

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

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Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Table of Content

Chapter 1.	The Master Plan	3
	What is a Master Plan	3
	How to Use the Master Plan	4
	Can the Master Plan be Changed	5
	Creating the Master Plan	6
	How You Should Use This Plan	7
Chapter 2.	Community Snapshot	9
	Introduction	9
	Historical Overview	9
	Land Use	10
	Transportation	13
	Utilities/Public Services	14
	Parks/Recreation	14
	Natural Environment	14
	Demographics	15
Chapter 3.	Planning Framework	24
	Public Participation	24
	Issues	25
Chapter 4.	Planning Principles	26
	Planning Values	27
	Vision	27
	The Vision Realized: Goals & Strategies	28
Chapter 5.	Future Land Use	35
	Future Land Use Classifications	35
	Highlighted Plan Elements	36
	Zoning Plan	40

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 6. Implementation 41

Project Priorities	41
Implementation Plan	41
Keeping the Master Plan Up-to-Date	46
Conclusion	46

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms	
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Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 1.

The Master Plan

What is a Master Plan?

Every community has a responsibility to consider the long-range consequences of their land use and zoning decisions. The community should seek guidance for those decisions by considering a variety of possible futures. This long-range view for the Village of Colon is provided through the Master Plan.

Highway corridors that serve as ‘gateways’ into the Village, vacant buildings and streetscape limitations within the Village core, a desire to be a ‘walkable’ community, and a strong interest in reestablishing a vibrant downtown area and a stable residential base have highlighted land use concerns within the Village. Village leaders and residents want to revitalize the community by promoting the strengths of the Village while also protecting its small town character.

Not all contrasting concerns about land use can be solved, but both supporters of growth and those of preservation have a common goal; each wants ‘good planning’. The real task of planning then becomes balancing the interests of land owners wishing to develop their properties with the retention of those features that attracted people to the community in the first place.

The area’s major water features, the variety of local recreational opportunities and public services, the numerous special community events, its status as The Magic Capital of the World, the historic downtown, and the area’s seasonal population give the Village of Colon a unique small town atmosphere. A good Master Plan must consider these elements and use the right planning tools to promote long use that fits in the area and preserves the Village as a special place.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008) gives communities the authority to adopt a Master Plan to ‘address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 years or more into the future.’ This Plan will provide direction for the use of land within the Village for the next 20 years, based upon a vision for land use established by its citizens.

How to Use the Master Plan

The Master Plan serves many functions. It can be a very effective tool for a community if there is a willingness to support and implement the vision and goals set forth in the Plan.

1. The Master Plan is a statement of the vision, goals and policies for the Village. It sets forth a single and comprehensive view of the Village’s desires for the future.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

2. The Master Plan provides direction in daily land use decision-making. The vision and goals set forth in the Plan are designed to be used by the Planning Commission and the Village Council in their consideration of zoning issues, subdivisions, capital improvements, and other land use and development initiatives.
3. The Master Plan provides the statutory basis upon which zoning decisions are based. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006) requires that ‘the Zoning Ordinance be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.’
4. The Master Plan provides direction for decisions about public services. New infrastructure or services should correspond with the Plan to give the Village control over new growth, to coordinate public improvements with private development, and to provide for fiscal responsibility.
5. The courts of the State of Michigan lend more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those that appear to be arbitrary against an individual property owner. Consistent use of the Plan provides a foundation for controversial land use/zoning decisions.
6. The Master Plan is an educational tool. It provides the mechanism to clearly set forth the Villages direction for the future to residents, property owners, developers, and surrounding communities.

The Master Plan’s Relationship to Zoning

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act states that the ‘zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, (and) to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability.’ Although the Master Plan is a policy document and does not have the force of law, it provides the basis for the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, and zoning decisions found to be inconsistent with the Plan may be found to be improper by the courts.

The Master Plan sets forth the vision for the Village, while the Zoning Ordinance establishes the land use regulations designed to implement that vision. The areas delineated on the Future Land Use Map are called ‘land use classifications’ and are not the same as zoning districts on the Zoning Map. The land use classification is the desired long range land use, whereas the zoning district sets forth what can happen now.

To that end, the Future Land Use Map will not correlate directly with the Zoning Map or with existing uses. However, the Plan reflects the long range desires for land development, and it is expected that as market demands change, future rezoning and land use decisions will be made to conform to the Master Plan.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

The Zoning Plan contained within the Master Plan describes how the land use classifications on the Future Land Use Map correlate to the zoning districts on the Zoning Map. The Zoning Plan should be used as a guide to determine how the Zoning Ordinance should be amended to implement the Master Plan.

Can the Master Plan Be Changed?

The Master Plan is a guide for the future. As such, the Plan should not be rigidly administered since changing conditions can affect its original intentions. Over time, goals may be achieved and new goals needed, the direction of development in a particular area of the Village may change, or decisions may be made contrary to the Plan. These changes should be acknowledged and addressed through amendments to the Master Plan.

The Planning Act requires communities to review their Master Plan at least every five years to determine whether amendments are needed, or if a new Plan should be developed. The Planning Commission should also hold an annual meeting to review the Plan to ensure that changes in the area are considered and that amendments are made to keep the Plan current with Village philosophies. An annual Planning Commission review will not only fulfill the five-year statutory review requirement, but will also guarantee that the Plan remains relevant and useful.

Creating the Master Plan

The 2022 Master Plan was developed through a coordinated effort between the Village staff and the citizens of the Village of Colon. The Planning Commission and Village Council hired a planning consultant (Rebecca Harvey of Harvey Consulting) in 2012 to assist them in preparing a new Master Plan for the Village. The Master Plan was created in four major steps.

First, information about the community was gathered - demographics, history, land use, physical features, and other background material. This information is presented in **Chapter 2.**

Community Snapshot. The data set forth in the Community Snapshot was used by the Planning Commission to identify preliminary issues (strengths, concerns, opportunities) for the Village.

The public then had an opportunity to consider the community profile and identify the values important to them. Several techniques were used to solicit public input. A Community Forum was held where participants identified strengths and weaknesses of the Village and discussed opportunities and threats to the Village related to land use. The Village also received public input via the Village website. Finally, after the initial draft of the Plan was completed, a Community Open House was held to allow public review and reaction to the proposed concepts set forth in the Plan. A summary of the results of the public participation process and the identified land use issues are set forth in **Chapter 3. Planning Issues.**

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Based on the outcomes of the public participation and the identification of issues, the third step involved the development of Planning Principles. These Principles consist of a Vision, Goals, and Objectives/Strategies that serve as the foundation for the Plan. **The Planning Principles** are described in **Chapter 4**.

Using the Planning Principles as a guide, a **Future Land Use Plan** and **Future Land Use Map** were prepared (**Chapter 5**). In addition, an **Implementation Plan (Chapter 6.)** was created to guide this Plan into action.

This process took place in 2013. In 2022 the Planning Commission then initiated the adoption process required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The draft Master Plan was reviewed by the Village Council and then released for review by the surrounding communities and the St. Joseph County Planning Commission. Following the mandated review/comment period, the Planning Commission held a public hearing March 15, 2022 and the Plan was adopted by the Village Council April 5, 2022. The resolution of adoption is copied on the inside back cover of this document in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

How You Should Use This Plan

How the Master Plan affects you depends upon your situation:

- If you are a *property owner*, you will have several interests, including the future identified for your property, as well as for other properties similarly designated.
- As a homeowner, you will be interested in the properties in your immediate neighborhood, including uses proposed for vacant land.
- As a resident, you will be interested in the overall vision for the Village as expressed in the Goals and Objectives. These statements should give you an indication of the view of the Village now, and in the future.

Generally, your use of the Plan should follow these steps:

Step 1: What land use is proposed for your property, or the area surrounding your property.

This information is set forth on the Future Land Use Map and described in the Future Land Use Plan in Chapter 5. Find the land use classification in which your property is located and then read the description of the land use classification applied to your property.

Depending on the nature of your interest, this may be as far as you want to go. If you have a specific proposal that is inconsistent with the expectations of the Plan, you will want to review the Plan in more detail.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Step 2: How does the Plan affect your property?

The Future Land Use designation of your property indicates the planned use of your property, this does not mean that you cannot continue the current use of the property. Land use within the Village is also affected by zoning. See the Zoning Ordinance for zoning standards specific to your property.

Step 3: How does the Village view developments in your area?

The Future Land Use Plan and Map indicate the type of development planned for your area; it may be specific or somewhat general. The Future Land Use Classification descriptions set forth in Chapter 5 and the Goals and Objectives for future land use within the Village set forth in Chapter 6 provide details on the direction of future land use within your general area.

No matter what your interest is, the Master Plan may have a profound impact on the future of your property. As a resident or property owner in the Village of Colon, it is important that you become familiar with the Plan and understand what it may mean to you and your community.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 2.

Community Snapshot

Introduction

The Community Snapshot provides a profile of the Village and serves as the foundation of the Master Plan. As they say, ‘to know where you want to go, you first must know where you are and where you have been.’

