
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

May 14, 2025

Regular Meeting - 7:00 PM

1) CALL TO ORDER

IN A REGULAR SESSION held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 323 West Michigan Ave, Marshall, MI 49068, the Marshall Planning Commission was called to order by Chair McNiff.

2) ROLL CALL

Roll was called:

Present: Chair McNiff, Banfield, Bright, Fitzgerald, Hodo

Also Present: Director of Community Development Strange, Deputy Clerk Cary

Absent: Sievertsen, Stewart, Zuck, Underhill

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Items can be added or deleted from the Agenda by board action.

A. Approval of January 8, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes

Moved by Aron Hodo, supported by Tim Banfield to approve the January 8, 2025, Planning Commission minutes. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried**

B. Approval of February 20, 2025 Special Planning Commission Minutes

Moved by Aron Hodo, supported by Carter Bright to approve the February 20, 2025 Special Planning Commission Minutes. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried**

C. Approval of March 12, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes

Moved by Aron Hodo, supported by Carter Bright to approve the March 12, 2025, Planning Commission Minutes. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried**

4) APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Items can be added or deleted from the Agenda by board action.

Moved by Aron Hodo, supported by Tim Fitzgerald to approve the agenda as presented. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried.**

5) PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of five (5) minutes. Comments should address AGENDA ITEM topics. Public Hearing items should be addressed during the PUBLIC HEARING portion of the meeting agenda. Non-Agenda items should be addressed during the PUBLIC COMMENT-NON-AGENDA ITEMS portion of the meeting agenda.

None

6) PUBLIC HEARINGS & SUBSEQUENT BOARD ACTION

None

7) OLD BUSINESS

None

8) REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW BUSINESS

A. Receive the 2025 City of Marshall Master Plan Draft

Moved by Tim Fitzgerald, supported by Tim Banfield to receive the 2025 City of Marshall Master Plan Draft. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried.**

Director Strange stated that there was a request to do a comparison between the last master plan and the current master plan. This isn't a simple request as this Master Plan was started from scratch. There is some incredible value in understanding what has not changed. As a part of that process, one of the questions that gets asked in the master planning process is:

What do you like most about living in Marshall? Comments like:

"[Marshall is] a safe, friendly community with passionate people."

"Downtown is within walking distance of where I live."

"Community events, such as parades."

"The beauty of historic Marshall."

"Quiet, hometown feel."

"Marshall is family-friendly."

"I like that I can walk almost anywhere and feel safe."

"Public schools are excellent."

These comments could come from today's survey answers but their responses were from the 2014 survey. Those comments are still very similar to the comments that were received 10 years later.

In 2024 things people like most about Marshall (in order):

- o Walkability

- o Safety

- o Local restaurants & businesses

- o Historic character

- o Family-friendly

In general, Marshall residents in both 2014 and 2025 find the corridor between 69 and the Brooks Fountain to be the most aesthetically challenged part of town, with many potential safety hazards. Asked to describe the area, survey respondents were overwhelmingly negative. More pedestrian crossings and more landscaping are desired to soften the area.

This continues to be an area of concern and residents still want to make the gateway corridors safer and more attractive.

The River District is still a focus for multi-use building types and improvements in this area continue to be strongly desired.

The old State Farm (now a Land Bank Property) continues to be a focus of re-development.

For the last Master Plan, open house participants generally agreed with the concept of offering a mix of housing opportunities. Single-family homes, independent senior living and residential above commercial and office topped the list for desirable types of residential development in Marshall. The focus was drawing young families to Marshall. Today we see several active projects adding residential space to our downtown – continuing a trend anticipated in 2012.

Between 2000 and 2022, Marshall's population declined from 7,459 to 6,806 (10%). Its

median age increased from 36.4 to 45.4.

Housing remains a strong focus today. An influx of workers and their families are anticipated for the Blue Oval Battery Park Michigan, and there are multiple developers working in town while larger developments are anticipated.

Housing is expensive. People would like to see single family homes first, but unlike past surveys, there is interest in more options like small apartment complexes, townhomes, and mixed-use buildings.

The addition of FiberNet to Marshall's offerings checked a box from the last Master Plan and is a significant draw for small businesses and those working from home.

Brooks Industrial had been designated as a large industrial area. Further investigation of these sites found that the amount of buildable land is significantly less than anticipated due to wetlands and boggy soils. Industrial use has now been pushed towards the MAJOR Campus and along Industrial Road where some open land remains. The area by the Brooks is anticipated to be well suited for adding housing to Marshall and that is reflected in the recommendations for changes to the zoning map.

A lack of cohesive signage continues to plague Marshall and concerns were raised again about difficulties with wayfinding in our community.

The Future Use map has a reduced number of zones – less industrial types, and less residential (down from 5), while simplifying the extent of each area. This realignment modernizes our approach and is something that can be refined as we review our zoning ordinance as the next steps in this process after the master plan is adopted.

Complete streets were proposed in 2012 and while the City continues to add sidewalks, the need for Trail Connectivity drove the development of a non-motorized plan as part of the current Master Plan. Multiple stakeholders of the trail systems are hopeful the City will be able to improve connectivity in the coming years. The new plan also makes specific recommendations and provides greater detail regarding desires for improving Michigan Avenue and making investments in sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure to connect parks, neighborhoods, downtown, and other key destinations. The new plan also addresses climate resiliency and the preservation of natural resources more explicitly, and focuses on leveraging natural resources more for resident benefit and tourism.

The next steps outlined in the current Master Plan are intended to build from the 2012 Master Plan. We have taken steps to ensure screening of residential from commercial properties in our ordinances and continue to think about Context Sensitive development and redevelopment. Those topics are addressed in the plan's Place Types, where clear recommendations are made for the integration of a mix of uses in appropriate areas of the city. The plan also makes a series of recommendations for amending the zoning ordinance based on its goals.

There is a quick comparison of the goals that were stated in the 2015 master plan versus the additional goals that were stated in the 2025 master plan. The first comparison is that the historical characteristics directly align with protecting and enhancing the historical integrity of Marshall. The old master plan talked about the esthetics and design, and long-term stability of Marshall's neighborhoods. Ensuring our employment base and

maintaining a transportation network. Those same words show up in the new master plan with the gateway corridor safer and more attractive. Sustain Marshall's future by expanding housing supply and choice. Making the Marshall area a hub for employment, fostering a safe transportation network.

Banfield thanked Director Strange for the thoughtful introduction of the Master Plan.

The board discussed multifamily units, current zoning districts and parking. Banfield and Hodo discussed allowing residential accessory structures and the goal of increasing residential density in our existing neighborhoods. The board also discussed the engagement process of the residents for the draft 2025 Master plan. Hodo and McNiff provided positive feedback about their participation in the Master Planning Committee.

- 9) PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS** Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of five (5) minutes. Comments should address NON-AGENDA ITEM topics. Public Hearing items should be addressed during the PUBLIC HEARING portion of the meeting agenda. Agenda items should be addressed during the PUBLIC COMMENT-AGENDA ITEMS portion of the meeting agenda.

Derek Allen gave public comment.

10) BOARD REPORTS

11) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Brandie Cary
Deputy Clerk