

# **OTTAWA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**



## **SMART GROWTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

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## Introduction

The Ottawa County Planning Commission has completed a document entitled the *Rural Preservation Guidebook*. This publication is a concise, reference book that provides readers with a simple overview of some of the most effective tools that can be used to preserve rural characteristics in our communities. After beginning the *Rural Preservation Guidebook*, the Planning Commission began discussing methods that could be undertaken to ensure that this document was not shelved and forgotten like so many other planning documents. It was agreed that the best course of action would be to conduct a demonstration project within a community to implement the tools and prove or disprove their feasibility and effectiveness.

In order to conduct a demonstration project, the Planning Commission needs a "volunteer" community that will participate in this endeavor. Since the Ottawa County Planning Commission realizes that Ottawa County consists of two rural types of communities - rural/agricultural and developing/fringe - it was decided that demonstration projects should occur in both types of communities. This project has been entitled the Smart Growth Demonstration Project.

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## Situation Statement

Ottawa County is as diverse a County as exists anywhere in the United States. It is comprised of seventeen townships, six cities, and one village. The County has historically enjoyed natural scenic beauty, low crime rates, low taxes, limited government, and an educated citizenry with strong work ethics. The economy is comprised of strong manufacturing and retail components and is enhanced by the largest and most diversified agricultural production rate in the State.

Today, Ottawa County still enjoys one of the highest qualities of life anywhere, and it is reflected in many areas of our community. Our naturally occurring scenic beauty and strong social fabric are partially responsible for attracting not only tourists, but also permanent residents. This attraction to Ottawa County has become so strong that it is now the ninth largest county in Michigan and the fastest growing of all counties with populations greater than 200,000. Ottawa County's estimated population is currently 220,403 and it is expected to reach 271,016 by the year 2010 and 338,450 by the year 2020.

There is one significant factor that does more to attract residents to our County than all other positive factors combined. That factor is Ottawa County's aggressive economic development efforts with business and industry. As a result of these efforts, our citizens enjoy one of the best economic growth rates and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the State. Residents also enjoy an enviable median household income level that is growing; and a county millage rate that is the lowest in the State.

Most counties usually contend with economic and population growth from a central, urban core area. Ottawa County's growth rate is more challenging than other areas because our County contends with economic and population growth pressure from three metropolitan urban centers (Grand Rapids, Holland/Zeeland, Muskegon/Tri-Cities) and one emerging urbanized center (Allendale).

Whether growth is caused by natural beauty, safe streets, economic growth, or geographic location - one thing is for certain - Growth Happens! And it will continue because our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and judicial case law guarantee it happens - and will continue to happen in the future. Therefore, we must creatively manage our growth so we have the best possible communities in which to live.

There are three main approaches in which our communities deal with growth, and each one perpetuates the type of development results we do not like. The first approach is to attack development with philosophical arguments. One such argument is that we can save our rural communities by stopping development in rural areas. But the fact remains that we cannot legally stop growth and development. The second approach is to simply blame others. Usually the object of our blame is developers. Our scapegoats, though, are usually the least responsible for causing growth. In actuality, it's almost always a much broader cross section of our society who is to blame. Virtually everyone of us at one time or another has supported policies that enhance our lives - such as economic development, job creation, tourism, crime reduction, and recreational improvements. Who wouldn't support these? These policies are all good for the community - but when successfully implemented, they attract more people. The third and last approach that is used to deal with development is a direct approach - but relatively ineffective nonetheless. It's our biggest weapon - master plans and zoning ordinances. We have invested thousands and thousands of dollars into consultants, surveys, plans, documents, and studies. But the fact remains that our ordinances still advocate traditional, textbook type planning solutions,

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void of components that preserve rural character. It's safe to say, for the most part, that our master plans and zoning ordinances have the same general planning principles in them that were used and designed 25 years ago - for the growth of 25 years ago.

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## Goals & Objectives

Although Ottawa County's development and growth pose many challenges in our communities, there are simple, yet effective, smart growth planning techniques that can accommodate development, and preserve rural character. These techniques can be applied in such a manner that they are equitable to the landowner, developer, homeowner, and community.