The Village of Colon is 1.73 square miles in size and is located in northeast St. Joseph County, approximately 16 miles north of Sturgis and 22 miles east of Three Rivers. Two State highways (M-86 and M-66) serve the area and provide easy access to these larger communities, as well as direct links to M-60 and US-131, giving the Village of Colon a prime market area. Situated in close proximity to three significant lakes (Palmer Lake, Sturgeon Lake, and Long Lake) and located an easy distance from Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, the Village also serves as a recreational and service attraction to visitors.

The Village of Colon, previously home to Blackstone the Magician, is widely known as the Magic Capital of the World. It continues to house Abbott’s Manufacturing Company, the world’s largest producer of magic paraphernalia and hosts the annual Magic Get-Together consisting of public performances by some of the world’s leading illusionists. Fab Magic Company, hosting the largest magic shop in the country, is also located within the Village.

Two buildings of historical significance are known to be located within the Village - the Lamb Knit Goods Company Building located on the corner of Blackstone Avenue and Elm Street and the Colon Public Library built in 1914 located on Blackstone Avenue. Limited manufacturing, as well as local retail and service businesses remain viable; but the majority of residents commute to surrounding areas for employment. Local services continue to support both visitors and residents. However, since much of the land within the Village has been developed, redevelopment and revitalization will play a major role in the community’s future.

Historical Overview

Roswell Schellhous of Ohio was the first to settle in the area. In 1829, he built a log house that contained two rooms and was used as a hotel for other settlers and travelers.

Roswell left for Illinois in 1838 but by then Lorancie, Martin, and George Schellhos, brothers of the first settler, had located in Colon and were on their way to becoming leaders in the community.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

The Village of Colon was originally platted in 1832 but the plat was not officially recorded until 1844. It was actually named by Lawrence Schellhous when he opened a dictionary at random and saw the word: "Colon". He determined that the town would be named that, as he felt the lake and the river resembled the shape of a grammatical colon.

George and Martin Schellhous bought the present mill site and erected a sawmill, later adding a grist mill. Charles Palmer of Ohio (Palmer Lake) moved into the township and joined the Schellhous' in the organization of several of the area's first manufacturing enterprises.

Cattle, hogs, and sheep were raised successfully in the area. Draft horses and fine racehorses soon became a paying enterprise resulting in the establishment of one of the first race tracks in St. Joseph County in Colon.

Known as the "Magic Capital of the World", the Village of Colon has gained widespread recognition for the invention and manufacture of magic tricks.

One of America's most notable magicians, Harry Blackstone (1885-1965), lived in the Village of Colon. His fame grew in the first three decades of the twentieth century when magic shows were a staple of vaudeville and Broadway. Blackstone's show often included the "dancing" handkerchief trick and rabbits which were given to young spectators.

Australian Percy Abbott visited the famous American magician Harry Blackstone and then returned to Colon and started the Abbott Magic Novelty Company in 1933. Mainly a mail-order operation, the company continues to devise tricks which baffle the human eye and mind. In 1934 Abbott sponsored the first "Magic Get-Together," now an annual event attracting thousands of professional and amateur devotees. Blackstone himself, as well as other famous conjurers, have performed at these festivals.

Blackstone's colorful personality enhanced the drama of magic and endeared him to Colon which in the early 1960s renamed Main Street in his honor.

Land Use

Village Core:

Map 1 (see Map PDF) shows existing land uses in the Village. Commercial land use has developed primarily at the intersection of M-86 and Blackstone Avenue. This major intersection has historically served as the 'downtown' of the community and continues as the commercial core in the area. It is occupied by a mix of retail, office and civic use, intermingled with residential properties.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Generally commercial development remains near the geographical center of the Village allowing for a vital commercial core and growth of a strong civic center that includes the Village Offices, a library, post office, and public lands. The strength of this center has encouraged an active community life and has served to maintain a vital business district as well as influence the commercial and residential land use pattern of the surrounding area.

The Village core does face some challenges, however. On-street parking is haphazard and poorly marked. Off-street parking is not provided in clearly designated and easily accessible locations. Parking limitations reduce options for occupancy of existing buildings and present limitations for community events. Some building facades need to be improved or restored. And there is a general lack of unified theme regarding building design/form, signage, and the streetscape.

Walkability in the core is impeded by wide crossings and sidewalk interruptions. Non-Motorized travel in the downtown area is further limited by a lack of bike lanes, and bike-related facilities. This pattern has resulted in a lack of pedestrian connectivity between ‘activity centers’ in the Village, which is crucial to the vitality of a community core.

A potential challenge to the strength of the core is the presence of commercial land use and vacant land in outlying areas along the major corridors leading into the Village. Unlimited nonresidential development in these areas will serve to diminish the role of the Village core and destabilize the existing business district.

M-86 Corridor:

Large lot residential and intermittent commercial land use have developed along the M-86 corridor as it extends east and west out of the Village. A land use pattern could be designed to provide for a successful transition between the commercial uses of the Village core and the residential development south and north of the corridor.

While it has the potential to be a successful corridor, pedestrian and non-motorized mobility is severely limited; site and roadway design is characteristic of ‘road into town’ corridors of suburban communities; and, as a ‘gateway’ into the community it falls short of attracting visitors and passerby traffic.

Residential:

A portion of the residential land use within the Village is situated in compact neighborhoods adjacent to the Village core. These residential properties are characterized by older homes on smaller lots. These neighborhoods provide the mix of use and pedestrian activity vital to the economic success of a community core.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Newer, subdivision-style residential development is largely located south and east of the downtown, with limited growth west of the Village core. These residential areas began to appear as the Village grew. Within these largely residential areas are situated an elementary school, the middle school/high school campus, larger residential lots, several large vacant parcels and natural areas of woodlands and wetlands.

Multiple family residential development is limited in the Village. A large percentage of the housing stock within the Village is located on the area's lake frontage and is used only seasonally for recreation and vacation purposes. It is estimated that nearly 15% of the housing stock within the Village is considered 'seasonal housing', with nearly 60% of the lakeside homes defined as 'lake cottages'.

Industrial:

Significant land area along the railroad has been set aside for industrial development, though currently largely undeveloped. Two small manufacturing plants, Forest River and Maxitrol Co., are located within the Village and serve as major employers in the area, but concentrated industrial growth is not envisioned. Instead, adjacent communities are recognized for their planned industrial development.

Village Assets:

The Village of Colon celebrates a rich historical and cultural heritage not common to many similar-sized communities. The community's history as the 'Magic Capital of the World' has provided the Village with the renowned annual Magic Get-Together.

Further, the presence of Palmer Lake and Sturgeon Lake, the Palmer Lake Dam and the numerous related parks and recreational sites located in the center of the community have encouraged continued support of the civic realm within the Village, as well as a very active community life for its residents and visitors.

The Village of Colon can also boast a long time business district; something to celebrate in the current economy. Over 25 family-owned retail, service and office establishments call the Village home, bolstered by the strong recreational elements in close proximity to the downtown area. The creation of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) strengthens commercial opportunities further by providing funding mechanisms for renovation within the Village core and should definitely be highlighted as a 'village asset'.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Transportation

The Village of Colon is served primarily by a single major State highway (M-86) which connects the Village with M-66, a primary north/south route in the County. These highways effectively link the Village with US-12 and the Sturgis area to the south and M-60 and the Three Rivers area to the west. The remaining street network within the Village consists largely of local roads. The primary intersection within the Village functions at a high level in that M-86 is not a through transportation route for truckers or bypass traffic.

Though the lack of ‘through-traffic’ in the Village has been seen as an obstacle to economic growth, it should also be recognized that traffic congestion and excessive truck traffic in a community can not only impact vehicular and pedestrian movement but also the character of an area as a desirable place to live, shop, or visit.

Historically, the Village was served by the Penn Central Railroad Line that provided a major transportation link between Chicago and Detroit for goods, products and passengers visiting the attractions of the area’s lakes. Freight and passenger service are no longer provided to the Village given a devalued in use and funding. Passenger rail is available nearby in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek via the Amtrak lines west to Chicago and east to Detroit. The nearest passenger airports are located in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids.

The railroad track of the Penn Central Railroad Line was removed in the 1980’s and the railroad right-of-way has been targeted for a non-motorized pathway. A segment of the pathway has been developed and currently constitutes the only non-motorized facility within the Village.

Walkability, bike ability, and having choices in transportation are recognized as providing benefits related to public health, a cleaner environment, economic development and mobility across all ages/abilities.

The adoption of a ‘complete streets’ approach to infrastructure planning and improvements within the Village would be an effective response to noted transportation issues and provide opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility for all travelers in the Village.

A ‘complete street’ is one that accommodates all people who use a roadway, not just those in cars. It offers a safe way for people to travel, regardless of their age, ability or mode of transportation- whether walking, biking, using transit or driving a car. Where we have ‘complete streets’, people have choices in transportation right outside their door that are affordable and healthy.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Utilities/Public Services

The Village of Colon provides public sanitary sewer service and public water service to the Village and adjacent areas. Electric and gas utilities are provided within the Village through Consumer Energy. Broadband is available throughout the community and is provided through Charter Communications.

The Village has its own police department and is provided fire protection through an agreement with Colon Township. Annual leaf removal, snow removal, and sidewalk maintenance are also provided with the Village by the Village Department of Public Works.

The Colon School District comprises Colon Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12); Colon Elementary School (grades K-6); and, Leonidas Elementary School (grades K-8). Colon Elementary School is advantageously situated in close proximity to the Village core.

