Village District. The new Village zoning allows for a wide range of uses built to a human scale, with design standards based upon the historic building traditions of The Grand Traverse Region, and a layout that is conducive to walking. A significant obstacle to fulfilling the vision of a lively

village center is the lack of water and sewer facilities to support varied uses and higher density. The Township will need to be creative, looking at new technologies, and collaboration with private developers, if it is to find affordable ways to develop the public infrastructure necessary to make Williamsburg into an economically viable center.

This challenge is also the Township's greatest opportunity: to capitalize on the community's rural historic character by building a modern place that carries forward the best in traditional village design. This is the type of community center that appeals to people attracted to the region's natural beauty, and represents a dramatic contrast to the sterile strip development and suburban housing tracts that have come to dominate so much of the contemporary American landscape. Creating Williamsburg as a village center with an identity and sense of place is the Township's greatest opportunity and one of its most difficult challenges.

An even greater challenge is to find ways to protect the character of the rural countryside. This must be done in a way that is fair to the reasonable financial expectations of rural landowners. Whitewater Township will need to take actions that encourage development to be located close to its community center and encourage clustering in outlying areas. This is not a new problem, but it is one that becomes more urgent as pressure for sprawl development increases in the Township.

An issue that could not have been anticipated in 1990 was the coming of casino gambling to Whitewater Township. The Turtle Creek Casino operated by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians lies outside the regulatory control of the Township, but may have profound effects on its quality of life. The Township must come to grips with this new development, which potentially has far-reaching consequences. The Township should make contingency plans, and work cooperatively with the Tribe so that it can effectively meet the land-use challenges that will result from the expansion of this development.

Whitewater Township, in 1999, is confronted with the challenge of dealing with the effects of mushrooming growth in the region. If the Township is to maintain its treasured rural qualities it must take actions now to make the development that is inevitable compatible with the community's goals. This means that Whitewater Township must make strategic choices and take strategic action. This Master Plan is a guide for those choices and actions.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY GOALS

Whitewater Township, recognizing that it lies in an area of present and future growth, an area that is uniquely endowed with an abundance of natural resources, adopts these Community Goals to guide the formulation and implementation of this Master Plan.

1. To create in the midst of unspoiled lakes, forest, streams and fertile rolling hills a highly desirable human environment for the present and future residents of Whitewater Township; an environment that will not only meet their physical and economic needs, but will also fulfill their higher social, cultural, and intellectual aspirations.
2. To protect and preserve for all future generations of residents of Whitewater Township the cleanliness and purity of its water, land, and air; and to maintain as much as possible the unspoiled rural characteristics of the Township, including its farmland, forests, wetlands, water bodies, panoramic views, ridgelines, wildlife habitat, and other landscape features.
3. To recognize that the Township's attractive rural environment is its most important economic asset, providing recreational opportunities, scenic and aesthetic enjoyment, and wildlife habitat; a desirable place to live and work, and an important opportunity for people to connect emotionally and spiritually with the natural world.
4. To protect and preserve this economically important rural environment by preventing development which detracts from the aesthetic quality and rural character of the Township, and by controlling activities that produce excessive noise, odor, glare, vibration, and other nuisances.
5. To protect and preserve scenic vistas along M-72, other major thoroughfares, and country roads within the Township; minimizing the visual blight of strip commercial development, and making Whitewater Township an inviting gateway into the Grand Traverse Region.
6. To maintain and enhance the commercial viability of agriculture and protect the most valuable agricultural resources, especially prime and unique agricultural land.
7. To recreate Williamsburg as a viable village center with housing, parks, public buildings, and schools located within walking distance of shops, services, jobs, and transit; and to concentrate growth of residential, business, cultural, and civic uses in and around this village center.
8. To provide the public infrastructure necessary to support the growth of Williamsburg as a strong village center, to the extent financially feasible for the Township.
9. To provide municipal services and public facilities to keep pace with the Township's needs, in a manner that encourages the concentration of development near the village center, discourages development in the countryside, and minimizes property tax increases.

