



## Fresh Coast Planning

119 ½ Washington Avenue, Studio B  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
www.freshcoastplanning.com

**Gregory L. Ransford, MPA**  
616-638-1240  
greg@freshcoastplanning.com

**Julie Lovelace**  
616-914-0922  
julie@freshcoastplanning.com

**Kevin Yeomans**  
616-821-4969  
kevin@freshcoastplanning.com

**Alexis Gulker**  
616-773-4638  
alexis@freshcoastplanning.com

# MEMORANDUM

To: Ravenna Township Planning Commission  
From: Kevin Yeomans  
Date: 1/10/2024  
Re: Master Plan – Chapters for Review

---

For your January 20, 2024, meeting we have prepared five chapters of the Master Plan for your review. Below we have identified the chapters that have been prepared for your review and a brief summary of items for you to review.

As you review the attached chapters, please note that each chapter has four sections. The purpose of each section is as follows:

Purpose Statement – Identifies the purpose and intent of the land use classification or community attribute.

General Description of Appropriate Uses – Provides examples of uses that may be appropriate within each land use classification.

Goals – Identifies the goals in list format for ease of use when reviewing land use and zoning ordinance amendment proposals.

Recommendations – Provides recommendations on how the Township may help promote and create the desired future state of the land use as identified in the Purpose Statement.

Additionally, when you are reviewing the chapters, please note that different color text was used to indicate the following:

- a. Text in black is taken from your existing master plan.
- b. Text in green indicates language that has been added to your existing master plan goals and recommendations.
- c. Text in red is language that has been removed from your existing master plan goals and recommendations.
- d. Text in blue is newly recommended language to include in the new master plan.

A. Chapter 3 – Commercial Uses. The goals of this chapter were created using the goals within your previous master plan. The goals within this chapter have been expanded to clarify the intent and purpose of the previous masters plans goals.

B. In short, the commercial uses chapter is written so as to encourage retail, restaurants and other similar uses to occur within the Village of Ravenna, while also allowing small home-based businesses, commercial uses that support agriculture, and other commercial uses that do not require connection to public utilities to occur within the Township.

C. Chapter 4 – Industrial Uses. As we've previously spoken about, with the abandonment of the railway, Ravenna no longer has many of the features that would attract many industrial uses. This chapter has been written with the intent of limiting industrial development until the appropriate public infrastructure is in place. Additionally, this chapter would encourage the Township to work with the Village to centralize industrial uses and investigate if further industrial development should be encouraged.

D. Chapter 5 – Recreational Facilities and the Environment. Based on feedback from the 2024 Master Plan Survey the preservation of natural areas and the development of recreational opportunities appear to be a priority for residents. Given this we developed goals

that would encourage the preservation and development of recreational facilities and natural areas in the Township. Further we have included recommendations to development amendments to the zoning ordinance that would require developers to create recreational facilities and protect natural areas within their development.

- E. Chapter 6 – Utilities & Facilities. As you are aware, the Township does not control a large number of public facilities or utilities. This Chapter mainly focuses on coordinating with the Village of Ravenna regarding the maintenance and development of the Village’s Utilities. During previous conversations with the Department of Public Works (DPW) Supervisor, it is our understanding that the DPW and Village are mostly focused on lands within the Village. However, there may be opportunity to coordinate regarding the development of land north of the village between Ravenna Road and Slocum Road that is nearby the school campus as there are existing utilities in this area.
  
- F. Chapter 7 – Transportation. While transportation is both vehicular and non-vehicular (walking, biking, etc.) this chapter has been designed to focus on the maintenance and development of roads within the Township. Based on the results of the 2024 Master Plan Survey the condition of the roads in the Township are a major concern for residents. Further, as the Planning Commission has reviewed recent proposals for sand mines in the area, the condition of the roads has been a major point of review of these proposals. Given this, the chapter has focused on strengthening the Township’s relationship with the Road Commission and preparing plans for the maintenance and improvement of roads within the Township.

We look forward to your discussions and direction. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

KLY  
Planner

## CHAPTER THREE COMMERCIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

The intent and purpose of commercial uses is to provide residents and visitors with the goods and services they need or want. The purpose of commercial areas within the Township is to encourage diversified businesses that offer people a variety of goods and services in convenient locations.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ranging from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and automotive repair facilities, there are a variety of appropriate uses that can provide goods and services to individuals. Recognizing that different commercial uses place varying levels of demand on public infrastructure (roads and utilities), more intense commercial land uses should be designed and located in areas where the appropriate public infrastructure exists.

### Goals

- Encourage the Village of Ravenna to continue as the commercial service center for the community.
- Encourage retail, restaurants, and other similar commercial uses to take place within the Village of Ravenna.
- Allow for commercial uses that support agricultural uses to take place within appropriate areas of the Township.
- Allow for commercial uses that do not require connection to public utilities to take place in areas adjacent to the Village of Ravenna.

