

# Strategic Plan 2008-2013

Approved April 13, 2009

**DeWitt Charter Township Board**

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# Strategic Plan 2008-2013

## Executive Summary



### Introduction

DeWitt Charter Township, like many jurisdictions, is going to continue to face many challenges in the upcoming years. The United States, Michigan, and Regional economics are under stress. In the late 1990's and continuing into the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, DeWitt Charter Township was one of the fastest growing areas in Mid-Michigan. Unfortunately, with the down turn in the economy, growth has stopped. While the Township is in a good financial situation, this stagnation will certainly cause challenges. In fact, in 2010 and 2011 it is projected that revenues from real and personal property taxes will decline for the first time.

To ensure that the Township is moving in the right direction, the Board began strategic planning in 2008. This effort was designed to provide a direction and focus for the local government. This Strategic Plan creates a vision and helps chart a plan for the future. DeWitt Charter Township believes as the economy turns around, we will once again be the leaders of growth in the region. We must be prepared through a proactive management process. A

strategic plan will not only help us through the challenging times, but also put us in position to be, once again, ready for the future fast-paced growth.

Overall, the Township is trying to achieve the highest quality of life within its borders at the most reasonable cost to residents and businesses.

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### What is a Strategic Plan?

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Strategic plans have been defined in many ways. The concept has been around since the 1960's and over time the idea has evolved and changed. There is no one way you can define the value and purpose of a strategic plan, but here is one definition:

***Strategic Plan:*** *A strategic plan is a disciplined, coordinated, systematic, and sustained effort that enables an organization to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision. A strategic plan covers a five-year rolling timeframe. It links the mission to the vision. Strategic plans are reviewed annually to monitor progress and ensure alignment with other planning cycles. It establishes imperatives, goals, strategies, and performance measures for the organization that can be used*

*as a management and communications tool.*<sup>1</sup>

The important part to understand about a strategic plan is that it is simply a tool. A tool, like many others by itself, will not transform an organization; but if used correctly, it will certainly help the Township move toward its vision. Without a plan, an organization is more likely to change directions as pressures change. These can force the organization off track, or constantly change its goal. Additionally, the lack of a plan increases the likelihood that individual citizens, elected officials, department heads, and employees see a different vision and direction on how to get to that vision.

The Michigan Township Association talks about the value of a plan because it helps differentiate what is most important over the long term; it provides a framework for making decisions. They also say that a strategic plan can help by:

- focusing resources on key priorities
- proving a tangible way to evaluate how well the Township is meeting its goals
- empowering staff to carry out their jobs because they know the outcomes to achieve
- minimizing quarreling over which direction the Township should go
- becoming more needs-driven versus budget-driven

- improving the image of the Township
- being viewed as proactive rather than reactive
- linking the strategic plan to the annual planning and budget cycles<sup>2</sup>

In summary, a Strategic Plan is the formal consideration of an organization's future course. All strategic planning deals with at least one of three key questions:

1. "What do we do?"
2. "For whom do we do it?"
3. "How do we excel?"

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## Process

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As a preparation for developing the Strategic Plan, the Township Board first started by making use of the work completed during the creation of the Comprehensive Development Plan. This Plan was updated in 2005 and used extensive citizen involvement during its development. The Comprehensive Development Plan is a significant guiding factor in the land use planning for the Township. It is important to the Township Board that the Strategic Plan aligns with the goals and objectives of this document, and continues to move the Township in the direction that was established by the Comprehensive Development Plan.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.tamus.edu/strategicplan/docs/GLOSSARY.doc>

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<sup>2</sup> Michigan Township News, December 2003

In addition to the citizen involvement from the Comprehensive Development Plan, the Township Board also utilized a citizen survey before starting their strategic planning process. In 2008, the Township hired Cobalt Community Research. This organization used a quality of life style survey to measure overall levels of satisfaction within key areas. By using this type of survey for the strategic planning process, it allows the Board to confirm citizens' priorities, thus allowing the Plan to match what is most important to the people the Township serves. Additionally, the quality of life survey enabled the Board to identify if there were any overall areas of significant concern that the Board should address.

After the Citizen Survey was completed, the Board held a small focus group meeting of about 15 citizens. The focus group was used to provide additional insight and perspective on the information obtained from the Citizen Survey. This allowed the Board to ask more specific questions related to the areas of importance and concern that were identified with the survey. This process helped to validate and enrich the survey findings.

Using the information from the Comprehensive Development Plan, the Citizen Survey, and the Citizen Survey focus group, the Board held two workshop sessions. At the workshop sessions, Board members and Department Heads brainstormed together with the assistance of Dave Ivan, Director of the Clinton County

Extension Office. Additionally, Eric Scorsone from the State & Local Government Programs at Michigan State University provided oversight. The information gained from these sessions was the basis for the following document.

Before final adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Plan was sent to all of the Township Board and Commission members for comment. Additionally, articles were run in the local newspaper and the Township newsletter. Individuals could review the Plan on the Township web site and even fill out an on-line survey.

The final Strategic Plan was adopted following a Public Hearing on April 13, 2009.

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## Layout of Document

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This document is broken down into three additional sections that follow:

- Mission and Vision
- Strategic Initiatives
- Summary of Initiatives

The Mission and Vision are short statements that help define an organization. The vision looks into the future and defines what the organization wants to become. The mission defines why the organization exists.

The Strategic Initiatives are five broad statements of priority for the Township. By implementing these priorities, the Township believes that it will be meeting its mission and setting

the Township in the direction to meet its vision.

The final pages of the document are the summary of initiatives. This section breaks down each of the five strategic initiatives and provides more detail about the initiative.

The section starts by broadly defining what the initiative means. Because the Township is here to serve at the will of the people, the initiative is put into perspective of what it means to a citizen. If the Township was to fully achieve the initiative, this section would illustrate what the Township or community would look like.

The next two sections are challenges and opportunities. In creating any good plan, it is always good to know the environment you are facing. This creates a situational awareness. This information helps the organization be more aware of what is happening around it and how that may impact the organization from achieving its goals and objectives, both now and in the future.

The final section sets the strategies for accomplishing the strategic initiatives. A strategy is a long-term plan of action for achieving a goal. Each strategy then has one or more tactics or tasks. The tasks are more immediate action items. In some ways, this section is the most important of the document. It defines what areas the Township will be focusing on in the upcoming years.

This document is intended to be a living document. At a minimum, it will be reviewed and updated yearly. As new opportunities arrive, they should be compared with the Strategic Plan to ensure they are inline with the Township's overall vision. Additionally, during the yearly review, the past year should be evaluated to measure the Township's success in achieving its objectives.

## DeWitt Charter Township Mission and Vision

Vision: Defines the desired or intended future state of a specific organization or enterprise in terms of its fundamental objective and/or strategic direction.<sup>3</sup>

Vision: DeWitt Charter Township's fiscally responsible, citizen focused Government promotes the high quality of life that makes our community the region's leading destination for families and businesses

The Mission of DeWitt Charter Township is to ensure public safety and provide financially responsible, efficiently delivered services in a visionary, proactive and sustainable manner

Mission: Defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, describing why it exists.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic\\_planning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_planning)

## Strategic Initiatives

The Township has identified five strategic areas or themes. These can be considered long-term goals that help the Township meet its mission and to achieve its vision. These are not listed in any specific order of priority. More detailed information on each strategic initiative can be found on the pages that follow.

- Financial Stability - Fiscally responsible and financially sustainable Township government ( page 8)
- Economic Development -Vibrant, diversified economy (page 10)
- Public Safety - Ensure public safety (page 12)
- Infrastructure - Well-maintained and adequate infrastructure (page 14)
- Recreation & Environmental Awareness - Walkable community with first class parks, recreation amenities and programs/events. Additionally, the Township promotes environmental awareness.(page 16)

## Financial Stability

The Township's strategic goal is to be fiscally responsible with Township dollars and to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the Township government.

### What does this mean to Citizens(goal)?

- Regional cooperation
- Low tax rate
- Reasonable fees
- Proactive planning
- Well-organized government
- Maintaining property values
- Expenses in line with current and future revenues
- Healthy fund balance
- Customer service

### What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Protecting/maintaining borders
- Relations with other Government units
- Decreasing revenues & increasing expenses
- Maintaining adequate fund balances
- Declining growth
- Lack of grants and other alternative funding
- Predominately residential class

### What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Enhance tax base through 425 agreements
- Relations with other government units
- Public Education
- Fiscally conservative Board
- Creative staff
- Growth potential
- Quality of life makes this community attractive
- Grants and other alternative funding
- Township not at maximum millage rate
- Not using the tax administration fee
- Strong housing stock

### Strategies & Objectives

- 1) To evaluate Township operations to determine if savings can be achieved without negatively impacting service
  - Evaluate individual Departments for options.

- Evaluate energy conservation options
- 2) Continue discussion with regional jurisdictions to determine if new opportunities exist
  - Regional fire service
  - Regional police service
- 3) Continue/expand long-term planning related to revenue and expense.
  - Fund reserves
  - Increase the proactive planning of the Township by expanding projects listed on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- 4) Utilize communication to ensure the Township's side of the story is told
  - Lawmakers
  - Community Leaders
  - Citizens
  - Business Owners
- 5) Establish balance between residential property classes and other property classes
  - Increase Economic Development initiatives to increase commercial and industrial growth.

## Economic Development

The Township's strategic goal is to ensure that we have a vibrant and diversified economy.

### What does this mean to Citizens(goal)?

- Small town experience
- Strong business district
- Equal access to services
- Good economic planning
- Ensure balance mix of small and large developments
- Encourage mixed use developments
- Preserve and promote agribusiness

### What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Slow down in regional economy
- Cost of expanding infrastructure
- Sustainability of agribusiness

### What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Available space
- Transportation hub
- Airport expansion
- Welcoming diversity
- Natural surroundings close to urban amenities
- Diverse employment nearby
- 2107 acres of land in agricultural Preservation (P.A. 116 and PDR)

### Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Stabilize and increase the South Central Tier
  - Consider Downtown Development Authority vs. Corridor Improvement Authority and implement
  - Look into options for a Neighborhood Improvement Authority and work with legislature to change law if necessary
  - Implement property maintenance code and code enforcement
  - Create overlay zoning
  - Identify and market Brownfield opportunities
  - Work with Airport on joint planning efforts
  - Work with Michigan Department of Transportation, Clinton County Road Commission and Capital City Airport on corridor design plan for BR127 and State Road.

- Welcome to DeWitt Township sign on corner of BR127 and Sheridan Road
  - Create Access Management Plan for South Corridor
  - Extension of public water into the neighborhoods
  - Increase use of MSHDA dollars
  - Educate business on opportunities of commercial rehab program
  - Create Community Fund for funding of projects benefiting to the Township and its citizens
- 2) Continue good land use planning
- Review Comp Plan and come up with plan for implementation
  - Work with Clinton County Economic Alliance to develop business retention program
  - Work with Community to create "Sense of Place"
  - Work the regional jurisdictions on joint planning and economic development opportunities (i.e. airport)
  - Identify and promote opportunities to ensure sustainability of agribusiness

**Public Safety**

The Township’s strategic goal is to ensure that the residents and businesses of DeWitt Charter Township are safe and secure.

What does this mean to Citizens(goal)?

- Good police and fire services
- Safe access to destinations
- Well lighted outdoor areas
- Community safety and education programs
- Adequate snow removal
- Police presence at community events
- Good response times
- Safe housing and commercial buildings
- Well maintained roads
- Regional services
- Affordable cost for public safety

What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Relationships within the community
- Economy/Revenues
- Lack of rental inspection program
- Maintaining existing capital/infrastructure
- Lack of water in some areas
- Maintaining an appropriate level of staffing within the Fire Department
- Maintaining excellent response times
- Lack of local control of roads

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Relations within the community
- Public education
- Excellent and well respected staff
- Good capital and infrastructure
- Good Neighborhood Watch and Neighborhood Association systems
- Automatic Aid
- Good 911 System
- Good relationship with Clinton County Road Commission

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Evaluate ways to increase safety of housing and commercial buildings
  - Implement property maintenance code
  - Consider adoption of rental housing ordinance
- 2) Planning/Development of safe community

- Develop non motorized plan
- 3) Community education and communication
  - Promote paid on-call opportunities in the Fire Department
  - Evaluate opportunities for Fire education programs
  - Expand the Police community safety and education programs
  - Find way to implement Retired Senior Volunteer Program within the police department
  - Implement a Citizen Police academy
  - Increase Police contact with public at events, neighborhood gatherings, etc.
  - Expand early warning siren system

## Infrastructure

The Township's strategic goal is to ensure that we have well maintained and adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing community and continue to enhance economic development potential.

Infrastructure is defined as basic physical structures needed for the operation of our Community. These are items such as roads, water system, sewer system, power grid, and telecommunication.

### What does this mean to Citizens(goal)?

- Safe uncongested access to local and regional destinations
- Public water and sewer
- Non-motorized transportation
- Infrastructure is well maintained
- Regional approach

### What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Ageing roads/infrastructure
- Water/sewer system limitations
- Revenues
- Rising costs
- Inadequate funding of roads
- Slow down in economy
- Need of additional access management plans
- Cost of developing in areas without adequate infrastructure
- Limited right-of-way for roadway expansion

### What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Excellent regional access
- Good base to expand upon
- Roads have been rated
- Sewer Rehabilitation Plan
- Reserve established for transportation
- Adequate capacity for growth in sewer plant
- Current access management plan

### Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Maintain high quality transportation network
  - Create Road Asset Management Plan
  - In cooperation with Clinton County, develop a non-motorized transportation plan
  - Increase involvement in Tri-County Regional Planning Transportation Study (CARTS)

- Create access management plan for Northern and Southern Tier
- Create design plan for Southern Tier (BR127 & State Rd)
- 2) Maintain quality sewer system
  - Continue to fund and implement sewer Rehabilitation Plan
  - When development resumes, create pump station rehab plan
  - When development resumes, create a sewer master plan
- 3) As part of the South Central Area Plan, identify affordable ways to expand water system in Southern Tier

## Recreation & Environmental Awareness

The Township's strategic goal is to ensure that the urban areas of the Township are walkable and that we have first class parks, recreation amenities, and programs/events. Additionally the Township will promote environmental awareness.

### What does this mean to Citizens(goal)?

- Non-Motorized transportation system
  - Connected/ expanded trail system
  - Sidewalks
  - Bike paths
  - Access to Looking Glass River for canoeing
- Portfolio of diverse community events
- Sense of community
- Water recreation opportunities
- Open space
- Cost effective/affordable
- Modern park amenities
  - Senior opportunities
  - Adequate sport facilities
  - Handicap access
- Spacious tree lined streets. This replaces park-like feel on main roads.
- Developments that embrace green building techniques
- Extensive use of trees and landscaping on new developments

### What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Revenues
- Access to land for needs
- Consensus on priorities
- Regional Relationships
- Lack of grant opportunities

### What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Excellent existing resources
- Regional relationships
- Public/Private partnerships
- Marketing what we already have

### Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Enhance Township recreation amenities and opportunities
  - Work with other community entities such as DeWitt Area Chamber of Commerce, DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA) and YMCA to offer new community events
  - Update the Township's Parks and Recreation Master Plan with City of DeWitt and DARA
  - Partner with CASE Cares to build a Miracle League Baseball park and update the amenities at Valley Farms Park

- Identify strategies to obtain additional funding
- 2) Promote environmental awareness
- Work with regional partners to promote good management of our environment
  - Educate and foster a green community

## Appendix A

Below is a summary of how each the components of the Strategic Plan fit together. Each bubble defiens a piece of the Township Plan and illustrates how it fits together with the item above or below.

