

To: Northfield Township Board of Trustees
From: Northfield Township Planning Commission
Re: Annual Report to the Board
Date: February 6, 2013

Over the last year, the Planning Commission has been working diligently to serve the residents of the township. In addition to our personal experiences as residents of the township, we as a group brought the perspectives of small and large businesses, schools, families, neighborhoods, the downtown, and the rural areas. We have had an attorney, a builder, an office administrator, a small business owner, two executives, and a small organic farmer on the commission.

We began the year re-imagining the downtown area and how we might encourage revitalization. The result was a new zoning district called the **Whitmore Lake District** consisting of three sub-districts that provide more flexibility in the types of uses that are allowed, encourages a business and pedestrian-friendly community, and may gradually open up the waterfront area to views from Main Street. We recently recommended the **rezoning of the library parcel** into that district to allow the Northfield Township Library to expand their offerings.

The **Master Plan**, which is a guide for the future evolution of the township, was completed in June after two years of work that involved many meetings, a community survey, presentations, and resident input. It is a product of which we can all be proud. It preserves over three-quarters of the land area as low density rural/agriculture, yet strategically allows for future development to occur where it makes the most sense near the US-23 corridor. By guiding where this future development may occur and upholding that with a **sewer service expansion policy** that prevents leapfrogging of parcels to control urban sprawl, we hope to manage growth so that we can provide a compact mix of essential services, businesses, and housing to both serve the needs of Northfield Township residents and create a more prosperous balance to the tax base.

In addition, we have completed a **bed and breakfast ordinance, upgraded the planned unit development** section of the zoning ordinance to make it easier to accomplish, and added a section to encourage **agricultural tourism** and businesses. We continue to work on our **sign ordinance** to improve the look and feel of the Township, especially at its gateways.

We have also begun to methodically **review the zoning ordinance** for consistency and to ensure it is fair and customer-friendly and that it represents the legitimate needs of zoning in our community.

Another role of the planning commission is to prepare a **capital improvement plan** to assist the Board of Trustees with budgeting for large expenditures over the next five years, such as fire or police equipment or building repairs. This project has been on-going for several months and we just held a public hearing February 6th before we complete it and send the Board a final recommendation.

We have begun to set goals for our 2013 meetings and have many projects we will be tackling. If you see an area where the planning commission might act, please feel welcome to bring it to our attention.