### Recommendations

- Review and develop strategies to encourage tourism, particularly on land along Crockery Creek.
- Coordinate with surrounding municipalities to ensure unified commercial districts.
- Coordinate with farmers and local- business owners to develop a diversified local economy.
- Review regulations for commercial development to ensure regulations are not overly prohibitive to the development of local businesses.
- Review and, if appropriate, amend regulations for home-based occupations.
- Review and, if appropriate, amend regulations for “value-added” agricultural operations, such as farm markets and agri-tourism.
- Encourage the clustering of commercial uses to concentrate commercial and retail traffic to concentrated areas.
- Review regulations for vehicular and pedestrian access in order to limit curb cuts and ensure safe and orderly access to commercial sites.
- Review existing provisions and investigate the development of zoning provisions that would allow for the development of mixed uses.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.
- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

## CHAPTER FOUR INDUSTRIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

Industrial uses may produce odors, smoke, noise, traffic and other similar byproducts that can be disruptive to the health, welfare, and safety of individuals. As such the primary intent and purpose of the industrial land use classification is to identify uses that may negatively impact nearby properties and provide appropriate locations for industrial uses.

Additionally, industrial uses can play an important role in a community's economy by providing jobs, providing opportunities to diversify the local economy, and create a ripple effect that can extend to existing local, regional, and state businesses. As such, the secondary intent of the industrial land use classification is to capitalize on the positive impacts industrial uses can have.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Industrial uses provide for the manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and distribution of products and materials.

### Goals

- Encourage industrial development to occur in areas that are able to connect to public utilities and have easy access to major roads.
- Encourage industrial development to occur in a centralized manner.
- Ensure that industrial development occurs in a manner that protects ground and surface waters, air quality, and the environment.
- Balance industrial growth with the preservation of Open Space and the rural character of the community.
- Coordinate industrial development so that local businesses and residents are able to participate in economic growth that can come from industrial development.

### Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna for the development of an Industrial Center.
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna, the Muskegon County Road Commission, and other agencies as appropriate to ensure that the transportation network necessary to support industrial uses is developed and maintained.
- Differentiate between light and heavy industrial uses, what utilities are necessary for each, what transportation infrastructure is necessary for each, and develop standards to ensure they are properly located.
- Engage with local farmers and business owners to determine what, if any, industrial uses would be beneficial to their existing operations.
- Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that existing regulations are encouraging industrial uses to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals of the master plan.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.

- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT

### Purpose Statement

Recreational facilities, both public and private, are vital components of a community. Recreational facilities create shared spaces which allow space to be used economically and provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their neighbors and the outdoors.

Further, based on the feedback received from the 2024 Master Plan Survey the preservation of natural areas and development of recreational opportunities are top priorities for the community. Natural areas and recreational opportunities provide an essential element which both enhance and protect the quality of life in the Township. Availability and access to recreational facilities and natural areas can increase an individual's overall health and welfare, among other benefits.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Recreational facilities can take many forms. They can be natural areas (such as lakes and woodlands) or developed spaces (such as playgrounds), or a mix of natural areas and developed spaces. The following list identifies some types of developed spaces and natural areas, but is by no means exhaustive: trails, playgrounds, sports fields, pools, lakes and other bodies of water, beaches, picnic areas, forested areas and many more.

### Goals

- Encourage the development of recreational facilities and areas to ensure all residents have convenient access to recreational opportunities.
- Encourage and support the expansion and improvement of the County Park system
- Encourage the development of national and state facilities for the use and enjoyment by Ravenna residents.
- Protect and reserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains and potential groundwater supply areas.
- Encourage the development of neighborhood recreation facilities within residential areas.
- Encourage interconnection between recreational facilities and areas.
- Create and preserve public access to bodies of water and other natural areas in the Township.
- Preserve and enhance access to safe drinking water from groundwater sources.
- Preserve the aesthetics (views, serenity, rural nature, etc.) available in the Township.

### Recommendations

- Develop a Recreation Plan for the Township.
- Maximize the utilization of public buildings and grounds for multi-functional services.
- Review and develop regulations that require developments (residential, commercial, and industrial) to include pathways and other recreational amenities.
- Review and develop regulations that require developers to set aside suitable portions of land for parks, scenic viewsheds, and public access to water bodies and natural areas, where practicable.
- Identify ecologically unique areas for possible use as a Township recreation area or preservation area.
- Coordinate with Muskegon County and other nearby communities to ensure that a variety of recreational activities are developed and accessible to area residents.

- Coordinate with local, regional, and state agencies and officials to identify environmentally sensitive areas.
- Develop policies and overlay districts related to decision making and development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Consider the development of policies for conservation easements, land donation, and the purchase of property.

