

Community Involvement

INTRODUCTION

Community vision is what gives a Master Plan life and keeps it from being just an ordinary document. A Master Plan that has the vision of its residents becomes a working document guiding community leaders and residents forward developing a unique and vibrant community. Spring Lake Township understands the importance of this and has provided residents an opportunity to take part in the development of its Master Plan.

Spring Lake Township started the public participation process by inviting residents to participate in a visioning workshop, facilitated by the consulting firm of Beckett & Raeder Inc., which directed residents through a number of exercises to collect ideas, dreams, and goals for the community. Participant input, ideas, and goals have been compiled and analyzed to develop a list of themes and objectives that will help the Master Plan guide future development of the Township.

VISIONING WORKSHOP

Spring Lake Township held two visioning workshops for the community and public officials on the evenings of June 13th and 14th of 2006. Participants were asked to take part in a series of exercises that would allow for the development of ideas and goals for Spring Lake Township. Visioning sessions were held at the Barber Community Center in the Village of Spring Lake. Visioning sessions began by seating participants randomly at tables in groups of 6 to 8 persons. An introduction and welcome was given by the Township Supervisor, followed by an explanation of the importance of community involvement in the Mater Planning process.

The workshop began by having participants brainstorm on those things in the Township they were most proud of and those to which they were most sorry about. These issues were then compiled and voted upon by table members. The next exercise was to identify trends, developments, and events that have occurred in the Township over the past five to ten years. This exercise allowed the visioning participants to discuss a wide variety of key planning subjects that relate directly to the master planning process. The last brainstorming session of the evening was the discussion of a preferred future for Spring Lake Township. This session allowed participants to share their ideas for the community and identify a variety of goals and objectives for the Township. These goals and expectations for the Township were recorded and voted upon by the discussion groups. Ideas with the greatest consensus from each table were compiled by table leaders to create a master list that would be voted on by everyone participating in the workshop. Prior to the final participant prioritization exercise each table was allowed to present their ideas to the rest of the groups. Before the session was adjourned participants voted on the compiled list of goals.

WHAT ARE WE PROUD AND SORRY ABOUT

Proud

Participants in the visioning session were asked to reflect on and record which things they were the most proud of about Spring Lake Township. Following this exercise participants were asked to vote on those issues mentioned by themselves and others within their group. Table 1.1 below lists the issues that were compiled by all of the tables in both visioning sessions and ranked by frequency of votes. Residents of Spring Lake Township clearly view their natural features, specifically the dunes and forests in and surrounding the Township, as their greatest attribute. Following this observation residents believe that their community bike path network is a truly valuable asset. Residents of Spring Lake Township value natural features of their coastal community and the value of living in a community that offers access to the outdoors. Also receiving a large proportion of votes was the Spring Lake school system. Participants could not say enough about the quality and State ranking of their public school system. Many of the programs of the local school system were discussed at length and were a source of pride for many residents.

- **Natural Features (Dunes and Forests)**
- **Community Bike Path Network**
- **Spring Lake School System**
- **Spring Lake and the Grand River**
- **Environmental Protection Policies of the Township**

SORRY

Participants followed the same process to discuss and compile a list of issues about which things in the Township they were most sorry. Again, following this exercise participants at each table voted. All of the issues voted on during both sessions are referenced in Table 1.1.

Many residents expressed concern for traffic within the Township. Growth, commuter traffic, and tourists add to traffic delays at peak hours at various locations within the Township. In addition, development along the M- 104 corridor with new residential and commercial development is causing concern with community residents. Many residents discussed the idea of cooperation, in the future, with surrounding municipalities to address the development of the M –104 corridor. Another concern expressed is new development blocking the view of Spring Lake and the Grand River disrupting the viewsheds of the waterways. Increased traffic caused by new development within the Township, and in the surrounding area, combined with the impact on the local natural resource base is a principle concern for the residents of Spring Lake Township. The top five most proud issues voted on over the two sessions are as follows:

- **Traffic on M- 104**
- **Traffic back up near the US 31 Bridge**
- **Development Blocking Views of Lakes and River**
- **Sporadic Development / Sprawl Type Commercial**
- **Lack of Cooperation with other Governments**

