

∞ AGENDA ∞

MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
Commission Chambers at City Hall – 300 W. Baraga Ave.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

- 1) ROLL CALL
 - 2) APPROVE AGENDA
 - 3) APPROVE MINUTES: **Minutes of 06-03-25**
 - 4) CONFLICT of INTEREST
1. PUBLIC HEARINGS
 2. CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON AGENDA ITEMS
 3. OLD BUSINESS
 4. NEW BUSINESS



A. 01-STR-08-25 Wright Street Reconstruction Project

B. Planning Commission Special Election

5. CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS
6. CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS, MINUTES OF OTHER BOARDS/COMMITTEES
7. TRAINING

A. Land Use in Michigan – two articles from the Michigan Planner - April/May 2025

8. WORK SESSION ON REPORTS/PLANS/ORDINANCES

A. Planning Commission Presentation for City Commission

9. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS
10. ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the audience speaking during the public comment portion of the agenda shall limit his/her remarks to 3 minutes. Time does not need to be reserved for an item of business listed on the agenda, or otherwise addressed under Item #2, as time is provided for public comment for each item of business.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The order of presentation for a public hearing shall be as follows:

- a. City Staff/Consultants
- b. Applicant
- c. Correspondence
- d. Public Testimony
- e. Commission Discussion (Commissioners must state any Ex-Parte contact or Conflicts of Interest prior to engaging in any discussions), if it occurred, prior to entering into discussion or voting on a case).

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A regular meeting of the Marquette City Planning Commission was duly called and held at 6:00p.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, in the Commission Chambers at City Hall. A video of this meeting is available on the City's website.

ROLL CALL

Planning Commission (PC) members present (7): W. Premeau, Vice Chair K. Clegg, M. Rayner, J. Fitkin, Chair S. Mittlefehldt, A. Wilkinson, S. Lawry
PC Members absent (2): D. Fetter, K. Hunter
Staff present: City Planner and Zoning Administrator Dave Stensaas

AGENDA

It was moved by S. Lawry, seconded by K. Clegg, and carried 7-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

MINUTES

The minutes of the May 20, 2025, meeting were approved by consent.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. 01-PUD-03-25 - Preliminary PUD Plan review for W. Magnetic St.

D. Stensaas stated:

The Planning Commission is being asked to review an application for a preliminary Planned Unit Development – PUD - approval. The Planning Commission determined that the proposed PUD met the criteria for qualification as a PUD at a public hearing on March 18, 2025. The project application is for a proposed PUD of a mixture of townhome types - 1 unit, duplex, triplex, and 6 unit - for a total of 36 units to be located at the three existing parking lots on the south side of W. Magnetic St., between Lee St. and Fourth St. The Planning Commission is now prepared to conduct a public hearing for a preliminary site plan review and then draft a recommendation to the City Commission who will determine whether to approve or deny the PUD at a public hearing to follow. If approved by the City Commission, the City Attorney will prepare a contract. After the contract is recorded, and that is a contract between the developer and the City, the applicants can submit a final site plan to the Planning Commission for their determination of conformity to the contract and compliance with the Land Development Code. Only after these steps are completed and any conditions of approval are complied with, can staff issue permits for the development of the PUD. In the application packet that the Planning Commission has, we'll go over that here, there is our Staff Review Analysis, staff report, and that covers all the applicable Land Development Code sections, provisions, site plan review standards, details, everything that is attached which includes the applicant's application, the narrative responses to staff comments, and staff comments, narrative from the applicant about how they are meeting different sections of the code, staff comments and replies are included in here as usual in bold.

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Then we have the area map of the parcels, subject parcels outlined in blue. Block map, zoning map, this is all in Medium Density Residential zoning. Across the street we have Mixed Use, photos of the site, and then we have the preliminary site plan set showing the various phases of development and details, renderings of the site with the layout of the floor plans and building elevations, some plat information, and that's it.

S. Mittlefehldt said that she would like to call the applicant up to talk us through some of the changes that we saw from the first plan to this, and the status of the project at this point.

Mr. Bob Mahaney, CEO of Veridea Group, stated:

Thank you, commissioners, for the chance to be here tonight and for considering our PUD application. We were here back in March, and we got a lot of good feedback from that meeting, both from yourselves and the public. The plan that you have before you reflects our efforts to address some of that feedback with a revised plan. In addition, we had a neighborhood meeting on April 14th, kind of a town-hall format, where we invited all the neighbors from a three-block surrounding area of the master site. We had about one hundred people there, and again, it was a very productive session, a lot of good feedback. I'd like to go into a little bit more detail in terms of how we've addressed the public's concerns and comments. First, I should introduce our team, which is here to help if you have any questions. Michele Thomas is here; she is our Director of Commercial Real Estate. Brent Pizelle, as well, is our Director of Construction Management. Mike Corby is here as the President of Integrated Architecture - the architect engaged on this project. Mike has 30 plus years of urban planning background and I'm very fortunate to have his expertise and impact on this project. And we have Brian Savolainen, our civil engineer, who I'm sure many of you know from his long track record of working here in the City of Marquette.

In brief, our PUD covers 3.1 acres, as you saw, lying south of Magnetic street. This is the former staff parking lots for Marquette General Hospital. It's currently about 100% asphalt, impervious surface. I want to start off quickly by talking about the overall layout, the townhomes and our intent on building design. The buildings themselves have a very traditional, brownstone design. Obviously they will have modern features, but we really wanted to try to carry on and continue the color palette found in many of our historic buildings and carry it up here to the site. Again, from a color palette standpoint, try to bring those historic elements of Marquette into this site. You'll see that reflected in the brick we've chosen and other things.

The other thing we're trying to do is create strong pedestrian connectivity, both within the PUD we have before us, but also connecting to the north where we will have some significant green space and a large park as part of the development that goes on north of Magnetic. The current plan in front of you shows 36 townhomes. I believe our previous presentation had 40, so we have reduced the count by ten percent. These are mostly three-bedroom, two-car garage units. All are two stories in height. The previous plan had some that exceeded two stories. For green space, we've increased the amount of green space. We now have almost 30% of the

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ground area as green space, pretty close to an acre of the 3.1 acre site. I'd like to quickly touch on some of the issues that were raised by the public in the two meetings that I referenced. In no particular order but obviously one as you all heard in the one meeting was the access to Piqua, the use of Piqua Street. We've eliminated the access drives to Piqua; there's no connectivity to Piqua. All access will now be off of Magnetic. Some residents south of Piqua expressed concerns about vehicle lights shining into their homes should we use the Piqua drives. In addition to removing the Piqua drives, our intent is to add landscape berms or fencing to further block any lights from being directed south into that area.

Some people expressed concern about the density. As I mentioned, we reduced the total number of homes from 40 to 36. I would note that under current zoning, we could construct up to 46 homes under Medium Density Residential. So, we're at 36, less than what would be allowed if we went the conventional route. I'm not suggesting forty six homes is appropriate, just thought it was an interesting element in the code.

Some claim that we didn't take into account garbage dumpsters. There are no garbage dumpsters. Instead, garbage will be picked up curbside and bins will be kept inside garages, that will be a requirement of the HOA. This is a condominium development, so there will be common bylaws and an HOA. There was concern about snow storage space. We added additional green space, we feel we have plenty of space for snow storage and if it gets to be too much - like we do with a lot of our commercial buildings - we'll have it hauled off site. Another concern was expressed about whether we were going to have short-term rentals such as Airbnb. We will put in the condo bylaws language that effectively will prohibit short-term rentals. That's the same thing we did at Hemlock Park with our single-family development down there.

Others had concerns about the impact of demolition on their properties. We heard some people talking about foundations cracking, movement in their buildings, that sort of thing. I feel for those people, however that's not our responsibility, as it was the responsibility of the Foundation and Adamo. We take ownership of the property where the demolition took place once Adamo has completed all the demolition work. So, I'm not trying to pass the buck, that's just how that works. We're not part of the demolition activity, the demolition contract. And we explained that to people, that the people to talk to on that would be the Foundation and Adamo. And the last thing I want to close with, before I answer any questions you might have, is just that in the public meetings, especially the April 14th neighborhood townhome meeting, there was a lot of positive feedback as well. We really appreciated that. Hopefully, we've improved the plan as much as we can to everyone's satisfaction. One thing I've learned in this business is that while we try to take into account and address the concerns of everyone, it's pretty darn tough to bat a thousand, but we tried, and hopefully that's reflected in the plan, I think we have. So, with that, we'd be happy to answer any questions.

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K. Clegg stated you mentioned that Adamo is doing the demolition on the hospital site, but your adding additional green space to what is currently a parking lot, and I'm assuming they or you are going to remove that? Who is doing that sort of thing?

Bob Mahaney replied that his contractor will be removing the asphalt.

S. Mittlefehldt thanked Mr. Mahaney and stated:

That was very thorough, we appreciate that. At this point, we will listen to any correspondence. She asked D. Stensaas if there was any correspondence. D. Stensaas answered no.