- 10.** To provide a diverse range of housing types to meet the needs of residents and to discourage sprawling residential development in the countryside.
- 11.** To make effective use of the existing industrial district south of M-72 in a manner and scale which does not detract from the Township's rural small town character.
- 12.** To maintain cooperative relations with adjoining municipalities, public agencies at all levels of government, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.
- 13.** To protect historically, archaeologically, and ecologically sensitive and valuable areas.
- 14.** To promote vehicular and pedestrian safety by maintaining a network of local roads that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists, while minimizing congestion on major through roads by limiting access points and intersections.
- 15.** To meet the community need for recreational facilities including parks, playing fields, and trails, as well as undeveloped areas maintained in a natural state.
- 16.** In all of its land-use decisions to strike a reasonable balance between the interests of the community and those of private property owners.
- 17.** To afford special protection for the state-owned "Memorial Forests" that lie within the Township (Wheeler Memorial, Locke-Cummings-Wheeler-Mason 1776 Memorial, Frederick and Juila B. Wheeler Memorial, Abraham Lincoln Memorials, Clara M. Wheeler Memorials, T.O. Williams Memorial, Clay H. Hollister Memorials, Carolyn Wheeler Memorial, Philip R. Wheeler Memorial) and the Sand Lakes Quiet Area, because of their unique historic value, the value as the public of their recreational trail systems, and their importance as biologically important ecosystems, recognizing the need for protection and dedication of these lands in perpetuity as a public trust for the benefit of the people of Whitewater Township and the State of Michigan.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The Planning Principles that follow are intended to guide decisions made by The Planning Commission, The Township Board, The Zoning Board of Appeals, The Zoning Administrator, and all other Township employees or officials charged with administering the zoning ordinance and other regulations relating to land-use and development.

GENERAL STATEMENTS

1. The planning and decision-making process should, first and foremost, consider the long-term sustainability of the community, its environment, and economy.
2. Community planning should include public officials and private sector leaders, community interest groups, and professionals from many disciplines.
3. Public policy and development practices should support developments that are:
 - Diverse in land-use, population, and character;
 - Designed for pedestrians and bicycles, as well as motor vehicles;
 - Shaped and physically defined by parks, open space, and other natural resource areas;
 - Structured by physically defined, accessible public space, and community institutions; and
 - Based on local and regional history, climate, ecology, and building practices.
4. Community planning should address the challenges of:
 - Minimizing the spread of low density, non-contiguous development;
 - Minimizing strip commercial development along highway corridors;
 - Encouraging a wide range of housing opportunities to serve all segments of the local population;
 - Recognizing the critical importance of preserving agricultural lands and natural resources;
 - Encouraging the preservation and/or restoration of our natural and built heritage;
 - Encouraging development in accordance with this Master Plan; and
 - Recognizing that land use decisions may have impacts beyond the Township's boundaries.
5. The quality of life for the citizens of Whitewater Township can be enhanced by development that:
 - Supports, restores, and revitalizes the historic community center of Williamsburg and that reconnects the parts of the village lying north and south of M-72;
 - Gradually reconfigures existing low-density centerless subdivisions and highway commercial developments into communities of diverse neighborhoods;
 - Preserves and protects scenic and natural resources, agricultural lands, state forests, and the ecological integrity of different environments; and
 - Improves the physical design and condition of the Township as a whole and of its village center, neighborhoods, corridors, existing developments, parks, streets, blocks, and buildings.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Principles: General

1. Whitewater Township should contain housing alternatives available to people of all incomes.
2. Whitewater Township should have convenient access to public transportation and provide safe and convenient opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian travel.
3. Tourist-oriented development should be encouraged only if it will reinforce the Community Goals and Planning Principles of this Master Plan, especially the preservation of farmland, forests, other natural resources, and the revitalization of the village of Williamsburg.
4. Community planning should be undertaken in cooperation with other jurisdictions recognizing Traverse City as the regional center where most large-scale future growth and infrastructure investment should be located.
5. Whitewater Township should think regionally and cooperate with Grand Traverse County, Traverse City, Tribal government, school districts, and other townships to create an efficient and cost-effective system of public services, transportation, recreation, education, cultural institutions, and housing to achieve a viable sustainable region.

Principles: Williamsburg Community

1. Development should be encouraged in the existing Williamsburg village center area provided that it is accomplished in a manner that preserves historic structures, encourages pedestrian activity, and replicates the historic village development patterns of the Grand Traverse Region.
2. A developing Williamsburg village will be made more economically viable by creating a “Main Street” with street-level retail stores (to the extent economically feasible), residential apartments and houses, street trees, on-street parking, and sidewalks; and supported by an interconnected network of attractive side streets designed for pedestrian comfort.
3. Street and trail connections between the historic “railroad” village (north of M-72) and the earlier settlement center of Williamsburg (south of M-72) should be encouraged to knit these two small settlements together into a larger organic whole.
4. Civic buildings and public gathering places are important and should have prominent and accessible sites.

