

Strategic Plan:

A Community Blueprint for
DeWitt Charter Township
2020-2025

APPROVED APRIL 27, 2020

DeWitt Charter Township Board

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Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Executive Summary

Introduction

To ensure that the Township is moving in the right direction, the Board began a strategic planning process in 2008. This effort was designed to provide a direction and focus for the local government. The 2008 to 2013 Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board on April 13, 2009. A major update to the original plan was adopted by the Board on March 24, 2014 with a 5-year duration, expiring in 2019.

The Strategic Plan became the governing document by which the Township budgeted and determined what projects to work on. All Township Board actions were tied directly back to the Strategic Plan to ensure that the Township's actions were aligned with its desired future.

In 2019, as the update process began, there was a desire to have a strategic planning document more accountable, agile and innovative without losing the core tenants of the strategic planning process. These tenants include creating a vision and path for the community's future.

DeWitt Charter Township believes as the economy continues to progress, we will continue to be a leader in growth for the region. We must be prepared through a proactive management process.

A Blueprint will not only help us throughout the challenging times, it will also put us in the position for fast paced growth, opportunities and challenges.

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

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic plans have been defined in many ways. The concept has been around since the 1960s; and, over time, the idea has evolved and changed. There is no one way to define the value and purpose of a strategic planning process, however, here is one definition:

Strategic Planning: "... a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other Entity) is, what it does, and why it does" (Bryson, 2004). It focuses on broader policy questions facing an organization, such as its basic mission and purposes and alternative course of actions or strategies to achieve those missions and purposes (Moskowitz, 1978). As such strategic planning systemizes an organization's direction into goals

and acts as the backbone on which operational plans are built.¹

What is a Community Blueprint?

A Community Blueprint takes the tenants of mission, vision and strategic initiatives and enforces these themes through performance measures and manager accountability. Identified are five strategic initiatives with strategies and possibilities to reach these long term goals. Annually through the budgeting cycle, department heads and cross functional teams will set short term (six to twelve months) objectives that will move towards the long term goals of the community. The Community Blueprint's function is to have long term planning and focus with short term accountability.

The important part to understand about a strategic plan or community blueprint is that it is simply a tool. A tool, like many others by itself, will not transform an organization; however, 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

¹Giraudou and Mclarney.(2014). Benefits and Challenges to Strategic Planning in Public Institutions. SDMIMD Journal of Management

see a different mission and direction on how to get to that mission.

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 ²

In summary, the Community Blueprint and strategic planning process 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?"

² Michigan Township News, December 2003

Layout of Document

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, objectives will be annually reviewed during the budget process with department heads and cross functional teams. These objectives will move towards the long term goals of the community. As new opportunities arrive, they should be compared with the Strategic Plan to ensure they are in line with the Township's overall vision. Additionally, during the budget cycle, the past year should be evaluated to measure the Township's success in achieving its objectives.

DeWitt Charter Township Mission and Vision

Mission:

Ensure public safety and provide financially responsible, efficiently delivered services in a visionary, proactive and sustainable manner.

Defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, describing why it exists.³

Vision:

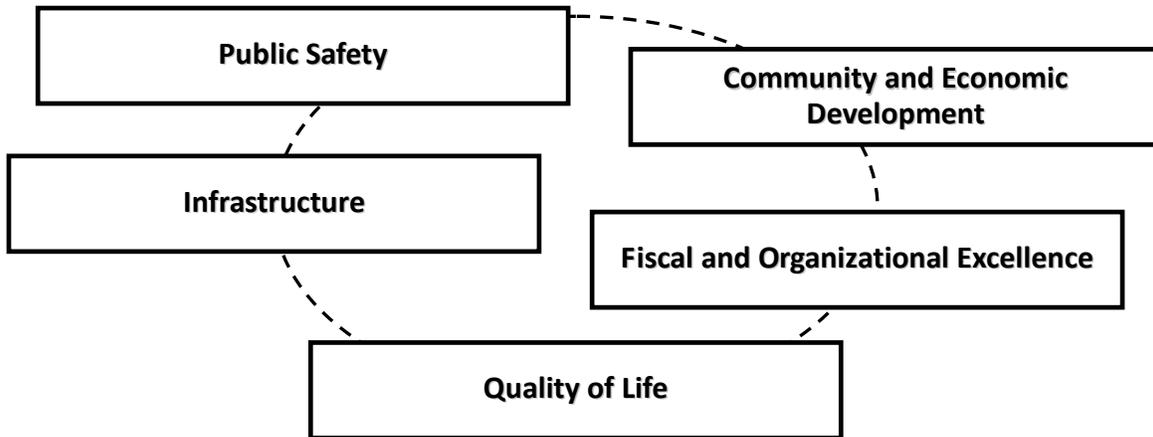
DeWitt Charter Township's fiscally responsible, citizen focused Government promotes a high quality of life that makes our community a leading destination for families and businesses.