S. Mittlefehldt then opened the public hearing.

Grant Soltwisch, of 365 W. Park St., stated:

First off, I want to say thank you that we're actually going to have something there rather than empty space or a parking lot. We're not looking for a large development for folks but I'm really glad to see it and something happen. And I appreciate that my comments were taken into account from the public meeting. My main concern was not only traffic and people but also, what we experienced when the hospital had that parking lot, every day we had a light issue. There is a 20-foot difference between my living room window and cars coming in on Magnetic St., and so anytime somebody came in, their lights would shine right into the living room in the house. So, they took that into consideration by putting in a berm. But my question for them that hasn't been answered is with the sixplex - the way it's sitting if it possibly could have been turned to block parking with the building, or if it could be an "L" shape? I don't know if they looked at that or not.

Mr. Mahaney stated we did look at that, but the short answer is we couldn't make it work effectively. I'm not trying to pass the buck here to Mike, but I know the staff looked at it and the only possibility was to put the sixplex this way and the triplex this way.

John Gumaer, of 720 W. Kaye, stated:

I was one of the participants in the April 14th meeting and I've also been watching this project. I would like to thank the developer for incorporating feedback from the different public meetings to make this a better overall project for the neighbors and the community as a whole. It's clear that they're vested in making this happen in a responsible way. Thank you.

S. Lawry asked staff if the proposal is to have Magnetic St. addresses for all these buildings, except perhaps those on Lee St.?

D. Stensaas answered yes, I would think so, it's the frontage for most of these buildings.

S. Lawry said:

I had some concerns about identifying it for emergency personnel, and I would encourage that we put a condition on it that the building address numbers be posted on the north wall of the buildings putting those that are set back in the parking lot and it would be easier for emergency

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responders. There is quite a bit of landscaping proposed, most of it to meet code, and I'm wondering if an irrigation system will be included? I didn't see it on the water utility plans.

Mr. Mahaney answered "definitely".

S. Lawry stated:

I know that some of it is just conceptual, but it does show plants also on the balconies, and people see the concept and want to adhere it, and will need outside access to water as well. That's something we don't often see in this type of development.

Mr. Mahaney said:

One of the lessons I've learned over the years is that for the landscaping to continue to look right, you have to invest in it with irrigation and such, you have to just do it now.

S. Lawry stated:

In response to Mr. Soltwisch's concerns, the landscaping does show evergreen hedges or tree plantings at the ends of those driveways to block the light glare.

S. Mittlefehldt asked if the fencing could be described.

B. Savolainen stated:

The type of fencing is yet to be determined, but in addition to the screening of the hedges there, one thing you don't see on this overall plan, is there is a significant grade change from Piqua out to the front of the road. Actually, where we dead end, we have about a 4-ft. cut from what's there right now. So where the grade was before, at the podium height, is now down at the floor, so that will also help create more of a natural berm. The floor will be set lower.

B. Mahaney said they will be starting 4' lower, and want to build a berm that looks nice on both sides and accomplishes what you need, which is no headlights coming through.

S. Lawry said:

Thank you and I commend the developer for being responsive to the comments that we received.

W. Premeau stated:

I have one comment that someone is concerned about their foundation getting cracked. So, after you spoke about "it's the other guys that did the demolition", I'm assuming they're not going to use any rollers or anything when you're building the roads, because shake the ground a little bit.

B. Savolainen said that it will be normal construction.

W. Premeau said:

That's right, there's a lot of shaking of the ground in normal construction.

B. Savolainen answered there is no blasting anticipated or anything like that.

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W. Premeau said:

If they roller back on that road, it's going to shake things, a small compactor shakes things. And then the other thing in this narrative here, the thing...I do not believe at all is performance guarantees, I don't see where they should have to come up with a guarantee that they're going to complete the construction. And maybe Brian can answer this - this is going to last over a period of years and we know that the new [building] code is coming out very shortly, sometime in the fall supposedly, and when that code comes out it's going to change the requirements. I don't know if you can get a permit now and be good for 4 or 5 years. I'm not sure what the length of a building permit life is.

B. Savolainen stated:

I would think with the City Code that would be more of a question for Dave, but it's our understanding that under the Code right now, when you submit at that time that's what your permit follows, it doesn't change. We have a phased plan that will develop over a five-year period. That's part of the agreement that will be with the City of Marquette, and the Code that we're under right now is the only code we can follow. W. Premeau said he is just asking how long is a building permit good for.

B. Savolainen said he didn't know how long building permits were good for.

Mr. Corby stated:

We will be subjected to the code that is in place at the time. With each phase we will have to get a separate permit. So for instance, if the code was actually supposed to change this fall and didn't, so if it changes, if we submit, the question of what's the duration of a building permit is a good one, I don't know, typically it lasts 12 months, you have start construction in twelve months or you have to reapply, but the future phases if the codes change, those will be subject to that code, they won't be able to use the code that was on the first phase. So, it's a good point. It's not going to change anything that you see here on the conceptual level. When it gets into insulation and some electrical things it will affect construction.

S. Mittlefehldt stated:

Just to follow up on Mr. Premeau's point about the performance guarantees, Dave, I know that's something we've talked about with other projects in town. It makes sure the site plan gets implemented as presented. Is that something that's been discussed with the applicant?

D. Stensaas stated:

Not that I'm aware of and that's really at the discretion of the Planning Commission on approving a site plan, special land use permit or a PUD. You can require a performance bond but it hasn't been done in a long time. We talked about it in relation to the fiasco at the Gaines Rock Townhomes, that in certain large project circumstances, going forward, it might be a good idea to get a landscaping bond beyond what's required by the Engineering department for right-of-way work. That it's totally at the discretion of the Planning Commission is what was decided when we were talking about it with the Land Development Code amendments that we spent

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months working on recently, which, by the way, have nothing to do with Code changes for the Building Code that the City does not administer.

S. Lawry stated:

I would like to give Veridea credit for the fact that they have done well on those projects without any development issues that were aware of, and I think they've done a lot to establish a very good track record, and I think we should credit them for that. I see no reason to do this. I guess if there's a concern that because it's such a long-term project that they might at some point transfer the project to someone else, we could reserve the opportunity at that point to consider it, but I think their intent is to finish it and I think they've finished all of their other projects quite well.

D. Stensaas stated I also think it's at the discretion of the City Commission to write that into the agreement with the developer if they so choose.

It was moved S. Lawry, seconded by K. Clegg, and carried 7-0 that after review of the PUD site plan - including pattern book items dated May 5, 2025 and the staff file review analysis for 01-PUD-03-25; the Planning Commission previously established the PUD met seven out of ten required objectives and the criteria to be eligible for a PUD of Section 54.323(f) of the Marquette City Land Development Code - the preliminary PUD plan meets Section 54.323(h) of the Marquette City Land Development Code and recommends that the City Commission approve the PUD with the condition that an amended plan be submitted meeting the City staff comments for final site plan review, particularly concerning lighting, landscaping, fencing, and engineering details. This includes the variances for the larger multi-family unit and the reduction in front and rear lot setbacks.

NEW BUSINESS

S. Mittlefehldt stated we have a reading on micromobility that Dave sent to us, which I found very interesting. I think we've seen a very rapid uptick in scooters, electric bikes and all kinds of new ways of getting around. I think this is something that is going to become increasingly important for us to address. Dave, did you want to talk about the micromobility stuff at all?

D. Stensaas stated:

Sure. Did anybody have a chance to go to one of the public input sessions that Toole design coordinated? The active transportation plan they are helping us develop will have some recommendations for how to incorporate those devices into our current network of multi-use paths and streets, hopefully in a better, more systematic way. Right now, there is quite a bit of conflict going on, especially with the multi-use path system, and I can't speak for the Police Department or the City Manager's office, but I think that the bad behavior problem is probably going to have to be resolved through enforcement and ticketing people. I don't know how else it gets resolved. I think a goal really for a good pedestrian and bicycle system is to make people

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the center of the city, what the city is designed for, and not cars. That's kind of like the utopian vision we have of cities, right? That they're designed for people and we can all get around safely and not have to worry about getting hit by cars or getting run over by a bike or motorcycle or anything else. So, getting to that point from where we are is going to be a long road, no pun intended. There's a lot of work to do because right now we have some serious behavior, riding behavior or operational behavioral problems, but not only do we want to put people at the center of what we design for, but we want free up the city from cars taking up so much of our space too.

Right now, streets take up a third of the space in most cities. And then you add parking lots on top of that. So right of ways take up about a third of the space, you add surface parking, and we've got some 40, 50% of our public space is devoted to vehicle storage, access and mobility. You're going to need space for people to get around, but it's really not sustainable if our population is going to continue to explode like it is. And cities are really hampered with the cost of all that infrastructure and facilities to accommodate vehicles. So, there's potential for cities to have better places for people, for development that serves people more than cars, and environmental gains come out of that. There's a lot of upside to this, planning for this. Micro mobility devices ,though, if you have read any of this stuff, are a very challenging issue. Most of what these articles address are these fleets of scooters and bikes. Bikes haven't really been a problem. We've got a little, you can almost call it pilot project, with the bike rental thing that is in its third or fourth year now down by the Ore Dock. But with scooters, we've kind of shooed them away. They've tried to get a foothold in the City but we've kind of said no, we're not interested. When I get those calls, that's what I do. I mean, I'm not interested in the problems I've seen in other cities where scooters are laying in the streets and left for dead in certain places and create hazards and all that. These scooter companies though, have responded to that, they are responding and trying to do better from what I'm reading in some of these articles, and they have done better in some of these places. Anyway, there's some stuff to learn here that's going to become more of a public conversation as we get into, hopefully, creating a better network after we figure out how to move forward. Hopefully, we will get some good advice, good recommendations out of this planning effort, which should be wrapped up by the fall. I think by the end of the year we will have a plan and take it from there.