Parks/Recreation

According to the Village of Colon Parks and Recreation Plan, ‘Colon Township’s 1000 acres of water provide year-round sport for everyone.’

Canoeing and kayaking on the St. Joseph River; water sports on Palmer Lake’; and, picnic areas, fishing sites, boat launches, and playgrounds that dot the shorelines of the area's lakes provide a host of recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. The Recreation Plan sets forth a complete inventory of the parks, special use areas, natural resource areas, and wildlife sanctuary serving the Village of Colon and the surrounding area and is incorporated herein by reference. The Village wisely views the natural features and recreational lands of the larger community as assets that will continue to bring value to Village residents and visitors.

Natural Environment

Surface Waters:

The Village of Colon is situated between Palmer and Sturgeon Lakes, which are part of the St. Joseph River chain of lakes in the area.

Palmer Lake is the largest of Colon’s lakes, covering approximately 500 acres with over 16 miles of shoreline. Palmer Lake is located south of the downtown area, with its water level controlled by a dam located on the north side of the lake which forges Swan Creek. The lake provides valuable water frontage and access within the core of the Village. A channel exists at the southwest end of the lake and connects Palmer lake to Long Lake, located approximately two miles south of the Village.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

The Palmer Lake Dam is located east of the downtown area of the Village of Colon and holds back the waters of Palmer Lake. The Dam is a beautiful attraction in the Village and has been invaluable as it provides both recreational and fishing opportunities in the area.

Sturgeon Lake is located northwest of the Village core and is an estuary of the St. Joseph River. The river flows northwest through Colon Township, making Sturgeon Lake the trailhead of the St. Joseph County River Country Water Trail. It remains a picturesque inland lake with both cottages and homes and a significant expanse of unspoiled wetlands.

Topography/Soils:

The topography of the Village is varied due to the presence of the water features. It ranges from flat to moderately steep embankments around the water areas. The topography surrounding the Village is primarily flat and open, giving the Village a 'plateau' appearance. The general geology of the area is characterized by glacial deposits of approximately 1300 ft. in depth overlying a shale bedrock formation. This area of outwash plains and glacial moraines are characterized by well-drained loamy and sandy soils.

Demographics

Population:

According to the 2010 United States Census, the Village of Colon has a population of 1173. During the period of 1990-2000, the Village experienced a lack of growth not typical to the area, revealing a population increase of only 0.24%. St. Joseph County and surrounding communities grew moderately during this period, with the State experiencing a similar percent increase in population.

During the period of 2000-2010, however, the population of the Village decreased by 4.4%, similar to the loss of population in adjacent communities. Such a decline has not been unusual to communities across the State given the stagnant economy, loss of jobs, and a resulting out-migration.

Due to the size of the Village and the area available for development, it is reasonable to assume only moderate increases in population in the future. Growth within the Village will depend on the economy, improvements that build on the community's assets, and an interest in redevelopment.

The Village of Colon was compared to several surrounding communities. These communities all share a similar physical character and general proximity to the area's amenities and resources. Further, they are all provided access by the same highway network. These data show how the Village compares demographically to communities with similar attributes. (Tables 1 and 2)

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Table 1

Surrounding Community Comparison - Population

<i>Geography</i>	1990	2000	2010	<i>Change 1990 - 2000</i>	<i>Change 2000 - 2010</i>
Village of Colon	1,224	1,227	1,173	0.24%	- 4.4%
Colon Township	3,217	3,405	3,329	5.8%	- 2.2%
Burr Oak Township	2,542	2,739	2,611	7.7%	- 4.7%
Nottawa Township	3,637	3,999	3,858	9.9%	- 3.5%
Leonidas Township	1,171	1,239	1,185	5.8%	- 4.4%
St. Joseph County	58,913	62,422	61,295	5.9%	- 1.8%
State of Michigan	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,883,640	6.9%	- 0.6%

Source: US Census

Table 2

Analogous Community Comparison - Population

<i>Geography</i>	1990	2000	2010	<i>Change 1990 - 2000</i>	<i>Change 2000 - 2010</i>
Village of Colon	1,224	1,227	1,173	0.24%	- 4.4%
Village of Burr Oak		797	828	----	3.9%
Village of Centreville	1,516	1,579	1,425	4.2%	- 9.8%
Village of Mendon		917	870	----	- 5.1%

Source: US Census

Age:

The median age of Village residents rose from 37.6 to 39.7 from 2000 to 2010. This represents a change in the median age comparable to that represented in the surrounding townships, as well as for St. Joseph County and the State of Michigan. Further, the median age within the Village continues to be very similar to that experienced in the area as a whole. (Table 3)

While the population of the Village of Colon appears to be aging, between 2000 and 2010 the age group with the highest rate of growth was the age 10 and under, with a 50% change in the share of the total population. However, in 2000, the 60 to 74 age group comprised 13% of the population. In 2010 this same age group increased its share to 16%. A similar pattern is seen with the 45 to 59 age group. In 2000, the 45 to 59 age group comprised 18% of the population, but by 2010 this same group increased its share to almost 20%. (Figure 1)

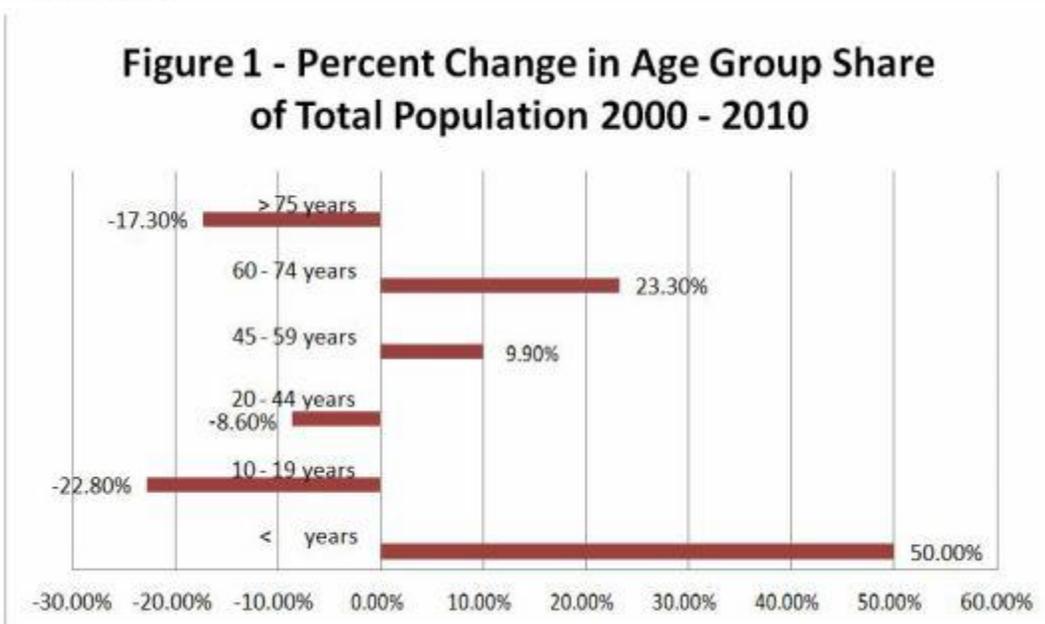
Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Table 3

Surrounding Community Comparison – Median Age

Geography	2000	2010	Change 2000-2010
Village of Colon	37.6	39.7	5.6%
Colon Township	37.4	39.7	6.1%
Burr Oak Township	35.1	37.8	7.7%
Nottawa Township	35.2	39.5	12.2%
Leonidas Township	33.7	39.6	17.5%
St. Joseph County	35.6	38.7	8.7%
State of Michigan	35.5	38.9	9.6%

Source: US Census



These age groups are characterized by new empty-nesters and retirement-age households looking to down-size their living space and seeking services and amenities related to their lifestyle changes. The Village will need to respond to this growing segment of the population as it relates to housing and services. This trend should also motivate the Village of Colon to improve the 'walkability' elements of the community.

Michigan is currently facing the loss of residents aged 20 to 44. This age group is generally composed of young professionals and working families with children that support the local economy and school districts. As such, it is seen as an indicator of economic health of an area. While many communities are finding it difficult to attract and keep residents in the 20 to 44 age group, the Village of Colon, as well as several of the surrounding communities, has been able to maintain relatively stable numbers. **Table 4** shows the 20 to 44 age group as a percent of the

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

total population by community. The area has experienced reductions from 2000 to 2010 in the 20 to 44 age group of 2% - 5%, similar to St. Joseph County as a whole.