Community Visioning Summary

Table 1.1: What we are proud and sorry about in Spring Lake Township

Proud	# of Votes	Sorry	# of Votes
Natural Features (Dunes and Forests)	23	Traffic on M-104	30
Community Bike Path	20	Traffic near the Bridge	13
Spring Lake School System	19	Development Blocking Views of Lakes and River	11
Spring Lake and the Grand River	7	Sporadic Development / Sprawl Type Commercial	8
Environmental Protection Policies of the Township	7	Lack of Cooperation with other Governments	8
Preservation of Open Space	5	No Riparian Boundaries Preservation	6
Spring Lake Township is a Family Community	5	Need more Bike Paths and Sidewalks	5
Great Place to Raise Kids (Small Town Environment)	5	Need more Planning Initiatives in the Township	5
Rural Character of the Township	5	Lack of Sewer Services to Various Areas	4
Great Neighborhoods and Housing	4	Medical Transportation	4
Water and Sewer Department.	3	Too much Local Government	3
Surrounding Beaches (Nautical Environment)	3	Water Quality in Lakes and River	3
Township Parks and Recreation	3	Uniform Population	2
M-104 Corridor is an Opportunity for Growth	3	Not enough Public Transportation Options	2
Wetlands and Habitats	2	Not enough Middle Income Housing and Jobs	2
Library	2	No Central Commercial District	1
Village of Spring Lake and Main St.	2	Not enough Parks and Open Space	1
Good Balance of Business and Residential	2	Not enough Code Enforcement	1
Recent Growth of the Township	2	Geographically Isolated by the Grand River	1
No Big Box Development in the Township	1	Loss of Wetlands	1
Pride of Ownership within the Township	1	Abandon Buildings (Commercial and Industrial)	1
Infrastructure		Zoning Ordinance not Enforced	1
Regional Amenities (Shopping, Arts, Health Care)		Coordination with Regional Governments	1
Water Access		Litter in the Township	1
Safe place to live		"Bedroom Community"	
Low Taxes		Truck Traffic on Local Roads	
Transition Between land Uses			
Good Job Opportunities			
Name Recognition of the Township			
Township Cemeteries			
Community Churches			
Fire Department and Public Safety			
Good Local Government			

Data Source: Beckett and Raeder Inc., 2006

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS IN SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP?

In this exercise participants were asked to identify trends in the Township. Events and issues residents listed provide a good understanding of the concerns and happenings in and around Spring Lake Township. Issues that were listed by workshop participants have been organized into various themes to organize resident observations. These categories are:

- **Natural Resources**
- **Parks, Open Space, and Recreation**
- **Housing and Neighborhoods**
- **Transportation**
- **Economic Development**
- **Public Services, Facilities, and Amenities**
- **Community Wide Issues**

Natural Resources

Protection of Spring Lake Township's natural resources and features is a top priority with residents. Many visioning participants believe that the Township is doing a good job at developing strong preservation policies for wetlands, woodlands, and the dunes. However, residents wish that the Township would develop plans to protect riparian rights and develop a green buffer between development and local waterways. Continued clean up of Spring Lake was another reoccurring issue. Many residents believe water management has been improving and the Lake has become cleaner in recent years. It is reassuring to note that residents of Spring Lake notice the positive impact that policy and planning is having on various environmental issues facing the community. It is evident that Spring Lake Township has been proactive in its environmental legislation and residents are highly supportive of these initiatives. Continued education of the issues and public outreach will ensure that this type of support of the community will continue. Remaining trends in the natural resources category can be found in table 1.2.

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

The focus of this category tended to be placed on Township parks and the need for more parks that are connected throughout the Township. Participants felt the current Township parks are well maintained but not used enough by the public. Some of the issues raised about the Township parks are that they do not have enough sports facilities and that traveling to the parks by riding a bicycle or walking is difficult. Older residents of the Township feel that future park development should keep seniors in mind when looking at location and programming of the facilities. Many residents feel Spring Lake Township needs to continue building upon its existing park system by updating current facilities and linking the current parks to make them more accessible to the public.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Because many residents of Spring Lake Township are involved in outdoor recreation and activities it is not surprising that the number one issue with regard to neighborhoods was walkability. Many residents discussed a need for more walkable neighborhoods near a mix of land uses. Discussion at many tables focused on allowing more neighborhood commercial uses back into residential areas of the Township. Additionally, residents would like to see the development of more affordable housing to retain the overall character of the Township and allow young families the opportunity to own a home. Many residents believe that Spring Lake Township has quality housing and safe neighborhoods.

Transportation

Public transportation in the Township was a largely debated topic throughout community visioning in Spring Lake Township. Many residents are looking for other modes of transportation other than the automobile. Harbor Transit service is seasonal to the area and does not always have routes favorable to Township residents. Residents would like to see year-round bus service that provides transportation to Township destinations as well as those in the Village of Spring Lake and City of Grand Haven. Adding to the concern for public transportation in the Township is the increase in traffic on M-104 and congestion that occurs at peak hours near the M-31 Bridge. Participants were split on the issue of developing a local bridge to relieve traffic. Many residents believe that new development in and around the Township has increased the number of motorists making daily trips and at that this traffic has become substantial in recent years.

Economic Development

Availability of good paying jobs and a strong tax base is important to any community. Spring Lake Township residents believe that redeveloping and reusing existing commercial and industrial areas within the Township is a sound idea. Participants felt that many of the underutilized properties located on 148th Avenue should be reused. In addition, many residents felt redeveloped properties would help attract new business and bring more jobs to Spring Lake Township. Some participants favor the development of a commercial core within the Township possibly located on 148th Avenue while others identified the Village of Spring Lake as the commercial center of the Township.

Public Services, Facilities and Amenities

Participants discussed public services, facilities, and the amenities offered in the Township. Participants were proud of their bike paths and hoped the Township would continue to maintain the current paths while providing new linkages to parks and other community paths. The Spring Lake District Library was mentioned as another source of pride and residents hoped that the library would extend its hours. Additional trends for public services, facilities, and amenities are presented in Table 1.2.

Community Wide Issues

A number of trends were presented that did not necessarily fit into previously discussed categories. These trends dealt with the Township Zoning Ordinance and enforcement and compatibility with surrounding municipalities. Cooperation with Ferrysburg and Crockery Township on planning issues was also mentioned by residents. The remaining community wide trends are listed in Table 1.2.

Community Visioning Summary

Table 1.2: Events, Developments and Trends In Spring Lake Township

Natural Resources	Reoccurrence
Strong preservation policys of wetlands, woodlands and other natural features	5
Not enough protection of Riparian Areas of the Lake and River	3
Continued Lake clean-up and continued water management	2
Not enough woodlands protection / preserve landmark trees	1
Continued preservation of wetlands areas	
Concern for ground water quality for drinking	
Watershed Protection	
Preserve shoreline integrity	
More Public education for water protection and quality	
Limit boat congestion on Spring Lake and the Grand River	
Residents support environmental initiatives of the Township and the Village	
Decrease in Wetlands	
Dunes protection needs to be maintained, development of North Ottawa Dunes	
To much regulation of wetlands inhibits development	
Parks, Open Space and Recreation	Reoccurrence
Need more Township parks	2
Upgrade Water Tank Park	
Parks in the Township do not have enough sports fields (Soccer, Baseball, Etc.)	
Township Parks are available but under utilized	
Parks should have linkage to one another	
Parks need to be developed with senior citizen distribution in mind	
Maintenance of Township Parks is first-rate	
Bathrooms and shelters at local parks need rehabilitation	
Housing and Neighborhoods	Reoccurrence
Promote walkable neighborhoods with mixed uses	4
Foster the development of affordable housing	3
Preservation of older homes in Spring Lake Township	3
Preserve open space for common use near existing neighborhoods and to help maintain rural character	
Neighborhoods need "Corner Stores"	
Spring Lake Township has overall good housing quality	
Cottages are being removed and replaced with housing that is out of character	
Spring Lake Township neighborhoods are safe	
Cluster Housing Developments being built in the Township	

