

Developing a Master Plan for the Grand Traverse Commons

In 2007, the City of Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township worked together to establish the *Grand Traverse Commons Joint Planning Commission*. The new commission was created to replace the oversight role of the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation. The new commission is continuing to take a community-wide approach to planning, collaborating on land use issues of mutual interest.

Home to the Munson Medical Center and the Village at Grand Traverse Commons (including Building 50), portions of the 484-acre campus lie within both the City of Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township. In fact, the jurisdictional boundary separating the two jurisdictions goes through the middle of one of the former state hospital buildings. Established under the Joint Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 226 of 2003 (MCL 125.131, et seq.), the new joint planning commission is one of just a handful of such commissions in Michigan. One of the first tasks charged to the new commission is the development of a new master plan and zoning ordinance. With a grant of assistance from the *Partnerships for Change Sustainable Communities Program*, the Joint Planning Commission initiated the planning process last July.

What Is A Master Plan and Why Is It Important?

A little like a “blueprint,” a master plan is the public’s guide for the development of a community and the management of its resources. The plan provides the framework under which a community can preserve its natural features, build strong neighborhoods, increase commerce, plan for public services, and guide new development. In fact, a master plan is the legal basis for the development and application of local land use regulations, including the zoning ordinance. Most master plans also identify a number of capital improvement projects. The identification of these projects can help to build support for local funding or leverage funding from state granting agencies.

What is Partnerships for Change?

Partnerships for Change is a multi-jurisdictional planning assistance program developed by the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), Michigan Municipal League (MML) and Michigan Townships Association (MTA) with support from Michigan State University (MSUE) and Michigan Association of Planning (MAP). The overall mission of the program is to foster new and expanded cooperation between cities, townships and villages in developing and carrying out local land use policies that contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural resources. Wherever possible, these policies should encourage urban redevelopment and discourage inefficient, low-density development.

The Planning Process

The Grand Traverse Commons Joint Planning Commission is guiding the development of the *Master Plan*. The Commission consists of five officially appointed representatives from the two jurisdictions. With assistance from LIAA and the *Partnerships for Change Sustainable Communities Program*, the Joint Planning Commission is facilitating a public planning process that encourages citizen participation and open dialogue. The Joint Planning Commission will convene a number of public meetings, giving citizens the opportunity to shape a plan that is unique to the Grand Traverse Commons. In addition, citizens are encouraged to attend the monthly meeting of the Joint Planning Commission. The Joint Planning Commission convenes the fourth Tuesday of every month - meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held at the Governmental Center. For more information on how to participate in this exciting planning process, please contact your local official or visit the project website: <http://www.partnershipsforchange.cc/gtcommons>