

Implementation Tools

This section of the Chapter will summarize the various recommendations into a checklist to outline actions and responsibilities for implementation. Tools to implement the Comprehensive Master Plan generally fall into these categories:

- Land use regulations derived from police powers.
- Capital improvement programs derived from budgetary powers.

Each tool has a different purpose toward Plan implementation. Some suggest specific short term priorities, some are medium term policies and others involve on-going activities. The key tools are described below.

Land Use Regulations

The primary tools for Plan implementation, such as the Zoning Ordinance and other land use regulations, are summarized below. The City also has a number of other codes and ordinances to ensure that activities remain compatible with the surrounding area, such as noise, blight and nuisance ordinances and to control impacts on the environment and infrastructure.

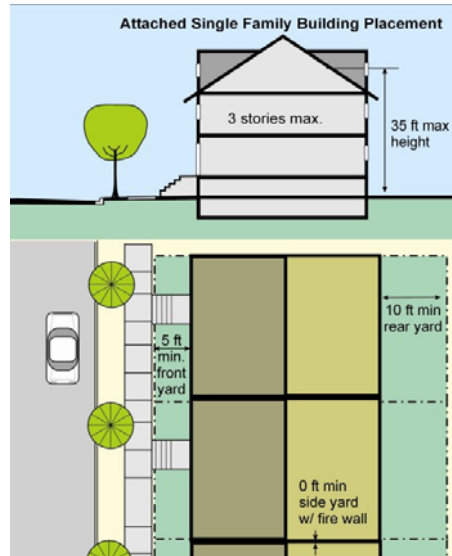
Zoning Map. The intent is that changes to the zoning map over time will gradually result in better implementation of the objectives encouraged in the Future Land Use Map. In some cases, the City may wish to initiate certain zoning changes as part of an overall zoning map amendment. Other changes to the zoning map will be made in response to requests by landowners or developers. In those cases, City officials will need to determine if the time is proper for a change. A key point to remember is that the future land use plan is a long range blueprint: implementation is expected, but gradually in response to needs, conditions and availability of infrastructure.

Zoning Regulations. Zoning regulations control the intensity and arrangement of development through standards on lot size or density, setbacks from property lines, building dimensions and similar minimum requirements. Various site design elements discussed in this Plan are also regulated through the site plan review process, which addresses overall site design for items such as landscaping, lighting, driveways, parking and circulation, access management, pedestrian systems and signs. Zoning can also be used to help assure performance in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, state regulated wetlands and woodlands.

Zoning Ordinance Review

A review of the City’s Zoning Ordinance and map was completed to identify potential changes to implement recommendations of this Comprehensive Master Plan. The review only suggests potential changes based on the plan, it does not evaluate the Zoning Ordinance for specific issues, problems, interpretations and compliance with current laws, legislation and case law.