Transportation	Reoccurrence
More Public Transportation options	8
Need a local alternative bridge	3
M-104 is congested	3
Multiple school buses on the same roads in the morning	
Congestion on major throughfares (W. Spring Lake Road, 148th Avenue, Savidge St.)	
Lots of summer traffic	
Speed limits on some roads are too high	
Leonard Road should be considered to become a scenic route	

Economic Development	Reoccurrence
Redevelopment or reuse of existing industrial / commercial properties	6
Business recruitment to add new jobs within the Township	2
Need to develop a commercial core north of M-104 on 148th	2
The Township has a need for more retail and restaurants	2
Village is the centralized business district for the Township	
Township is missing out on tourism dollars	
Township needs to attract smaller sized commercial businesses rather than large	
The Township is in demand for more Hi-Tech jobs (Research and Development)	
Strong Chamber of Commerce	

Public Services, Facilities and Amenities	Reoccurrence
Maintain current bikepaths and develop new linkages	2
Township office is located in the Village	
Library hours are limited	
Lack of athletic facilities that can be utilized by adults and seniors during day time hours	
Good water and sewer, good Township services	
Library provides the community with many educational opportunities and great programs	
School Facilities offer some exercise facilities	
Police and Fire Service is sufficient for the Township	
Development of a boat launch on the Grand River	
Bathrooms and shelters at Township parks are in need of maintenance	
Township office and fire station need to be updated	

Community Wide Issues	Reoccurrence
Zoning Ordinance needs strict enforcement	
Uses in the Township need clear separation	
Activity in Hanky Panky Bayou is questionable and should be policed	
Township and Village Zoning needs to be compatible	
Co-operative Planning between Ferrysburg and Crockery Township	
Good land is gone and poor land is being developed	

PREFERRED FUTURE OF SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP

The final exercise of the visioning workshop involved looking into the future and describing Spring Lake Township as it appears in 2016 - 2021. The participants were again asked to brainstorm and collect any ideas or dreams they may have for the Township as it develops in the future. At the end of this exercise participants were able to vote for three ideas or images they hoped would occur in the Township. After voting had taken place these lists of preferred future trends from each table were then compiled, and voted on by all participants as they left the visioning session. Issues in the preferred future exercise were compiled into the same categories as the trends exercise and can be found in Table 1.3. The following is a description of those issues that received significant votes in each category.

Natural Resources

The most discussed issue in this category was the health of Spring Lake and the Grand River. Many residents hope that water quality and clarity will continue to improve over the years as more policy and planning initiatives limit the environmental impact of development. Along with this, many residents hope for the continued protection of all natural features in the Township and that outdoor recreation can be planned in conjunction with the preservation. Watershed and ground water protection was another issue receiving a number of votes by participants. As previously discussed, the residents of Spring Lake Township focused heavily on issues that were related to the natural resources of the region and the protection and availability of those resources for years to come.

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Much like the issues discussed in the trends section of this chapter the most voted upon item in this section was a new Township park. This Township park would be centrally located within the Township and accommodate events like a "Taste of Spring Lake" festival. Many residents hope that in the future the Township will utilize its waterfront similar to that in the City of Grand Haven. This waterfront would include mixed uses and provide entertainment in the form of restaurants and shopping. Also discussed was the idea of more access to the waterways of the Township and the development of fishing sites and a fishing pier that could be utilized by Township residents and visitors alike. Preservation of rural character was mentioned along with the development of cluster housing in the Township. Many participants favor the preservation of open space for the use of recreation and to preserve and enhance the rural character of the Township. One resident offered the idea of developing a music and arts based camp for students similar to Interlochen School of Arts in Michigan.

