

Alternative Strategies

Community Character

The Planning Commission has identified protection of the village's character as a key goal of the plan. In looking at alternative strategies to address this goal, the range of techniques includes:

- A. Establishing architectural design standards that are used as the basis for development review – This approach can be as detailed as a "pattern book" that illustrates design characteristics that all developments must incorporate into their project, or as general as standards for compatibility that do not specify specific design requirements and are normally applied as a standard of site plan approval. Architectural design standards are fairly easy to apply commercial, public, semi-public and multi-family developments. This technique is less effective in addressing single family detached housing because this type of development normally does not require site plan approval.
- B. Façade/Sign program – This is a less coercive approach in which the community provides technical assistance and sometimes funding to ensure that any façade improvements or sign changes are consistent with established standards. The program may involve an architect hired by the village making recommendations on potential improvements of a building or sign, or may include village funds that are available for improvements that comply with village standards.
- C. Screening – This approach attempts to minimize the visual impact of structures and uses that conflict with the community character. These could include loading docks, outdoor storage and dumpsters. This approach is normally implemented through the zoning ordinance's site plan review process in which case it will not impact existing structures or uses.

Residential Development – Providing a mix of uses

The Planning Commission has noted that the village currently does not contain a wide mix of housing. Over 88% of the dwelling units are single-family detached. At the same time the village does not want to promote development that damages the village character. Possible strategies include:

- A. Provide for multi-family housing in the two areas already zoned for it – Two relatively large parcels in the village are currently zoned for multi-family residential development in the village. One, Fox Hollow, is partially developed with two and three unit single-family attached units. The other is currently undeveloped. The multiple family district allows for duplexes, and other multi-family structures.
- B. Residences over storefronts – The current zoning ordinance prohibits the development of apartments on the second floor of businesses. Some communities prefer not to encourage residences in the downtown because of potential parking conflicts. Other communities encourage it because it provides a revenue source for the business owner and provides affordable housing.
- C. Conversion of single-family homes – Some communities allow large single-family homes to be converted into apartments. The village zoning ordinance does allow for one "accessory apartment" in a single-family dwelling but the home must be owner occupied, and there is a limit to not more than one accessory apartment per single-family dwelling unit.
- D. Mixed use districts – Some urban areas are creating mixed use districts where a wide range of residential, office and commercial uses are permitted, provided they comply with requirements intended to ensure that the use does not harm adjacent uses. Sometimes the emphasis is on "live-work" arrangements where a resident can have an office or a studio as well as a dwelling unit.

Residential Development – Single-Family Developments

Because single-family residential development makes up such a large part of the land area of the village, it has a huge impact on the nature of the community.

- A. Conventional development – Jamestown is an example of a conventional development with dwellings setback from the front lot line on individual parcels. Street patterns emphasize cul-de-sacs. Because it is the "normal" form of residential development over the past 60 years, it is the preferred form for most developers.
- B. Traditional Neighborhood Design – These developments emphasize patterns common prior to 1950, with smaller lots laid out on an interconnected gridiron pattern, houses located closer to the front of the lots, with garages in the side or rear, in some cases access provided by alleys. This style of development has regained popularity for a number of reasons. The gridiron street pattern helps to reduce congestion on major streets and promote street connectivity. The grouping of homes closer to the street promotes a sense of enclosure that can enhance community identity. Because this pattern replicates that of pre-1950 development, it is more consistent with existing development in older communities.
- C. Cluster Development – Concern over the environmental impact of conventional and traditional development, many communities promote cluster development, particularly in areas with significant natural resources such as forests or prime farmland or natural constraints such as wetlands, floodplains or areas of steep slopes. Cluster development concentrates residents in areas where it will minimize its impact on the natural features. The goal is generally to maintain the level of density of dwelling units if the property were developed conventionally. An advantage of cluster development is that it can preserve open space in a community while protecting the environment. This approach is appropriate where there are significant natural features in need of protection and where municipal water and sewer infrastructure can support the higher densities in the cluster.

Industrial Development

The Village of Metamora has a significant industrial base for a community its size. This base is concentrated along the former railroad right-of-way, south of the village's downtown. The principal component is Metamora Products, a manufacturer of plastic products for various customers including petroleum and pharmaceutical industries. A key element of the plan update was to investigate strategies for expansion of the village's industrial base. There are three options reviewed below.