S. Mittlefehldt asked what is the current police ordinance is? She said she knows there's a speed limit on the bike path but thinks it's not enforced really and are there other police ordinances?

D. Stensaas said no, the police are trying to enforce the state law. I think it's now built into the vehicle code that on multi-use pathways that have any state funding, you have to follow their rules, and the rules are that Class II and III e-bikes are not allowed on those pathways. But there is no way to really gauge what's a Class II or III, aside from if it's going more than 20mph, then it's probably not a Class I e-bike, which are designed to be 20mph top speed vehicles. So, that's the challenge, that's why it's a behavior issue, it's not a design issue. It's

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kind of like a Corvette on the streets, you can't really just say a Corvette is going to be a problem itself because it can go 160mph. It's the driver that creates the speeding problems. So, you have to enforce the rules on the driver, not the vehicle.

S. Lawry said just a reminder that we had a gentleman here during one of our Master Plan sessions that was asking about the micro mobility plan, which we were talking about at that time, [if the City] can include the provision for the kind of skateboard that he rides with the one wheel. And I have seen several of them around the community. There is another group out there besides bicyclists that are looking for alternatives. When we mentioned some behavioral problems, I was in Paris last year, and even though there are special bike lanes and provisions and they are barely used there. The automobiles stop at the stop lights and stop signs; the bikers will not. Do not step off the curb into a crosswalk because the bikers ignore the stop signs and we found that to be very much the case.

S. Mittlefehldt said that one of the articles said they banned electric scooters and stuff in Paris and other cities, which I thought was interesting. Different cities are taking different approaches to do this. I just think it seems like the biggest violators of all this stuff are middle school teenage boys. Not to stereotype, but I wonder if there's, again it comes down to enforcement, but maybe education or something.

M. Rayner stated it's been some near misses on the path behind me. I can see scooters taking advantage of them, which I'm not sure that's legal for them.

A. Wilkinson said I don't think any of us know the solution to it. I have a Class III e-bike. I try to keep it on the street as much as possible. I was also going down Lakeshore a week or two ago. I was going 25, that's the speed limit through there. I was just looking to be on the street and keep up with everybody. I looked back and there were a dozen cars behind me, and one was riding right up behind me. I didn't feel safe, so I got up on the bike path at that point. And I rode slower, I was trying to be respectful, but as someone who is trying to follow the rules in place, I have found myself not feeling safe. I use the stop signs. I try to be a good user of the roads.

S. Mittlefehldt said that is why I don't correct my kid when she's riding on the sidewalk. I know you're not supposed to ride on the sidewalk, but there are certain streets that it's not safe to ride a bike on that street, so then you do what you have to do.

J. Fitkin stated I agree with it makes more sense to have speed limits than restrict certain types of bikes, because it's about the driver.

D. Stensaas stated the only prohibition of riding on sidewalks is in business districts. Pedestrians should have the right of way on a sidewalk, and you have fixed objects which are a hazard, it's a lot easier to run into something and hurt yourself on a sidewalk. At one of those events last week, the one at Blackrocks, I was talking a couple people and one of them lives close to Third St. and said they've been telling their kids to ride on the sidewalk because they don't feel safe

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riding in the street. So that brings up a whole other issue about changing the layout of the street potentially. It's a wicked problem.

A. Wilkinson said he lived in the city for a few years now and have heard that Third St. was at one point a one-way street. Why did that change, out of curiosity?

S. Lawry said that Third St. was one way south, and Front St. was one way north. Basically, the business association felt that it deprived them of a lot of their trade because they couldn't get two-way traffic, especially from the downtown area. They were not part of the DDA at that time, they had a separate organization, the Village Business Association. It was one-way for probably at least ten years I'd say, maybe closer to fifteen. Eventually they convinced the City to change it back. It didn't necessarily function any better because, even as one way, it still had parking on both sides and two lanes of traffic and so it was still taking up the entire pavement. It created issues, more difficulty with people getting out of their cars. They may have stated their case enough to convince the Commission that it should be changed back.

J. Fitkin said I would second the interest in Third St. one way once again. But that's interesting, I didn't know it was paired with Front St. in the past. I would suggest paired with Fourth St. It might not be super relevant, but I thought that it was an interesting suggestion for the future and have one lane of traffic on each one-way and angle parking on one side, and the other side for pedestrians, or just bikes.

D. Stensaas said the idea of one-way on Third is gaining momentum again. When we did the corridor plan in 2013, the consultant that led that project for us was a retail expert and he interviewed all of the business owners on the street, and at the time, there was no interest in going back to one way. But I talked to one of the business owners recently who said she would support it and I've talked to other business owners that are feeling the same way at this point, and I know just from some discussion with the DDA director that they would be more inclined to see it refigured as a one way street than to take parking off of one side of the street. They see it as a non-starter, to remove parking. That was the biggest issue with the business owners, as Steve said, it's still the same. And the data supports what the retail expert who led that project in 2013 said, the data absolutely supports that once you make a street one way, there is going to be less vehicle traffic and likely less retail traffic. Removing parking is the other part of that equation, and maybe it's a little bit mitigated if you at least have parking on both sides of the street.

K. Clegg said if there was angle parking on a one-way, wouldn't there actually be more because right now they're parallel parking.

D. Stensaas said I don't know. Spatially there might be more space, but it depends on what you want to do with the pedestrian and bicycle space. It might be harder to accommodate that with angle parking.

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W. Premeau said Steve can correct me if I'm wrong, but you use angle parking, you have an 18' parking spot, you have to have 18' behind it, that's 36' of a 32' wide street. The other question, for all the bikers is, has the law changed or don't bikes still have the same rights as an automobile? They used to, and they could ride down the road, and you signal I'm going to turn right, you signal I'm going to turn left, but has all that changed that you have to have your own designated path to drive on? You should be able to drive down any road without any real problems.

D. Stensaas said yes, that's the law, you can ride in streets except for limited-access highways.

W. Premeau said I don't see the real problem. The other problem we used to have but now with global warming, we're going to have constant bare streets and warm weather, but if it doesn't come to fruition in the near future we still have a lot of winter, and you don't see a lot of bikes out there. I mean, I have nothing against bikes. The only other suggestion I would make, and I don't know maybe they do it but are they still teaching bike safety in school, telling you your angles out straight, your hand goes like this, or did they give that all up?

K. Clegg said that they do not. One of the things that I've done for my school is start a bike class where I've been taking it upon myself to lead kids that I know are on my route with my own kids to school. We sent text messages to their parents that said if your kids are in the street, they can ride with us. We teach them how to travel on the roadway, how to signal, when to stop, and how to get safe routes to school. There is funding through the safe routes to school program and the League of Michigan Bicyclists to fund these programs into expanding into schools, but we haven't gotten that far yet. It is a problem, we can see that now, especially with the way middle schoolers and high schoolers are using e-bikes, on paths with way too fast of speeds and they're not being courteous and knowledgeable riders. We've been having City outreach through programs like the Bike Rodeo that mitigate that well.

D. Stensaas said we are kind of hoping the school resource officers will pick that back up as something they could put on as short trainings. That's what they used to do at school. Police, Officer Friendly would come to the school and teach the kids about how not to get hit by cars as a pedestrian or cyclist. Wayne's comment that it's legal to ride on the street with a bike, that's true, but a lot of people aren't comfortable riding on the streets with other vehicles and a lot of people driving motor vehicles are not courteous to bikers. It's a two way thing. There's a lot of people riding bikes that don't follow the rules, there's a lot of people driving their cars that make bikers feel very uncomfortable.

S. Mittlefehldt said winter does make it extra challenging. If you attempted to bike year round, when you get to the snowbanks, they're encroaching, and you can't see.

D. Stensaas said there are a lot of great street designs out there in places where they have money and where they've redesigned the streets in ways that make it a lot more comfortable for people to ride bikes. There a lot of cities in the world where people are very comfortable

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

June 3, 2025

riding bikes. You have a lot of people as a percentage of the commuters using bikes to get around. In Japan, there are garages for bikes. People have hundreds or thousands of bicycles stored where they end up for travel to their work, or school.

S. Mittlefehldt said she has the QR code here if anyone wants to take the Active Transportation survey, and this could be a good catalyst for the next phase that might involve the Planning Commission at some point. Then we could take these recommendations and figure out where we're going.

