

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Introduction to the City of Grayling



The City of Grayling is a small community located in northern Lower Michigan, in Crawford County. While the City encompasses just over two square miles, the greater Grayling area offers a multitude of recreational opportunities, and as such, the City benefits from an abundant tourist-oriented economy. Grayling draws on its accessibility, natural features

and strong community spirit as it continues to grow. With direct access from I-75 and M-72, Grayling proclaims to be the “Gateway to the North,” providing convenient services and activities for residents, travelers and tourists.

While many landowners in Crawford County are seasonal residents who travel south during times of colder weather, most within the City are permanent residents. Likely due to the large employers of Munson Healthcare Grayling Hospital and Camp Grayling, the City remains the hub of Crawford County, and is currently the County seat.

Surrounded by majestic natural features, Grayling is a destination for its recreational trails, pristine rivers, historical significance and vast open spaces. Much of surrounding Grayling Township is owned by the State of



Michigan’s Department of Natural Resources and the federal government. The Hartwick Pines State Park is the State’s fifth largest park. It provides visitors with recreational and historical attractions. Many of the area’s trails are used year-round as hiking and biking trails in the spring, summer and fall months, and as snowmobile trails throughout the winter. Other recreational attractions, such as the AuSable River, local ski slopes, golf courses, and attractive biking environments make Grayling a destination throughout the year.

As with many communities in northern Lower Michigan, Grayling began as a logging town. Early settlers were drawn to the towering pine trees and river access provided by the AuSable and Manistee Rivers. Today, much of this history is celebrated through annual events and local attractions that honor the traditions of the past.

A major challenge facing the City of Grayling is the quality and quantity of its housing stock. Presently, the City is home to approximately 1,884 residents. The majority of residential development occurred during the early settlement days, with the majority of commercial and residential structures built prior to 1959. This presents a unique situation for Grayling, where some structures have been left to the elements of weather and are now falling into disrepair. Most new residential construction is occurring in the outlying townships, where undeveloped land is plentiful. A consideration with this master plan is the connection between ongoing development or redevelopment with the City's overall economic stability. This plan seeks to find ways to attract redevelopment while maintaining the significant natural and cultural resources currently enjoyed.

## **Description and Purpose of the Master Plan**

The master plan is a guide for the future that recommends how the City should develop in order to meet community goals. A sound master plan helps ensure a logical development pattern that will result in a highly desirable community in which to live or work. A plan allows residents, business owners and developers to make investments with a reasonable expectation of what will happen in the future. In essence, the plan represents a balance between the sometimes-competing interests of the environment, individual landowners and the community overall.

The plan directs the intensity and arrangement of various types of land uses and promotes design that complements the character of the City. The plan strives to provide a complementary mix of land uses intermingled with natural features to create a sustainable, livable community.

The master plan's goals and future land use plan will assist City leaders in decision making, which consider the long-term implications for the community. These community-wide implications may not be immediately apparent to the individual property owner or citizen, but the impacts of each decision are linked and become visible over time. Sound, appropriate planning is necessary to ensure mistakes are not made that will be difficult to eliminate in the future. The master plan can be viewed as a

community blueprint for the future, a mechanism to help ensure each decision fits as part of the whole.

Among the many reasons for the master plan are the following:

- Present a future land use map illustrating how the City should develop over time with a balanced land use pattern.
- Provide a legal basis for zoning and other regulations for the type, intensity and timing of development.
- Ensure that the most significant natural features are preserved as development occurs.
- Outline specific strategies to address situations where one land use is not compatible with an adjacent land use.
- Recommend improvements to intersections and roadway sections needing attention due to rapidly increasing traffic volumes.
- Address the changing desires and needs of residents.
- Desire to provide a sustainable community and a land use pattern which translates into a diversified tax base to support the desired facilities and services.
- Coordinate land use recommendations with anticipated land use changes and infrastructure improvements with the County.

## Legal Basis for the Plan

The Grayling Master Plan is prepared under the authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008) which authorizes the planning commission to prepare a master plan. The purpose of this plan is set forth in section 7 of the act as follows:

**125.3807 Master plan; adoption, amendment, and implementation by local government; purpose.**

Sec. 7. (1) A local unit of government may adopt, amend, and implement a master plan as provided in this act.