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

³ 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.



Public Safety - Ensure that the residents and businesses of DeWitt Charter Township are safe and secure.

Fiscal and Organizational Excellence - Fiscally responsible with Township dollars and capable of funding the Township's resource demands for immediate and long-term sustainability while delivering efficient high quality customer service.

Community and Economic Development - Ensure that the community has a vibrant, robust and diversified economy in all sectors.

Infrastructure - Develop and maintain infrastructure that is both sustainable for current needs and adequately prepared for future development.

Quality of Life - Ensure that the trafficked 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.

Fiscal and Organizational Excellence

The Township's strategic goal is to be fiscally responsible with Township dollars and capable of funding the Township's resource demands for immediate and long-term sustainability while delivering efficient high quality customer service.

What does this mean to Citizens (goal)?

- Low tax rate
- Regional cooperation
- Reasonable fees
- Proactive planning
- Well-organized government
- Sustain staffing with talent
- Sound fiscal policies
- Preserving property values
- Expenses in line with current and future revenues
- Healthy fund balance
- Customer service
- Transparency

What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Protecting/maintaining borders
- Relations with other government units
- Maintaining adequate fund balances
- Negative economic conditions
- Legacy costs
- State funding allocations
- Population density
- Lack of diversified real property classes
- Availability of grants and alternative funding sources
- Predominately residential class

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Enhance tax base through 425 agreements
- Relations with other government units
- Supporting schools
- Fiscally conservative Board
- Creative staff
- Growth potential
- Quality of life makes this community attractive
- Grants and alternative funding
- Township not at maximum millage rate

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Maintain sound fiscal policies and budgets that allow the Township to address service needs and maintain community quality
 - Evaluate individual Departments for options
 - Evaluate energy conservation options within Township facilities
 - Explore funding sources and opportunities
 - Maintain employee wages at a competitive rate to attract and retain high quality work force
 - Work to control employee benefit costs
 - Maintain high level of transparency with the budget and all Township operations
 - Encourage education and training opportunities and professional development
 - Provide funding for statutory required functions and maintaining investments that the Township has already invested
- 2) Continue discussion with regional jurisdictions to determine if new opportunities exist
 - Regional Parks & Recreation
 - Regional Community Education programs
 - Regional fire service
 - Regional police service
 - Regional Building/Trade permit operations
- 3) Continue/expand long-term planning related to revenue and expense, and ensure that the Township continues to invest in and maintain its existing assets
 - Fund reserves
 - Increase the proactive planning through a strong Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- 4) Enhance Township Services, giving consideration to the latest technology and best practices
 - Monitor Township personnel/contractors to ensure we have the appropriate levels to meet the needs & demands for high quality service delivery
 - Enhance cemetery records management system
 - Evaluate record automation for preparation and management of Township Minutes and Agendas
 - Develop user friendly public reference tools for processes and ordinances
 - Increase automation and eliminate unnecessary processes to reduce costs and increase customer service (building permits, burn permits, e-mail sewer bills, facility management, e-file assessment forms, GIS, mapping etc.)
 - Update the Township's website

- 5) Continue to utilize all media sources (newsletter, news articles, social media, listservs) to strengthen media exposure, ensure transparency, and to strengthen the Township's Brand
 - o Signs
 - o Constant contact usages

Community and Economic Development

The Township's strategic goal is to ensure that the community has a vibrant, robust and diversified economy in all sectors.