5. The scale and configuration of streets and open spaces (parks, greens, and squares) should be attractive and comfortable to pedestrians.
6. Architecture, building placement, and landscaping should result in the physical definition of streets and other public spaces.
7. New development should be seamlessly woven into the physical fabric of its surroundings, regardless of differences in size or architectural style.
8. Neighborhoods should include a variety of public spaces (tot-lots, village greens, ball fields, community gardens, etc.) that are strategically distributed and physically well-defined.
9. New investment along highway corridors should not detract from investment in Williamsburg Village.
10. A revitalized village center in Williamsburg should consist of a full and balanced mix of residential, commercial, office, recreational, cultural, and civic uses. It should have defining edges with an identifiable center.
11. Development and re-development should focus on previously developed sites, infill development, and re-use of existing facilities, rather than expansion into the country side.
12. Design is an important element of planning and should contribute to the community's safety, security, and attractiveness.

Principles: Rural Community

1. To preserve rural community character, site design should encourage clustering of development and the preservation of open space.
2. To preserve rural community character, site design should include desirable views and vistas across water features, woodlands, orchards, farmlands, and the protection of ridgelines.
3. To preserve rural community character, recreational and forest lands should be preserved in their natural state and protected from degradation and fragmentation.
4. To preserve rural community character agriculture should be maintained and enhanced as a viable economic activity that is important to the local and regional economy, and agricultural lands should be protected from degradation and fragmentation.

Environment

1. Whitewater Township should recognize that its natural resources are part of larger systems, not limited to any jurisdictional boundaries.
2. Whitewater Township should recognize that the health and quality of the Township's natural resource base are directly related to public health, welfare, and economic growth.
3. Lands with unique, sensitive or fragile resources, or historical significance should be preserved in their natural state and protected from degradation and fragmentation.
4. Natural resource areas, recreational areas, forests, farmlands, and open space are essential elements of the rural landscape of Whitewater Township. Their preservation is important to the local and regional economy and is useful in shaping development and maintaining rural community character.
5. Natural resources are limited in their ability to accommodate development without incurring damage. Development within natural environments should occur in a sustainable manner that minimizes damage to these environments.
6. Wildlife habitat corridors should be sufficiently wide and interconnected to maintain environmental balance and bio-diversity.

Infrastructure

1. Development should be directed to areas serviced by adequate roads, water, sewer, and other utility services.
2. Construction, expansion, and upgrading of public roads, water, and sewer services should be planned to strategically direct growth into the Village District area.
3. Public transportation should, where feasible, connect homes to jobs, the village center, the regional center of Traverse City, and cultural, recreational, educational, and institutional facilities in the region.
4. New streets and developments should provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Such facilities should be strategically incorporated into existing transportation corridors and greenway linkages.
5. The number and frequency of automobile access driveways along road corridors should be minimized.
6. Whitewater Township should participate in regional comprehensive planning for transportation and other infrastructure to support a unified, long-term regional vision.

Plans and Implementation

1. Public officials and private sector leaders, including representation from the County, the Tribe, and neighboring jurisdictions should be involved in periodic reconsideration and revision of this Master Plan.
2. The Whitewater Township zoning ordinance should be revised to ensure that it implements this Master Plan and should be reviewed and updated as necessary to remain consistent with this Master Plan as it evolves.
3. Individual decisions on land-use, road improvement, infrastructure development, and other capital expenditures by the Township Board, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and other Township officials should be consistent with this Master Plan.
4. Planning, zoning, and capital expenditure decisions which affect neighboring communities should consider impacts on those communities and the region.
5. Whitewater Township should seek to ensure that decisions relating to school construction, land-use, road improvement, and infrastructure development made by school districts, County, State, Tribal governments, and the boards and officials of other townships are consistent with this Master Plan.

CHAPTER 4: ACTIONS

The most important aspect of this Master Plan is the action that results from its adoption. This chapter sets forth recommended actions, assigns responsibility for taking these actions, and suggests reasonable time frames within which these actions should occur. Whitewater Township's Master Plan will produce results only if those responsible for taking the recommended actions agree with them and make a commitment to their implementation.

The recommended actions are divided into two categories--regulatory and non-regulatory actions. Regulatory actions involve changing land-use ordinances that affect private landowners. Non-regulatory actions include an array of options that do not involve regulations, such as public investments and taxation.

REGULATORY ACTIONS

The single most important action the Township can take, following the adoption of this Master Plan, is the revision of zoning ordinance regulations that dictate sprawl development patterns. If the Township develops to any significant extent under the current zoning ordinance, much of it will end up carpeted with suburban sprawl. This section of the Master Plan lists the most important zoning and other regulatory changes needed to achieve the Goals in Chapter Two and implement the Planning Principles in Chapter Three.

