

Municipal Plan*Assessment

This tool was developed to assist in reviewing municipal master plans and in determining if these plans are consistent with smart growth principles, neighboring municipal plans, and other county and/or regional plans. A list of questions have been developed to evaluate a municipal plan to determine if it is consistent with smart growth principles. Smart Growth promotes flexibility and encourages reinvesting in cities, creating compact, walkable, transit-oriented development.

The tenets of Smart Growth are:

- ✓ Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- ✓ Create walkable neighborhoods
- ✓ Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration
- ✓ Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- ✓ Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
- ✓ Mix land uses
- ✓ Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- ✓ Provide a variety of transportation choices
- ✓ Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- ✓ Take advantage of compact building design

**Municipal Plan refers to Township, Village, City master plans, land use plans, development plans or comprehensive plans.*

Criteria	Evaluation				
	Does not meet	Marginally meets, needs improvement	Meets	Exceeds	Does not apply
General Plan Contents					
Plan contains adequate, up-to-date analysis of current conditions (population, housing, income, employment, education, transportation, natural features)					
Plan contains a vision, goals and objectives					
Plan contains an implementation strategy or action plan with specific steps to evaluate progress over time					
Plan contains a future land use map with text describing the intent of each land use category					
Location and Type of Development					
Plan contains specific language that describes a pattern of growth that includes one or more compact centers of growth with low density and/or cluster development in surrounding areas					
Plan's future land use map and text encourages new development within or adjacent to existing growth areas (cities, towns, villages) or within or adjacent to existing infrastructure					
Plan's future land use map and text encourages development on major roads to be in focused nodes instead of strips along entire road length					
Plan has clear boundaries defined for the extension of municipal sewer and water services (if available)					
Plan supports incentives for mixed use in growth areas (ie. incentives for ground floor retail/office with upper level residential uses) for new development and renovated buildings					
Plan supports policies allowing home office use in residential areas					
Regional Issues					
Plan's future land use map and corresponding text is compatible with adjacent municipalities' future land use map and text					
Plan is generally compatible with the County's Comprehensive Plan					
The ongoing planning process demonstrates collaboration with the County and surrounding municipalities					
The implementation strategies found in the Plan support collaboration with the County and surrounding municipalities					

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Diversity in Housing Options					
Plan assesses housing affordability					
Plan supports policies requiring or providing incentives for a mix of housing types (affordable housing for purchase, multi-family rentals, senior housing, etc.) in growth areas					
Plan supports policies requiring or providing incentives to new developments to include housing targeted at more than one segment of the market (apartments along with single family or affordable housing with market rate)					
Transportation					
Plan supports policies requiring new streets to be interconnected with existing streets in a clear pattern or network					
Plan supports policies allowing different street widths depending on the scale of the neighborhood and type of traffic					
Plan supports policies requiring new development to construct a network of sidewalks and/or bicycle paths that connects to existing paths where possible					
Plan addresses the need for walking/biking routes to schools					
Plan supports policies requiring parking to be located behind buildings and providing incentives for shared parking					
Natural Assets/Open Space/Agricultural Land					
Plan includes maps identifying locations of natural assets, environmentally sensitive areas, open space and/or prime farmlands					
Plan includes text describing the value of natural assets, environmentally sensitive areas, open space and/or prime farmland					
Plan supports policies protecting natural assets, environmentally sensitive areas, and open space					
Plan supports policies providing incentives to developers to utilize the open space or cluster development option which preserves natural assets or environmentally sensitive areas on a site					

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Plan supports policies requiring or providing incentives for utilizing Low Impact Development Techniques (Examples include saving trees on the site, not building on sensitive areas (wetlands, steep slopes, critical dunes, high risk erosion areas), orienting roads and lots to allow for passive solar orientation of homes, providing wildlife habitat and open spaces, providing for on-site treatment of stormwater)					
Plan supports policies requiring new development to be set back from water bodies and wetlands					
Plan supports policies limiting development on steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, critical dunes, high risk erosion areas and areas with endangered species					
Plan supports policies limiting development around inland lakes unless adequate municipal sewer is available or septic system maintenance requirements are enacted					
Plan supports policies encouraging the use of green building design/energy efficient buildings					
Plan supports policies encouraging the use of plants native to SW Michigan in landscaping					
If Farmland Preservation is a goal; answer this section					
Plan's future land use map indicates areas intended for the preservation of farmland					
Plan includes text describing the strategies intended to be used in order to preserve farmland, including purchase of development rights and other techniques					
Plan includes language indicating why farmland should be preserved in the county (cost of services studies, economic benefit to county, etc)					
Plan includes a description of how and why the preservation area(s) were selected					
Plan includes a description of the process used to prepare the farmland preservation element and the involvement and participation of local units of government with the county, farmland owners (producers) and the general public					
Cultural/Historical/Recreational					
Plan supports policies encouraging new developments to create or enhance community spaces such as plazas, squares, parks, trails, etc.					
Plan supports policies maintaining or increasing public access to inland water bodies and Lake Michigan					
Plan supports policies protecting historical features in the community					

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Impact Analysis					
Plan supports policies requiring developers to pay for new infrastructure unless a substantial public benefit is provided (such as high wage job creation)					
Plan includes a build out analysis of current zoning and future land use map					
Plan considers capacity of its infrastructure and environment to accept new growth					
Plan supports policies requiring a fiscal analysis for new development proposals over a certain size					
Plan includes a cost of service study to better understand who is paying for and who is receiving public services					
Involve the Public					
Plan describes how the community/general public was actively involved in the plan development process other than the required public hearing (examples – survey, well advertised and attended public meetings, visioning workshops, focus groups, etc)					
Plan supports policies ensuring that consistent standards are applied to all planning and zoning decisions to ensure fair treatment of all applicants					
Other County/Regional Plans					
Plan includes recommendations found in the County Hazard Mitigation Plan					
Plan includes recommendations found in the County Recreation Plan (Cass County has a county recreation plan)					
Plan includes recommendations found in the County Homelessness Plan					
Plan includes recommendations found in Watershed Plans (Watershed Plans exist for the Dowagiac River, Galien River, St. Joseph River, Black River, Paw Paw River (being developed), and Lake Michigan)					
Plan includes recommendations found in the County Solid Waste Management Plan					
Plan includes recommendations found in Airport Plans					
Plan includes recommendations found in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy					