



## Fresh Coast Planning

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# MEMORANDUM

To: Allendale Charter Township Planning Commission  
From: Gregory L. Ransford, MPA  
Date: November 1, 2023  
Re: Town Center – Master Plan

Pursuant to your direction at your October 2, 2023 meeting, we initiated the process to amend the Allendale Charter Township Master Plan (ACTMP) and your reconsideration of the previous Town Center. To begin this process, we reviewed the previous Town Center language and provide the following findings below to initiate your discussion. The purpose of this review is to assess what provisions of the previous language remain relevant today, if any, and to what extent revisions are necessary.

### Town Center Language Review Findings

Below we summarize our key findings of the previous Town Center language. Attached is a document we created that contains all of the provisions regarding the Town Center from the previous ACTMP. You will see various highlights and notations regarding certain language therein. We have provided our findings below as they appear in order within the attached. This list does not contain all of the highlights and notations within the attached.

- A goal of the proposed Town Center location was identified as needing to be “easily accessible” to Grand Valley State University (GVSU) students.
  - Given that GVSU campus is approximately one and a half miles from the previously identified Town Center and a significant amount of off-campus student housing is located at a distance of approximately a mile from the previously identified Town Center, this goal and the accessibility to GVSU students may need reexamination.
- A strategy indicates that the township should prepare and adopt regulations and incentives to promote and encourage the development of the Town Center.
  - As you know from our recent discussions, an amendment to the ACTMP is appropriate prior to drafting said language and should be conducted to serve as the basis of that future amendment. In our opinion, this strategy remains relevant and will be legitimized by the amendment process to the ACTMP.
- A strategy of the previous language indicates that the Township should identify locations where the Town Center is feasible.
  - Related to our first bullet point above, we presume the feasibility component and the accessibility to GVSU students component were considered in tandem.
- Efforts were made with the intention to include West Presley Parkway and Henry Street into the design of the Town Center.
  - Do these remain relevant today?
- The Development Guidelines should be maintained, and improved if necessary, to provide for Town Center “protections” while drafting the related ACTZO language.
- Town Center East – Was this “completed?”

### Planning Commission Considerations

As the Planning Commission deliberates regarding the previous Town Center language, we believe the following warrant your review and consideration. They are listed in no particular

order.

- The location of the Town Center. Certainly, we understand that the Township has become an owner within the previous Town Center area and it is most likely that the same area is utilized for the Town Center. Related, previous discussion included the concept of adding property on the north side of Lake Michigan Drive as well to the overall Town Center.
- Whether new public engagement methods are necessary or the previous efforts and related results remain relevant to move forward without new public engagement
- The incorporation of previous language into a new Town Center chapter

The Town Center concept has been scheduled for your discussion at your November 6, 2023 meeting. If you have any questions, please let us know.

GLR  
Planner

Attachment

cc: Adam Elenbaas, Supervisor

Previous Town Center language

Chapter 3 Goals & Strategies

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Goal: Create a Town Center

Identify one or more locations for the establishment of a vibrant town center having a design which is pedestrian friendly, creates new mixed use development opportunities, is attractive and easily accessible to both Township residents and GVSU students and provides a location for social interaction and community events.

Commented [GR1]: How, presumably by foot?

STRATEGIES

1. Through the Master Plan process identify locations other than the one recommended in the 2003 Plan where the town center concept is feasible; review the 2003 location and design recommendations in light of the uses which have been established and determine what changes should be made to enhance town center development of this location.
2. Working with the development community prepare realistic drawings of a conceptual town center for the new locations identified in order to spark interest and set forth the expectations of the Township.
3. Prepare and adopt regulations and incentives which will promote and encourage the selected locations to be developed in accordance with the town center concept.
4. Identify obstacles to the implementation of this goal and seek to resolve them.

Commented [GR2]: Good

Chapter 5 Future Land Use

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Master Plan Concepts

The Town Center location and concept will continue to be a vital component in creating a sense of community for the Township. The Township may need to take a stronger role in making this a reality.

Commented [GR3]: Yes, with land purchase(s)

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Town Center

The Town Center concept and its location on the south side of M-45 between 60th and 64th Avenues was the centerpiece of the 2015 Community Strategic Plan adopted in 2003. The 2011 community survey showed strong support for the continuation of this form of land use in the Master Plan update.

