

Pittsfield Township

Zoning Ordinance

Purpose and Key Considerations



<http://pittsfield-mi.gov/zoning-ordinance.html>

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The Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance is a critical community development tool. While supported by other Township plans and ordinances, the Zoning Ordinance is the primary method through which the Township can implement the vision of the Master Plan. Elements regulated by zoning include land use, building height and form, parking requirements, special performance standards for certain unique land uses, and many other general provisions.

Michigan municipalities are given the authority to adopt zoning ordinances through the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. Designed to promote and protect the health safety and welfare, the Zoning Ordinance protects the rights of landowners to use their land, while not impeding the ability of others to use theirs. It is designed to bring about a predictable outcome, and a planned physical environment that allows for the highest possible quality of life.

The 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan was adopted by the Township Board after an extensive community engagement process. The Master Plan represents the long-term vision of the Township in regards to land use, transportation, agriculture, natural areas, and other significant community elements. The Master Plan embodies a set of implementation strategies, general policies, and specific steps the Township must take in order to turn this vision into action.

The relationship between planning and zoning is intended to be complementary. The Master Plan provides the policy foundation and basis for zoning as a regulatory tool. Furthermore, Michigan law requires zoning be based on a plan. Therefore, it is both necessary and timely that the Zoning Ordinance be reviewed and revised following a comprehensive revision of the Master Plan.

Guiding Principles / Improvements

- Promote Goals of Master Plan - Reflecting the vision of the 2010 Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance establishes provisions to strengthen rural areas and economic vitality of agriculture, preserve and promote strong existing neighborhoods, integrate art and culture into the public realm, encourage public gathering places, and promote higher density mixed use development at six focus development nodes.
- Improve Readability, Organization, and Usability including the use of Graphics – Without compromising legal precision, the Ordinance has been made understandable to the user. Using new software technology, improved graphics have been included in the document. The graphics complement the text to make the ordinance more user-friendly. Such graphics will better illustrate ordinance requirements such as dimensional regulations, landscaping, and signage. The Ordinance is designed not only for hard copy but also online use. Starting out with this in mind, techniques such as hyperlinks are provided that will allow cross-references to section references, definitions, etc.
- Incorporation of Best Practices and State Statute Requirements – The last significant revision of the Zoning Ordinance occurred over twenty years ago. Since that time there have been a number of best practices and amendments to address specific issues, remain consistent with the Michigan zoning enabling statute, and respond to precedents established by case law.
- Streamline Administrative Procedures – By creating standards and clearer processes, administrative procedures has been streamlined in order to create a more predictable, productive, and cost efficient approval process. Streamlined administrative procedures include revisions to the Site Plan Review, Planned Unit Development, and Conditional Use process.

