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# MEMORANDUM

To: Crockery Township Planning Commission  
From: Gregory L. Ransford, MPA  
Date: June 12, 2023  
Re: Comprehensive Review of the Crockery Township Master Plan

Pursuant to the direction of Supervisor Erhorn, we reviewed the 2013 Crockery Township Comprehensive Plan (CTCP). The purpose of this review was to provide our analysis of its content to determine the extent of revisions that are necessary within the immediate five year planning period, as mandated by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Act 33 of 2008, as amended. In addition, the purpose of this review was to provide suggested revisions regarding the entirety of its content beyond the five year planning period, as well as regarding its overall structure.

To those ends, we recommend revisions throughout the current CTCP, primarily because of, but not limited to, the following, which we explain further below within this memorandum:

1. The need for a more user-friendly, simplistic approach to the overall structure which should be utilized through land use classification chapters as well as an Appendix containing demographic and historical data.
2. Specific density and uses are identified within the language, which can handcuff the township during land use review processes and are more appropriately located within the zoning ordinance.
3. The Public classification within the Future Land Use Map should be eliminated
4. Several provisions may have been achieved and should be removed

In addition, the review serves to create the basis of each land use classification chapter (the chapters of which we explain within the Simplistic Master Plan Structure section of our memorandum below) by capturing relevant language to combine with the outcomes of the public workshops and Planning Commission direction.

Finally, this memorandum serves as an organizational guide with the Planning Commission.

### Suggested Revisions

We have organized our most significant comments further below by section of the existing master plan document. For simplicity, we have not included reference within this memorandum to any grammatical errors, punctuation errors, writing format needs, or other minor errors that require revision within the plan. We will perform those changes without your direction and immediate oversight as you progress through the draft chapters.

#### *Simplistic Master Plan Structure*

All too often, we review master plans containing numerous pages of community history, demographics, and other statistical data within the first half of the document prior to reaching any significantly relevant information. In fact, the CTCP contains approximately 30 pages of history, demographic statistics, and other census data before any significant goals and objectives are presented. We find this structure unnecessary and a deterrent to regular use of the document by residents, developers, township officials, and the like. While most of this information is useful, we believe it is more appropriately located within the Appendix, with the exception of applicable introduction and public participation information to

establish the general basis and core values of the plan content.

In particular to the CTCP, following the 30 pages of information noted above, we eventually find content that contains value to the review of development proposals. Unfortunately, it is not until approximately page 38 of the CTCP that we begin to find goals for land use. The current structure of the CTCP requires the reader to examine every page of the document to find relevant information when reviewing a development proposal. For example, and after filtering through the first 30 pages, while pages 38 through 62 contain valuable content for a residential or commercial land use proposal, that content is not organized in an efficient manner since it is throughout 25 pages. This inefficient organization can result in an incomplete examination of the plan. To prevent incomplete examination, we recommend that the master plan is organized into land use classification chapters (which is partially present in Chapter 5 – Planning Dimensions of the CTCP) where most of the relevant land use information, for example, is codified in its own chapter. This structure will greatly lessen the amount of time a user needs to find applicable information. It is important to keep this structure in mind as you review our recommendations below.

#### *Policy Document (Master Plan) Is Not Law (Zoning Ordinance)*

As you know, a master plan is a policy document and the zoning ordinance is law. Considering this, a master plan should not contain provisions regarding specific land uses permitted (uses should be generalized), dimensional requirements, density, and the like. As you will review in our comments below, we note several occurrences in this regard and recommend that they are removed from the plan.

