

1 Introduction...A Comprehensive Master Plan for a New Century

What is the measure of a great first-tier city?

The height of its buildings? The size of its municipal complex? The number of “Fortune 500” companies within its borders? The winning sports records of its school district teams? Although each of these can contribute to greatness, the ultimate measure of a city’s greatness is the quality of life it offers to its residents and property owners.

A great sustainable first-tier city (*Defined as a city adjacent to or in close proximity to a major city like Detroit. Because they are near the urban core, these cities were among the first suburbs to develop in the metropolitan region, and they are usually among the oldest. Their economics and social networks are often characterized by a strong interdependence with their core city. First-tier cities are not completely urban, nor do they fit the traditional description of “suburban.” They share physical, social, economic, and cultural characteristics with both outlying, fast-growing suburbs and core cities.*) connects citizens of all ages to great choices in housing, education, employment, services, shopping, parks and natural open space, entertainment and culture as well as to opportunities to live in neighborhoods that are safe, secure and vibrant. A great first-tier city can be a place that nurtures the body, mind and spirit of those who choose to make the city home – whether it is a resident, business owner or a corporation.

To further advance this great first-tier community, City leaders embarked on a strategic planning process in 2004 to find new ways to do business, stay focused and be accountable. The City’s Strategic Plan concentrates on the current financial state of the City as well as future economic projections. Other areas considered included community image, economic growth, city services and quality development/redevelopment. The Strategic Plan’s vision was to develop strategies to increase revenue, develop initiatives, and decrease expenditures to maintain Southfield’s strong business center and quality neighborhoods. To achieve this vision the City set these goals in place to sustain a viable, exciting and prosperous community:

- Financially sound and sustainable city government
- Top quality city services
- Quality development and redevelopment

- A preferred place to make home
- Southfield – one community, one city
- A lively city to enjoy and have fun

As a result of the Strategic Plan the community has come together to foster these goals into tangible actions and initiatives that will:

Encourage Local Leadership. Encouraging community dialogue and decision making; forge coalitions and partnerships among corporate and residential owners; and build leadership consensus through community and regional stakeholders. These initiatives have been accomplished by providing dramatic and extensive visual, physical and verbal portrayals of the community.

Be Competitive. Continue to build on “location, location, location” as a key asset; remodeling aging housing stock, and making the community clean and safe.

Incentivise the Private Sector. The City clearly understands that recruiting multiple participants: one person, one project is rarely enough. Using inducements to reduce private sector risks, eliminating red tape, expediting development through “green tape,” and relaxing some development controls. The City also takes the lead in building public support and consensus while maintaining and strengthening infrastructure and providing extraordinary public safety.

Think and Act Regionally. Continue to participate with other first-tier cities, County and region to solve issues together and work toward regional approaches to economic development, land use and transportation policies.

Results Orientated, Continuously Asking. Has the quality been improved? Will the deal prove financially sound so that the return on investment pays off? Has the City properly set the stage for private investment? Is the development or redevelopment sustainable?

The dedication to maintain Southfield as a great first-tier City, has been recognized around the country. In October 2007, Forbes Magazine’s annual survey named Southfield as one of the nation’s most livable metro-area suburbs. This recognition was based on market research conducted by neighborhoodscout.com; a statistics database that measured the education level of residents, home ownership rates, home values, quality of schools and crime.

What is a Comprehensive Master Plan?

Continued recognition for excellence as a great first-tier city is a main reason for this Comprehensive Master Plan. This Plan describes a new vision for the future of Southfield, its neighborhoods and commercial/business districts. Southfield’s Zoning Ordinance No. 1543 directs the Planning Department, Planning Commission and City Council to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Master Plan for the development and improvement of the City. This Comprehensive Master Plan serves as a blueprint for the development and revitalization activities in the City. Implementation of this Plan will ensure that Southfield remains a highly desirable community in which to live, work, visit and learn. This can be accomplished by preserving and enhancing the qualities of the community that the residents, businesses and property owners consider important.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is intended to:

- Establish a pattern for land use which will provide a sustainable community with a diversified tax base to support the desired facilities and services with reasonable tax rates.
- Provide a legal basis for zoning and other regulations for the type, intensity and timing of development.
- Ensure that, as development occurs, significant parks and natural open space, cultural and natural features are preserved or enhanced.
- Recommend improvements to the transportation system including roadway and technology upgrades, traffic management tools to preserve roadway capacity, access management standards, and continued investment in non-motorized and transit options.
- Address the desires and needs of the residents, businesses and property owners.

- Coordinate land use recommendations with anticipated land use changes, infrastructure improvements and surrounding communities.

This vision of the City’s future looks out 15 to 20 years to provide guidance on development-related decisions that must be made on a day-to-day basis. Some of the Plan’s recommendations will occur only when market conditions are right or when necessary funding becomes available. Given the current limited availability of public funds and land, the Comprehensive Master Plan is an essential tool in ensuring that Southfield makes the best use of these scarce resources and in preventing the City from pursuing policies or supporting projects that work at cross-purposes.