Transportation

Multi-modal transportation is not out of the question for Spring Lake Township residents. Participants discussed a variety of options for the future with regard to transportation. Ideas ranged from an interurban system that would move passengers between destinations like Grand Haven and Grand Rapids, to bike paths and trail systems. Residents of Spring Lake Township envision a pedestrian environment that allows for safe walking and biking throughout the Township. Residents also identified they would like to see the bike path connected to the riverfront and linking the community to Township Parks. Participants mentioned the reduction of traffic congestion on major Township thoroughfares through the development of new infrastructure and road reconfiguration.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Participants in the community visioning workshop had many things to say when it came to the future of their neighborhoods. Many of the discussions revolved around the development of new housing that is compatible with existing housing in the Township. Many felt new housing development should be sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and preserve open space for recreation and the rural character of the Township. Residents also discussed the return of neighborhood business back into existing and new neighborhoods. Uses such as ice cream parlors, barbers, butchers, and neighborhood grocers were all discussed as possible commercial opportunities for Township neighborhoods. Township residents discussed historic preservation and the maintenance of existing homes as well as the creation of bed and breakfast type establishments in older traditional neighborhoods.

Economic Development

An additional topic discussed in the preferred future exercise was economic development. Numerous residents envisioned new business and industry developing within the Township. Reuse of existing industrial and commercial areas within the Township was a goal of many participants. Furthermore, residents envision aesthetically pleasing and well-landscaped commercial and industrial developments representing architecture consistent with Township character. Retail development in the Township would remain small according to participants, while big box retail would be kept out of the Township. Retail and shopping would also be introduced to the waterfront in a walkable environment that would include entertainment options for residents and visitors to Spring Lake Township. Some residents feel that Spring Lake Township should develop a community theme that would help to attract more tourist dollars to the area.

Public Service, Facilities and Amenities

Spring Lake Public Schools were mentioned the most in this category. Residents believe their school district will be the best in the nation. Police and fire was expected to maintain a high level of service and grow with the Township. Participants also mention they would like to see an expanded waster management system and improved recycling service. Residents also envisioned a senior citizens center and a local museum as facilities they would like to see developed.

Community Wide

Township residents feel that regional cooperation and planning should occur in conjunction with Ottawa County and surrounding municipalities. Residents would like to see the Township Zoning Code and Master Plan enforced, and planning to be implemented as guided by the plan. Many residents see the Village of Spring Lake and Spring Lake Township merging to become the City of Spring Lake.

Table 1.3: Preferred Future for Spring Lake Township

Natural Resources	# of Votes
Clear water and a healthy Lake and River	10
Preservation of major natural features	4
North Ottawa Dunes are preserved with hiking trails and public facilities	4
Creative use of the environment	3
No more ground water pollution	3
Watershed protection	1
Preservation of Landmark Trees	
Clean well maintained beaches	
Riparian Buffer Zone along River and Lake	
Natural area provided at the end of 144th Avenue	
Continuation of Lake Board and scientific monitoring	
Completion of Greenway on River connected to bikepath and a woodland corridor	
Night Sky preservation through lighting ordinances	
Township provides a news letter to inform residents of environmental issues	
Bayous are area used by the public and maintained	
Parks, Open Space and Recreation	# of Votes
Township park that provides a venue for Township events like " Taste of Spring Lake"	2
Township operates a Winter Activity Area	
Township utilizes its waterfront (Spring Lake and Grand River)	
Beach access to Lake Michigan	
Open space preservation through cluster housing developments	
Retain open space along M-104 to preserve rural character	
Township purchases open space in order to control development	
New East Side Park	
Fishing sites and piers are provided on the lake and river for residents and tourists alike.	
Township events promote the arts and music, Community develops Interlochen type camp program	
Senior Center is available to provide activities such as a lunch program and fitness programs	
Transportation	# of Votes
Safe and Walkable environment for walkers and bikers	3
Traffic is diminished by the use of new infrastructure or roadway reconfiguration	2
Public Transportation is available all year long	
M-104 becomes a gateway to the Township	
Bikepath connects to the river and through Township Parks	
New local bridge that connects to Grand Haven	
No new local bridge is built to reduce traffic on M-104	
Township Implements the M-104 corridor study plan	
Roads in the Township are well maintained	
Rail service between Grand Haven (Spring Lake) and Grand Rapids	
Boat traffic is well regulated on the Lake and River, wake is reduced on lake	

