



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

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Kalamazoo County Master Plan Receives 2019 Daniel Burnham Award for Comprehensive Plan

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

KALAMAZOO, MI — The Kalamazoo County Master Plan has been awarded the 2019 Michigan Association of Planning's Daniel Burnham Award for Comprehensive Plan. The award honors group achievement in the planning profession that advances the science and art of planning, and was presented at the 2019 Michigan Association of Planning Annual Conference on September 25th in Kalamazoo, MI.

The goal of the Kalamazoo County Master Plan was to engage each municipality; identify and confirm the Kalamazoo Metropolitan County Planning Commission (KMPCPC), County Administration's, and County Commissioners' understanding of local issues; educate the municipalities about countywide and significant trends; and provide a compelling document with data, resources, and useful information.

In a primarily rural county, some community plans were written in the 1970s, some communities did not have websites, some did not communicate with their neighbors, and some were skeptical of the County's desire to create a master plan. It was recognized that engagement had to be multi-pronged and highly inclusive to gain local support. The KMPCPC spent months reaching out to the 24 communities in its purview to gain local support. They explained the unique master plan process, shared a summary of their hosts' planning goals and objectives to ask for confirmation or revision and explained that KMPCPC wanted to serve as a facilitator, data portal and technical assistance provider rather than a source of authority. It was also an opportunity to inform municipalities that an updated plan made them eligible for grant funding that could be used for projects across the county.

A project website was created to host all 24 municipalities' planning documents, and feature zoning and land use data that the County could use to create a generalized zoning and future land map to determine if any use conflicts exist among bordering jurisdictions. The County also mapped major infrastructure that crossed boundaries to explain development patterns such as countywide farmland capability, non-motorized transportation, parks, water and sewer lines and brownfields.

The Kalamazoo County Master Plan is a guide and foundation for local land use policies designed to unify and join communities based on their commonalities and provide an additional resource for information and data. The Plan is truly inclusive as it reflects common goals, objectives and strategies, and planning best practices for leaders and decision-makers within the greater Kalamazoo area to follow.

Many planning improvements have impacted Kalamazoo County in the past 10-15 years with emphasis on inter-governmental co-operation resulting in a variety of efforts such as aerial flights, countywide GIS, County Brownfield Redevelopment /Authority projects and creation of the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority. The master plan process is a continuation of this emphasis, and reminds everyone that urban, suburban, and rural issues must be addressed comprehensively, especially in a diverse metropolis like Kalamazoo County.

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