W. Premeau said you're talking about obstacles. The biggest obstacles I can see right now for automobiles and bicycles are the garbage containers all over the streets. I have seen people weave and turn and try to get around those things. It's just crazy. You get up in the morning and they're all over. They're not on the side of the road anymore.

D. Stensaas stated yes, the City is dealing with Waste Management right now over problems with the contract.

M. Rayner stated that seems to have increased just lately, they're on the streets and on their sides. My street doesn't have sidewalks, so it makes it doubly hard. Kids are trying to walk around those to get over to the high school and it's not a safe situation.

STAFF COMMENTS

W. Premeau stated:

The only comment I want to make is when I brought up the bonding requirement, or that cash bond, it said in this packet to be determined by the Commission. There are three or four items there that say to be determined by the Planning Commission.

M. Rayner stated:

I like the new [PUD] plans. I think they utilize the space more effectively and I like having a little bit more green space with lots of vegetation.

K. Clegg stated:

I was glad to see that Veridea took into account the public comment in their new revised plans, I thought they were good.

A. Wilkinson stated:

I like that Veridea took some of the notes from the community, and also, the new housing is awesome. And I appreciate everyone indulging in the bicycle talk.

J. Fitkin stated:

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

June 3, 2025

I agree with everyone else in that I appreciated Veridea's consideration of the public's thoughts and the neighborhood thoughts.

S. Lawry stated:

I think there is some sympathy to the [PUD] neighbors. They're projecting this as about a five year project just for this development, not even talking about getting across the street yet. And so, it looks like it's a perpetual construction zone. I'm not sure we can tell the neighbors that they're not going to be affected by construction. And it is a little bit frustrating when we read repeatedly what Marquette County's housing units are, and they're going to put up three units here, three units here. It adds to the frustration that we're seeing development, but it's nowhere near what we need per the study.

S. Mittfehltdt thanked Dave and Eric for their efforts with the Bike Rodeo and its success.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair S. Mittfehltdt adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm

Prepared by A. Cook, Administrative Assistant; and D. Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator,
Planning Commission Staff Liaison



CITY OF MARQUETTE
PLANNING AND ZONING
1100 WRIGHT STREET
MARQUETTE, MI 49855
(906) 228-0425
www.marquettemi.gov

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner
DATE: August 1st, 2022
SUBJECT: **01-STR-08-25 Wright Street Reconstruction Project
Sugarloaf Ave. roundabout to Van Evera Ave. intersection**

A street reconstruction project is being proposed for a ~900 ft. section of Wright St., between the roundabout at Tracy Ave./Sugarloaf Ave. to the intersection of Van Evera Avenue. The project will consist of replacing the water and sewer utilities in this corridor, creating new stormwater facilities, and reconstructing the street structure and surface. The project is likely to begin in the spring of 2026 and take about two months to complete.

Per the process developed by the City's Planning and Engineering departments, the City Engineer is requesting a recommendation from the Planning Commission regarding the new street construction, and in particular, the Community Master Plan recommends street cross-section designs that the Planning Commission must use for guidance in determining the suitability of the proposed cross-sections.

The Planning Commission will also be conducting site plan review. Staff comments regarding the plan have been provided, as well as the applicant's responses to those comments.

Please see the following attachments for the Street Construction Design Review:

1. Fact sheet describing project background information
2. Concept Map for the Project Area
3. Area map including water and sewer utilities
4. Illustrations of the proposed street cross-sections
5. Notification letter sent to property owners adjacent to the project
6. Correspondence (if none has been received this will not apply)

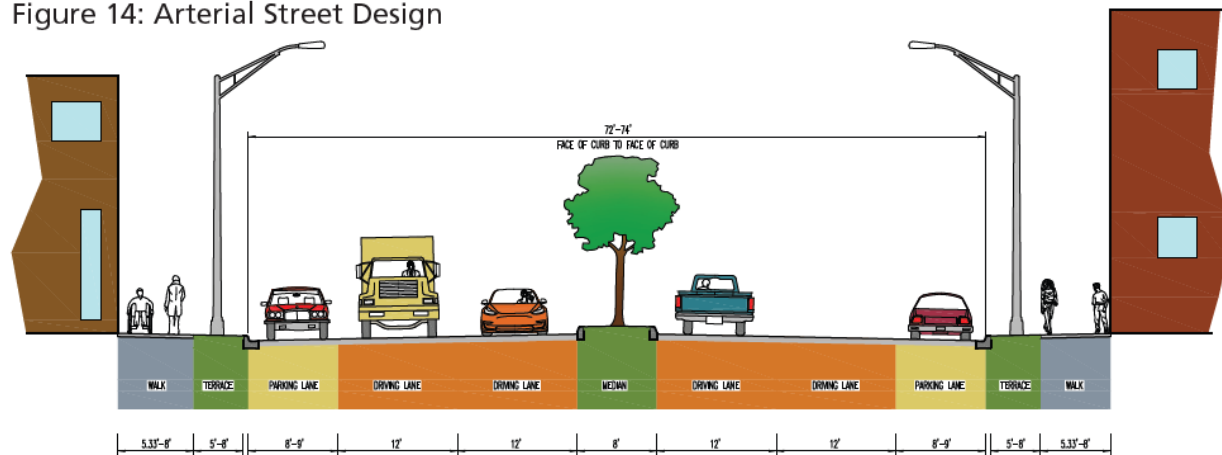
The Planning Commission is being asked to approve the proposed cross-section as the design for construction of the streets.

Community Master Plan (CMP) Compatibility

The right of way, aside from a 7-ft. sidewalk easement granted by Northern Michigan University, is 62 ft. wide, and has a proposed 46 ft. wide (back of curb to back of curb) cross-section for the street, with 12 ft. travel lanes, an 11 ft. two-way center turn lane (left turns only, for eastbound travel). Sidewalks are proposed at the City standard 5 ft., 4-in. width, on both sides of the street, separated from the roadway by grass terraces of ≥ 4 feet.

This design is compatible with the recommended cross-section for arterial streets, as shown in Figure 14 of Chapter 6 of the Community Master Plan, shown below.

Figure 14: Arterial Street Design



Source: City of Marquette Engineering Department

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Planning Commission should review the information provided in this packet, receive public comment, and consider approving the proposed cross sections for this new street proposal.

As always, it is highly recommended that any motion includes the following:

After review of the proposed cross-sections and associated background information for 01-STR-08-25 - the Wright Street Reconstruction Project, - the Planning Commission [finds/does not find] that the proposed project meets the intent of the Community Master Plan, and hereby [approves the street reconstruction design (as presented)/with the following conditions)/does not approve the street reconstruction design].

FACT SHEET

WRIGHT STREET RECONSTRUCTION **SUGARLOAF AVENUE TO VAN EVERA AVENUE**

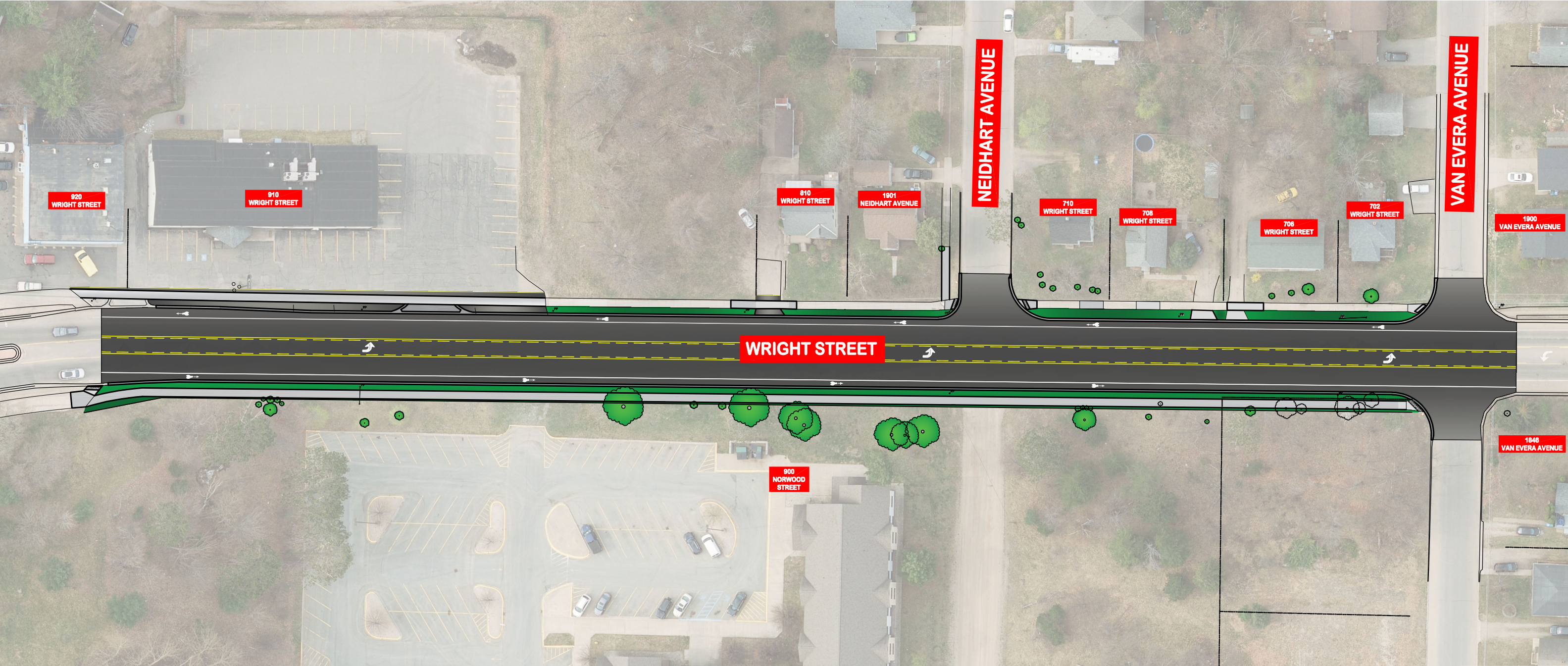
Existing Right of Way	62 feet wide
Existing Street Width	39-41 feet (back of curb to back of curb)
Existing Curbing	Mixture of Curb and Gutter and Straight curbing.
Existing Sidewalk	Sidewalk and a pave shoulder existing on the North side of the street. No sidewalk on the South side of the street.
Existing on Street Parking	No on Street Parking
Existing Water Main	6" sand cast iron 1912
Existing Sanitary Sewer	12" vitrified clay pipe 1950
Existing Storm Sewer	None or 12" 1998 Concrete.
PASER Rating	Currently rated as 3 out of 10 (1 worst – 10 new)

