

THEMES AND STRATEGIES

Introduction

Ideas and issues raised during the visioning sessions lead to the development of planning objectives for Spring Lake Township. The six overarching themes that were developed using the information gathered as a result of the community visioning sessions are as follows:

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

THEME

Natural Resources: Preservation, Protection and Regulation of Township Natural Features

Spring Lake Township serves as a gateway to the west Michigan coast. Spring Lake Township residents take pride in the natural features of the community, and the unique ecological value of the North Ottawa Dunes area, riparian and tidal wetlands, the Grand River, Spring Lake and Lake Michigan. These natural and geologic features add to a strong sense of place for Spring Lake Township and contribute significantly to the quality of life of the community. As a result, proximity to the waterfront vista's and access associated with living on or near the water have increased competition for property with those assets. However, these elements, which contribute to that quality of life, are sometimes the same elements that are compromised by those seeking a better lifestyle or opportunity to visit and recreate. Herein lies the dilemma faced by residents and local government, which is the need to preserve and protect these assets while accommodating reasonable development.

Strategies

Near-Term Priority

- NR-1 Continue to improve the health of Spring Lake and the Grand River through public education, public policy and water quality management
- NR-2 Preservation of the North Ottawa Dunes through public policy and the creation of a Dunes Preservation Area.

Mid-Term Priority

- .NR-3 Require current engineering practices to ensure best management practices are used where run-off generated by new development is filtered and cleaned before entering natural drainage ways and watersheds.
- NR-4 Develop a Riparian Development Overlay district, which balances protection of natural features while permitting sensible land development.
- NR-5 Require the use of planned unit development provisions on property with natural features to allow for innovative real estate development.
- NR-6 Improve and expand municipal water and sewerage facilities.
- NR-7 Preserve the Township's scenic roads.

Long Term Priority

- NR-8 Require new buildings along Spring Lake and the Grand River to be situated in a manner, which preserves viewshed corridors.

- NR-9 Discuss with Crockery Township future land use designation along 144th Avenue to provide opportunities for continued agricultural such as blueberry farms, horse farms, and cash crops.

THEME

Parks, Open Space and Recreation: Creating Community and with Nature

The ability to enjoy the outdoors is a top priority for Spring Lake Township residents. Providing quality places for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors makes Spring Lake Township an attractive place for both residents and visitors. Many residents hope that in the future the Township will utilize more of the waterfront for recreation, mixed-use developments, and entertainment in the form of restaurants and shopping. Lastly, continued residential growth fueled by the demand for waterfront living should be balanced with the addition of geographically distributed Township-owned park and recreation facilities.

Objectives To Address Theme

Near-Term Priority

- POS-1 Maintain the high levels of services and maintenance to existing Township Parks.
- POS-2 Pursue development of pocket parks that coincide with connecting pathways and the trail system.

Mid-Term Priority

- POS-3 Provide waterfront access for residents to the Grand River and Spring Lake.
- POS-4 Maximize waterfront development by encouraging cluster open space development.
- POS-5 Build upon the Township pathway system to increase connections between neighborhoods and residential development with Spring Lake and the Grand River.

Long Term Priority

- POS-6 Investigate with the Village of Spring Lake, City of Ferrysburg, and Spring Lake Public Schools the potential to establish a joint recreation authority district used to acquire, operate, manage, and maintain park and recreation facilities.

THEME

Transportation: Safe, Efficient, and Connected

The segmented geography of the Township created by Spring Lake and the Grand River; coupled with the limited number of bridges results in traffic congestion and highway network inefficiencies. Street ends and cul-de-sacs, which are frequently used in the Township decrease and/or prevent connectivity between residential developments and neighborhoods adding to traffic and trip generation on major streets and arterials. As the Spring Lake Township community evolves, opportunities for other modes of transportation and the need to be more walkable will be important elements for a successful community.

Objectives To Address Theme

Near-Term Priority

- T-1 Organize non-residential development along M-104 into defined nodes reducing access and vehicular conflict points.
- T-2 Continue the Township pathway system.

Mid-Term Priority

- T-3 Implement the recommendations outlined in the M-104 Access Management and Corridor Study (September 2002).
- T-4 Develop sidewalks and pathways throughout the Township that connect to the bike path, parks, schools, neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- T-5 Where feasible create pedestrian connections between existing subdivisions.
- T-6 Develop regulations that encourage shared and overflow parking which serve multiple land uses.
- T-7 Work with Harbor Transit to provide extended services to the Spring Lake Village and Township.
- T-8 Require new residential developments to promote vehicular and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, community facilities, and parks.
- T-9 Investigate and implement where appropriate alternative intersection designs.

Long Term Priority

- T-10 Investigation a new bridge for use as a local traffic by-pass for the M-104 / US-31 bridge and interchange.

THEME

Housing and Neighborhoods: Developing a Sense of Place Through Great Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the barometer for measuring a community's health, value and stability. Spring Lake Township has a variety of housing types, sizes, and styles accentuated by architectural variations influenced by geographic location. However, as a waterfront community, competition for real estate has increased the median housing values making entry into the housing market for younger professionals and families more challenging. The Spring Lake community takes pride in its public school system, which provides quality educational services to children and young adults but this community facility also requires the financial support of parents to maintain this commitment. Families with children augment the financial success of the school system and it will be important for Spring Lake Township to remain a family-oriented and family-affordable community.

