

TO: Ypsilanti Township
FROM: Carlisle/Wortman Associates
DATE: October 31, 2018
RE: Master Plan Workshop Summary

A Master Plan workshop was held October 16th-19th, for members of the Ypsilanti Township community to contribute their input on the current state and future of Ypsilanti Township. Throughout the four day workshop, nearly 200 unique visitors attended one or more of the community meetings, open studios, and tours. Below are summaries of events and activities that were offered to the public throughout the workshop:

Open Studio

The open studio was held at the Ypsilanti Township Community Center at 2025 E. Clark Road. Visitors had the opportunity to provide input on their neighborhoods by participating an exercise. The exercise asked three main questions:

- What do you like about your neighborhood?
- What do you want to see improved?
- What do you want to see changed?

Results of the exercise varied greatly between individuals and neighborhoods. For instance, some residents of West Willow felt their neighborhood lacked open space, whereas multiple residents in the Southern half of the Township hoped to see some of the open space developed. However, there were recognizable patterns, where most of the residents agreed, discussed further in the “Themes” section in this memo.

Tours/Events

American Center for Mobility (ACM)

On the morning of October 17, over thirty Township residents, business and institution representative met in a conference room at ACM for presentation on the newly constructed autonomous vehicle test track, a short tour of the facility and a group discussion on the development opportunities surrounding the facility. The discussion focused on how to create a place surrounding ACM and the nearby Yankee Air Museum where workers and visitors would stay in the Township, not just commute in and out. More information on ACM is in the “Themes” section of this memo.

Gault Village Shopping Center

Over 40 Township residents walked the Gault Village Shopping Center with the property owner and Township staff and consultants on the afternoon of October 18. The property owner shared his intent to improve the roof, install a new façade and improve the parking lots and lights. The group discussed

what types of retail they would like to see in the shopping center, namely a grocery store, hardware store and restaurant. Consultants led a discussion about what could be on the site if the buildings were demolished and the site completely redeveloped. Residents expressed support for a mixed-use development. Further details on possible redevelopment scenarios for this area is in the “Themes” section of this memo.

Farm Tour

On the morning of October 18, almost twenty Township residents, staff and consultants with a Michigan State Extension Educator visited three farms in Ypsilanti Township:

- Smoking Barrels Ranch: A recently established vineyard in the southern part of the Township with plans for a tasting room.
- We the People Grow Cooperative: A community garden in the Sugarbrook neighborhood that hopes to establish a state-of-the-art urban farm and culinary school on a former elementary school property.
- Dawn Farm: An institutional farm that incorporates farming as part of addiction recovery. Dawn Farm also has a farming cooperative that provides growing space for small-scale agricultural entrepreneurs willing to contribute labor or expertise as rent.

After the tour, the group discussed the role of agriculture in the Township. Generally, there was agreement that open space and agriculture should be preserved to the extent possible in the southern portion of the Township and gardening or urban agriculture could be allowed in established neighborhoods if it fit that context.

Happy Hour

A happy hour was held at Unity Vibration Brewery as another opportunity for the public to share their concerns and ideas in a more casual setting. Those who attended partook in general discussions about the current state of Township as a whole, what brought them to the community, and where they see the Township in the next 20 years.

Public Meetings

Opening Celebration

The opening celebration began with panel of Ypsilanti Township residents, who had lived in the Township between six and fifty years, sharing stories and memories of Ypsilanti Township. A short presentation on expectations for the Master Plan, and how community engagement will impact the process. At the end of the evening, attendees were asked to provide their input by participating in the “like/improve/change” exercise.

Closing Celebration

The closing celebration was the final event of the Master Plan workshop. The purpose was to relay the input and ideas that had been shared over the course of the week. The information shared is summarized in the

“Themes” section of this memo. Throughout the evening, participants were asked if they concurred with the direction of the plan and to provide any further opinions.

Themes:

During open studio time and other events throughout the workshop, six themes emerged which should be addressed in the Master Plan. These themes with brief descriptions of the issues and potential options are below:

Neighborhoods are the Heart of the Community

Largely, residents identify with their neighborhoods. During the workshop, most residents highlighted specific improvements that would have the greatest impact on their respective neighborhoods. Going forward, the Master Plan will likely be a neighborhood-based plan.

Physical Connections

Large physical barriers in the Township such as I-94 and Ford Lake have caused a struggle for residents and visitors alike, to maneuver throughout the Township due in part to the lack of physical connections. The lack of physical connections is a concern for those who rely on non-motorized options, such as sidewalks and bike lanes. Crucial locations for improved non-motorized options include the overpass over I-94 via Huron and Whittaker Roads (between Township Hall and the City), as well as along the East Michigan Avenue and Ecorse Road corridors.

Accessibility to needs and services

Most residents who participated in the workshop felt there is a lack of options throughout the Township for shopping, dining, as well as other daily needs and services. There are underserved locations where additional retail options for daily needs and services would greatly benefit neighborhoods. These areas include the Whitaker/Huron Drive area, the Ecorse Road/Michigan Avenue corridors, the Hewitt Road/Ellsworth Road area, the Washtenaw Avenue corridor, and the Huron River Drive/Rawsonville Road area.

Impact of land use continuation

The southern half of the Township has seen continuous single-family residential development in recent decades. Residents expressed mixed feelings as to whether they want to see this land use pattern continue. Gains from continuing this pattern include an increase in population, new housing, and greater opportunities to attract developers. However, continuing this single-family pattern will require additional infrastructure including storm water management and roads. The Township would also lose open space, agriculture and its remaining rural heritage.

ACM

ACM is a crucial building block for economic development within the Township. However, it is almost completely secluded from the rest of the Township and lacks accessibility. Creating additional connections to key arterial roads, such as East Michigan Avenue and Tyler Road, will allow workers entry into the rest of the Township for everything it has to offer. Further, additional connections into the ACM area, will create

opportunities for residents in surrounding neighborhoods to easily access jobs that are offered by ACM, GM, and any other future employers to the area, and further link ACM to the Township as a whole.

Gault Village

The Gault Village Shopping Center has been underutilized since the late 1990's and has not met the needs of the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. This property can be seen as an asset, due to the opportunities to transform the space into something that can further benefit the surrounding neighborhoods and community as a whole. One option to transform this property is to construct small-scale retail buildings on out lots along Emerick Street to provide a more walkable setting for shopping and dining. Another option would be to raze the property, and construct a mixed use development. A mixed use development at this scale could potentially offer ground floor retail, multiple-family housing, and even a bungalow court.