Primary Issues: The street structure, water main, sanitary are beyond their useful service life. Storm sewer is inadequate. The street cross section does not meet the Community Master plan recommendations and sidewalks do not extend throughout the length of the project limits.

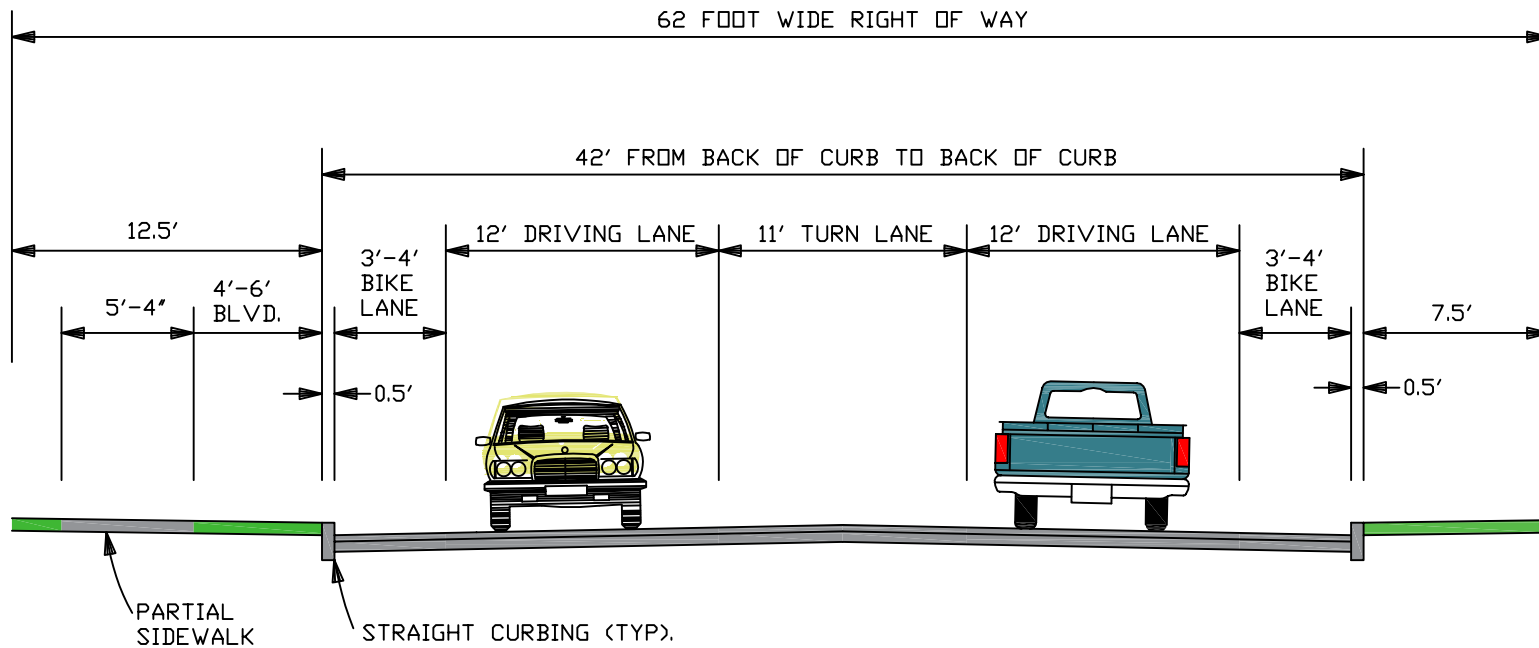
Proposal: Upgrade the existing street to include curb and gutter, 4ft wide bike lanes, 12-foot travel lanes, and an 11-foot wide center turn lane. These lane widths will match the adjacent roadway and comply with MDOT requirements for a major street.

Water and Sewer utilities under the roadway will be upgraded to meet modern standards and requirements. Fire flows in this area will be significantly improved. The storm sewer will be updated with an increased number of inlets to help during significant rain events.

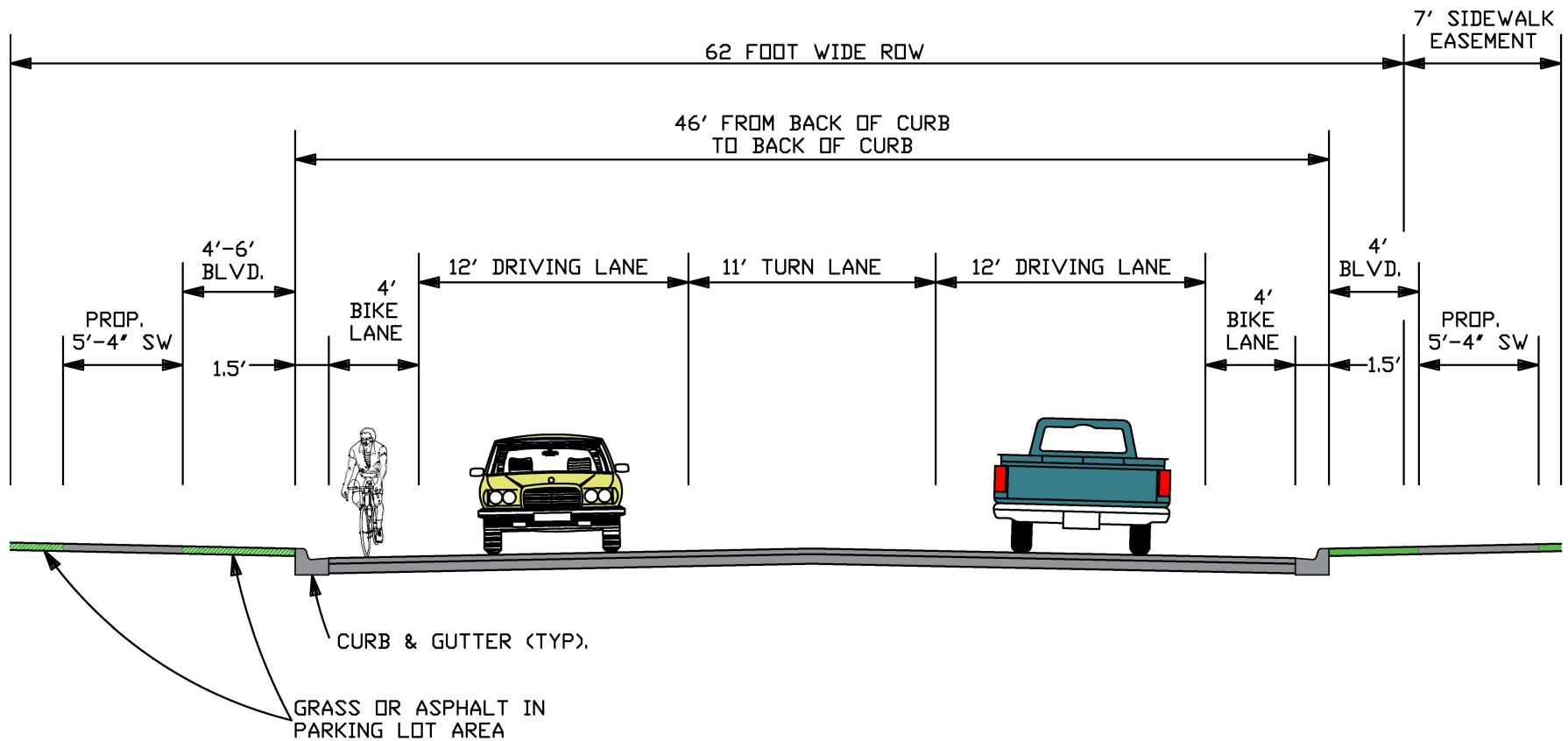
Funding: Roadway, storm sewer and sidewalk components of this project are funded through FHWA funding and administered through and MDOT small urban grant. The remaining utilities are funded through City Enterprise funds.