Objectives To Address Theme

Near-Term Priority

- HN1 Provide a wide range of housing opportunities throughout the Township including single family, townhomes, condominium and mixed-use developments.
- HN2 Examine the proportions of R-1, R-2, and R-3 zoning in the Township which allows duplex units.

Mid-Term Priority

- HN3 Ensure that new housing developments fit within the overall character of Spring Lake Township through design guidelines.
- HN-4 Develop appearance standards for neighborhoods, which include sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, grass terraces, and neighborhood scale roadways.
- HN-5 Improve housing in existing neighborhoods.

Long Term Priority

- HN-6 Foster opportunities to introduce neighborhood retail back into select existing neighborhoods and new housing developments.
- HN-7 Plan for rental and multiple family housing developments that tie into existing neighborhoods providing desirable housing options for families, singles, and retirees.
- HN-8 Encourage housing developments in proximity to community facilities.
- HN-9 Encourage the development of "cottage" type (small lot) housing.
- HN-10 Encourage the renovation of historic buildings and homes that promote the community character of Spring Lake Township.
- HN-11 Minimize the installation of cul-de-sacs in new housing developments.

THEME

Economic Development: A Coastal Community

Spring Lake Township is a Lake Michigan coastal community. This convergence of land and water creates a layered economic environment fueled by year-round residents, seasonal residents, and vacationers. Frequently, coastal communities along Lake Michigan have higher median incomes and housing prices, diversity of age groups (families and retirees), and higher average consumer expenditures than their inland counterparts. (For example, median incomes for Spring Lake Township, Crockery Township, and Allendale Township are \$53,497, \$47,935, and \$45,258, respectively. Average consumer expenditures for Spring Lake Township, Crockery Township, and Allendale Township are \$48,763, \$39,865, and 41,929, respectively.) Locational (Grand Rapids regional influences) and quality of life indices are also factors, which interplay with the dynamics of the local economy. National and statewide growth trends, which favor coastal communities, will result in continued household development and associated increases in other land uses in the Spring Lake community. Spring Lake Township is, and should continue, to capitalize on its coastal community image.

Objectives To Address Theme

Near-Term Priority

- ED-1 Establish site design and landscaping standards to enhance the appearance of existing and proposed industrial and commercial developments. This is particularly important along the M-104 corridor.
- ED-2 Encourage the reuse of existing under utilized industrial and commercial properties along 148th Street north of Cleveland Street (M-104).
- ED-3 Develop with the Village of Spring Lake a commercial development plan, which includes downtown Spring Lake and the M-104 corridor as a way to concentrate commercial development and reduce corridor commercial sprawl and vacancies in the downtown.
- ED-4 Maintain vacant properties.
- ED-5 Continue to recognize the Village of Spring Lake as the commercial center of the Township

Mid-Term Priority

- ED-6 Evaluate the need and/or amount of commercial zoning at the 174th Street / Hickory Street intersection.

Long Term Priority

- ED-7 Evaluate the need for industrial development at the Hickory, Apple, and 148th triangle.

THEME

Public Services, Facilities and Amenities: Appropriate and Quality Services

Local government plays a critical role on what and how support services (police, fire, waste collection, etc.) cultural services (parks, libraries, museums, etc.) and educational services are provided and delivered to residents. The type and quality of these services can influence the quality of life, property values, and demographics of a community. For example, high performing public school districts attract more families and households. Conversely, communities with lenient building, zoning and blight enforcement often have lower property values, higher incidence of housing decline, and the inability to support public services. Although local governments attempt to provide a variety of public services the reality of fiscal mandates and limitations restrict the offerings. As a result, public services should be provided which address the public's health, welfare, and safety at a level, which is appropriate and funded according to ensure quality.

Objectives To Address Theme

Near-Term Priority

- PS-1 Investigate the fiscal and operational practicalities of combining and/or sharing local government services, such as, parks and recreation, police, fire, assessing, and waste management with the Village of Spring Lake and City of Ferrysburg.
- PS-2 Increase Township access to Spring Lake and the Grand River.
- PS-3 Investigate the fiscal, operational, and governance efficiencies associated with combining Spring Lake Township and the Village of Spring Lake into the City of Spring Lake.
- PS-4 Continue to provide quality police and fire service to residents.
- PS-5 Continued support for the Spring Lake Public School district.

Mid-Term Priority

- PS-6 Work with the Village of Spring Lake, Crockery Township, Ottawa County, MDOT and local land and nature conservancies to develop a regional trail and pathway network.
- PS-7 Continued expansion of water and sewerage facilities.
- PS-8 Provide a Township park system that provides opportunities to access Spring Lake and the Grand River, preserves open space in areas with significant natural features, and strategically located neighborhood/community parks to serve the resident population.

Long Term Priority

- PS-9 Evaluate waste management options to develop a recycling program for Township residents.