Before our traditional approaches to preserving rural character can be changed, we must first define what rural characteristics we want to preserve in our communities. We have narrowed down what we believe to be the three most important features that convey rural character. They were chosen because they are the features by which most people measure growth and development. These rural characteristics are aesthetic features, environmental quality, and transportation efficiency. If you can preserve these features, you've covered 90% of what people think of as rural character. The aesthetic features that we want to preserve, are those features that psychologically tell us we're surrounded by open space. They include scenic and panoramic views from elevations or across a meadow, and natural features such as trees and farmland. Environmental features that we want to preserve are surface and groundwater, and sensitive sites such as wetlands, dunes, and animal habitats. We want to ensure that they remain as pristine as possible. The transportation features we want to preserve are those that make travel safe and efficient.

To that point, the Smart Growth Demonstration Project will focus its resources on implementing planning techniques that protect environmental qualities, preserve aesthetic features, and minimize traffic congestion. Specific goals and objectives are as follows:

### **GOAL ONE: Protect Environmental Quality**

- Preserve integrity of surface and ground water quality (erosion, stormwater, sedimentation, nutrient loading)
- Preserve beneficial natural features (critical dunes, wetlands, forests, unique soils)
- Preserve wildlife habitat

### **GOAL TWO: Preserve Aesthetic Features**

- Preserve open space including unique panoramic, picturesque, and scenic views
- Preserve and reestablish tree lined and canopy covered transportation corridors
- Preserve agricultural lands for open space value

### **GOAL THREE: Minimize Traffic Congestion**

- Promote efficient and safe traffic flow
- Reduce traffic flow when feasible
- Encourage interconnected pedestrian trails and greenways as alternative means of transportation

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## Primary Components - Smart Growth Demonstration Project

The Smart Growth Demonstration Project is divided into primary and administrative components.

This section - primary components - will focus on smart growth techniques that can be implemented in the master plan and zoning ordinance to preserve rural character. Other primary components include stand-alone programs, educational training, collaborative efforts, and task forces - all of which are designed to assist in our efforts to preserve rural character.

A partial list of potential master plan and zoning ordinance techniques that can be used to preserve rural character are as follows:

### **MASTER PLAN & ZONING ORDINANCE**

#### **Protect Environmental Quality**

- Create buffers between watersheds and developmental land uses.
- Prohibit floodplain development.
- Preserve steep slopes that are high risk erosion areas.
- Create wildlife habitat.
- Create maps to identify environmental features (critical dunes, wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, ravine, ridges, topography, wildlife habitat, unique soils, drainage) that the community wants to preserve.

Ordinance Options: Open Space Zoning; Overlay Zoning; Setbacks; Performance Based Zoning; Floodplain Zoning District; Drainage Review Ordinance; Master Plan.

#### **Preserve Aesthetic Features**

- Preserve trees and other natural features along major and scenic transportation corridors by zoning for land uses that do not require full visibility, and utilizing natural buffers. Commercial uses requiring high visibility should be zoned into "activity" centers along these corridors, and should utilize landscaping, noninvasive lighting techniques, and "behind building" parking.
- Preserve trees and other natural features along scenic transportation corridors by requiring buried utilities, disguised telecommunication towers, and limited signage.
- Preserve trees and other natural features by minimizing private drives along transportation corridors.
- Preserve trees and other natural features by allowing narrower road design standards, European cul de sacs, and other unique concepts in residential developments.
- Preserve open space and agricultural land by minimizing impacts of the State Land Division Act near farms and thereby reducing nuisance complaints.
- Preserve open space through agricultural lands by preserving large blocks of contiguous farm land and minimizing residential zoning and development near farms and thereby reducing nuisance complaints.
- Preserve open space through agricultural lands by creating exclusive agricultural zones that are surrounded by secondary agriculture zones.