***TYPICAL EXISTING STREET SECTION
WRIGHT STREET
SUGARLOAF TO VAN EVERA AVENUE***



TYPICAL PROPOSED STREET SECTION
WRIGHT STREET
SUGARLOAF TO VAN EVERA AVENUE



July 31, 2025



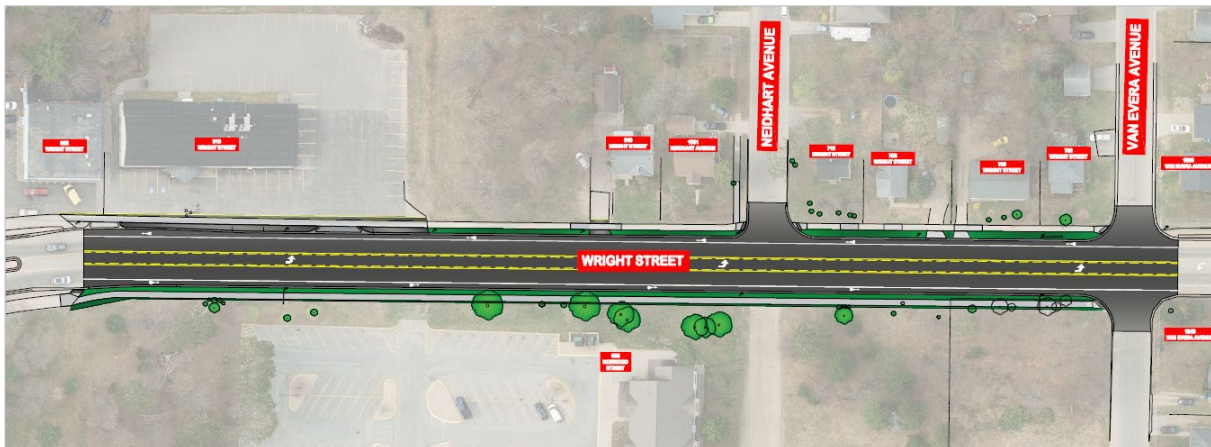
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING NOTIFICATION

Wright Street Reconstruction and Utilities Project Sugarloaf Ave. to Van Evera Ave.

Dear Property Owner:

The City of Marquette Planning Commission will be discussing the Wright Street Reconstruction Project at their regular meeting on **August 19th, 2025, which begins at 6:00 p.m.** You are being notified because you own property adjacent to the project.

The project area is the Wright St. corridor between the Sugarloaf Ave. roundabout and the Van Evera Ave. intersection. The concept for the proposed project is shown below.



This section of Wright St. is rated as being in poor condition and is beyond its useful service life, as are the existing water main (c. 1912) and sewer service main (1950). There are also no functional storm sewer facilities, and sidewalks don't extend through the project limits.

The included **Fact Sheet** states the existing conditions and the proposed scope of work/improvements for this project. The included schematics show the proposed street cross-sections that will be constructed. The Planning Commission will primarily consider and determine if the proposed cross-sections are in concurrence with recommendations for street design in the adopted Community Master Plan, or if they are otherwise an acceptable design.

The Planning Commission will review the project at their regular meeting on August 19th, 2025. You are welcome to attend the meeting and voice any concerns about the proposed project. You can also send written comments to the Planning Commission



at any time before the meeting, either by email to dstensaas@marquettemi.gov or by mailing it to the specified address.

City of Marquette Planning Department
1100 Wright Street
Marquette, MI 49855

I encourage you to call the City Engineer or myself directly with questions or concerns that you may have (numbers provided below), as most often questions about these projects can be answered by staff members.

Questions regarding construction, design, or utilities may be directed to City Engineer Mikael Kilpela at 906-225-8995 or mkilpela@marquettemi.gov. Questions related to the Planning Commission meeting or agenda materials should be made to me at 906-225-8103.

Please review the fact sheet before calling or attending the Planning Commission meeting.

Thank you,

David Stensaas

David Stensaas
City Planner



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: August 08, 2025
SUBJECT: **New Business – Election of Officers and PC representative to the BZA**

In accordance with the Planning Commission Bylaws, special elections may be held to fill vacancies, and there is a vacancy of the Chair position due to the recent resignation of Chair Sarah Mittlefehldt. The Planning Commission should vote to elect a new Chair, and if a new Vice Chair is needed, also vote to elect a member for that position.



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: August 12, 2025
SUBJECT: **Work Session – Annual Report Presentation for the City Commission**

The Planning Commission's annual report to the City Commission is scheduled for delivery on September 8th, and Staff will provide a draft version of the presentation at the 8-19-25 PC meeting for consideration by the PC members.



Trend by Elizabeth Hahn

No One Owned It

The Story of Land Use Planning in Michigan

It has been said that the purpose of history is to learn from the mistakes of the past, not to repeat them. In other words, to build a better future, the past must be understood. Such is the case with land use in Michigan. It is important to understand the ways we have—and have not—attended to our land, water, and infrastructure, if we are to have a prosperous and thriving future.

Thirty years ago, in September 1995, *Patterns on the Land: Our Choices – Our Future* was published as part of the Michigan Society of Planning Officials' **Michigan's Trend Future Project**. The final report was based on the findings of eleven working papers. In Mark Wyckoff's Planning and Zoning Center there was

a small but mighty group that spent countless hours hand-entering Census data, pouring through library stacks, learning a new tool called "GIS", and burning the midnight oil drafting papers. We hoped the report would be a wake-up call to change land development patterns in Michigan. As a recent college graduate, I was overly optimistic.

Land Use Policy in Michigan 1900 - 1970

Michigan's land development patterns began like most places. Farmers, lumberjacks, and miners worked outside of town while merchants sold goods in town, where most people lived. Roads and rails were constructed to connect one town to the

next. Then, Michigan experienced rapid urbanization; the US Census reported that 39% of the state's population went from living in urban areas to more than 61% between 1900 and 1920.

Development patterns shifted with the introduction of street cars, and then private automobiles. Auto-dependent lifestyles encouraged low-density development patterns (better known as "sprawl"). Farmland acreage in Michigan was being converted to non-agricultural uses at a rate of 171 square miles per year (300 acres per day and 30,000 lots per year) between 1940-1970¹. These shifts, and their associated consequences, were concerning to

¹ <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/11562/?ln=en&v=pdf>

Republican Governors George W. Romney (1963 – 1969) and William G. Milliken (1969 – 1983).

Romney's Special Commission on Urban Problems, comprised of the Committee on Planning, Committee on Housing and Urban Development, and Committee on Transportation, issued a report in 1966 entitled "Urban Growth & Problems". Committee recommendations included:

- That a State Planning Agency be created as a function of the executive office of the Governor.
- That funds be appropriated to support comprehensive planning activity at the metropolitan (regional) level.
- That the State re-examine and modernize all laws relating to planning and urban development and that land use and physical planning should incorporate social planning.
- That all modes of transportation be balanced.

Governor Milliken's administration assigned numerous Commissions and Task Forces to examine land-related topics. Reports from these bodies consisted of:

- Governor's Task Force on the Future of Agriculture (1970)

- Governor Milliken's Special Commission on Land Use (1971)
- Report of the Governor's Special Commission on Local Government (1972)
- MICHIGAN'S FUTURE was today.... (1974)

Recommendations included, but were not limited to, creating a land use agency, modifying property tax law to reflect a use value assessment rather than potential value assessment, protecting critical land areas, developing a land use classification system, and encouraging housing variety in type and cost.

"The 37 million acres that are Michigan is all the Michigan we will ever have." Gov. William Milliken

On January 22, 1970, Milliken issued a 20-point environmental policy plan. "Unless we move without delay to halt the degradation of our land, our water, and our air, our own children may see the last traces of Earth's beauty crushed beneath the weight of man's waste and ruin." The Michigan Environmental Protection Act was passed to protect water resources, air quality, soil and land resources, and wildlife. DDT was banned and Michigan's bottle bill was enacted. There was even an "equity package" to support Detroit's cultural institutions.

Land Use Policy in Michigan 1970 - Today

Michigan's population growth slowed by the 1970's and has remained relatively flat for the past 50 years. Despite that, between 1982 and 1992, an average of 133 square miles of farmland were developed per year: a conversion of nearly 2 ½ average sized counties ⁱⁱ. In 1992, the "Michigan's Environment and Relative Risk" report was released in Governor John Engler's administration. The report aimed at evaluating environmental priorities in Michigan. The Governor's blue-ribbon committee concluded that an "absence of land use planning that

considers resources and the integrity of ecosystems" was among the most critical environmental problems facing Michigan. Equally important was the "degradation of urban environments" ⁱⁱⁱ.