Table 4

Surrounding Community Comparison - 20-44 Age Group Percentage

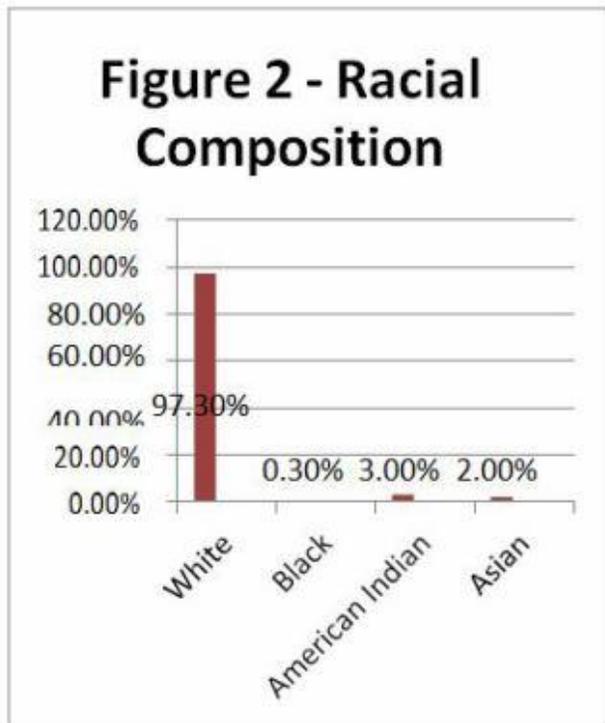
Geography	% of Total Population 2000	% of Total Population 2010	Change in % of Total Population 2000 - 2010
Village of Colon	31.3%	28.6%	- 2.7%
Colon Township	30.6%	27.4%	- 3.2%
Burr Oak Township	33.4%	28.1%	- 5.3%
Nottawa Township	31.5%	28.4%	- 3.1%
Leonidas Township	28.7%	28.0%	- 0.7%
St. Joseph County	32.9%	29.4%	- 3.5%

Source: US Census

Maintaining solid single-family residential neighborhoods, or creating new ones, is important in addressing the loss of this age group in the area. Yet, as the Village's population ages, the need for varied housing choices increases. Land use decisions that respond to both an aging population and the retention of families will be a priority.

Racial Composition:

The majority of the residents of the Village Colon are white, with minority representation consistently at around 3% of the overall population since 1990. Surrounding communities generally saw an increase in the minority population from 7-8% in 2000 to 10-11% in 2010. (Figure 2)



Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Household Characteristics:

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of households in the Village of Colon declined by 6.9%. This is consistent with the 4.4% decrease in population during that same period, and the 6.9% increase in vacant housing units. This is also consistent with the lack of growth experienced by surrounding Colon Township. To the contrary, the number of households continued to grow in area townships during 2000 to 2010, in conjunction with a decrease in average household size. Reduced family sizes and increases in single and retired households often results in an increase in households but a reduction in the household size. (Table 5)

Table 5

Surrounding Community Comparison – Household Characteristics

Geography	Number of Households 2000	Number of Households 2010	Change – Number of Households	Average Household Size - 2000	Average Household Size – 2010	Change – Average Household Size	Median Owner-Occupied Home Value
Village of Colon	521	485	- 6.9 %	2.36	2.42	2.5%	\$ 96,100
Colon Township	1332	1269	- 4.7%	2.55	2.62	2.7%	\$113,900
Burr Oak	980	940	- 4.1%	2.79	2.78	- 0.36%	\$112,200
Township							
Nottawa Township	1325	1330	0.38%	2.83	2.70	- 4.6%	\$127,300
Leonidas Township	407	421	3.4%	3.04	2.79	- 8.2%	\$127,000

Source: US Census

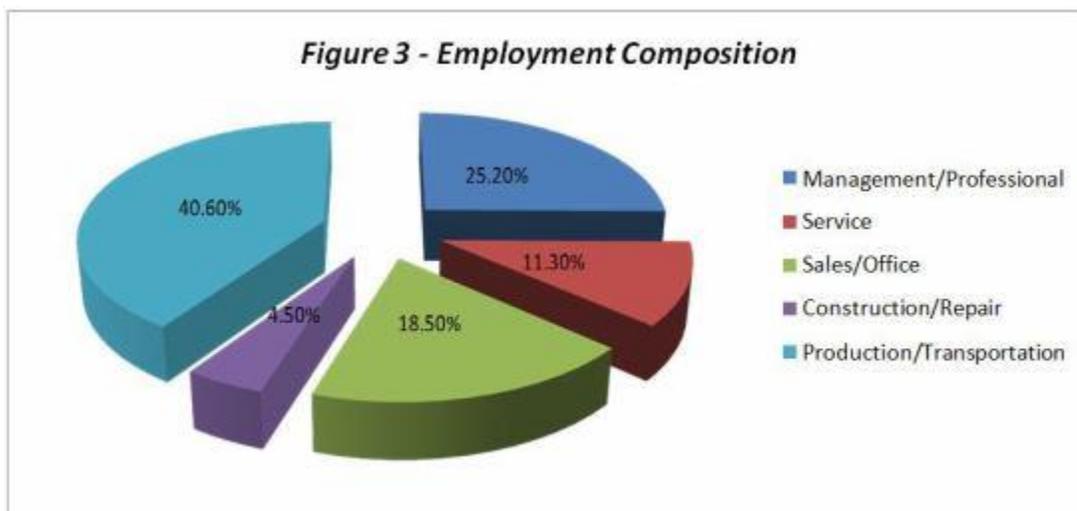
The median value in 2010 for owner occupied homes in the Village was \$96,100. This is below the median value for the State of Michigan (\$147,500) but consistent with St. Joseph County and the surrounding communities.

This helps reinforce the need to focus on maintaining strong single-family housing stock, reinvesting in older neighborhoods, and the enforcement of zoning and general nuisance ordinances.

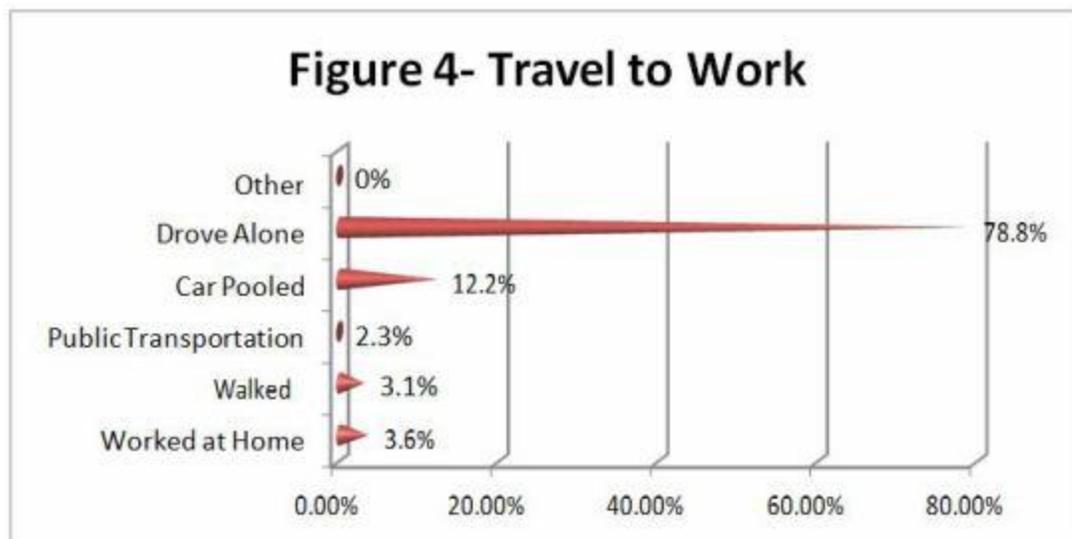
Employment:

The residents of the Village of Colon have a diverse employment base that ranges from white to blue collar jobs. Forty-one percent are employed in production jobs, which constitute the largest sector of employment for Village residents. The Villages management and sales/office sectors combine to provide for another 44% of the employment base. (Figure 3)

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022



Given the size and limited employment base within the Village, most Village workers commute and work outside of the Village. Almost 90% of Village workers commute, with 79% of those commuting in a single-occupied vehicle. Local businesses, however, are generally owned and operated by Village residents, including home based businesses, which allow for short commutes to work and an opportunity for pedestrian/non-vehicular activity. (Figure 4)



A large commuter population has implications for land use within the Village. Providing a variety of housing choices, a small town setting, a unique downtown area, and pedestrian and non-vehicle opportunities will assist in attracting and retaining families and the workforce age group. The key will be to offer a lifestyle that is not available within the suburban centers or rural areas.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Income:

The Village of Colon has a median household income that is slightly below that of the State. (Table 6) The Village's median income is comparable, however, to the median incomes of surrounding communities and of St. Joseph as a whole.

Table 6
Surrounding Community Comparison - Income

Geography	Median Household Income 2010
Village of Colon	\$45,096
Colon Township	\$47,470
Burr Oak Township	\$44,828
Nottawa Township	\$44,965
Leonidas Township	\$38,661
St. Joseph County	\$44,392
State of Michigan	\$48,432

Housing:

Housing in and around the Village of Colon is generally well-maintained. It predominantly takes the form of single family structures of wood, masonry, stone and mixed materials. New construction of single-family homes has been limited. Instead, recent activity has largely consisted of the redevelopment of existing structures and property improvements in and around the Village core.