## CHAPTER SIX UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

### Purpose Statement

Utilities provide essential services such as heat, power, potable water, waste disposal, and communication to individuals and organizations. Many utilities such as electricity, natural gas, internet, television, telephone and trash disposal are often provided by quasi-public or private companies. However, other utilities such as water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer are often provided by municipalities or other public organizations.

In order for individuals to have the opportunity to live the highest quality of life, a Township must work with both private and public organizations to build, maintain, and strengthen the facilities and infrastructures that provide these essential services to its community members.

Lastly, when utilities are expanded and strengthened, they can provide economic development opportunities for the community by providing the services necessary to support a more diverse range of commercial and industrial uses.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ravenna Township currently does not provide any public utilities. As the necessary infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to construct, the Township may need to coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to extend and strengthen their existing facilities and infrastructure to serve appropriate areas of the community.

Further, more intensive land uses such as residential developments greater than one unit per acre, restaurants, breweries, processing plants and other uses that have a high demand for water and sanitary sewer should be located in areas where they are able to connect to existing utility systems. This allows for the orderly development of utilities and aids in their long-term sustainability.

The development of utilities should be done in conjunction with the development of roads and other transportation methods.

### Goals

- Encourage development to occur within the Village of Ravenna and lands abutting the Village.
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to ensure the orderly development and sustainability of public water and sanitary sewer systems.
- Protect existing wells and access to potable water

### Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to investigate the feasibility of developing the existing public utilities that serve Ravenna Public Schools and the surrounding lands.
- Coordinate with nearby municipalities and agencies to identify the impacts and opportunities created by the construction of the sewer main connecting the City of Coopersville to the Muskegon County Landfill.
- Encourage the extension of natural gas lines into the Township to provide more cost-effective sources of energy
- Continue to work towards one hundred percent accessibility to internet services.



- Prepare capital improvement plans for things such as roads, parks and recreation, utilities, and other improvements.
- Limit higher densities of development to areas where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided.
- Require residential development proposals greater than one unit per acre to connect to public utilities where feasible
- Coordinate with the Village of Ravenna to design incentives to encourage private investment in public water and/or sewer expansion.

## CHAPTER SEVEN TRANSPORTATION

### Purpose Statement

The road system within the Township serves as one of the backbones for growth and development. By providing a means for internal and external traffic circulation, the road system within the Township influences the shape and intensity of land use.

The road system is limited by the natural features, which pose a significant impediment to convenient traffic movement throughout the community. In many cases, hilly terrain, lakes, wetlands, ravines and rivers have dictated the locations of roads and in some cases have resulted in the disruption of roads that would have otherwise been constructed in a complete grid pattern. Based on the results of the 2024 Master Plan Survey the conditions of the roads in Ravenna Township are a major concern for residents.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within Ravenna Township can have different functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. For the purposes of this Plan roads are categorized into three types, which are briefly described below.

**Primary Roads** are generally the county's longer distance, higher volume roadways that connect centers of population and employment and provide access to the state's highway network. Primary roads can be either "all-season" Class A roads or a non all-season road.

**Class A Primary Roads** are constructed in such a way that they are not subject to weight restrictions, meaning that legal-load truck may drive on them year-round.

**Non all-season** roads are subject to weight restrictions during the annual thaw period (late winter-early spring) to help prevent damage to the road.

**County Local Roads** generally collect and distribute traffic to and from higher classification roads. Traffic mobility is usually somewhat sacrificed through additional curb cuts to provide increased access to adjacent property.

**Other Roads** – The remainder of the roads in the township are either under the jurisdiction of an appropriate governmental agency or are private roads.

### Goals

- Maximize the efficiency, safety, and ease of maintenance of the vehicular transportation system and non-motorized pathway (i.e. bike path and sidewalk) system.
- Ensure that necessary road maintenance and improvements are conducted to support existing and future land uses within the Township
- Ensure that existing roadways can handle projected traffic volumes resulting from new development.

### Recommendations

- Coordinate with the Muskegon County Road Commission to review and develop a road maintenance and improvement plan for the Township.

- Through cooperation with the Muskegon County Road Commission, monitor traffic volumes and road conditions as part of a program to establish road improvement priorities.
- Coordinate with the Muskegon County Road Commission in regard to the allocation of monies for road improvements
- Encourage property owners to improve existing driveway and private road designs.
- Review and ensure that setbacks for signs, parking, and buildings are adequate to avoid conflicts with roads or pathways.
- Establish zoning and subdivision regulations that institute access controls intended to reduce traffic conflicts along County Primary and Local Roads thereby preserving their volume and function.
- Create access management provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for commercial and industrial development.
- Limit the number of access points along County Primary Roads by encouraging shared access for commercial establishments through site plan review.
- Strengthen ordinance provisions to require developers to provide road easements for construction of pedestrian/bicycle paths.
- Review and develop regulations to ensure that new roads (public and private) conform to County Road standards.