ZONING

The existing Whitewater Township zoning ordinance has evolved into a document that provides an array of sophisticated environmental protections and comprehensive regulation of commercial development. Since 1990 a number of amendments have been added to the zoning ordinance; this was done without a comprehensive review and revision to improve readability and to ensure internal consistency. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the Whitewater Township zoning ordinance was performed for the Township in November of 1997 and some of its findings are described below.

Current zoning regulations can control commercial development quite strictly and may discourage undesirable forms of commercial development. However, it is also important for the Township to clarify and simplify these regulations so that they are more easily understood by Township boards, commissions, applicants, and interested citizens. To accomplish this it is important that there be more effective administration and enforcement of these regulations. To accomplish this it is important that the Township have competent professional assistance in revising and administering its regulations.

While the current zoning ordinance provides for effective regulation of roadside commercial development and the protection of environmentally sensitive resources such as wetlands, dunelands, soils subject to leaching, steep slopes, shorelines, and ground water recharge areas, it does relatively little to change the underlying pattern of

development. This pattern of development, which carves up the landscape into lots ranging from just over one-quarter acre to just under one acre, could eventually carpet most of the northern half of the Township with “cookie-cutter” residential development. Such development would, in turn, degrade the lakes and other environmental resources and drastically alter the visual, social, and economic character of the Township. In the southern half of the Township, where much of the land is state forest, lot sizes are required to be at least five acres, but this consumes even more land per house.

The current zoning ordinance carefully prescribes limited areas where development should not go, or should be highly restricted, such as along roadside buffers and the Boardman River. However, until the Williamsburg Village District Amendment was adopted in 1998, the zoning ordinance contained no positive vision of how to build a healthy and vital community. The Township continues to face a difficult choice--whether to allow growth everywhere, or to channel it into more compact communities. The Township must make a choice, because failing to decide means choosing sprawl by default. This Master Plan makes the conscious choice of channeling development into a revitalized and expanded Williamsburg Village and encouraging clustered development in the countryside to preserve the rural landscape.

If the Goals and Planning Principles of this Master Plan are to be achieved the Planning Commission should prepare, and submit to the Township Board, a substantial revision of the current zoning ordinance within a year of adoption of this Master Plan. An important first step was taken in 1998 with the adoption of the Village District for Williamsburg. A comprehensive revision of the zoning ordinance will implement the Goals and Planning Principles of the Master Plan. That revision should pay particular attention to the following priorities:

1. READABILITY

Rewrite the zoning ordinance so that it is internally consistent and more understandable to the informed lay reader, Planning Commission members, The Township Board, The Zoning Board of Appeals, other Township officials, and applicants for land use approvals. Portions of the ordinance that are contradictory or are needlessly complicated should be rewritten. Sections needing special attention are the COPUD, PUD, and Site Plan Review provisions.

2. PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE

- A. Preserve open space more effectively whenever development is proposed. This involves streamlining the clustering provisions (in the PUD section) and providing better criteria to ensure that cluster developments effectively protect the key open space resources of the community, and result in better quality development. Open space that is set aside as part of a cluster should be carefully selected to advance the conservation objectives of the Township and should be permanently protected by a conservation easement. Also, in non-residential settings, it is important to require appropriate open space preservation as part of the site plan approval process.

- B. Provide an incentive for clustering by allowing landowners to develop at the density they are allowed under current zoning only if they cluster, while increasing the minimum lot size for conventional sprawl-development.
- C. Institute a mandatory open space set-aside requirement for all residential and commercial developments outside of the Village District.
- D. Allow density to be transferred from parcels that are environmentally sensitive to other places that are more appropriate for development, especially the Village, and the M-72 commercial corridor.
- E. Allow a “conservation density” development option in which landowners are allowed to build private roads that are less expensive than those required under the Land Division Ordinance in return for permanently restricting the land to very low density development.

3. DENSITY REDUCTION IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Rezone the land along streams and ponds. Current zoning allows the smallest lots along the shores of streams, ponds, and lakes. While the lakes are already developed with small lots, the protection of ponds and lake watersheds requires lower densities, especially along the streams that feed these lakes. Other sections of the zoning ordinance provide some protection for these shore areas, but higher densities in the base zoning contradict these protective provisions. Since most of the ponds are within the state forest and much of the land along the streams is already classified as wetlands, the primary effect of this rezoning will be to rationalize the zoning map and to protect streams where water quality could be degraded by development allowed under the current zoning.

4. FLEXIBILITY FOR SMALL-SCALE BUSINESS USES

In order to allow more options for rural landowners, carefully designed and sited small businesses could be allowed, with strict Special Use Permit and site planning controls. Possible negative consequences of allowing commercial development in agriculture zones can be addressed with appropriate Special Use Permit standards.