Several striking demographic characteristics include the high percentage of vacant housing units and the percentage of renter occupied housing units in the village in 2010. In 2000, just over 18% of the Village's housing units were vacant. In 2010, the vacancy rate increased to over 25%. (Table 7) However, it is significant to note that a majority (65%) of the housing units in the Village identified as vacant in 2010 are categorized as 'for seasonal use'. This can also be said for the surrounding Colon Township, where 75% of the units identified as vacant are considered seasonal homes. This is consistent with the seasonal population characteristic of the area. Interestingly, the percentage of renter occupied units within the Village decreased since 2000 but remains higher than the percentage of the total for the County, or the area in general. In fact, renter-occupied housing continues to constitute almost one-third of the housing units within the Village. Such a percentage could suggest a mobile population with limited ties to the community. This also may help explain Colon's lower median home values.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Table 7
Surrounding Community Comparison - Housing

Geography	% Vacant Housing Units 2000	% Vacant Housing Units 2010	% Renter Occupied Housing Units 2000	% Renter Occupied Housing Units 2010
Village of Colon	18.50%	25.40%	29.20%	28.00%
Colon Township	24.30%	31.00%	19.40%	19.00%
Burr Oak Township	7.90%	12.90%	18.60%	16.80%
Nottawa Township	12.90%	16.90%	20.20%	18.40%
Leonidas Township	5.80%	10.60%	10.80%	14.30%
St. Joseph County	11.80%	16.30%	23.10%	24.60%
State of Michigan	10.60%	14.60%	26.20%	27.90%

These trends serve to provide critical reaction to the Village for serving future residents. Strong single-family areas should be bolstered to help support and provide desirable locations for home ownership and encourage retention of vital age-groups. There also appears to be sufficient stock of work-force housing. There may be a potential demand for higher-end housing that is not being met in the local market, as well as opportunities for housing attractive to seniors. And, in recognition of renter occupied trends, the conversion of upper floor residential uses that allows property owners to increase the amount of revenue generating space would introduce residential options into the downtown and give consumers additional housing choices.

Economics:

Economic Influences

The economy in the United States is facing pressures from several different directions. Business and construction activity has slowed, consumer spending fluctuates, the credit markets are tight, and consumer confidence is volatile. Manufacturing has been especially hard hit as consumer spending has declined. Michigan and its sizable manufacturing economy has experienced a significant economic downturn. However, unemployment statewide has dropped from 11.4% in 2010 and 8.9% in 2012 to 7.7% in 2013 ... 1.2% higher than the national unemployment rate of 6.5%.

In southwest Michigan, impacts from the national and statewide trends are evident. The unemployment rate in Kalamazoo - Portage area peaked in 2010 at 11.5% but was 4.7% points lower at 6.8% in 2013. Conversely, the unemployment rate in St. Joseph County was 7.3% in December, up from 7.2% in November, 2013. Similarly, the unemployment rate in neighboring Van Buren County was 8.9% in December, up from 8.1% in November of 2013.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Tourism

Southwest Michigan is an important tourism destination for travelers from the Midwest and beyond. Tourism represents a significant economic engine, employing nearly 200,000 Michigan residents statewide and generating nearly \$900 million in state taxes. The keys to our region's draw include our proximity to major Midwest cities, our natural environment, the recreational opportunities that exist, and the local 'magic' industry.

This area of St. Joseph County receives a significant number of seasonal visitors with its many vacation homes/cottages. It is estimated that almost one third of all spending on tourism goes to expenses related to stays at seasonal homes. Spending related to camping also appears strong in the area relative to the State's average. The regional tourism destinations, such as lakes, resorts, and festivals generate thousands of visitors to the area every year.

Conclusion:

The Village of Colon is a desirable place to live, with proximity to many natural and recreational assets, a strong history, and sustainable local businesses. Although population and housing growth have been limited in recent years, the area's tourism opportunities and proximity to population centers positions the Village of Colon for a positive future.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 3.

Planning Framework

This Master Plan has been developed based on public participation and the planning issues identified through the public input process. These issues provided the foundation for the community vision and helped define the values, goals and strategies of the Plan, as well as the specific elements of the Future Land Use plan.

Public Participation

Several methods were used to engage the residents and business owners of the Village of Colon in a discussion of the important issues and priorities within the community. From an informal group setting (Community Forum) to the one-on-one format of the Master Plan Open House, community members were afforded the opportunity to provide input and participate at a meaningful level in the planning process.

Community Forum

On March 18, 2013, a Community Forum was held at the Colon Library within the Village of Colon. This event was attended by over 20 persons. After a short presentation about what a Master Plan is, the process used to develop a Master Plan, and the role of public input in the process, participants split up into working groups of 4-7 persons. Each group was asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) within the Village, and then presented the common findings on what they liked and did not like, as well as where they saw opportunities for change in the Village.

The strengths of the Village most often cited included the lakes and parks in the area, the Village's civic assets (public services, library, churches, school district) and its value as a 'small town', including the local businesses and the level of community involvement.

Weaknesses identified included the presence of vacant and/or deteriorated buildings (commercial and residential), the need for additional businesses, and the lack of parking. Concern was also expressed regarding the loss of the area's young population. Important opportunities to build on included the valuable lake frontage/access and recreational assets, the presence of a strong local commercial core and infrastructure, and a high level of coordination and cooperation that is growing through strong Village leadership. The threat most frequently identified was the loss of population and the increase in vacant buildings.

Master Plan Open House

An open House was held on April 29, 2014 at the Colon Library in the Village of Colon to preview the draft Master Plan. Illustrations and graphics were displayed around the room setting forth the elements of the Plan and describing in detail the Future Land Use Map. Attendees browsed the displays, asked questions and provided input through conversation with Village

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

officials and Planning Commission members. General consensus was voiced regarding the major recommendations of the Plan, but valuable suggestions were received on specific elements of the Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

Public Hearing

The public hearing held on the draft Master Plan by the Planning Commission offered an additional opportunity for public input in the planning process. The public hearing was held on March 15, 2022 at the Village Hall and was well attended by the community. The positive comments received on the plan are a testimony to the value of public participation throughout the process and the importance of having a Master Plan that reflects the priorities and planning values of the community.

Issues

The Issues identified in the public participation stage of the planning process can be summarized as follows:

- Downtown - revitalizing downtown buildings; attracting shoppers, tourists and local businesses; preserving historic buildings; providing mixed-use opportunities; providing adequate parking, and marketing the 'small town' atmosphere.
- Streetscape Improvements strengthen the 'walkability' of the downtown area through sidewalk and streetscape improvements; continuing to improve downtown landscaping; incorporating bike lanes; and accommodating outdoor commercial activities.
- M-86 Corridor - creating attractive gateways into the Village; attracting travelers to the downtown area from M-66, US-12, and M-60; enhancing wayfinding; and providing for bike and pedestrian travel.
- Commercial Development - attracting a variety of small businesses; retaining existing businesses; directing commercial development toward the downtown area to complement existing businesses and parks and take advantage of existing services.
- Housing - protecting existing housing stock, attracting a variety of housing, and initiating property maintenance efforts.
- 'Magic Capital of the World' - celebrating the history of the community; continuing regional marketing of local events/festivals; and building on the contributions of a seasonal population,

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

- Recreation/Community Activities - building on waterfront recreational opportunities; improving hiking and biking trails; and strengthening connections to area-wide recreational assets and points of interest to attract visitors/tourists.
- Community Partnership continues coordinated land use efforts and communication between Village and Township planning officials, the DDA, and local businesses and residents.
pre
- 'Sense of Place' - embracing the objectives of place making to attract talent and the knowledge work force (i.e. our youth), including a concentration on 'walkable environments, recreational assets, housing variety, and 'small-town' amenities.

Issues related to a land use or a specific geographic location or corridor are mapped on the Village Issues Map (Map 2 – see PDF file).

These planning issues provide the foundation for the planning principles (values, vision, goals, and strategies) outlined in Chapter 4. Planning Principles.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 4

Planning Principles

The issues identified through the public participation process and set forth in Chapter 3. have been used to define the underlying planning values of the Village of Colon. These values provide the basis for an overall land use vision for the community, from which planning goals and strategies have been developed. The Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 5.) has been created based entirely upon these planning principles (values, vision, goals and strategies).

Planning Values

The following Values have been derived from the Issues identified through public input and represent the beliefs and desires of the citizens of this community.

Small-Town Character. The residents of the Village of Colon are proud of their home town and appreciate the familiarity and friendliness of living and doing business with neighbors and friends.

Sense of place. The waterfront amenities present throughout the Village and the community's rich history as the 'Magic Capital of the World' provide the Village of Colon with a strong foundation to be a 'destination' within the region ... a place to drive to - not a place to drive through.

Natural Resources. The natural water features in the area are valued for their beauty, their recreational potential, and their contribution to the environment.

Walkable Community. Its compact arrangement and the presence of 'destination-based assets (waterfront areas, parks, retail) inspire growth of the Village as a pedestrian-friendly community. Streetscape features (sidewalks, street trees, benches, etc.) and connectivity within the community should be enhanced as walkability and 'sense of place' continue to be related to economic growth and stability.

Opportunities for Growth. The Village recognizes that its ability to be a 'destination' within the region, the prevention of the deterioration of the Downtown and area neighborhoods, and the promotion of the local business community are key opportunities to drive economic and population growth in the area.

Vision

The Vision is a statement that describes where the Village of Colon wants to go in the future. The citizens have a very strong appreciation for the history of their community and speak with a

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

common voice regarding the opportunities and challenges that confront them. As a result, they are able to present a clear direction for their future.

The Vision is an 'ideal' and likely will not be possible to attain entirely. However, it should serve to motivate and provide guidance to decision-makers and residents.

