

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

8350 Main Street, Whitmore Lake, MI 48189

To: Northfield Township Board of Trustees

Re: Annual Report to the Board

Date: February 12, 2014

2013 Quick Facts: The Planning Commission held fifteen meetings. We heard from four applicants and revised seven sections of the zoning ordinance. The Capital Improvement Plan was completed and we began to discuss the future of the US 23 – North Territorial Interchange.

Early in the year, the Planning Commission **completed the Capital Improvement Plan** with the obvious assistance of the department heads. We are very thankful for the time and consideration they put into this important document. The Capital Improvement Plan, required by Michigan law, is a five-year projection of the capital needs of the Township and is helpful for the budgeting considerations of the Township Board. It will be revised in the current year to reflect any changes in capital needs.

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. To that end, we **revised the agricultural and low density residential zoning districts** to clarify some of the permitted and conditional uses and to ensure that they are friendly to farm-type activities as our residents expected when the Master Plan was adopted. This methodical review continues in 2014.

The **sign ordinance received major revisions** adding the possibility of electronic message signs and digital billboards, both with an appropriate level of township control. It is hoped that over time this ordinance will encourage current owners of non-conforming signs to convert to a more attractive display to improve the overall visual experience for both residents of and visitors to the Township.

We have **revised the Repairs and Maintenance section** to ensure that residents who live in non-conforming homes would be able to rebuild them if disaster strikes. Another revision allows the **placement of accessory structures** anywhere except in the required setback areas in agricultural and low density residential zoning.

At the initiative of Township Manager Howard Fink, we developed a **food cart ordinance**. This small but forward-thinking addition to the zoning ordinance signals the desire of the Township to invite these innovative entrepreneurs into our midst to improve the downtown experience, thereby creating a draw that would potentially benefit the brick and mortar establishments.

The Planning Commission continues to work on setting the stage to take advantage of an improved economic climate and the return of development activity. In October, we began discussing **options for the US 23 – North Territorial Interchange**, a very important gateway to the Township. We hope to accomplish a “jobs node” with a compact mix of essential services, businesses, and housing to both serve the needs of Northfield Township residents and create a more prosperous tax base. As a result, we have been working on a **revision of the Master Plan**, the extensive planning document that was adopted in June 2012 and guides the Township’s future growth.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude my fellow planning commissioners who give many hours in thoughtful consideration of the projects of the applicants and the needs of the Township. Thank you for your role in appointing them. Their willingness to offer their skills to this position enriches the value of what we do. As a group, we now have the skills of an investment advisor, a builder, an office administrator, a small business owner, a general contractor, a school board member, and a small organic farmer. We represent the needs of small and large businesses, schools, families, neighborhoods, the downtown, and the rural areas.

If you see an area where the planning commission might act, please feel welcome to bring it to our attention. Thank you.

The 2014 Planning Commission

Marlene Chockley, Chair

Janet Chick, Vice-chair and Board of Trustees Representative

Ken Dignan III, Secretary and Zoning Board of Appeals Representative

Ken Cousino, Member

Andrea Darden, Member

Sam Iaquinto, Member

Larry Roman, Member