5. IMPROVEMENT OF SPECIAL USE PERMIT STANDARDS

The current zoning has very detailed and elaborate Site Plan Review standards but standards for Special Use Permits are much less clear and need improvement. Improving these standards would give the Planning Commission more control over potentially damaging uses. New Special Use Permit standards should reference this Master Plan, especially the Planning Goals in chapter 2 and the Planning Principles in Chapter 3, to ensure that individual decisions made on Special Use Permit applications are consistent with this Master Plan.

6. STREAMLINING SITE PLAN REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

Streamline Site Plan Review for smaller-scale projects and tie approvals to the Master Plan Goals and Planning Principles in chapters 2 and 3. The current zoning ordinance has Site Plan Review requirements that can be burdensome. While these may be appropriate for large-scale development along the M-72 corridor, they are unnecessary for small businesses in other locations. Less burdensome Site Plan Review standards should be adopted for these small-scale uses. The standards for the M-72 corridor should also be reviewed to determine if the Township is prepared to enforce them (see ENFORCEMENT below). All Site Plan Review decisions should be required to be consistent with this Master Plan.

7. VILLAGE DISTRICT

- A. The Village District zoning amendment enacted in 1998 should be revisited to learn how it is working. Consideration should be given to expanding the District and/or breaking it into two districts, one for residential neighborhoods and one for mixed-uses in a central core area.
- B. The linkage between the zoning and water and sewer infrastructure should be explored further.
- C. The Planning Commission should explore ways to connect the two parts of the Village that are separated by M-72 and areas of hydric soils. One part of this effort would be to focus on the area lying between Old M-72 (the Village Main Street) and M-72. This area could help create connections, capture traffic along M-72, and bring people into the village. Other areas, especially south of M-72, should also be examined closely. Some of the measures needed to establish connections would involve construction of trail and/or road connections (see Non-Regulatory Actions below).

8. ADOPTION OF ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS FOR WILLIAMSBURG VILLAGE AND FOR RURAL CLUSTERS

The new Village District includes written standards for Village District design. These standards should be put in illustrated form. The same is true for rural cluster development. An illustrated guidebook(s) and other materials should be made available to developers showing clearly what the Township desires. Applicants should be referred to the design materials listed in Chapter 5, and any other illustrative material on file. Such a guidebook(s) and materials should be referenced in the zoning and land division ordinances.

9. SIMPLIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF M-72 COPUD

The current COPUD provisions, while providing ample tools for controlling development in the M-72 corridor, should be revised to reduce complexity, improve understanding, and simplify administration and enforcement. However, care should be taken to maintain their effectiveness. Illustrations should be developed for this area as an aid to the Planning Commission and other Township officials, and to show developers what the Township desires.

10. CREATION OF SCENIC OVERLAYS FOR SELECTED ROADS

The portions of M-72 not zoned commercial (east of Cook Road) should have a special scenic overlay district created to protect its scenic character. This can be done through restrictions on building location, design, mandatory clustering, and screening requirements. The Township should consider the corridors of other roads, or stretches of road, that might be put into this kind of Scenic Overlay District or protected in some other way if there are natural features that singly or in combination, set the road apart as being something unique and distinct in the Township. Some criteria to consider are: outstanding features along road borders and/or curves and hills that add to the scenic quality; in addition, these roads might display native trees and other vegetation such as shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, ferns, and open areas with scenic or natural vistas, or pass by lakes, ponds, streams, or rivers. Priority examples that meet some of the above criteria are Williamsburg Road, Broomhead Road, Guernsey Lake Road, Supply Road, Diagonal Road, and Deadhorse Road. The Township should also consider those roads that may qualify as “Natural Beauty Roads.” (see Non-Regulatory Actions below).

11. LAKE WATERSHED OVERLAY

The Township should consider creating a lake watershed overlay district to enforce additional performance standards on land within the lake watersheds (especially along streams), where alteration of the land could adversely affect water quality in the lakes. The combination of protective measures already included in the zoning for environmentally sensitive areas and rezoning the R-1 land along streams will accomplish some of this protection. The Township should strengthen the environmental protections within these sensitive areas--for example, increasing the width of protected areas along streams from 50 feet to 100 feet or more.