Housing and Neighborhoods	# of Votes
New housing is compatible with existing architecture and the Townships character	3
Condos and new housing in the Township are sensitive to the natural environment	2
Mixed use development helps to draw young families and seniors to the Township	2
Historic revitalization and renovation of existing housing creates strong neighborhoods	2
Cluster housing developments preserve rural character and open space	2
Senior citizens housing development provides worry free living for Township seniors	2
Cul-de-sacs are eliminated from housing developments and neighborhoods are connected	2
Spring Lake Township has good affordable housing	
A mix of " neighborhood" commercial uses are introduced into neighborhoods	
Bed and Breakfast establishments are introduced into historic neighborhoods	
Rental housing is closely inspected and development is limited	

Economic Development	# of Votes
Landscaping and Architecture of new commercial and industrial uses is aesthetically pleasing	6
Retail should be specialized and should fit into the Township, no big box retail	5
Industrial property is inventoried and reused for new uses	4
M-104 corridor develops as a corridor that welcomes visitors into the Township	3
Township develops a theme to attract more tourism dollars (Resort / Nautical look)	2
Billboards within the Township are limited	
Spring Lake Village continues the revitalization of its commercial district	
Demolition of old buildings that are not able to be reused	
Retail and shopping is developed on the lake in a walkable environment	
Commercial core is developed with Savidge becoming a pedestrian mall	
Entertainment venues and unique restaurants draw residents and tourists	
Township is active in purchasing property along the river	
Corporate headquarters and Hi-Tech research facilities are located within the Township	
Industry is kept out of the Village of Spring Lake	
Strip Malls are limited in the Township	

Public Services, Facilities and Amenities	# of Votes
School system is the best in the nation	2
Police and Fire service maintains its high standards and grows with the Township	
Higher learning and research facilities are established in the Township	
Roads in the Township are all well maintained and efficient	
All public access to waterways is maintained at a high level	
Expanded waste management and better recycling service	
Senior Center and Family Recreation Center	
Extended water and sewer system	
Museum under the auspices of Tri-Cities Historical Society	

Community Wide	# of Votes
Regional cooperation and planning occur in Ottawa County	2
Township and the Village merge to become the City of Spring Lake	
Citizens of the Township are proud of their community and keep the Township clean	
Overall growth of the Township is slow and well planned	
The Township has great communication with adjacent municipalities	
Strict enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan are observed	
Sign ordinance is created to make new signage more appealing	

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP?

It is clear from reviewing the results of the Township visioning workshops that residents see a magnificent future ahead for Spring Lake Township. Strong consensus was built on a number of key issues, this consensus will help direct the Township into developing a Master Plan that will guide growth and produce a outcome that is supported by its residents. The identification of current trends lends support to previous planning efforts and Township policy. Pinpointing trends also helps the Township to build upon and improve those areas of the community that residents often utilize and enjoy. Spring Lake Township is fortunate to have residents that are interested and involved in the Master Planning Process. Residents are encouraged to stay active in all planning aspects of the Township and lend their voice to the local planning process.

Community Visioning Summary

Table 1.4: Overall Goals of Spring Lake Township

Goal	# of Votes
Implement the M -104 Corridor Study and develop the M -104 Corridor with character.	19
Achieve clean water in Spring Lake and Grand River.	16
Green space preservation, Riparian buffers.	13
More public access to Spring Lake and the Grand River with fishing piers , beaches, and boardwalks.	11
Spring Lake Village is developed as the heart of the community.	10
Bike and pedestrian paths that connect all areas of the township and surrounding communities and natural areas.	9
Local bridge bypass to ease traffic congestion on M-104.	8
Develop higher learning training/research facilities.	7
Encourage small business development.	7
Senior citizens center and housing development.	6
Cluster Housing Developments that preserve open space areas of the Township.	6
Continued preservation of natural features and resources through policy and planning.	6
Incorporation of the Village and Township.	4
Continue the tradition of quality schools.	4
Retain the rural character of the Township.	3
Purchase of river property by the Township.	2
Expansion of the Harbor Transit System.	2
Culture of Pride, Township is well kept and clean	1
Regional planning participation to develop water front and surround communities.	1
Inter-urban transit system connecting Holland, Grand Haven, Grand Rapids and beyond.	1
Continue Lake Board.	
Develop moderately priced / affordable housing.	
Improve and expand the municipal water and sewer system.	

Data Source: Beckett & Raeder Inc. 2006