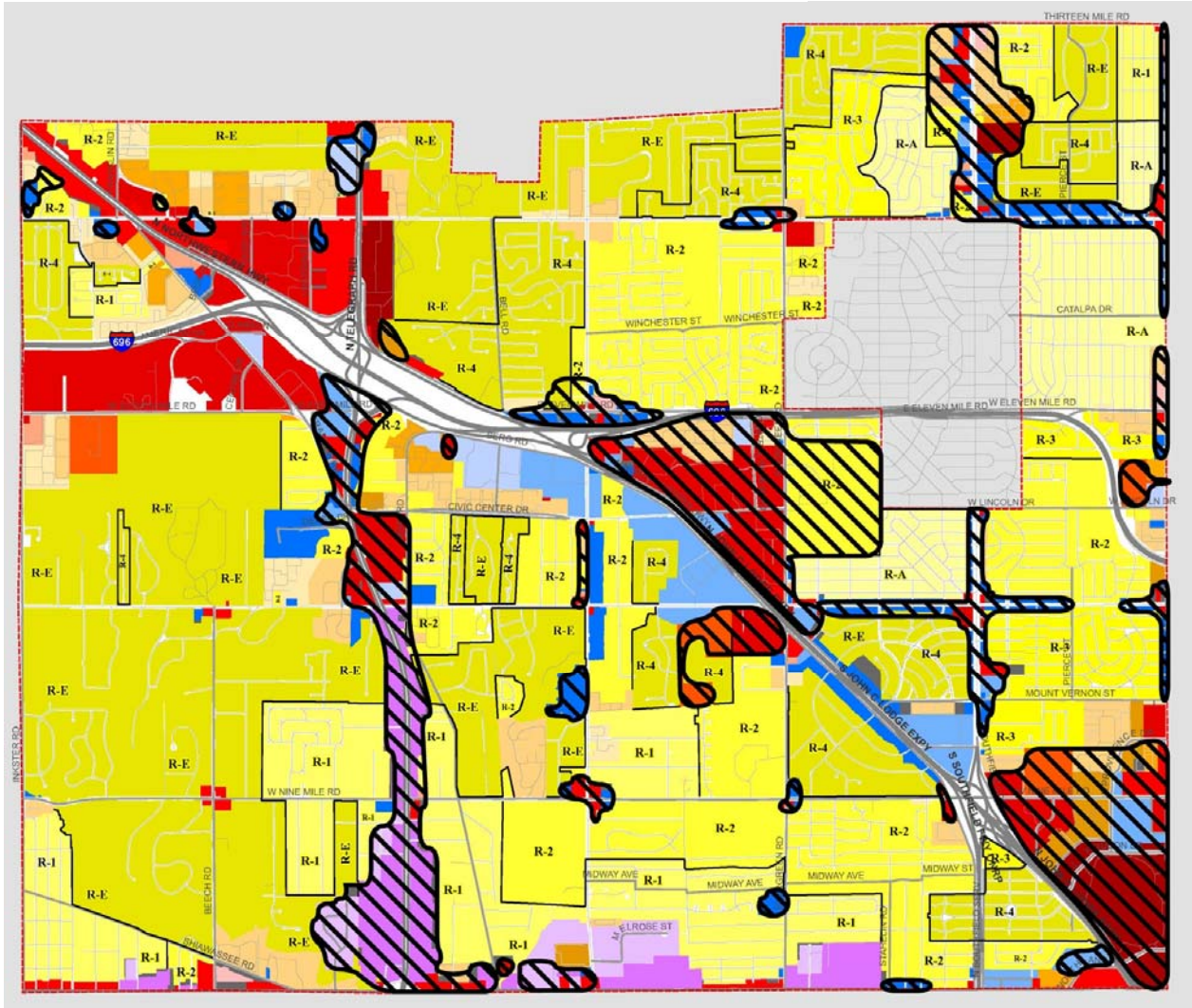
1. **Overall Organization.** The City should consider a comprehensive revision to the ordinance. There have been major advancements in the organization and structure of Zoning Ordinances that make these documents more user-friendly to the public and easier for the City to administer.



2. **Zoning Map Changes.** Areas on the Future Land Use Map that call for different land uses than are allowed under current zoning should be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Where there are differences, the City should review the zoning designations as compared to the Future Land Use Map to see what rezonings are appropriate for the City to initiate upon adoption of the Plan and which are more appropriate at a later time or at the property owner’s request. Rezoning requests, either City initiated or from an applicant, shall use both the maps and text in the Future Land Use Plan as a guide.

The graphic on the following page identifies areas where the current zoning is different from the Future Land Use Plan. Most of these areas are located within the sub areas. It is recommended that the City consider developing

Figure 14-1: Differences between Current Zoning and Future Land Use



specific zoning districts or overlays for each of the sub areas to outline the unique range of uses and the special design character of each.

A form based code, a zoning approach which focuses less on permitted uses, but more on building size, shape, and location within a site, should be considered for the City Centre sub area. A form based code would have detailed design standards to direct building form and relationship to the street in a manner that will achieve the desired environment.

3. **Single-Family Residential Districts.** Southfield has a number of single-family residential districts with minimal differences. For example, R-1 through R-4 Districts permit the same uses and have the same required lot area and width with only slight setback differences. Some of these districts could be combined to simplify the ordinance.

The Southfield Zoning Ordinance does not address home occupations. As discussed in the Future Land Use Chapter, regulations on home occupations should be added that regulate the types of businesses that can be conducted within residential districts. Today’s business climate lends itself to people working out of their homes, and most communities accommodate it, with some parameters to ensure the residential nature of the neighborhood is protected. To accomplish this, regulations should be developed that ensure the residential character of the neighborhood remains by limiting things such as traffic generated, signage, lighting, parking, number of employees, etc.