- A. Expansion on the margins – This strategy would propose that future expansion would occur by conversion of adjacent land to industrial uses. This would ensure that the industrial land uses would remain clustered in one area, minimizing potential conflict with land uses in other parts of the village that scattering industrial throughout the community could cause. The problem with this approach is that most of the adjacent land is already developed, increasing the cost of conversion to industrial uses. In addition, many of the parcels adjacent to the existing industrial uses are small and would require assembly of several to permit large scale expansion.
- B. Expansion in the southeast quadrant – Another option for future industrial expansion is to develop the vacant land in the southeast quadrant of the village. This provides for a relatively large site that could accommodate significant expansion and is adjacent to existing industrial development at the end of Pleasant Street. Development could include construction of an all-weather road connecting Pleasant Street with Blood Road to eliminate truck traffic that currently travels from High Street down Pleasant Street. The disadvantages of this approach is the substantial grades on the property that could increase the cost of development, the potential conflict with residences along Blood Road and

future residential development planned by the township in areas adjacent to this part of the village and the fact that Blood Road is not an all-weather road.

- C. Expansion in the northeast quadrant – Another option for future industrial expansion is to develop a portion of the vacant land in the northeast quadrant of the village. Most of this land is owned by the village and a portion is occupied by the existing sewer lagoons. Some of the vacant land is intended to provide for additional lagoons, but not all of the land may be needed for that purpose. Advantages of the site include the potential for direct access to a major street, relatively large amount of land available, the lack of significant natural features that would hinder development and consistency with future land use plans by the township. Disadvantages include the need to extend streets and water lines to serve the site, the fact that any land used for industrial development would not be able to be used for sewer treatment and that it would be fragmenting the industrial base of the village (although that is mitigated by existing and planned land uses surrounding the potential site).

Commercial Development

The intersection of Oak Street and High Street represents the commercial core or downtown of the village. This area has been well established for years and is the primary commerce center for the village. This is where the Village Hall is located as well as eateries and specialty, small retail businesses. A top priority of this plan will be to preserve Metamora's downtown; however, a key question will be whether or not to promote expansion of the downtown. Options include:

- A. The first option is to not allow for any additional expansion of the downtown to maintain the character that currently exists in the village.
- B. Allow for conversions on the margin of downtown. This option allows for the conversion of existing structures to commercial uses consistent with downtown commercial while maintaining their residential character. Under this option, the village would allow some expansion with minimal change to the character of the area. The disadvantage is that some commercial uses may not be able to effectively work out of converted commercial buildings.
- C. Allow for marginal development of traditional suburban style commercial development. This option would allow for a developer to demolish existing structures on the margin of downtown to develop commercial or office uses more consistent with a suburban setting (small box). This type of development style is generally reflected at the intersection of M-24 and Dryden Road. The advantage of this approach is that it would be the most agreeable to many potential retailers. The key disadvantage would be its impact on the character of the community.
- D. Form based development. This option allows for the development of new office and commercial uses on the margins of downtown, but requires that development to follow the existing forms of the village to match the village's residential and commercial character. This option provides the best method of regulation of "character" should the village choose to expand upon the downtown as the surrounding areas continue to grow. The primary disadvantage is opposition from potential retailers.

Transportation

One of the primary issues regarding transportation in the future for the village is street connectivity. The current pattern of street development, especially in newer residential subdivisions is a pattern of cul-de-sacs with no connectivity to other neighborhoods. It has been demonstrated in numerous communities that street connectivity is a benefit to the community because it can reduce length vehicle trips needed to get from place to place during the stages of a person's day. Further, poor connectivity has been shown to discourage walking and biking as an alternative means of transportation. This is generally because it

takes longer to reach a destination as well as usually requires one to travel on or across major pedestrian-unfriendly routes. Low connectivity can also increase emergency response times in certain situations. However, cul-de-sacs are seen as desirable by many people because it reduces the amount of traffic within the residential areas.

- A. The village could require connectivity of streets within new developments and extensions of existing development. Where the adjacent property is undeveloped, the street network would be required to extend to the property line, and future development required to extend to it.
- B. The village could allow cul-de-sac development in the future
- C. The village should establish a Capital Improvement Plan that prioritizes street and sidewalk improvements and extensions.

Gateway Options

A key goal of the DDA's Development Plan was to identify village gateways by creating uniform signage. The Master Plan RFP requested that the Village Plan also consider options for enhancing the village gateways. Using the new signage as a starting point, options include (see attached illustrations):

- A. Add enhanced welcome features at key gateway points with larger ground mounted message, landscaping and use of branding message. This would further describe the character of the community and supplement the current signs.
- B. Use the location at the 4 corners for wayfinding signs that provide an opportunity to provide a message. It should be noted that banner and custom street signs are already drawing attention by visitors. One option would be to place limited directional signs in conjunction with the clock post. Selection could be kept to public facilities such as (Library, Park, Post Office, Village Hall)
- C. Provide additional signage to enhance the designations for public parking