Our Vision for the Village of Colon is a community characterized by:

A vibrant 'small-town' atmosphere -- neighborhoods, local shops and businesses that serve the needs of the community, with an emphasis on service and friendliness. The Downtown and waterfront areas are the focal points of the Village, Residents are proud of the history and heritage of their community.

A 'destination place' -- the Village parks and waterfronts, local events, and a pedestrian-friendly downtown area give the Village a strong 'sense of place' and define it as a destination.

A rich natural environment -- quality waterfront area in the downtown, ample residential lakefront property, and scenic areas near rivers and wetlands provide a unique and beautiful setting. These areas are valued by the community and play a major role in the economic stability of the Village.

Economic growth initiatives -- that strengthen the Downtown, provide for a variety of housing stock, and establish the entrances into the Village as gateways to 'some place special. These initiatives are promoted to serve as a catalyst for business growth and attract travelers.

A complete streets' community -- with a network of non-motorized routes and connectivity with area recreational facilities and activity centers, the Village of Colon is a 'complete streets' community. It provides not only a range of transportation and recreational opportunities for its residents - but also serves as an important link in the region's economic and recreational network.

The Vision Realized: Goals & Strategies

The Vision serves to inspire specific goals and strategies that will then be implemented through the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 5.).

A goal is a general statement of a desired outcome - it should be realistic and attainable. Each goal is followed by a set of strategies. A strategy is a specific action that accomplishes the outcome set forth in the goal. The strategies provide the basis for the Implementation elements of the Plan.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Vision Element: A Vibrant Small Town Atmosphere

Goal: Preserve and promote the Downtown.

Strategy:

Develop a Downtown Sub Area Plan that sets forth specific strategies for development and public improvements within the Downtown.

Strategy:

Promote Downtown businesses through local organizations (i.e. Downtown Development Authority).

Strategy:

Emphasize the historic character of the Downtown and provide incentives and/or direction for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

Strategy:

Incorporate waterfront areas as focal points within the Downtown.

Strategy:

Consider alternative parking arrangements Downtown and invest in parking improvements to support local businesses and residents.

Strategy:

Allow mixed-use development, including upper floor dwellings, in and near the Downtown.

Strategy:

Provide pedestrian amenities (street furniture, signs, streetlamps, etc.) along Downtown corridors and at key focal points in the Village.

Strategy:

Provide 'wayfinding' signs in the Village to guide motorists and pedestrians to local attractions.

Goal: Promote safe and efficient transportation within the community.

Strategy:

Implement street designs within the Village that support multi-modal transportation and create a more livable and walkable community. (i.e. 'Complete Streets' approach)

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Strategy:

Work cooperatively with MDOT to achieve roadway improvements consistent with the 'Complete Streets' approach.

Strategy:

Apply 'traffic calming' techniques, such as reduced street widths, on-street parking, marked pedestrian crossings, and landscaped bump-outs within the Downtown and Downtown Fringe.

Goal: Retain the elements that make the Village of Colon special.

Strategy:

Continue efforts to maintain and beautify Village parks, waterfronts and public areas.

Strategy:

Market local businesses, waterfront assets, and the 'pedestrian-friendly downtown as a unique destination within the region.

Strategy:

Continue to promote the heritage of the Village through events/festivals. These events should be marketed to a regional audience.

Vision Element: A 'Destination' Place

Goal: Provide key services within the region.

Strategy:

Market businesses within the Village as destinations for nearby rural residents.

Strategy:

Market businesses and local events within the Village as destinations for regional users of area recreational facilities.

Strategy:

Promote the Village's location between Detroit and Chicago as a premier location for 'new economy' businesses.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Goal: Recognize the value of nearby points of interest and area recreational assets.

Strategy:

Provide for easy access and connectivity to the Downtown from surrounding points of interest and area recreational assets.

Strategy:

Accommodate non-motorized facilities (egg. bike lanes, sidewalks) within Village transportation routes.

Strategy:

Coordinate local events with area recreational opportunities.

Strategy:

Work with business owners to cross-promote businesses and attractions in the community.

Goal: Recognize and promote the lakes and wetland areas as community assets.

Strategy:

Apply zoning techniques designed to manage shoreline development, such as a waterfront overlay approach.

Strategy:

Work in conjunction with area lake associations and the St. Joseph County Drain Commission to create a long term plan for water quality preservation and shoreline management.

Strategy:

Seek opportunities to expand or enhance the vistas around the lakes.

Strategy:

Continue to maintain lake levels established by law.

Goal: Protect the water quality of the lakes and wetland area.

Strategy:

Implement the Village Wellhead Protection Plan.

Strategy:

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Establish floodplain protection measures using updated FEMA information provided by the State of Michigan.

Strategy:

Educate waterfront homeowners about environmentally-friendly practices.

Strategy:

Apply low-impact development solutions along shorelines, such as vegetative buffers and rain gardens.

Goal: Provide for recreational opportunities that take advantage of the natural environment.

Strategy:

Plan for non-motorized paths near the lakes and wetland area that will connect parks and other activity centers.

Strategy:

Plan for ecologically-sensitive public access to the wetlands area, such as a boardwalk into the marsh. Work with the School District and environmental groups to provide education on wetlands and environmental protection.

Vision Element: Economic Growth Initiatives

Goal: Promote M-86 as a vibrant business corridor and a connection to Downtown.

Strategy:

Identify and use public spaces to establish 'gateway' entrances that draw traffic into the Village. Extend streetscape improvements to these 'gateways' to provide a visual connection to the Downtown

Strategy:

Connect the M-86 corridor with pedestrian pathways and sidewalks to Downtown, the lakes, and other Village attractions.

Strategy:

Make the M-86 corridor more pedestrian-friendly with pedestrian crossings at key locations, safe sidewalks, and pedestrian amenities.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Strategy:

Create a wayfinding system (signs and/or other graphic communications such as colors, logos, etc.) to guide motorists and pedestrians to Downtown and to local attractions.

Strategy:

Work with local business owners to cross-promote attractions in the community.

Goal: Diversify the economic base of the Village.

Strategy:

Vision Element: Economic Growth Initiatives Attract 'new economy' workers through policies that allow 'home occupations' and extend wireless and broadband service throughout the community.

Strategy:

Promote the reuse of old and vacant structures in the Downtown through a form based approach instead of use-based approach to redevelopment.

Goal: Continue to protect and promote a variety of housing stock within the Village.

Strategy:

Promote housing styles that serve residents throughout the life cycle, including independent living units and assisted living facilities'

Strategy:

Identify areas for condominiums and townhomes to make the Village attractive to entrepreneurs, as well as seniors and retirees.

Strategy:

Protect and provide for housing stock attractive to families, including affordable workforce housing targeted to families with low to moderate incomes, in close proximity to local activity centers and points of interest (e.g. schools, parks, etc.)

Goal: Continue the provision of local services and maintenance of local infrastructure.

Strategy:

Maintain a budget that supports the current level of services and ensures efficient service delivery.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Goal: Maintain homes and businesses to keep neighborhoods safe and attractive and protect property values.

Strategy:

Adopt and apply a property maintenance program.

Strategy:

Educate the public about property maintenance.

Strategy:

Provide incentives to maintain/improve property through public programs (e.g. monthly trash pickup, leaf removal, etc.)

Vision Element: A 'Complete Streets' Community

Goal: Plan and allow for motorized and non-motorized traffic on all streets.

Strategy:

Plan for non-motorized facilities (bike lanes, sidewalks) along street corridors that connect activity centers, such as parks, schools, and business areas.

Strategy:

Implement complete streets' concepts within the Village. (www.completestreets.org)

Strategy:

Provide pedestrian amenities at key focal points along the corridors.

Goal: Provide connections between area points of interest and activity centers.

Strategy:

Provide safe and convenient access to the trail system.

Strategy:

Connect main corridors into the Village with the Downtown through non-motorized facilities (bike lanes, sidewalks).

Strategy:

Provide 'wayfinding' signs in the Village to guide motorists and pedestrians to local attractions.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 5.

Future Land Use

Future Land Use Classifications

The Future Land Use Map (Map 3 - see Map PDF) illustrates how the residents of the Village of Colon would like to see their community develop. The desired land use patterns are depicted through the use of the following land use classification scheme:

Residential, Low - Medium Density (R-LM)

This classification represents a large portion of the Village and generally includes existing residential neighborhoods surrounding the Village core, including waterfront properties. This approach forwards the desire to protect the community's existing housing stock.

In addition, the large, mostly undeveloped land areas adjacent to the existing residential neighborhoods are classified as R-LM. These land areas have been identified to provide for the expansion of housing attractive to families.

The R-LM classification is designed to provide for single- and two-family residential land use on smaller lots in traditional neighborhood settings. Existing land use patterns reflect a general density of 5 to 6 dwelling units per acre and lot sizes that average 7500 square feet.

Manufactured Housing Community (MHC)

It is estimated that the existing and planned manufactured housing development areas within the adjacent communities will meet the demand for manufactured housing during the life of this plan.

Transitional (TR)

The Transitional classification is intended to recognize the ability of the fringe areas of the Downtown to serve as a transition or buffer between the Village core and surrounding residential areas.

This area of 'transition' is ideal for providing a mixture of housing options in locations that are in close proximity (walkable) to areas of employment and commerce, such as the downtown, while also encouraging the preservation of single family homes near the center of the village.