4. **Multiple-Family Residential Districts.** The multiple family districts regulate density based upon number of rooms, which can be counterproductive toward the goal of more

owner-occupied condominiums as opposed to rental apartments. Instead, the City should consider establishing a base number of units per acre, regardless of number of rooms per unit.

In addition, the appearance of multiple family developments could be enhanced through the addition of building regulations that set maximum length of buildings and require architectural features to break up long expanses of blank walls.

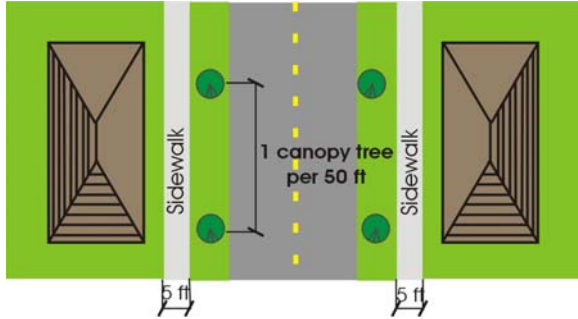
5. **Open Space.** Regulations should be added that require residential development over a certain size to set aside a certain amount of recreational area or open space as part of any new subdivision, condominium, or redevelopment. This can be done based on per unit or acreage basis and can require active playgrounds and athletic fields, or simply preserve natural areas for passive recreational use.
6. **Business and Office Districts.** The business districts should be revised to encourage the desired mixed use categories explained in the Future Land Use Plan. Regulations should:
 - Encourage compact, pedestrian-oriented environment. Currently districts require large front yard setbacks that encourage front yard parking lots.
 - Permit mixed-use buildings along select corridors such as Telegraph, Southfield, Evergreen, and Greenfield Roads.
 - Encourage development to be transit and pedestrian oriented especially along transit corridors.
 - Provide incentives to encourage developers to use parking structures to reduce the amount of land devoted toward parking.
7. **Industrial Districts.** Greater buffering from residential districts is needed including increased landscaping and wall regulations. The list of industrial uses should also be updated to include and possibly encourage eco-industries. Truck circulation requirements should also be added to ensure new industrial uses can accommodate the typical larger trucks that are now being used.
8. **Planned Unit Development.** A Planned Unit Development (PUD) section could be added to help encourage flexibility in design and uses and provide incentives to developers. A PUD is a development option that allows the applicant to deviate from zoning ordinance requirements in

exchange for higher quality development. PUD developments can accomplish the following:

- Provide flexible design to respond to the unique characteristics of a site.
- Coordinate development on larger sites.
- Preserve significant natural features in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner.
- Provide alternatives for developing plans on land that may exhibit difficult physical constraints, and where an improved design can provide the developer and the community with benefits.
- Ensure public infrastructure and road improvements are made concurrent with the development.
- Provide the opportunity to mix compatible land uses.

PUD options should be created for residential neighborhoods, mixed use projects, and for business and industrial parks that could be overlay districts over current zoning. This could be a key implementation tool for getting the desired types of development in the subareas described in the Comprehensive Master Plan. A redevelopment PUD could also be created that would give incentives for redevelopment of nonconforming sites or uses to help promote infill development.

9. **Natural Features Setback.** A natural feature setback from all regulated wetlands, natural ponds, lakes and streams and should be required for all districts that will limit negative impacts and encroachment into these sensitive areas. A 50 foot setback is recommended where buildings would be prohibited; however certain structures, such as decks and piers could extend into the setback.
10. **Landscaping.** Southfield has many areas where non-residential uses abut residential neighborhoods. The quality and type of buffering varies from non-existent to very effective screening in different areas. Rather than a rigid standard, a sliding scale could be used that varies the width and type of screening (fence, wall, landscaping, combination, etc.) with greater buffers for more intense uses.



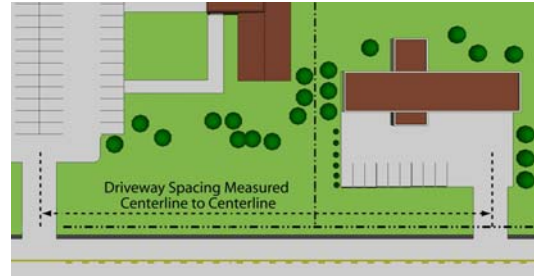
A variety of standards should be established that touch on a wide variety of topics including:

- Screening for waste receptacles that is sturdy and matches the building.
- Mechanical equipment and screening.
- Standards for detention ponds should be added that encourages a natural appearance.
- Use of native materials where appropriate.
- Requirements should be reviewed from a public safety perspective to ensure that screening does not hinder police surveillance.

11. **Off-Street Parking Requirements.** This section should be updated based on current information of parking demand and with the intention of promoting shared parking opportunities and transit oriented development. Specific areas that need to be added or revised include:

- Many uses require parking in excess of typical standards such as retail stores, restaurants, and professional offices, to name a few. Excessive parking can lead to increased storm water runoff and reduces the walkability of a community. Maximum parking requirements should be added to limit excessively large parking lots. Allowing smaller parking spaces may also help reduce the amount of pavement on a site.
- Parking space deferral (land banking provisions) should be included.
- The Planning Commission should be able to approve reduced parking where it is shared between uses or where a use is served by walk-in trade or transit.
- Provisions should be made to allow alternative paving materials such as porous pavement or other alternative paving material, particularly for seasonal or low usage parking.

12. **Driveway Access Management.** Access management standards should be provided to regulate driveway placement. Driveway spacing standards should be included based upon roadway function or posted speeds. Provisions for shared driveways, frontage roads, service roads and parking lot connections will be provided. Charts and graphics will be included for greater ease of use.



13. **Transportation.** Many items that shape the street system and streetscape are included in other topics in this list; however, the following topics shall also be considered:

- Require Traffic Impact Statements (TIS) for all development generating more than 500 directional trips.
- Increase density and height of buildings that are located along transit corridors.
- Revise regulations so views from I-696 and M-10 are treated as a front door to the community and not a rear yard.

14. **Lighting.** Exterior lighting provisions should be added to include additional lighting information for site plan review including: a photometric grid to verify light intensity is not excessive, pole and fixture details. Both minimum and maximum light levels should be regulated to ensure there is uniformity in lighting and adequate light for public safety. Light levels at residential property lines should be limited.

15. **Building Materials.** Exterior building wall requirements should be added to help improve the quality of new development. This section should address the full range of building materials and should have standards for front, side and rear facades. Incentives, such as increased density, for buildings that are sustainable or are Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified should be included. LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings.

16. **Non-motorized Pathways.** Many sections of the ordinance state that sidewalks shall be provided along all public streets but do not provide any specifics on width or construction standards. A more comprehensive multi-modal pathway section should be added to the ordinance that addresses sidewalks and bike paths and pathway types based on a more functional classification. A system for installing pathways incrementally as sites develop also needs to be addressed, including where there are right-of-way issues. Sites shall be designed to have convenient and safe access to and from parking areas, buildings and the public pathway system.
17. **Nonconforming.** The nonconforming regulations should include separate regulations for nonconforming uses, lots, sites and buildings. In addition there should be standards to encourage upgrades to nonconforming sites that lack landscaping, parking, lighting etc. and provides for upgrades commensurate with the amount of building expansion. The nonconforming regulations should also be more lenient on nonconformities that are created by right-of-way expansion. This would assist the City in acquiring right-of-way without creating a hardship for the property owner.
18. **Sign Ordinance.** Although this is a separate ordinance and is not located within the Zoning Ordinance, it has significant implications on the appearance of Southfield. This ordinance should be updated with modern standards including reduced height of signage, prohibiting of pole or ground support signs, and developing personalized sign regulations for specific corridors or sub areas to help create unique districts and nodes.

Other Ordinances

In addition to the zoning and sign ordinance discussed above, other city documents, such as the City’s engineering specifications and general code of ordinances, should be revised based on the recommendations of this Plan.

Property Maintenance Code

The City has adopted a Property Maintenance Code via adoption of the State Building Code. This Code provides the City with enforcement powers to ensure that properties are maintained to the standards of the community.