#### 2013 Comprehensive Plan

##### *Chapter 1 - Forward*

- (Pages 1-7)
  - While the overall language is well focused on the requirements of the MPEA, we recommend the language is reduced, relocated to other Chapters, and streamlined
  - In addition, we recommend outlining the core values of the master plan on which the body of the plan shall be based. This portion of the Forward should clearly state the desires of the public and identify the attributes they value in land use. In other words, this Chapter helps create the legitimacy for future land use decisions.
  - Mission Statement – a mission statement is not required within a master plan. If the Planning Commission contemplates its removal, we do note that its content generally repeats throughout this Chapter and is clear within the language. While having a mission statement is reasonable, our approach to drafting master plans is to streamline and reduce unnecessary content wherever we can. Given the aforementioned, we recommend its removal.
  - The Michigan Planning Enabling Act eliminated titles, such as “Comprehensive Plan” and streamlined all land use planning as a “Master Plan.” We will update language where necessary throughout the document.
- How to Use This Plan
  - We recommend that the aforementioned land use classification chapters are organized with Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies, which we outline further below in the Chapter 5 section of this memorandum. The Forward chapter would contain instructions on How to Use This Plan, which describes the purpose of the Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies.

##### *Chapter 2 – Description of Crockery Township*

- (Pages 8-29)
  - Generally, pages 8 through 13 are written like a history book and provide no value to land use review. We recommend that these pages are eliminated.
  - The remaining pages should be relocated to the appropriate land use classification chapters, to the Appendix, or be eliminated. Where language is relocated to the Appendix, that data can also be updated accordingly.

### *Chapter 3 – Trends and Regional Aspects*

- (Pages 30-33)
  - Overall, we recommend relocating language to appropriate land use classification chapters or the Appendix, and eliminating this chapter.
  - Page 32 – The Community Context section of this Chapter appears to contemplate what residential and commercial development may look like in the Township, specifically along M-104, as it asks several questions. Following the questions, the language indicates that, “it is important that the appropriate location and configuration of these retail areas be determined. Ideally, these new developments should be grouped together to provide linkages between non-residential land use and adjacent residential neighborhoods.” We recommend revisions to this language with pointed direction rather than questions. Ultimately, does this “goal” for retail and residential uses remain true? If so, then the language should be strengthened and definitive regarding the intent.

### *Chapter 4 – Public Participation*

- (Pages 34-36)
  - As aforementioned in the Chapter 1 – Forward portion of this memorandum, the master plan should clearly state the desires of the public and identify the attributes they value in land use. Chapter 4 identifies information from the past public participations processes, which should be streamlined and relocated to Chapter 1 as well as the Appendix, as applicable.
  - The remaining language can be relocated to the appropriate land use classification chapters and Chapter 4 can be eliminated.

### *Chapter 5 – Planning Dimensions*

- (Pages 37-45)
  - Consistent with our recommendations provided within the Simplistic Master Plan Structure portion of this memorandum, we believe it is beneficial to create land use classification chapters and relocate relevant provisions for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, transportation, utilities, recreation, etcetera, within their own chapters and eliminate this chapter.
  - In addition, as aforementioned we recommend that the land use chapters provide a better substructure and are more definitive in their direction. Specifically, we recommend identifying Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies for each land use classification. These goals, recommendations, and strategies can be found throughout the existing documents (with similar or no identifying title) particularly in Chapter 5, and simply need reincorporation in appropriate locations. The premise of the goals, recommendations, and strategies are designed as follows. In addition, this premise serves as the instruction of how to use the master plan, which we provided within the Forward chapter of this memorandum.
- Goals – These are community objectives derived from significant public input and Planning Commission oversight.
  - These are applied most frequently during land use review to ensure a proposed development meets and is consistent with the core values of the master plan.
- Recommendations – These are pointed direction to achieve the goals.
  - These are applied the strongest during land use review to ensure proposed development is consistent with the intent of the master plan.
- Strategies – In an effort to accomplish the goals and recommendations of the master plan, the strategies are the legislative methods to mandate certain physical form, through zoning ordinance and/or police power ordinances.