12. CHANGES TO MAP

In order to implement some of the above recommendations, changes will be needed to the zoning map. Some of these may include eliminating R-1 zoning along most streams and small lakes, allowing some additional industrial zoning south of M-72 (with appropriate site planning), and expanding the Village District. Expanding the C-1 district is not desirable at this time. Most of the remainder of the zoning map can probably remain unchanged. However, the Township should consider new names, new Statements of Purpose, new use regulations, and new dimensional regulations for these districts. The following categories are suggested for land use districts:

- Rural Agricultural (currently A-1)
- Rural Forest (RC-1)
- Lake Residential (R-1)
- Suburban Residential (R-1 and R-2)
- Village (possibly divided into Residential and Mixed-Use)
- Highway Commercial (C-1)
- Industrial (N)
- M-72 Commercial Overlay (COPUD)
- M-72 Scenic Overlay (possibly extended beyond M-72)
- Lake Watershed Overlay

13. ENFORCEMENT

It is critical that the Township commit itself to actively enforcing its zoning ordinance. No zoning ordinance is worth the paper it is printed on if it is not enforced consistently and even-handedly. Any revision of the zoning ordinance should eliminate provisions that the Township is unwilling to enforce. It should keep those provisions that are worth enforcing and add only those new provisions which it is prepared to enforce.

Following adoption of this Master Plan, the Township should begin a systematic enforcement campaign that focuses on zoning violations that also violate the Goals and Planning Principles of this Master Plan. An enforcement campaign does not necessarily mean rushing into court. Rather, it is an education process, talking with landowners about the zoning and Master Plan, appealing to their pride of ownership, and finding common ground in making the Township a more attractive place for businesses, customers, and residents. It is something that can be done by talking informally with non-complying property owners, as well as by formal enforcement action. As soon as the zoning is adopted, the enforcement campaign should target those uses that were already in violation of the old zoning and that remain in violation under the new ordinance.

Any new development approvals granted under the revised zoning should be done with concern for the enforceability of conditions imposed, and a commitment to enforcing them.

OTHER REGULATORY ACTIONS

1. LAND DIVISION ORDINANCE

The Township adopted a new Land Division Ordinance in 1997 to comply with changes in State law. These changes in State law compromise the powers of the Township to implement the Goals and Planning Principles in the Master Plan by establishing a complex system of exemptions from Planning Commission review. There is very little that can be done through the Land Division Ordinance to remedy this problem.

However, through zoning, there are some approaches that might mitigate the impact of the State law. The Township has already done one thing to help remedy this problem, which is to require Site Plan Review for otherwise exempt land divisions. It should take an additional step by requiring much larger lot sizes for divisions that are exempt from review than for those that come under jurisdiction of the Planning Commission.

One area where the Township should consider revising its regulations is described above under Conservation Density Development. This would involve waivers of the Township's construction standards for private roads where an applicant agrees to restrict the density of a development permanently, using conservation easements.

2. ACCESS MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE

Whitewater Township's Ordinance Number 23, Arterial Road Access Management Regulations, should be examined for consistency with the Planning Principles of this Master Plan. If changes are necessary, it should be changed accordingly. The Township should consider incorporating this ordinance into the zoning ordinance, as it contains a number of standards relating to driveways, frontage roads, parking lot design, and layout. These are properly part of the Site Plan Review process which is described in the zoning ordinance.

3. HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

There is a concern about the "Memorial Forests" in the southern part of the Township, and whether the deed restrictions that protect them will be enforceable over time. The Township should consider designating this area as a historic district under State law, as that will add an extra layer of protection against degradation and to help keep the land as permanent forest.

NON-REGULATORY ACTIONS

There are many non-regulatory tools that Whitewater Township can use to implement its Master Plan. One is voluntary cooperation of landowners in fulfilling the Goals of the Master Plan. Other kinds of measures described below should also be taken by the Township to implement the Master Plan.

Where and how public funds are spent on roads, schools, water, and sewer systems, has a major impact on growth patterns. Suburban sprawl is fueled by projects that attract growth into outlying rural communities such as Whitewater Township. Unfortunately, the Township itself has very little direct control over most of this infrastructure development, which is primarily the responsibility of county, State agencies, and school districts. However, the Township's Master Plan can be an important tool in negotiating with other entities for infrastructure planning that is consistent with the Township's goals of maintaining the rural character of the countryside and developing a vibrant, attractive, and economically successful village center.

Because Whitewater is a small community with limited resources, there are few non-regulatory actions that have the impact of the recommended changes in the Township's zoning ordinance. However, some of the following non-regulatory actions could be important in complementing the regulatory change recommendations:

1. WILLIAMSBURG

The Township should maximize public investment in the Village of Williamsburg. The Township should seek to locate its own public buildings in Williamsburg Village. It should also encourage the construction of County facilities, churches and other places of public assembly in the village. The post office should be kept in Williamsburg despite inevitable pressures from the U.S. Postal Services to move it out to M-72. The Township should encourage streetscape improvements (sidewalks, street trees, benches, etc.) to make old M-72 a real "Main Street." The construction of a network of secondary streets with sidewalks and street trees should also be encouraged.