Higher density residential development is envisioned to include lofts, mansion apartment buildings, townhouses, mixed use buildings, and senior housing (independent/assisted living and continual care), ranging in density from 5 to 6 dwelling units per acre.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

This classification is directed to areas that are generally located in close proximity to the Village core with easy access to amenities and local services, and where existing residential development may be experiencing redevelopment pressure.

Site and building design within these transitional areas are very important and should project an image that compliments the Village core. For this reason, development standards that use a form-based approach will be applied.

Village Core (VC)

This classification encompasses the Village center or downtown area of the Village of Colon. The Village core is the retail, historical and cultural center of the Village and provides the community its 'sense of place'. It is an area of mixed use, characterized by historical residences intermingled with commercial activity, recreational assets and community space. In recognition of this character, a subarea plan for the core has been developed and is set forth later in this Chapter.

Corridor Commercial (CC)

The CC classification is directed to the commercial area along the M-86 corridor which extends east into the Village core and that portion of M-86 which stretches through the southeast section of the Village. This classification is characterized by auto-oriented commercial activity.

This classification recognizes the 'gateway' nature of M-86 as it extends through the Village. Streetscape improvements and site development that is responsive to this important corridor should be considered to present an attractive entrance to the Village and announce to travelers that they have entered a special place.

Adding gateway elements such as wayfinding signs and common streetscape treatments also help provide continuity and connection between the M-86 corridor and the Village core.

Because these 'gateways' are crucial to the stability and planned growth of the Village, the M-86 corridor has been identified as a 'highlighted plan element and is discussed in more detail later in the Chapter.

Public (P)

This classification includes institutional uses such as public schools, government buildings and churches. Public parks and points of public waterfront access are also included. Their public use is not expected to change over time and should be recognized. Land use patterns on surrounding properties should be designed to complement and/or take advantage of the public nature of the property.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Light Industrial (LI)

When the Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1976, extensive land area along M-86 and along both sides of the Penn Central Railroad in the northeast portion of the Village was zoned for industrial land use.

The existing industrial zoning along M-86 as it stretches east and west out of the Village is proposed to remain light industrial. This industrial land use pattern is proposed in recognition of existing land use and infrastructure. However, the remaining industrial zoning is proposed to be reconsidered for land use that is responsive to the natural features and recreational/water assets that surround it.

It is estimated that the existing and planned industrial areas within the adjacent communities will assist in meeting demand for light industrial land use during the life of this plan.

Waterfront Overlay (WO)

Waterfront Overlay exists as a 'classification layer' that recognizes shorelines and wetland areas within the village. These areas play a crucial role in preserving the water quality of Palmer Lake and Sturgeon Lake. They also are key in the area's natural storm water management systems, as well as providing important natural habitat and wildlife corridors.

The Waterfront Overlay functions as a 'classification layer' placed 'over' (and therefore, in addition to the land use classification. It is envisioned to offer design/use alternatives in these important areas in recognition of their value to the environmental health and safety of the region.

Highlighted Plan Elements

Many of the Highlighted Plan Elements detailed below are located on **map 4**. (see Map PDF)

A. Village Core Subarea Plan

As the geographical, economic, and historical center of the Village, the core requires specific planning consideration.

The main intersection within the Village core consists of a north-south route (Blackstone Ave/M-86) that is provided a 2 lane roadway with on-street parking north of the intersection and a 4-lane roadway with no on street parking south of the intersection. Blackstone Ave/M-86 is situated within a 66-foot-wide right-of-way.

State Street (M-86) and Colon Road constitute the east-west route through the Village core. State Street (M-86) - the east leg, is provided by two (2) west-bound through lanes and a single east-bound lane at the intersection. East of the bridge the roadway widens to four (4) lanes. On-street parking is provided near the intersection on the south side of the road. The west leg (Colon

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Road) consists of two (2) through lanes with both diagonal and parallel on street parking provided. State Street (M 86) and Colon Road are also located within 66-foot-wide right-of-ways.

The most recent traffic counts (2010) on Blackstone/M-86 and State Street (M-86)/Colon Road show average daily volumes of between 5000 and 6000 vehicles, and there is no reason to expect that these will increase significantly. According to generally accepted transportation planning standards, two (2) travel lanes in each direction is typically only necessary when traffic volumes exceed 10,000 - 15,000 vehicles per day. This would suggest that the intersection is operating at capacity and that the both roadways through the Village core have a greater vehicle capacity than there is traffic volume.

Consistent with the design elements of a 'Complete Streets' approach, the Village core concept suggests a modification to the roadway Downtown such to establish one rough lane in each direction, add a center I turn lane - and establish on-street parking adjacent to the curb - all within the existing 66-foot-wide right-of-way of each roadway. (Map 4 - see Map PDF)

Blackstone Ave/M-86 and State Street (M 86) should also be considered for the addition of bike lanes. Further, unified crosswalks should be established within the intersection to improve walkability in the Village core., and coordinated streetscape enhancements (i.e. lighting, street furniture, landscaping) incorporated into the area.

The advantage of this 'road diet' approach to the Village core is the additional room that will be provided within the existing public realm (right-of-way) to accommodate on-street parking, bike lanes, and the use of the sidewalk area for street café extensions, landscaping, etc. at very little cost.

Visually narrowing roadways by reducing the number of travel lanes has the added benefit of slowing traffic speeds, which will also add to the walkability and economic strength of the Village core.

B. M-86 Corridor

While the M-86 Corridor may be an established economic benefit for the Village of Colon, its suburban 'strip' character (parking lots, buildings set back from the street, poorly defined pedestrian amenities, lack of an attractive streetscape) creates an impression that the Village is just like any other highway, auto-oriented community.

The M-86 Corridor should be re-versioned as a gateway into the Village of Colon and made to serve as a catalyst to bringing shoppers, travelers, and diners into the Village core.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

The Plan envisions a common streetscape scheme complementary to the Village core to give a unified look and feel to the corridor, including lighting, signs, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

A system of wayfinding signs should also be incorporated to guide visitors to points of interest within the Village, including water features and parks within the core, and existing/planned greenways that connect to area-wide recreational assets.

A Sidewalk network and bike lanes should be designed to provide functional and visual connectivity between the gateway corridors and the Village core. Crosswalks with brick or concrete pavers make crossing a street feel safer and should be established in appropriate locations along M 86 to make the gateways feel pedestrian friendly as they enter the Village core.

C. South Burr Oak Corridor

The South Burr Oak corridor is an established area of low to moderate income housing and plays a vital role in providing affordable workforce housing within the Colon community. The future economic vitality of Colon is directly linked to establishing and maintaining quality and safe housing for working families. Located in close proximity to an existing industrial employment center, local commercial services, and school facilities, revitalization of the South Burr Oak Corridor that supports the rehab of existing low and moderate income housing, as well as the establishment of new multi-family housing targeted to families with low to moderate incomes, is consistent with local economic development and housing strategies.

Sidewalks and bike lanes should be established in this area. Historically, low to moderate income families tend to use sidewalks and bike paths as their primary form of transportation. The street committee, which also oversees sidewalks, should look at putting in sidewalk and bike lanes along the South Burr Oak Corridor.

D. Non-Motorized Trail Connections

The Plan illustrates proposed extensions of the existing non-motorized pathway currently located within the railroad right-of-way north of the Village core.

The non-motorized trail is proposed to run the length of the railroad right-of way recognizing the environmental and aesthetic value of the wetlands surrounding that area.

The proposed non-motorized trail has an added ability to connect to the area sidewalk network and proposed bike lane routes. These connections could be enhanced through parking facilities and retail/recreational opportunities that would identify and encourage their use as 'trailheads'.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Further development of bike lanes and sidewalks along the major streets that connect the non-motorized trail to the Village core will provide additional connectivity within the Village.

Pathway extensions that serve to connect the Village with the recreational trail systems in adjoining communities should be an additional goal. A completed trail system would provide easy access to residents and visitors of surrounding areas to explore the Village of Colon.

E. Downtown Waterfront

The Village of Colon is unique in its several valuable waterfront areas situated favorably in the Village core. These areas include a small Village Park off Swan Street on the west shoreline of Palmer Lake and extensive shoreline frontage on the east side of Palmer Lake, south of State Street. Both sites are actively used for recreation (picnicking, boating and fishing) throughout the summer season.

The Village recognizes these points of access to Palmer Lake as 'assets' that provide recreational opportunities, 'gathering places', and usable green/open space within the Downtown area. These assets have been connected to each other and to other 'activity centers' within the Downtown by sidewalks. Emphasis should be placed on keeping these routes walkable. These spaces have also been identified as magnets for complimentary economic activity on surrounding properties.

Zoning Plan

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires that a Master Plan include a Zoning Plan, which 'include(s) an explanation of how the land use classifications set forth on the Future Land Use Map relate to the districts on the zoning map'.

Table 7 sets forth the future land use classifications and identifies the corresponding zoning district from the Village of Colon Zoning Ordinance.

The Zoning Plan also provides recommendations regarding the implementation of the Master Plan through the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Chapter 6.

Implementation

Project Priorities

This Master Plan will be useful to the Village of Colon if it is consistently consulted when making land use related decisions and actively implemented in coordination with area governmental entities and civic organizations.