What does this mean to Citizens (goal)?

- Small town experience
- Business district
- Equal access to services
- Balanced mix of small and large developments
- Variety of commercial and residential options
- Mixed use developments
- Preserve and promote agribusiness
- Well maintained businesses
- Stream lined processes
- A government that works with businesses

What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Regional economy
- Cost of expanding infrastructure
- Sustainability of agribusiness
- Economic downturn
- Reduced tax revenues
- Need for certain regulations
- Available infrastructure
- Revenues and lack of funding

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Underdeveloped land
- Transportation hub
- Airport development
- Welcoming diversity
- Natural surroundings close to urban amenities
- Proximity to workforce
- 2290 acres of land in agricultural Preservation (P.A. 116 and PDR)
- One of the fastest growing areas in Greater Lansing and the State
- Low unemployment rate
- Regional cooperation
- Largest State University 15 minutes away
- Relationship with private sector

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Stabilize and increase the South Central Tier
 - Support efforts of the CIA
 - Work with Capital Region International Airport, LEAP and Next Michigan Development Corporation on joint planning efforts
 - Blight Elimination
 - Work with Neighborhood groups to solve problems and increase a sense of community
 - Work with CATA and Clinton Transit to enhance transportation options
 - Create a unique sense of place
- 2) Enhance aesthetic quality of major gateways to the Township
 - Create signage for unique districts in the Township
 - Add landscaping, lighting, street trees, art installation, etc.
- 3) Utilize strong planning principles and a policy of managed growth
 - Review/update Comp Plan
 - 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
 - Work with Tri-County Regional Planning on the evaluation and possible implementation of an Urban Service Boundary
 - Evaluate planning and zoning processes to ensure appropriateness and efficiency
 - Review old site plans and SUPs for compliance
 - Stimulate mixed use and/or senior developments
 - Housing study on multi-family housing
 - Work with Lansing Township and East Lansing to expand the opportunities around Coleman Road
 - Review and update ordinances to ensure they are meeting the long term goals of the Township
- 4) Encourage a variety of businesses and a diverse housing stock
 - Increase Economic Development initiatives to promote commercial and industrial growth
 - Evaluate economic development opportunities in the Northern Tier with the creation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
 - Develop a PR marketing strategy that can be provided to developers about DeWitt Township and Clinton County
 - Develop a plan for expansion of sewer north of Webb Road

- 5) Work with Lansing to assist the expansion and growth of the Capital Region International Airport
 - Next Michigan Development Corporation
 - State Road zoning and road right-of-way
 - Work with Clinton County Economic Alliance, LEAP, and MEDC to attract new business opportunities and retain existing businesses
- 6) Increase elements that help attract and retain seniors
 - Additional affordable senior housing
 - Increase senior facilities, services, and other quality of life components
 - Perform market study(s)
 - Evaluate and possibly amend ordinances to senior housing opportunities
 - Develop a volunteer coordinator

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)?

- Police and fire services
- Safe access to destinations
- Well lighted outdoor areas
- Community safety and education programs
- Snow removal
- Police presence at community events
- Safe response times
- Safe housing and commercial buildings
- Dangerous buildings addressed
- Well maintained roads
- Regional services
- Affordable cost for public safety
- Access to public water for Fire
- Maintaining existing equipment
- Expected to be a top priority by citizens
- Non-motorized transportation
- Data analysis

What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Relationships within the community
- Revenues & expenditures
- Lack of rental inspection program
- Maintaining existing capital/infrastructure
- Lack of public water in some areas
- Property values
- Maintaining a suitable level of on-call staffing within the Fire Department
- Maintaining excellent response times
- Lack of local control of roads
- Growth of population
- Costly capital improvements

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Community relations
- Public education
- Professional staff
- Capital and infrastructure
- Neighborhood Watch and Neighborhood Association systems
- Automatic Aid
- 911 System
- Relationship with Clinton County Road Commission
- Community relations
- Training