### *Chapter 6 – Management Recommendations*

- (Pages 46-66)
  - Consistent with our recommendations provided within the Simplistic Master Plan Structure portion of this memorandum, we believe it is beneficial to create land use classification chapters and relocate relevant provisions for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, transportation, utilities, recreation, etcetera, within their own chapters and eliminate this chapter.
  - A significant amount of language within this Chapter is written like a research paper (pages 47-48) and can be eliminated. In addition, recreation language exists (on page 50 and page 54) that is more appropriately located within a separate recreation policy document, such as a Recreation Plan, and therefore can be eliminated from the master plan.
  - The language identifies support for a “Mixed-Use Zoning District Option.” Where should this be located, Nunica? Does this remain a desire of the Planning Commission?
  - Community Gateways and Interchange Image language can be eliminated from the master plan as the content is more of an exercise of a public entity. Nonetheless, this language could be maintained, if desired, but should be strengthened with more specificity to achieve during private development proposals.
  - Pages 62 (bottom) through 66 can be eliminated. The language should be located in the Zoning Ordinance and/or reworked into land use classification chapters or is otherwise not a master plan policy (Hazard Mitigation).

### *Chapter 7 – Land Use Needs*

- (Pages 67-71)
  - Consistent with our recommendations provided within the Simplistic Master Plan Structure portion of this memorandum, we believe it is beneficial to create land use classification chapters and relocate relevant provisions for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, transportation, utilities, recreation, etcetera, within their own chapters and eliminate this chapter.

### *Chapter 8 – Zoning Plan*

- (Pages 72-86)
  - Again, consistent with our recommendations provided within the Simplistic Master Plan Structure portion of this memorandum, we believe it is beneficial to create land use classification chapters and relocate relevant provisions for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, transportation, utilities, recreation, etcetera, within their own chapters.
  - While a Zoning Plan is required by the MPEA, we recommend significantly reducing the content therein and renaming the chapter to “Implementation.” In our opinion, the MPEA merely requires that there is a connection between the land use classification titles and the Zoning Ordinance District titles. Below is an example of the Zoning Plan we drafted for Robinson Township. We will create the same type of Zoning Plan for Crockery Township. All remaining language regarding densities, uses, lot area and the like should never be identified within a master plan.

#### Relationship of Master Plan Classifications to Zoning Districts (Zoning Plan)

Complementing the text of the Master Plan is its map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its Map. In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the

Zoning Ordinance Map, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and man-made features of the landscape such as public utilities, topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, and etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, and access. Consequently, while the land use classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a proposed use is determined by the aforementioned, and the Zoning Ordinance with its regulations regarding height, area, bulk, location, etcetera for each of its Zoning Districts.

Nonetheless, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that a Master Plan include a “Zoning Plan” with an “explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map. The table below summarizes the Master Plan classifications and how they relate to reach of the existing zoning districts.

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Zoning Ordinance Map Districts
Agricultural (AG)	Agricultural (A-1) & Agricultural Service (A-2)
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Rural Residential (RR)
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Residential One-Family (R-1)
High Density Residential (HDR)	Residential Multiple-Family (R-2)
Flood Plain (E-1)	Lowland Resource Conservation Overlay (E-1)
Commercial (C)	Neighborhood Commercial (B-1) & General Business (B-2)
Industrial (I)	Industrial (I-1) & (I-2)
M-231 Primary Growth Area	Lake Michigan Drive Commercial Overlay (LMDCOD)
M-231 Secondary Growth Area	Lincoln Street Overlay (LSOD)
Mobile Home (MHP)	Mobile Home Park (R-3)

*Chapter 9 – Public Infrastructure Improvements*

- (Pages 87-93)
  - While the MPEA requires the Planning Commission to review and approve capital improvements, we do not believe that a chapter solely for capital improvements must be maintained with the plan. As a result, but because we have never seen language such as this within a master plan, after future consultation with Township Attorney Redick, we expect to recommend its elimination.

*Future Land Use Map*

- Public Classification
  - The Future Land Use (Master Plan) Map identifies a “Public” classification. While we did not find any reference to this classification within the text, we recommend that it is eliminated from the map. As you may know (since the Master Plan does not contain language explaining this classification), the Public classification is generally intended for public lands, whether owned by a Township, County, State, or school district, and sometimes even religious institutions. These areas have historically been inappropriately identified for a public purpose within master plans based on the assumption that they will never be used for any other purpose. However, it is possible (and we have observed) that a public park or other public property use could be sold. Further, if such a use is ever abandoned (presumably by sale to a private party), it would render the property dormant since the classification does not support any other type of land use. Given that your zoning ordinance allows for public uses in various zoning districts, this removal does not cause any conflicts between the master plan and the zoning ordinance. Moreover, given that no language exists within the master Plan to explain this classification, its removal would be an appropriate correction to the plan.