(2) The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
- (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
  - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets and provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users.
  - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.
  - (iii) Light and air.
  - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
- (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
- (vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
- (vii) Recreation.
- (viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.

**History:** 2008, Act 33, Eff. Sept. 1, 2008;—Am. 2010, Act 134, Imd. Eff. Aug. 2, 2010.*requirements.*

MASTER PLAN	ZONING ORDINANCE
Provides general policies, a guide	Specific regulations, the law
Describes what should happen in the future over the next 5-20 years, not necessarily the recommended land use for today	Describes what is and what is not allowed today, based on existing conditions
Adopted under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008), as amended	Adopted under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006
Includes recommendations that involve other agencies and groups	Deals only with development related issues under City control
Flexible to respond to changing conditions	Fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change requirements.

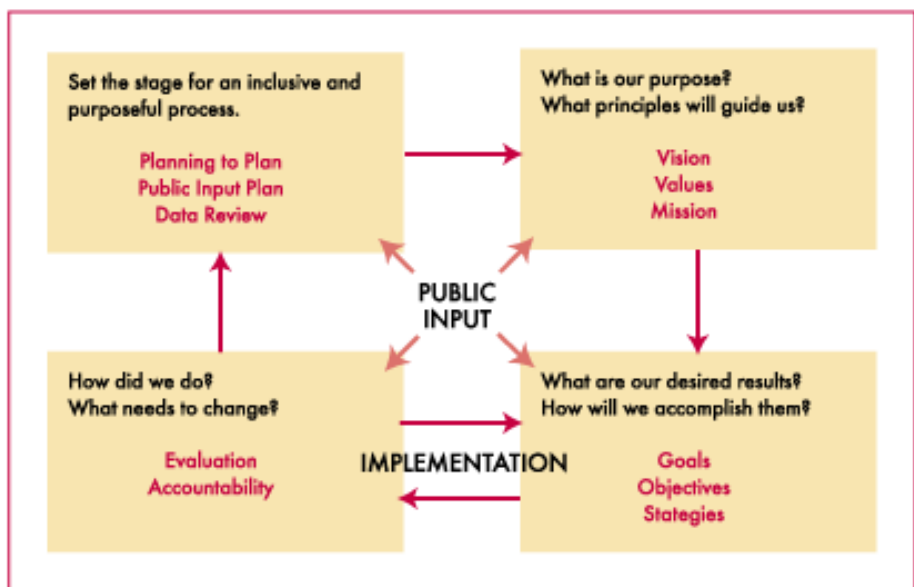
## Comparison of the Master Plan to Zoning

The master plan provides general direction on the future development pattern in the City. Some of the master plan recommendations will be implemented through amendments to the zoning ordinance text and map. However, the master plan itself does not change the zoning ordinance or zoning of any property. Some of the differences between the master plan and the zoning ordinance are listed below:

### Master Plan Process

The master plan represents a year long effort by the Planning Commission, City officials and residents. Development of the plan involved collection and analysis of data on population, land use, environmental, transportation, infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions. The recommendations of the plan are based upon this

Elements of the Planning Process



information and input from the public. The process is more specifically described as follows:

### ***Existing Conditions Report***

The first step in the planning process was to obtain a snapshot of the area's physical and social features as they exist today. The current condition of the City provides an understanding of what its strengths and weaknesses are and serve as a base for future recommendations.

### ***Public Participation***

A public survey form was distributed in November, 2013. The survey document requested general opinions about City programs and parks, residential development, transportation systems and overall growth in the City. Of the 614 surveys mailed, a total of 137, or 22.4% were returned. Survey results are shown in Appendix A. The information obtained was used in the development of goals, objectives and recommendations found in the plan.

After preparing a draft of the plan, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 19, 2015 to gather feedback on the work conducted. Members of the public were in attendance as well as members of the Planning Commission, City Council, other staff and officials, as well as the consulting team.

### ***Analysis and Recommendations***

Based on the data collected from the existing conditions report, public participation results and the experience of the steering committee, staff and consultants, information was analyzed and recommendations were made for the future of the City. This information was presented to the City for review and comment in a draft version of the plan.