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Evaluate ways to increase safety of housing and commercial buildings
 - Consider adoption of rental housing ordinance
 - Review ISO study and determine options for improving Fire Department Operations
 - Develop inter-department protocol
 - Review and update ordinances to ensure they are meeting the long term goals of the Township
- 2) Planning/Development of safe community
 - Continue to implement non-motorized plan
 - Develop a strategic plan for the Fire Department
 - Plan for replacement of Fire Station one
 - Expand Township readiness for assistance to the Community during large scale emergencies.
- 3) Explore, develop, and implement options that improve safety and educate residents on the role they can play in making their community safer
 - Promote paid on-call opportunities in the Fire Department
 - Evaluate opportunities for Fire education programs
 - Expand the Police community safety and education programs
 - Utilize Retired Senior Volunteer Program to support the community
 - Implement a Citizen Police & Fire academy
 - Increase Police & Fire contact with public at events, neighborhood gatherings, via social media, etc.
- 4) Explore multi-jurisdictional agency cooperation for emergency, mental health and drug recovery services
- 5) Protection of drinking water supply and related environmental concerns
 - Educate residents and businesses about maintaining and keeping private water wells safe
 - Implement and adhere to safe water standards established by the EPA and EGLE

Infrastructure

The Township's strategic goal is to ensure, develop, and maintain infrastructure that is both sustainable for current needs and adequately prepared for future development, including utilities, roads and technology.

What does this mean to Citizens (goal)?

- Safe 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 and lack of funding
- Rising costs
- Road funding
- Economy
- Midwest climate
- No dedicated revenue stream for path maintenance
- Access management plans
- Limited right-of-way for roadway expansion

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Regional access
- Sewer Rehabilitation Plan
- Reserve established for transportation & non-motorized transportation
- Adequate capacity for growth in sewer plant
- Existing infrastructure system
- Road condition ratings
- Current access management plan
- Manage storm water regionally (GLRC)
- Evaluate revenue generation for non-motorized transportation plan (NMTP)
- Proactive maintenance on Roads

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Maintain high quality transportation network
 - Implement non-motorized transportation plan, increase funding of transportation system via additional general fund dollars, grants, transportation millage, special assessments and/or additional State funding
 - Review and update ordinances to ensure they are meeting the long term goals of the Township
- 2) Work with Clinton Transit and CATA to expand public transportation opportunities and interconnections between systems
- 3) Maintain quality sewer system
 - Continue to fund and implement Capital Improvement Plan for Sanitary Sewer System
 - Develop a plan for expansion of sewer north of Webb Road
 - Develop sewer asset management plan

Quality of Life

Ensure that the trafficked 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
- Diverse community events
- Sense of community
- Water recreation opportunities
- Open space
- Modern park amenities
 - Senior opportunities
 - Adequate sport facilities
 - Universal access
- Spacious tree lined streets - this replaces park-like feel on main roads
- Developments that embrace green building techniques
- Protection of our water resources

What are the challenges in achieving this goal?

- Revenues and lack of funding
- Access to land for needs
- Consensus on priorities
- Regional relationships
- Lack of grant opportunities
- Maintenance costs

What are the opportunities in achieving this goal?

- Existing resources
- Regional relationships
- Public/Private partnerships
- Water trails
- Placemaking Events
- Crowdfunding
- Community reputation
- Infrastructure

Strategies & Objectives

- 1) Enhance Township recreational amenities and opportunities
 - Work with other community entities such as DeWitt Area Chamber of Commerce, DeWitt District Library and DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA) to offer new community events
 - Identify strategies to obtain additional funding
 - Work with community members to expand recreation opportunities
 - Expand services and opportunities for senior citizens
- 2) Provide bike lanes, sidewalks, pathways, and waterways that promote healthy lifestyles and provide adequate connections locally and regionally
- 3) Review and develop a long term plan for expansion and maintenance of cemeteries in the Township
- 4) Promote environmental awareness
 - Work with regional partners to promote good management of our environment
 - Educate and foster a green community
 - Explore options for development standards that promote conservation and environmental sustainability

Appendix A

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