Development Review and Approval Process

Most land development regulations are applied when new construction is proposed. The City of Southfield has a comprehensive development review process from development conceptualization to building occupancy. Once proper zoning is in place, a site plan must be approved followed by approval of building and site engineering construction plans and then permits for construction. Buildings and sites are inspected and then occupancy permits are issued. Regulations are enforced through a combination of monitoring by City staff and in response to complaints.

Form-Based Code

Areas planned for more urban development may be more appropriate to regulate through form-based codes rather than traditional zoning ordinances. Form-based codes focus more on the building form than the land use and strives to achieve a desired atmosphere first, then considers use as a secondary concern. They include very specific building regulations that ensure proper building placement relative to the public realm.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

A CIP is a multi-year program that lists recommended improvements, timing, estimated costs and funding for infrastructure (streets, bikeways, sidewalks, sanitary sewers, waterlines, storm sewers and drainage) and community facilities (public buildings, fire, police and parks). Capital projects should be identified and constructed in a manner that helps support and promote desired development and to meet the needs of residents and businesses already in the City. The number of projects and their timing is influenced by several factors, in particular, the cost, need for environmental clearance, or approval by other agencies and funds available. For example, the amount of funding available from outside sources varies as new programs become available. Funding is also influenced by the timing of development (i.e. tax revenue), tax abatements and other changes to the anticipated tax base.

Incorporating Plan Review into Rezoning Request Review

Although a review of the plan is recommended every few years to provide a comprehensive examination of the plan, many issues with a Comprehensive Master

Plan will become obvious during consideration of a rezoning. It is important to incorporate review and amendment of the Comprehensive Master Plan as part of the Planning Commission’s consideration of such requests. This is covered in more detail in the subsection on using the master plan for zoning reviews.

Using the Comprehensive Master Plan for Zoning Amendment Review

In considering a rezoning request or a proposed text amendment, the primary question is: “Does this zoning amendment conform to our Comprehensive Master Plan?” Subsidiary questions follow that:

- Was there an error in the plan that affects the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?
- Have there been relevant changes in conditions since the plan was approved that affect the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?
- Have there been changes in the community’s attitude that impacts the goals and policies of the Plan and affect the appropriateness of the proposed amendment?

Answering these questions should answer the question whether or not a zoning amendment is appropriate and that should frame the reason within the context of the Plan.

This method of analyzing a request rests on the assumption that a request that complies with a valid plan should be approved and that one that does not comply with a valid Plan should not be approved. (The principal exception to this rule would be text amendments intended to improve administration of the ordinance). Further, it assumes that the three circumstances that would invalidate a Plan are an oversight in the Plan, a change in condition that invalidates the assumptions that the Plan was built on or a change in the goals and priorities that the community set for itself.

Consistency with Comprehensive Master Plan.

The issue of consistency with the Comprehensive Master Plan can vary. For the purposes of this plan, consistency with the Comprehensive Master Plan in the case of a rezoning means being consistent with most of the relevant goals and polices as well as consistent with the Future Land Use Map. In the case of a proposed text amendment, consistency means being consistent with most of the relevant goals and polices.

Oversight. An oversight in a Plan can be an assumption made based on incorrect data, an area on a Future Land Use map that is incorrectly labeled, or other factors that if known at the time of the Plan adoption would have been corrected.

Changes in Conditions. A Plan is based on the assumption that certain conditions will exist during the planning period. If those conditions change then goals, policies and land use decisions that made sense when the Plan was adopted will no longer be valid and a zoning amendment that was not appropriate before may be appropriate now.

Change in Policy. In the end, a Plan is based on the Planning Commission’s vision of their municipality’s future. When that vision changes, the plan should change. When a zoning issue results in a change in vision, a decision can be made that is contrary to the current Plan as long as that changed vision is explicitly incorporated into the Plan.

Three points should be made. First of all, the factors for consideration (mistake, change in condition, and change in goals or policy) can work in reverse; making a proposal that otherwise seems appropriate, inappropriate. Secondly, these factors should not be used to create excuses for justifying a decision to violate the Comprehensive Master Plan, or to change it so often that it loses its meaning. Finally, it has been the City’s long-standing policy that if a proposed zoning amendment is found inconsistent with the City’s Plan, the amendment cannot be approved without first amending the plan.