This chapter outlines and prioritizes specific actions identified to successfully implement the Plan.

Each implementation action is listed with a 'priority number and assigned a general time frame for completion. The Village body primarily responsible for moving the action forward is also identified.

The 'prioritization scheme' applied within the Implementation Plan is as follows:

Priority 1: These projects should be given immediate and concentrated effort. They are the first projects that should be started after the Master Plan has been adopted.

Priority 2: These projects are those necessary to implement the plan, but either depend on the completion of Priority 1 projects or require more complex or coordinated effort.

Priority 3: These projects implement elements of the Plan but are not urgent and can be delayed for a longer period of time. Further, these projects may be limited by budgetary constraints.

Implementation Plan

Plans, Policies, and Ordinances

Action	Responsibility	Time	Priority
1	Review the zoning ordinance to determine if any existing Provisions inhibit or prohibit implementation of the plan. Make amendments as necessary	1 Year	1

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

2	Amend the zoning ordinance to include successful plan implementation techniques such as mixed-use zoning, overlay district, and phone face standards.	<i>Planning Commission Village Council</i>	1-3 Years	1
3	Promote opportunities for 'missing middle' housing such as 'lifecycle housing' and mixed housing development.	<i>Planning Commission Village Council</i>	2-4 Years	2
4	Update the Village Recreation plan. Obtain DNR approval of the plan to create funding opportunities for Planned improvements.	<i>Planning Commission Village Council Parks Board</i>	2-4 Years	2
5	Complete the Village / Township Wellhead Protection Program. Implement education strategies.	<i>Staff, Village Council Civic Organization Public Schools</i>	2-4 Years	2
6	Conduct a parking study within the Downtown. Develop a parking plan that responds to identified parking needs / demands and is consistent with the Downtown Sub-Area Plan.	<i>Staff, Village Council</i>	3-5 Years	3
7	Develop a Capital Improvement Plan that coordinates Village funding with implementation priorities.	<i>Village Council</i>	1 Year and annually	1

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Transportation Corridors

Action	Responsibility	Time	Priority
1	Work with MDOT to incorporate complete streets elements into the downtown in downtown fringe, including the gateway corridors into the village	<i>Staff, Village Council</i>	1-3 Years 1
2	Work with MDOT to implement a redesign of the M 86 Corridor / intersection in the Downtown so as to implement the streetscape elements of a Downtown Sub-Area Plan and Downtown Form-Based Code.	<i>Staff, Village Council</i>	1-3 Years 1
3	Implement the Sidewalk Ordinance consistent with an overall sidewalk plan for the Village that promotes a walkable downtown, accommodates planned streetscape elements and maintains connectivity within the network.	<i>Staff, Village Council</i>	1-3 Years 1
4	Develop, fund and implement a wayfinding sign program.	<i>Village Council Historic Commission DDA</i>	2-4 Years 2

Economic Development

Action	Responsibility	Time	Priority
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Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

1	Work with the Village businesses to develop a marketing scheme that emphasizes the Village of Colon as a ‘destination’ in the region and capitalizes on its reputation as “The Magic Capital of the World.”	<i>DDA</i>		
2	Coordinate local events/festivals with area-wide recreational opportunities	<i>Staff, Village Council, Local Organizations</i>	1-2 Years	1
3	Work with the Village businesses and surrounding communities to develop a plan for the cross-promotion of businesses and attraction.	<i>Staff, Village Council, DDA</i>	1-2 Years	1
4	Work with a DDA in downtown Property Owners to create a strategic leasing plan within the Downtown.	<i>Staff, Village Council, DDA</i>	1-5 Years	3
5	Work with the DDA to develop a facade improvement grant program in coordination with the objectives of the Downtown Form-Based Code.	<i>Staff, Village Council, DDA, Historical Commission</i>	2-4 Years	3
6	Seek Funding opportunities to implement the Downtown Sub-Area Plan.	<i>Staff, Village Council, DDA, Historical Commission</i>	1-3 Years	2

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

7	Promote economic development opportunities near recreational assets, including pathway crossings, through zoning and infrastructure improvements.	<i>Planning Commission Village Council</i>	2-4 Years	2
8	Establish a property maintenance education and incentive program	<i>Staff, Village Council</i>	1-3 Years	3

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

Keeping the Master Plan Up-to Date

Change is constant and there will be circumstances that may warrant changes to the Zoning Map that are not consistent with the Master Plan. If and when this occurs, an amendment to the Future Land Use Map in the Master Plan needs to be considered.

The following criteria should be reviewed to determine if a proposed change to the Future Land Use Map is warranted:

- ✓ Does the proposed new land use classification meet the objectives of the Plan?
- ✓ Is the zoning district and its permitted uses designed to implement the new land use classification compatible with and appropriate in the vicinity of the property under consideration?
- ✓ Have any conditions changed in the area since the Master Plan was adopted that justify this change?
- ✓ Will there be any impacts on the community that should be considered, such as increased traffic, that might create a need for additional services or improvements?
- ✓ Are there any environmental considerations that may be contrary to the intent of the existing or proposed classification of the land?
- ✓ Was the property improperly classified when the plan was adopted or amended? Are the qualities of the property (or area) different from those described in the Plan?
- ✓ Will there be any adverse effects on adjacent properties as a result of the proposed change?
- ✓ What impacts of the proposed change will result on the public health, safety and welfare?

Conclusion

Although this Plan is a comprehensive guide for land use planning in the Village over the next 20 years, it is difficult to predict with certainty what changes may occur in and around the community. Therefore, decisions related to development should be considered carefully in light of the recommendations of this Master Plan.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires the Village of Colon Zoning Ordinance to be 'based on a plan to promote the public health, safety and welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, to limit the improper use of land, to conserve natural resources and energy, to meet the needs of the state's residents for food, fiber and other natural resources, places of residence and other uses of land.' Since the using Map is part of the Zoning Ordinance, lunge to zoning boundaries should be in conformance with the Master Plan. If urea development decisions take these Factors into account, and if the plan is reviewed at least every five (5) years (as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act) and amended when necessary, then the Village of Colon can feel confident that development will reflect the desires of its citizens as reflected through the adopted Master Plan.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

Complete Streets:

Public Act 135 of 2010 defines complete streets as "...roadways planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle."

Form-Based Codes:

A means of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form (not building style). These codes create a predictable public realm by controlling physical form primarily, with a lesser focus on land use, through municipal regulations.

Good Form:

Development that is consistent with centuries' old principles for human scale walkable development; based on neighborhood, block, building and street design standards.

Life-Cycle Housing:

Starter homes to larger homes to senior housing.

Mansion Apartment:

A large impressive building divided into apartment units.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act:

The Michigan Legislature adopted P.A.33 of 2008, which took effect September 1, 2008. The MPEA replaced three prior planning enabling acts in Michigan which separately authorized planning in cities, villages, townships and counties.

Michigan Zoning Enabling Act:

The Michigan Legislature adopted P.A. 110 of 2006. It replaced three prior zoning enabling acts and had a set of corrective amendments incorporated in 2008.

Missing Middle Housing

All communities need a wide variety of housing types to meet the needs of the whole community. If the community wants to focus on talent attraction and retention as a part of Place making, there is a particular set of housing types that are often missing in suburban, traditional neighborhood, and downtown zones. Known as the Missing Middle Housing, they are often characterized by a walkable context, medium density, small footprint and blended densities, and smaller, well designed units.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022



Mixed Use

Areas designated as mixed-use allow for integration of compatible uses (retail, residential, office, transit-oriented uses) and encourages lively activity in public and private spaces. A diverse mix of uses that meets daily needs and creates a place that both attracts people and generates economic activity.

New Economy

Refers to Global, entrepreneurial, and knowledge-based economy where business success comes increasingly from the ability to incorporate knowledge technology creativity and Innovation into products and services.

Placemaking

The process of creating Quality Places in which people want to live, work, play and learn. This requires engaging and empowering people to participate in the process. It embraces a wide range of projects and activities pursued by the public and private sectors over a long. Of time.

Projects tend to be downtown street and facade improvements and neighborhood-based – such as residential rehab, infill development, and small-scale multi-use project, and a wide range of activities.

Road Diet

Quite simply, traffic calming expert Dan Burden told Streetfilms, “A road diet is anything you take any lane out of a road.”

The first time people hear about a road diet, their initial reaction likely goes something like this: “How can removing lanes and prove my neighborhood and not cause traffic backup?” It seems counterintuitive, but taking away lanes can actually help traffic flow smoother while improving safety for everyone.

Road diets are good for pedestrians: They reduce speeding and make vehicle movements more predictable while shortening crossing distance, usually through curb extensions or center median island. They are they are good for cyclists: Many road diet shifts space from car lanes to create bike lanes. They are good for drivers: Less speeding improves safety for motorists and passengers, and providing left-turn pockets allows through traffic to proceed without shifting lanes or waiting behind turning vehicles.

Village of Colon Master Plan 2022

And here's something to keep in mind during this era of lean budgets: Road diets are highly-effective infrastructure improvements that can be implemented quickly and at a low-cost.

Traffic Calming

Physical design and other measures including narrow roads, put in place on roads for the intention of slowing down or reducing motor-vehicle traffic as well as to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.