

Heart of the Irish Hills
VILLAGE OF BROOKLYN
Jackson County - State of Michigan

Introduction

Why Plan?

At first glance, it may seem like the Village of Brooklyn does not need a Comprehensive Plan. The Village is one of the economic and cultural centers of the Irish Hills Area, which provides residents a high quality of life. Many find that Brooklyn’s historic downtown and compact neighborhoods offer an attractive alternative to the more suburban character of the surrounding townships. In spite of these tremendous assets, the Village has planning issues that need to be examined. For example:

- ✦ The commercial enterprises which dominate the northern and southern thresholds to Brooklyn bleed into the surrounding township. What can be done to capitalize on the “small-town-charm” that helps to make the rest of the Village so attractive?
- ✦ A recent housing survey reveals that only 50.3% of the housing structures within the Village need “little or no repairs” that property “owners may be able to maintain.” How can home maintenance be encouraged?
- ✦ The last sizable vacant areas within Brooklyn are currently under development. What can the Village do to maintain growth once these areas are completely developed?

The Village of Brooklyn Comprehensive Plan was prepared under the authority of the State of Michigan’s Public Act 285 of 1931, Municipal Planning, (MCL 125.31-125.45). Act 285 authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the Village’s physical growth and development.

Planned change within the Community is required if the Village is to maintain its dynamism and attractiveness. New residents are needed and current residents must be encouraged to stay. Homes need to be renovated and new houses must continue to be built. Numerous other changes must be made as Brooklyn matures.

Some communities simply allow change to happen. They hope for the best and react to development proposals as they surface. Others work diligently to influence change in a manner that results in the quality of life desired by residents and others. A major step in that “influencing process” is the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan provides a framework which the Village can use to evaluate its present status and outline its desired future direction. The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for land use, development and zoning decisions in the Village of Brooklyn. A well-designed and implemented Plan will help Brooklyn continue to be a highly desirable community in which to live, work and visit.

The Plan is a “living” document, which Village officials should review on a yearly basis. This review should evaluate the level of program achievement and include a strategic implementation plan for the upcoming year. If circumstances in the community change, the Plan should be amended. The Village should also consult the Plan when allocating funds and use the Plan as support for grant applications.



The Village of Brooklyn Comprehensive Plan consists of 4 general components:

- × **Background information.** Compiled through analysis of existing studies, reports and Census findings; field investigations; and input from the Planning Commission, Village staff and community leaders.
- × **Community-wide goals & objectives.** A community vision of the future which anticipates growth and development.
- × **Future land use plan.** A plan for the physical distribution of land uses throughout the Village that respects the goals and objectives of the community.
- × **Plan implementation.** Strategies, policies and actions to achieve the Plan’s goals and future land use plan.

How Did the Plan Develop?

This Comprehensive Plan is the latest in a series of planning documents completed by the Village. This Comprehensive Plan combines elements of both of these previous documents.

Throughout the plan development process, citizen participation was actively sought. Citizen

participation is extremely important to the success of almost any planning effort. Citizen participation helps guarantee that the vision outlined for the Village’s future accurately reflects the true goals of its residents. Direct and indirect public input opportunities included:

- ✦ Regular meetings of the Planning Commission where the Plan was included on the Commission’s agenda. Those meetings were duly noticed and open to the public.
- ✦ Meetings with Village officials and consultants.
- ✦ Public meetings on the Comprehensive Plan.
- ✦ A public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan.

Who Will Implement the Plan?

Three distinct municipal bodies (with the assistance of Village staff and consultants) undertake the major planning responsibilities for Brooklyn: the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Village Council. All of their decisions and recommendations should be based upon the Comprehensive Plan.

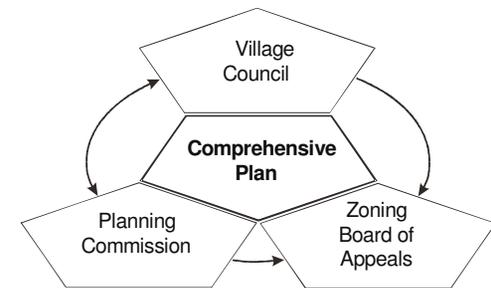
Planning Commission

Development and approval of the Comprehensive Plan is an important responsibility of the Planning Commission. The Commission is charged with the development of zoning, sign and other ordinances (over which the Village Council has final authority). It also recommends approval or rejection of requests to the Village Council for district changes (rezonings) and conditional use permits.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) decides use and dimensional variance requests (e.g., setback requirements). The ZBA makes an official interpretation of the zoning ordinance when the Planning Commission disagrees on its meaning or intent. The Village Council serves as the ZBA.

The Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Decision Makers



Village Council

As the legislative body for Brooklyn, the Village Council is responsible for the passage of all municipal ordinances, including zoning, sign and other planning related legislation. The Council also handles appeals to the denial of sign permits by the Zoning Administrator. The Council appoints members to the Planning Commission.

Other Planning Efforts

Village staff and other municipal committees undertake planning efforts on their own or in conjunction with the Planning Commission. These planning efforts may include housing, key transportation corridors, parks and recreation, and historical districts. Future updates to those plans should complement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In turn, those documents should be consulted whenever this Plan is amended or a new comprehensive plan is adopted. This consultation should also extend to regional plans.