The MSPO *Trend Future Project*, funded by the Charles Steward Mott Foundation and the Frey Foundation, soon followed as the first comprehensive effort to document Michigan's land use trends on a statewide basis. The project identified the adverse effects of sprawl, which were noted in a manner relevant to the state's different constituencies^{iv}:

1. **General Public:** Cost of building new and maintaining old highways, roads, other infrastructure; construction cost of new schools as urban schools close; environmental degradation to air, land, and water resources, and open space.
2. **Businesses and Workers:** Impacts to land-based industries (agriculture, timber harvesting, mining, tourism); longer commutes to work that impact quality of life; lack of access to employment opportunities; increased transportation costs.
3. **Residents of Suburbs:** Infrastructure costs; costs associated with vehicle ownership; loss of open space; increase of noise and congestion on roads.
4. **Residents of Rural Areas:** Loss of farms, woodlots, and open spaces; loss of rural character and conflicts with new residents; challenges for land-based businesses to continue to operate.
5. **Residents of Urban Areas:** Lack of opportunities to access jobs, goods and services; economic and racial segregation; loss of social stability and political power.
6. **Community and Generational Equity:** "Are the citizens of the cities and the citizens of the suburban and rural areas part of a single community with mutual

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1994, A House Republican Land Use Task Force provided 21 recommendations for land use reform that included encouraging state government to adequately protect a reasonable supply of agricultural lands for future needs, better management practices to safeguard Michigan's timber lands for future generations, and revisions to the Michigan Drain Code

^{iv} *Patterns on the Land*, pp. 5-7

ⁱⁱ *Patterns on the Land*, p. 4

MAP's Pro-Housing Webinar Series continues

April 24 | The Housing Element of the Master Plan

May 22 | Missing Middle Housing

June 25 | Administrative Approvals

July 16 | Community Engagement for Housing: Changing Hearts and Minds

September 25 | Transforming your Corridors with Housing

Program details and
registration at
www.planningmi.org

	Key Findings (selected)	Recommendations (selected)	Notable Quotes
Michigan's Land, Michigan's Future: Final Report of the MI Land Use Leadership Council (Gov. Granholm, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan develops its land 8 times faster than its population grows We are irreversibly converting valuable farmland, wildlife habitat, and open space to support development at a pace that far exceeds the needs created by population growth City tax base and population declines, concentrated poverty occurs, and public infrastructure and services deteriorate when investment occurs suburban and exurban areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate land use decisions between state agencies and regional, county, and local and tribal governments Establish state land use goals Consider the well-being of all residents in decision-making Promote new investment in already developed areas and discourage subsidies for sprawl Fix-It-First public infrastructure Collect data for Michigan's land resource-based industries and the environment 	"Increasingly in Michigan, citizens, policymakers, communities, environmentalists, businesses, developers, realtors, and others are concerned with what are perceived to be the long-term consequences of unplanned, unmanaged growth for both the environment and the economy of the state."
Regional Prosperity Initiative Reports (Gov. Snyder, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten (10) unique economic regions exist within Michigan Communities throughout the state compete rather than cooperate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivize workforce development through the coordination of the private sector and the education system Coordinate state resources on a regional level to streamline services Coordinate cultural activities within region 	"Let's base our activities on... getting an alignment between all the state resources, all the local government resources, and creating public private partnerships so we can work well together." -Gov. Snyder
21st Century Infrastructure Commission Report (Gov. Snyder, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 130,000 (10%) of the state's 1.3 million septic systems are likely experiencing operational problems 27% of bridges are structurally deficient or obsolete Nearly 25% of beaches experienced closures in 2015 39% of roads are in poor condition (2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a culture of strategic investment through asset management Create a regional infrastructure pilot to create a comprehensive database, coordinate asset mgt and planning across infrastructure sectors Establish Michigan Infrastructure Council to coordinate and unify efforts Create a "broadband superhighway" 	"Improving infrastructure today and for future generations is a responsibility every Michigander needs to take seriously... (its) vital to the health and well-being of the people of Michigan and will help support our growing economy in the future."
21st Century Economy Commission Report (Gov. Snyder, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High correlation between educational achievement and per capita income Michigan needs to lead in mobility Competition is global, with multiple challenges in every field Place matters, people chose where to live based on quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build and maintain physical transportation, digital communications, and utility infrastructure Build social infrastructure to remove barriers Create thriving cities and communities to drive growth and anchor regions Lead on quality of access to our natural resources, fresh water, and recreation 	"Unless we take collective action to 'grab the tiller' and bend some upcoming demographic and economic trends, our state will not be among the winners in the 21st century global economy."

responsibilities and obligations? Or are they merely competing economic and social interests? What is left for the future?"

"The three most critical environmental problems in Michigan are land use, land use and land use."

Detroit Free Press Editorial, May 1, 1995

With this understanding, a warning was issued: "Sprawl, if it is allowed to continue, will inevitably present society with lost opportunities, a variety of social and environmental problems and immense monetary costs"^v. This general warning was coupled

with more specific projections about Michigan's future, including the huge burden of maintaining infrastructure, deteriorating assets, open space reduction, and impairments to natural resources.

Despite this, land consumption dramatically increased with no additional gain in residents or businesses. No action was taken by the State of Michigan or local jurisdictions to change the "business as usual" approach to land management. SEMCOG reported that prior to 1990, there were 2.84 housing units per acre in Southeast Michigan. That number dropped to 1.26 units per acre going into the new millennium; an increase of 44% in the amount of land used for each house

^v. Since the Trend Future Project, the same consequences have been consistently repeated in report after report. The following table presents selected studies since 1994.

Conclusion

The *Trend Future Project* identified issues associated with low-density development patterns in 1995. A generation later, we know that sprawl is even more corrosive than previously described. Michigan's lack of comprehensive land use planning has made us significantly less economically

vi <https://www.uwindsor.ca/glier/449/land-use-change-southeast-michigan>

vii https://www.michfb.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/mi-path-to-a-prosperous-future_briefing-deck_farm_bureau-07sept2023.pdf

^v *Patterns on the Land*, p. 75

	Key Findings (selected)	Recommendations (selected)	Notable Quotes
MSHDA Housing Plan (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38% of Michigan households struggle to afford housing, child care, food, technology, health care, and transportation Homeownership and homelessness show disparities along racial lines Housing stock is aging Construction of new units falls short of current demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and address systematic barriers to housing access Enhance collaboration within housing ecosystem Support construction industry Increase quality of housing stock 	<i>"The reality is that overcoming the complex barriers to safe, healthy, affordable, accessible, and attainable housing for all Michiganders requires coordinated action and new approaches."</i>
Michigan Department of Agriculture and Development's Office of Rural Development: 2023 Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural communities make up 95% of Michigan's geography Challenges in rural communities include aging and declining populations, housing shortages, need for infrastructure improvement, and limited access to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate policy efforts across regional, state and national levels Build local administrative and financial capacity to address rural needs Create consistent interaction between rural communities and other agencies to improve coordination and collaboration 	<i>"Michigan's long-term prosperity depends on the success of our rural regions: urban and rural economies are linked through our markets, natural resources, tourism opportunities, and workforce."</i>
Michigan's Path to a Prosperous Future: Challenges and Opportunities (Citizens Research Council of Michigan and Altarum, 2023)^{vii}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life expectancy by county varies by as much as 8 years and varies by neighborhood by as much as 29 years Michigan's transportation system will face a needs gap of an estimated \$4 billion annually through 2045 The funding gap to maintain Michigan's water infrastructure is somewhere between \$1-5 billion annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refocus on the opportunities and well-being of Michiganders, to improve health, educational achievement and job readiness Invest in the public services and natural resources that make Michigan a place where people want to live Attract new people from around the country and world 	<i>"Michigan is suffering from brain drain, a shrinking workforce, declining health of its people and a deteriorating infrastructure. All of this comes as racial and ethnic disparities across key indicators remain glaringly wide."</i>
Growing Michigan Together Council (Gov. Whitmer, 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan's population is declining: 49th out of 50 in state population growth since 2020 Michigan's national median income is ranked 34th Education proficiency at all levels is ranked low on a national scale, with only 25% of adults earning a bachelor's degree or higher Michigan's highway and water infrastructure is ranked among the worst in the nation Lack of housing exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Michigan as the Innovation Hub of the Midwest Build educational skills and competencies Address housing and transportation needs to attract and keep young talent 	<i>An analysis of the underlying policies, systems, processes, laws, and institutions that have been longtime barriers to the successful transformation of our state is needed to make the underlying structural changes necessary."</i>

competitive, decreased our quality of life, created worse health outcomes, exacerbated disparities, and degraded our natural environment. We are less prepared for the future.

Despite repeated recommendations on how best to manage our land, water, and infrastructure we have been acting like Pac-Men, eating up the 37 million acres of our Michigan. No one has assumed the job of putting all the pieces together to create a comprehensive land use strategy for Michigan. No one has owned this at a statewide level, at most regional levels, or even at the county level. Just as the small yellow mouths follow their path on the video screen, eating as they go, each well-intentioned elected and appointed official, developer, planner, business owner, and resident has facilitated sprawl by only looking at one site plan at a time.

