



Manchester Area Joint Master Plan Report
Freedom Township Planning Commission
Commercial Section Review Report
January 28, 2009

1. Purpose:

1.01 The purpose of this memo is to outline changes in policies, objectives, or goals suggested in the Draft Manchester Area Joint Master Plan dated 2009. The following sections point out areas for the draft that need further understanding.

1.02 The Draft Section reviewed was the Commercial Section.

2. Commercial Section:

2.01 Introduction

A. Clustered on the north side of Pleasant Lake, this Freedom Township commercial district serves the immediate needs of the Pleasant Lake community. There are just a few widely spaced service businesses including a small grocery, an office, and the township hall. It may be difficult to achieve a pedestrian friendly cluster of commercial uses along this busy corridor without creative land use controls and other incentives.

This section suggests that the Lake Community has established a commercial district. The district should reflect the wording established in the Lake District Section of the Freedom Township Master Plan. It is important that the regional plan and the local plan are working together to achieve the proper planning of this area. The development of this area has to be supported by the Lake Associations, Freedom Township, and the County Agencies in order to have a safe community that continues to serve the local population.

The use of cluster should not be suggested in order to make commercial development pedestrian friendly, although pedestrian circulation is important in commercial development it should not be described as a leading contributor to cluster development. I would suggest this sentence be stricken or suggest that the sentence be revised to define different character development techniques such as clustered land use controls, and other incentives in order to achieve sustainable developments that are pedestrian friendly.

2.02 Coordination with Economic Development Organizations:

A. It is important to recognize the important role private and quasi-public nonprofits will play in furthering the objectives for business growth in the region. Their shared vision and history of innovative and effective programs will be of great benefit to the policy makers who will take this plan forward. Two of the organizations that are working toward a viable Manchester economy include:

The second *important* in the first sentence should be eliminated and the sentence fixed. What is the need for this section? There are many community nonprofits that would be interested in making sure the Manchester Area succeeds. The other sections of the Master

Plan do not include the development of nonprofits in such a way, so we should not give such prominence in certain land uses. If this section is needed for future grant programs, or development of federal assistance programs, then this section should be focused on the Manchester Village or tied to a specific area.

As it is written, it suggests that these Development Organizations should be consulted before any commercial development takes place in the region. This process may not be supported by all agencies or businesses looking for development. Giving the prominence of these two organizations in the Master Plan, it may suggest that public monies are being used to recruit business to the region in order to make "a viable Manchester economy". A viable economy is based on who's standard?

2.03 Goals, Objectives, and Policies & Implementation Strategies

A. Provide adequate and appropriate areas for General and Local Commercial services for the population of the region.

This language should be changed because who will establish "adequate and appropriate", the developer, the municipality, or the Manchester Joint Planning Commission?

B. Base land use regulations on reasonable expectations of the local market demand.

In order to understand this objective, you must look at it at face value, which means basing land use strategies on the local market demand. Who would define this? If you ask major developers such as Wal-mart, Meijer, K-Mart, and other you will find they base their strategies on residential growth through transportation corridors, not local demand. If the Manchester Area would like to base commercial growth on local market demand then we should list milestones in order to understand the context of the "local market demand". As an example, is the local market agriculturally based or other, thus should the businesses be based to support the agricultural area (grain, tractor supply, ect.) or the residents needs for services (banks, pharmacies, restaurants, ect.).

C. Recruit commercial development that provides the opportunity for local employment.

This objective suggests that all communities within the Manchester Planning Area will recruit commercial development that would provide jobs for local residents. Since all new commercial development provides local jobs, does this region need to recruit? Additionally, does this statement follow the same thought process with objective two "basing land use regulations on reasonable expectations of the local market demand?" The two seem to be working against each other because your land use would be based on recruited businesses not market demands. If a community chooses to recruit, then they change the regulations to allow for all development, not just cherry picking the best for the region. If they cherry pick, then that community would be open to selective enforcement legal action by future developers.

2.04 It is the Policy of the Manchester Community Joint Planning Commission that:

A. 3. The community's retail and service needs will best be served by coordinated development of the commercial corridors, the CBD and other identified commercial nodes.

This sentence should be refined to include "existing" commercial corridors. In order to make sure the region is sustainable, the planning should be focused on existing infrastructure supported commercially zoned areas.

B. 5. Providing assistance to commercial enterprises located in the community will recognize the quality of life opportunity for employment for area residents.

This sentence is not clear and should be refined for clarity. Recognize that sustainable businesses serve as employment centers.

3. Conclusions:

A. The Township of Freedom should agree to the requirements or potential obligations that have been prescribed in the Commercial Section. This would include the objectives of recruiting businesses to the region.

B. The suggested changes to the objectives should be revisited, because the items crossed out and re-written sections do not mess. Many of the supporting reasons for the objectives have been stricken from the text; the objectives should be based on milestones or tangible visions to give a character example that describes that item. This style of master plan writing creates a defensible document. A master plan document based on “reasonable”, “viable” or other non-descript words undermine the local planning control. It also creates doubt that could be exploited by developers through court action.

C. The use of existing infrastructure is important in the long-term success of sustainable commercial developments. The objectives should be written to preserve the development of the existing commercial zones, districts and locations that have infrastructure capacity, before opening up the region to commercial growth.

D. The existing goals and objectives should be modeled after each communities goals and objectives sections. The commercial section of regional plan should be consistent with Freedom Township’s Master Plan Lake District.

Thank you for your time,

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