

Pittsfield Township overhauling master plan

BY DAN MEISLER
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Pittsfield Township is moving ahead on rewriting its master plan, an overhaul officials say will help determine future development in the township.

Officials and community members say they hope to have the master plan rewritten by the end of 2010.

About 40 people representing different organizations met Thursday at the township hall to form subcommittees that would guide the process.

By state law, townships with planning commissions and zoning ordinances are required to have master plans that govern zoning and land use. Township Supervisor Mandy Grewal said updating Pittsfield's has been one of her top priorities since being elected in November.

"It's time for us to start thinking strategically about who we are," she told the assembled subcommittee members. "When things do pick up (economically), we will have a plan in place to move forward in a coherent and strategic manner."

Grewal added she wants the new master plan to be as much a policy document as a planning document, meaning it would help township officials set policy rather than simply sitting on the shelf.

"It's going to be the center of what happens in Pittsfield Township from here on forward," she said.

McKenna Associates of Northville was hired by the township board in August to help write the plan. The contract is worth about \$70,000, and runs through the end of next year.

Amy Chestnut, senior principal planner at McKenna, outlined the process of developing the plan, which includes public workshops starting in November, design charettes in February, a draft ready by next summer and final approval by the Board of Trustees in winter 2010.

She said public input is crucial: "We are hoping by this process we plan to have that there is buy-in from the community and we do get action from the plan."

Economic development was also at the top of the priority list, Chestnut added. With increased economic mobility, companies are looking for places that have a well-educated and talented work force to locate in, she said.

"We want to make sure Pittsfield is a place talent wants to live," she said.

State law requires master plans be reviewed every five years. The township's current comprehensive plan was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2006.

Eight subcommittees were created Wednesday: Special Community Input; Community Infrastructure; Arts, Culture and Leisure; Economic Development; Green; Housing; Open Space, Agriculture and Natural Features; and Transportation and Land Use.

The Web site for the "2010 Pittsfield Plan" at mcka.com/pittsfieldmasterplan.html will contain a calendar of events, planning documents, and places for citizens to provide input on the process.

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