Unlike a Pac-Man game, we do not have the luxury of hitting "restart," but we can begin today to change our plans, practices, programs, and projects. The upcoming Governor's race provides a platform to discuss how to make a course correction. It starts with collaboration and coordination between local, regional, and state jurisdictions – a common thread emphasized by Trend Future and all the committee reports before and since.

Suzanne Schulz, FAICP is the Urban Planning Practice Leader with Progressive Companies. The practice focuses on innovative land use and transportation planning projects in communities, facilitating development, and creating systemic change. Suzanne is the former Planning Director and Managing Director of Design and Development for the City of Grand Rapids (MI). She serves on the State Transportation Commission. –

Jaclyn Walker, with a JD and a Master of Urban Planning degree, brings a diverse background in urban planning, having worked with an architecture and engineering firm in Albany, NY, and as a planner for a U.S. Air Force base in England. Currently, Jaclyn is focused on her work in Michigan with Progressive Companies, where she is enthusiastic about contributing to the evolving landscape of urban planning in the state's future development.



Who Will Own It?

The Future of Land Use Planning in Michigan

Interagency, intergovernmental, and interregional cooperation on a policy and fiscal level has been the most noted recommendation in studies and plans for the past 60 years; yet, we have not managed to accomplish it with meaningful results. “Not to decide, is to decide,” noted *Patterns on our Land: Our Choices – Our Future* from the **Trend Future Study** in 1995.

Michigan’s low-density development pattern has only become more dispersed. Consequently, sprawl has put pressure on our land, people, and resources statewide, leaving a legacy of crumbling infrastructure, inadequate housing, and concentrated poverty. It is no coincidence that population growth has stagnated.

This result has put us and future Michiganders at risk. Our state and local economies rely on investment to create jobs, support public services, deliver safe drinking water, dispose of waste, maintain parks, and perform other core functions. We find ourselves chasing the next “big thing” instead of addressing the interrelatedness of our actions and reinforcing Smart Growth fundamentals. If Michigan is to find a more economically sustainable and prosperous path, we must work together to change our course.

How Do We Do It?

The following ideas are not new. As documented, plenty of “hows” are contained in gubernatorial committee reports. In addition, the Board of Directors for the Michigan Association of Planning began studying this issue in 2023 and is continuing its work into 2026; the board requested this report to inform their work going forward. The MAP Board is exploring ways to help communities address challenges while capitalizing on the state’s many assets to achieve broad goals related to economic prosperity, equity and

fairness, community health and vitality, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Here are a few key recommendations:

1. **Create a Statewide Planning Office.** Thoughtful coordination among and between local communities and state agencies is needed to ensure growth efficiently uses existing infrastructure and other investments while also preserving the state’s rich land-based resources. With more than 2,000 counties, townships, cities, villages, tribal governments, drain commissions, road commissions, and school districts engaged in land use decision-making, the lack of coordination adversely affects the efficient use of resources, quality and delivery of services, transportation and infrastructure systems, environmental integrity, and agricultural viability. Not since Governor Milliken was in office has there been a statewide land use office. There is a role for state-level leadership to coordinate and collaborate with local jurisdictions and state agencies.
2. **Invest in land use and infrastructure data.** The Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget offers an Open Data Portal. No “land use” or “land cover” data categories are presented that fully address the built environment. The Michigan Resource Inventory System (MIRIS) land cover maps, dating back to 1978, remains one of the only statewide data sets of land cover available. As documented in the 21st Century Infrastructure Commission Report under Governor Snyder, the lack of data on public infrastructure has made it difficult to properly assess potential hidden liabilities and issues for Michigan communities and the State. Good data

Michigan’s constitution has included an environmental protection clause since 1963. Article IV, Section 52 proclaims: “*The conservation and development of the natural resources of the state are hereby declared to be of paramount public concern in the interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the people. The legislature shall provide for the protection of the air, water and other natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment and destruction.*” This move to legally enshrine environmental protection as a core value and priority for Michiganders was a pioneering one: a wave of other states followed in the early 1970s. Today, roughly half of U.S. state constitutions include a similar clause.

is needed to provide a complete picture of what is happening to make better decisions.

3. **Establish statewide land use goals.** Establish state land use goals related to economic prosperity, health and quality of life, social equity, and sustainability of natural resources, along with various objectives and policies relevant to our state’s diverse regions and places. Such goals will provide policy direction to state agencies, prioritize investment, and encourage collaboration as groups work together to achieve specific outcomes.
4. **Incentivize action.** The immense success of MSHDA’s Housing Readiness Incentive Grant Program demonstrates how local jurisdictions

can respond to a statewide goal. This approach respects jurisdictional autonomy, sets expectations to increase housing supply and affordability, is easy to use, and has few strings. As a result, communities of all different types and political leanings have undertaken changes to master plans and zoning ordinances. Aligning local plans, policies, and ordinances to statewide initiatives can help to move the needle.

5. **Address our water issues.** Investments in drinking water, stormwater, and sewer infrastructure are imperative to lay a foundation for the future.

Michigan is the only U.S. state without a statewide septic code, and underground water flows are not mapped. With an estimated 20% of private septic systems failing, neighbors could be drinking effluent. Ottawa County's aquifers are being suffocated by clay, preventing them from recharging. In Plainfield Charter Township, PFAS contamination required sanitary sewer extensions where none were planned. These issues are expensive, affect public health, deter growth, and are not receiving enough attention.

6. **Allow more choice in multi-jurisdictional collaboration.** Increasing flexibility in state laws to allow local jurisdictions to choose with whom and how they wish to collaborate would assist in addressing our infrastructure crisis. For example, villages or cities could join with county road commissions or townships could partner with adjacent cities, like water and sewer authorities, to share resources, reduce redundancies, and achieve mutual goals.

7. **Advance a regional mindset.** Promote regionalism that interprets statewide planning goals within the context of regional needs and reflects local community identity. Facilitate equitable sharing of information between state agencies and local governments at the regional level,

including by providing demographic, spatial, economic and other relevant information, trends, and projections periodically to facilitate informed planning and land use change.

8. **Support comprehensive planning and planners.** Professional planners are trained to take a "big picture" view, analyze data, facilitate dialogue, and work with communities to set a vision for the future. While statewide land use goals are critical to this work, if there is no one to guide local decision-makers then efforts in cooperation and collaboration will fall short. Planning should be viewed as an essential service and planners should receive adequate training to effectively advance a cohesive land use strategy make Michigan stronger.

Michiganders cannot continue with business as usual. That approach hasn't increased our statewide population, made our communities stronger or more resilient, garnered resources to invest in our infrastructure, protected the fields that provide our food, or enhanced our natural resources. We can learn from our past mistakes and chart a different course that will create stronger places and, in turn, a stronger and more competitive Michigan. It all starts with deciding to do it.

Suzanne Schulz, FAICP is the Urban Planning Practice Leader with Progressive Companies. The practice focuses on innovative land use and transportation planning projects in communities, facilitating development, and creating systemic change. Suzanne is the former Planning Director and Managing Director of Design and Development for the City of Grand Rapids (MI). She serves on the State Transportation Commission.

Jaclyn Walker, with a JD and a Master of Urban Planning degree, brings a diverse background in urban planning, having worked with an architecture and engineering firm in Albany, NY, and as a planner for a U.S. Air Force base in England. Currently, Jaclyn is focused on her work in Michigan



with Progressive Companies, where she is enthusiastic about contributing to the evolving landscape of urban planning in the state's future development.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR MAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The annual election for the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association's (MAP) Board of Directors is conducted each summer and the self-nomination window is open! As required by Association bylaws, a nominating committee was appointed by President Shari Williams in late 2025. The committee is charged with identifying nominees and accepting self-nominations for each vacancy on the board. This year there are three open seats on the MAP board, and two incumbents are running for a second 3-year term on the board.

Nominations open on April 11, 2025 will be accepted until May 2, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Submit a letter of interest and resume (contact the MAP office at 734.913.2000 for required submission standards) to the nominating committee via Executive Director Andrea Brown by May 2, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Look for candidate bios, position statements and e-voting instructions this summer. Go to www.planningmi.org/board.asp to learn more about the responsibilities of the MAP Board of Directors.

Electronic elections – conducted by the APA for the Chapter – are open from August 6 through September 5, 2025. Details and reminders will be shared as the election approaches.



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: May 29, 2025
SUBJECT: Training – State-level Land Use Planning in Michigan
Articles (2): No One Owned It; Who Will Own It – Michigan Planner,
March/April 2025

The two articles that follow are about the history of land use planning in our state and what more needs to be done to change what the author provides as a summary of our current status in the first article:

“Michigan’s lack of comprehensive land use planning has made us significantly less economically competitive, decreased our quality of life, created worse health outcomes, exacerbated disparities, and degraded our natural environment. We are less prepared for the future.”

The second article provides eight separate actions that our state can take to turn this sad state of affairs around.