**Adopted/Created Provisions**

Numerous provisions exist throughout the current document that will represent our “Strategies” during the reorganization of the plan. We will bring these to your attention as the chapters are drafted to check whether they have been adopted, still remain relevant as written, or need strengthening.

**Needed Components within the Master Plan**

*Complete Streets Plan*

The MPEA requires communities to accommodate “complete streets,” which address motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and the like. However, because the township does not own any of its roads, the related language will likely be brief to satisfy the MPEA. We will address the required complete streets plan within a future Transportation Chapter draft.

**Master Plan Terms (Land Use Classification) and Master Plan Chapters**

While not part of the zoning plan nor required by the MPEA, we believe it is appropriate to provide an association between the master plan terms and the master plan chapters as it assists the reader to understand the document. We recommend, following the reorganization of the master plan by creating individual land use classification chapters, to incorporate similar language together with the Zoning Plan. Below is an example of Master Plan Map section content we drafted for Olive Township.

Terminology

*Relationship of Master Plan Map Terms to Master Plan Chapters*

Several Chapters of this Master Plan identify the interests, recommendations and strategies regarding future land uses in the township. While the interests, recommendations and strategies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan map terms as provided in the table below.

Master Plan Map Terms	Master Plan Chapters
Agricultural Preservation	Agricultural Uses
Rural Residential	Residential Uses

Town/Neighborhood Center	Borculo
Medium Density Residential A	Residential Uses
Commercial	Commercial (& Industrial) Uses
Light Industrial	(Commercial) & Industrial Uses
General Industrial	(Commercial) & Industrial Uses
Parks, Recreation, Natural Areas	Recreation
Sensitive Areas	-

**Community Survey Interests**

The Public Participation chapter of the CTCP appears to suggest that the most recent community survey is from 2010. The Planning Commission will need to determine if the data collected from that survey remains valid or whether a new survey should be conducted. Our direction in this regard, of course, is dependent on the related budget established by the Crockery Township Board of Trustees.

**Public Workshops**

Typically, we recommend communities hold at least one public workshop to solicit public participation and form the basis of the plan (coupled with the Community Survey). Public contributions ultimately become the values on which the language is drafted. We understand from Treasurer VanBemmelen and Supervisor Erhorn that most likely only one public workshop is necessary. Regardless of the number of workshops, we seek your direction regarding “hot topic” items for which you desire public participation.

**Framework**

Lastly, following the conclusions of your discussion regarding our Considerations and Direction section of this memorandum immediately below, we will draft a Master Plan Framework, which will outline the expected project dates, outcomes, and deliverables.

**Planning Commission Considerations & Direction**

While additional revisions to the master plan may be appropriate, we believe the aforementioned are minimally necessary to adequately provide an update to the plan and prepare the text for the incorporation of public contributions. As the Planning Commission deliberates regarding our memorandum, we minimally seek your feedback on the following. They are listed in no particular order.

- Whether a mission statement remains important in the Plan
- Whether the goal to integrate retail and residential uses should be maintained in the Plan, specifically along M-104
- Whether the area of Nunica should have its own chapter within the master plan
  - Whether any other area of the Township should have its own chapter within the master plan
- Consider an Environmental chapter to address uses adjacent to the Grand River and incorporate other environmental provisions from throughout the current Plan
- Whether the 2010 survey remains valid or a new survey should be conducted
- “Hot topic” items the Planning Commission desires to obtain public input regarding

We will be prepared to discuss these items further at your June 20, 2023 meeting. If you have any questions, please let us know.

GLR  
Principal Planner

cc: Erik Erhorn, Supervisor