The Township should consider commissioning a more detailed area-plan for the future of the Village District to enable it to grow into the vital community center envisioned by this Master Plan.

2. RURAL AREA OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

- A. The Township should support implementation of "green infrastructure," such as the establishment of parks and the purchase of agricultural and open space development rights.
- B. The Township should encourage landowners to enter into voluntary development rights agreements to protect farmland and open space and to donate perpetual conservation easements to non-profit land trusts and other qualified entities. The Township should work with the Michigan DNR to encourage State purchase of development rights.

- C. The Township should study the potential economic benefits of purchasing development rights itself, as has been done by Peninsula Township. Purchasing permanent development rights easements on agricultural land protects the rural character of the Township, reduces potential build-out of rural areas, and compensates landowners for giving up the right to develop. This type program is the most effective and fairest way to ensure that rural land will not be developed. The Township should consider an economic study which can reveal whether or not such a program might be less expensive in the long run. Some communities have found that because of the long-term costs of servicing new development, it is in their own economic self-interest to purchase development rights on farmland. It is cheaper to do this before development pressures raise land values.

3. PROPERTY TAXES

Property taxes represent a substantial financial burden on owners of farmland. State income tax credits for local property taxes enable landowners who enter into farmland development rights agreements to obtain tax relief without imposing costs on local government. Landowners should be encouraged to take advantage of this option, which also protects farmland in the short-term (through ten-year agreements). However, it does not afford protection of farmland long-term.

4. ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

- A. Whitewater Township should oppose transportation investments by the State or County that generate sprawl development. The improvement of M-72 as a major arterial highway in Whitewater and Acme Townships, and Kalkaska County has already had a major impact, especially in spawning commercial development. It has also made Traverse City more accessible to people living in Whitewater and Acme Townships, and Kalkaska County, which will gradually encourage residential development in these areas. This violates many of the Planning Principles in Chapter Three by encouraging the spread of low-density development in rural areas. While Whitewater Township has no direct control over M-72, it should go on record in opposition to any more public investments that make M-72 an even greater high-speed thoroughfare. Whitewater should do the same with respect to other public roads in the Township which come under the jurisdiction of the Board of County Road Commissioners.
- B. The Township should begin to study places where pedestrian paths and bikeways could help encourage non-motorized transportation. These might be found along stream corridors, rural roadways and abandoned rail lines. Some portions of these pathways could be constructed by developers in the course of developing land: others might eventually be built by the Township. It would be especially useful to study ways of connecting the portions of Williamsburg south of M-72 with those north of the highway. The only roadway improvements that should be encouraged outside of the Village are the addition of sidewalks, bike paths and landscaping to existing roads. In addition, the Township should investigate ways to facilitate pedestrian and vehicular connections across M-72

- C. Township residents, with the support of the Planning Commission and the Township Board, should petition the Board of County Road Commissioners to designate Natural Beauty Roads to protect rural roads. If accepted by the Board of Road Commissioners, this designation will affect the way the County maintains its right-of-way, which normally is beyond the control of the Township. This program can be a tool for protecting the rural and scenic character of the Township's rural road system.
- D. The Township should support restoration of passenger service on the railroad line to Williamsburg. The presence of an active rail line that terminates in Williamsburg represents an opportunity that could, in the long term, benefit the proposed village center. Currently only the "dinner train" runs on that line. However, if more regular passenger operations were to be feasible at some future time, Williamsburg could become the terminus. If the casino remains in operation it would be the major tourist attraction that brings people out on the rail line. And if Williamsburg Village ever achieves sufficient critical mass, the train could make its final stop in the village. The train could thus serve multiple purposes; bringing people staying in Traverse City out to the casino, serving as a tourist attraction in its own right, and bringing commuters from the eastern suburbs into the city. Unlike most commuter trains, which run almost empty in one direction most times of the day, this line could have substantial patronage in both directions all day. While this option may seem far-fetched at present, it may be more plausible as the region becomes more heavily developed and traffic in and out of Traverse City becomes more and more congested. A train station in Williamsburg would be highly conducive to its development as a pedestrian-oriented village.

5. WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

- A. The Township should cooperate with developers interested in developing water and sewer infrastructure that could serve the village of Williamsburg, provided that the development they propose is consistent with this Master Plan. Water and sewer service is critical to making the Village District a successful and thriving village center. While building such a system is presently beyond the financial capability of the Township, it is possible that cooperation between the Township and a developer could provide the financing necessary for such a system. This could be an important benefit--allowing some form of large-scale development to be built between the casino and the Village--if the development is compatible with the Village District zoning. However, it would be unwise to allow construction of the water and sewer infrastructure without also ensuring that the zoning is in place that will produce the desired results and will protect against inappropriate or excessive development.

- B. The Township should encourage the use of technologically sound small-scale water and sewer systems to service cluster developments. Small water and sewer systems are critical to the success of clustering in rural areas. These would normally be provided by the developer. However, if several developments in close proximity were proposed, public water and sewer districts might be a better solution, with facilities constructed at the developers' expense. Water and sewer systems can enable more open space to be preserved by clustering a given amount of housing close together, leaving more open land protected.

6. SCHOOLS

The Township should support school construction only if new school facilities are located in the village of Williamsburg. The location of new schools is a major determinant of growth patterns. Many homebuyers make their purchasing decisions based largely on the perceived quality of the school system. Modern school buildings located in attractive rural settings invariably attract developers and home buyers who quickly convert those settings from countryside to suburbs. The Township has a vital interest in ensuring that new school buildings are not built in rural portions of the community. Unfortunately, this is often difficult to prevent, as State standards for school location generally mandate very large parcels which are only available in rural settings.

7. CAPITAL PLANNING FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

The Township should study its long-term capital needs. It may wish to make a range of investments to enhance the quality of life of the community, including Village sidewalks, bike paths, pedestrian trails, parks, and public gathering places. A detailed examination of these kinds of investments is beyond the scope of this basic Master Plan; however, it may be advisable to establish a capital planning committee to look into these issues and report back for the next update of the Master Plan.

8. POLICY ON INFRASTRUCTURE

The Township should go on record, whenever appropriate, in support of this Master Plan's recommendations on infrastructure built by other entities. This means that the Township should oppose actions that would increase sprawl, such as traffic-generating improvements to M-72, improvements to County roads that change their rural character, the construction of new schools, and the extension of water and sewer trunk lines into rural areas.

CHAPTER 5: SUPPORTING MATERIAL

This chapter contains an inventory of available background resources and design illustrations that provide information in support of the recommendations of this Master Plan. The following maps, documents, reports, books, and illustrations, and the locations where they are available, represent a careful and thorough inventory and analysis of the physical and cultural resources of Whitewater Township, and of the current regulatory situation. They have served as the basis for many of the recommendations in the Master Plan and are incorporated into it by this reference.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1. US Department of Agriculture Map of Prime and Unique Agricultural Land	Township map file
2. Topographical Maps from US Department of Interior Geological Survey (1956)	Township map file
3. Flood Insurance Rate Map (1988)	Township map file
4. Soils Maps	Planning Commission file
5. Vegetation Map	Township map file
6. Wetlands Map	Township map file
7. Report of Planning Commission's <i>ad hoc</i> committee on agricultural land classification	Planning Commission file
8. Drainage and Soil Erosion Maps	Township map file
9. Hydrological maps	Township map file, when available
10. Memorial Forests maps	Township map file

CULTURAL RESOURCES

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1. Regional Map	Township map file
2. Base Map showing Sections, Roads, property divisions (1988)	Molar in Township map file
3. Road map showing road surfaces and planned improvements (1989)	Township map file
4. Map showing residences (1980)	Township map file
5. Map showing residences (1989)	Township map file, wall map
6. Original maps of physical inventory of land use and cultural resources (1989)	Planning Commission file
7. Display map with overlays showing zoning districts, cultural resources (1989)	Township map file, wall map
8. Map showing sections containing sites identified as historically important or archaeologically sensitive	Planning Commission file
9. Report on all township parks and recreational facilities (1987)	Planning Commission file
10. Data on traffic volume and accidents	Planning Commission file
11. 1988 Survey of Township Property Owner's Opinions and Preferences relating to Township Services and planning issues	Planning Commission file

OTHER REPORTS AND RESOURCES

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1. 1990 Whitewater Township Master Plan	Planning Commission file
2. 1997 Regulatory Assessment Memorandum	Planning Commission file
3. Traditional Neighborhood Design, Volume I	Planning Commission file
4. Traditional Neighborhood Design, Volume II	Planning Commission file
5. Traditional Neighborhood Design, Volume III	Planning Commission file
6. Rural clustering illustrations, village illustrations, design illustrations.	Planning Commission file
7. Additional articles, books, pamphlets, publications, photographs etc., representative of the Master Plan's Community Goals and Planning Principles. Also representative architecture and design.	Planning Commission file