Since the adoption of the 2003 Plan the Town Center site has been developed with the Family Fare Supermarket, the Metro Health Clinic and the Allendale Christian School behind the Family Fare. In addition a public street, West Presley Parkway, has been built on the west side of the Metro Health Clinic to provide public access into the Town Center property from M-45 and Henry Street was built to provide access to the Allendale Christian School and the Town Center site from 64th Avenue. The Allendale Downtown Development Authority has also set aside funds for stormwater management on this property.

Commented [GR4]: Interesting. It seems FF is a typical strip mall located far off LMD...But the next para says there was no language for a TC design, so this wasn't through TC MP concepts???

Commented [GR5]: Hmm, so what does the road network look like?

While these above developments may constitute a start on the Town Center they have occurred on individual parcels by different developers without a true connection or following a cohesive design plan as envisioned by Town Center concept. Lacking a Township ordinance with development standards to "require" compliance with the TC concept it is questionable whether future development will achieve the design promoted in the 2003

Commented [GR6]: Correct. However, until ACTZO language is adopted, the Township can include language within the ACTMP to help achieve the goals of the TC.

Plan. Economic conditions resulting from the 2008 recession have also negatively affected the retail and housing markets raising more questions about the practicality of the Town Center taking shape in the manner recommended by the 2003 Plan.

The 2013 Master Plan still supports the development of a Town Center which can provide an identity for Allendale Township in a central location which is walkable and can serve as a gathering place for residents. The focus of the 2013 Plan is therefore more on the layout and design of the future commercial portion of the site along the M-45 frontage and less on the residential portion to the south.

Commented [GR7]: Mixed preferred, though?

**The Plan recommends commercial development to a depth of 800 to 1000 feet from M- 45. Buildings and support facilities should be located and designed to provide a village or traditional town atmosphere and to function in a manner consistent with a village or traditional town. Development of this area for commercial use should be guided by the following illustration and guidelines.**

Development Guidelines for the Allendale Township Town Center

- o On-street parking
- o Incorporate bike lanes for complete streets
- o Wide sidewalks abutting storefronts
- o Two and three story buildings
- o Residential on upper stores allowed
- o Pedestrian access to adjoining parcels
- o Projecting signs
- o See-through front windows

Commented [GR8]: Panama City Beach, but did not have second stories...

The illustration on the following page provides a good example of the type of development envisioned for the Town Center area.

Critical considerations in this regard should include defining the height, bulk, and placement of buildings, encouraging traditional architectural styles, allowing for residential use above ground floor commercial as well as a variety of housing types if feasible, minimizing the view of extensive parking areas from M-45, providing strong pedestrian amenities and traditional circulation patterns, providing open space in the form of a village square or similar amenity, and similar fundamental village components including the arrangement of commercial buildings along both sides of a main street in a traditional town center fashion.

Commented [GR9]: Yep. ZO language needed.

It is important that any design of the commercial portion incorporate safe and easy access both motorized and non-motorized to and from the residential area designated to the south.

Commented [GR10]: Why only south? Existing or new?

[DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES JPEG]

**In order to ensure that the village design pattern recommended here will be built, new zoning regulations will need to be adopted and the land rezoned. A degree of flexibility must be part of any such regulations so that development proposals can respond to market forces while striving to meet Township standards.**

The land abutting the Town Center commercial area is designated for Medium Density Residential use at a density of 6.7 dwelling units per acre. The residential portion may be developed separately or as part of the Town Center commercial area. However, the Plan recommends that the two land uses be designed so that there are vehicle and pedestrian connections.

***Town Center East***

The Plan recognizes that the area surrounding the intersection of 48th Avenue and M-45 has developed into a town center of sorts where the commercial uses there (MainStreet Pub, Biggby Coffee shop, Jude's Barber Shop, Burger King and others) attract both GVSU students and Allendale Township residents. The Plan calls for enhancing the opportunity for such social interaction by recommending that the vacant commercial land on the west side of 48th Avenue south of M-45 be built in a fashion of a village center with a main street flanked by commercial buildings as described above for the Town Center area between 60th and 64th Avenues. The density for the residential portion should be the same as recommended for High Density Residential areas which is 12 units per acre.

**Commented [GR11]:** Seems closer to students, for sure.