Using the Comprehensive Master Plan

The Mayor, City Council, Planning Commission, the public, various agencies, businesses and developers can all use the Plan to help guide and coordinate decisions. The Plan serves to:

- Guide expectations of those involved in new development and redevelopment, and give the public some degree of certainty about the plans for the future.
- Suggest where regional coordination is needed along borders, road and natural corridors or pathways that run through several communities; and share services for cost effective attainment of mutual goals.
- Identify public improvements to roads, streetscapes, gateways, district portals, pathways, parks, utilities/infrastructure and public facilities to support the overall Plan.
- Assist in review of development proposals – to confirm the proposal meets the goals and recommendations/strategies of the Comprehensive Master Plan.
- Establish a criterion for reviewing rezoning requests – to confirm the request is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan, the appropriate timing of the change, consistency with the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Master Plan and potential impacts on Southfield.

- Provide a basis for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map - to help realize plan goals.

Comprehensive Master Plan Process

The Comprehensive Master Plan is the essential first step in the overall community planning process. This Plan will serve as a base for future planning efforts during the upcoming years.

An assessment of existing data and documents was conducted first, followed by the development of a preliminary vision, governing principles and goals. Next, the City received input from residents, property and business owners and other community stakeholders. From this input, the plan was refined to state Southfield’s vision on important issues and to serve as a guide for future development and policies.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is comprised of 14 Chapters:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Governing Principles, Goals & Recommendations/Strategies
- Chapter 3 Population Trends
- Chapter 4 Housing & Residential Character
- Chapter 5 Economic Development
- Chapter 6 Managing Land Use for the Future
- Chapter 7 Natural and Cultural Resources
- Chapter 8 Parks, Open Space and Recreation
- Chapter 9 Transportation and Circulation
- Chapter 10 Public Facilities and Services
- Chapter 11 Community Utilities
- Chapter 12 Community Image
- Chapter 13 Design Guidelines
- Chapter 14 Stewardship and Implementation

In each Chapter there is an inventory and analysis of the existing and projected trends. The results of this analysis were used in establishing recommendations/strategies to achieve those goals.

Public Participation

Actively involving all residents and community stakeholders in developing Southfield’s Comprehensive Master Plan was an important part of

the planning process. The Mayor and City Council strongly believed public participation helps to ensure that the resulting Comprehensive Master Plan accurately reflects the vision, goals and values of the community.

The Mayor and City Council endorsed the following procedures designed to foster public participation, open discussions, communication programs/interviews, information services and public meetings where advance notice was provided.

Project Kick-Off. In June 2006, the project kicked off with a meeting between the Project Consultant Team and the City’s Planning Department to review the work plan and a specific work schedule. The kick-off meeting determined that the sub-area planning districts included the City Centre, the Telegraph Road corridor, the Southfield Road corridor, and the Westside Residential area bordered by Telegraph Road, 8 Mile Road, Inkster Road and 10 Mile Road.

Planning Commission/City Council Meeting. In the summer of 2006 a joint meeting with the City Council and Planning Commission was held to provide an overview of the comprehensive planning process, purpose and intent of a Comprehensive Master Plan, and the process for community involvement.

Community Tours. In the summer of 2006 the Planning Department staff along with members of the consultant team toured and photographed select areas of the community that are in transition, recent development/redevelopment projects and areas that are in the pipeline for development/redevelopment.

Residents Public Opinion Surveys and Community Newsletter. In the fall of 2006, a survey and newsletter was mailed to all 35,000 city households. Approximately 3 percent of residents responded to begin framing issues and opportunities for consideration. This led to identification of big picture issues and opportunities, along with some degree of prioritization. An overview and summary of this survey is included in the Appendix.

Economic Development Interviews and Meetings. At the end of 2006 through the first several months of 2007 approximately 25 interviews were conducted with area community business leaders, property owners, and representatives from Oakland County, Detroit Regional Chamber, SEMCOG, Southfield Public Schools, Lawrence Technological University,

Providence/St. John Hospital, Southfield Community Foundation, Cornerstone Development Authority and the City Centre Advisory Board. The intent of the meetings was to develop an understanding of local real estate and current business interests in Southfield. Driving issues for economic development in the City and the region, future trends and major economic development opportunities were also identified. Many of the interviewees also expressed interest in participating in a business roundtable.

Subarea Workshops. In the summer of 2007 four subarea workshops were conducted in the City Centre, Telegraph Road corridor, Southfield Road corridor and Westside Residential subareas. In all, approximately 190 interested residents, business owners, property owners, citizen investors and other community stakeholders attended these workshops. The workshops provided an opportunity to detail concerns and opportunities from a city-wide perspective, but also to focus on the unique characteristics of each subarea, and to get an account of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of these areas.

Comprehensive Master Plan Steering Committee Meetings. Four meetings were held with representatives of the Steering Committee to review findings and recommendations on various chapters of the Comprehensive Master Plan Draft. The meetings focused on each chapter of the Comprehensive Master Plan and discussed the vision, goals, recommendations/strategies; gathered additional comments; and suggested recommendations.

Final Open House. The Open House will allow the community to view the Comprehensive Master Plan draft and provide comments prior to the Public Hearing and adoption of the Plan. *(Date to be Determined)*

Final Comprehensive Master Plan Draft Public Review and Plan Adoption.
(Date to be Determined)