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- Preserve open space through agricultural lands by allowing more development in secondary agricultural zones than is permitted by right, if the parcel owner will utilize open space development and place the remaining portion of undeveloped land into a permanent conservation easement.
  - Preserve open space and natural features by utilizing open space zoning in residential zoning districts.
  - Increase public awareness of open space zoning by requiring "parallel plans" from developers showing the visual differences between traditional development and open space development.
  - Create maps to identify natural features, viewsapes, and open space that the community wants to preserve; including, but not limited to, wetlands, surface waters, ravines, ridges, topography, greenways, character defining features, scenic roads, scenic viewsapes, conservation easements, PA 116 lands.
  - Conduct a build-out analysis based on population projections showing how much land will be needed under traditional zoning and under open space zoning.
  - Preserve open space by planning infrastructure improvements.

Ordinance Options: Open Space Zoning; Overlay Zoning; Setbacks; Performance Bases Zoning; Floodplain Zoning; Agricultural Zoning Districts; Exclusive Use Zoning; Lot Regulations; Capital Improvement Plan (CIP); Land Division Ordinance; Buried Utility Ordinance; Tower Ordinance; Sign Ordinance; Subdivision Ordinance; Tree Preservation Ordinance; Master Plan.

### **Promote Efficient Traffic Flow**

- Incorporate access management tools into new development (limit number of drives onto roads)
- Require shared driveways
- Require traffic impact analysis for large scale development
- Utilize service drives along major transportation corridors for planned commercial districts
- Encourage flexible standards in private road design to promote safety and character
- Create open space in developments so interconnected trails and greenways can be developed
- Promote mixed land use in developments to encourage standards which promote neighborhoods and small self-contained communities
- Create maps of potential corridor routes for interconnected trails

Ordinance Options: Open Space Zoning; Performance Based Zoning; Planned Unit Development; Traffic Impact Analysis; Access Management Study; Private Road Ordinance; Performance Based Zoning; Master Plan.

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## **PROGRAMS**

The Ottawa County Planning Commission and Planning Department will provide assistance and resources to assist in implementing programs locally and at the county level. A list of potential programs that could be implemented are as follows:

### **Protect Environmental Quality**

**Program:**        **Environmental Standards Notification**

**Description:**    Distribution of a publication to individuals applying for construction permits. The publication will notify applicants of erosion control ordinances and other standards that relate to erosion, setbacks, and development near surface water.

**Agency:**        Drain Commissioner; Zoning Administrator

**Program:**        **Voluntary Phase II Stormwater Permit Program**

**Description:**    A voluntary compliance program to meet the requirements of Phase II regulations.

**Agency:**        Drain Commissioner

**Program:**        **Adopt A Stream**

**Description:**    Increase efforts to collect baseline information about local waterways and cleanup waterways.

**Agency:**        Adopt A Stream

### **Preserve Aesthetic Features**

**Program:**        **Arbor Day Organization**

**Description:**    Encourage organized efforts to increase tree preservation and plantings. Provide educational publications that include an abundance of illustrations and

**Sponsor:**        Stand-alone Organization; Zoning Administrator

**Program:**        **Transplant Tree Program**

**Description:**    Establish receiving zones along transportation corridors and other public donated stocks. Also establish a tax deductible value for developers that donate trees from their developments for receiving areas.

**Sponsor:**        Stand-alone Organization; Public Works Departments; MSU Cooperative

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Program: **Transplant Tree Fund**  
Description: Establish a foundational trust to be used for the cost of implementing the  
Sponsor: Grand Haven Foundation, Holland Foundation, Coopersville Foundation

Program: **Agricultural Disclaimer/Deed Restriction**  
Description: Provide brochures to all potential purchasers of land and/or homes in or near application, hours of operation, equipment on roads, and a variety of other potential agricultural uses that conflict with residential uses. If possible a waiver will be included and signed by potential land owners acknowledging their awareness of farmland practices and general agreement that they waive their right to interfere or petition for redress because of those  
Agency: Realtors, Homebuilders, Zoning Administrator, Public Health, Register of Deeds

Program: **Conservation Easement Program**  
Description: A promotional program that will showcase the benefits of utilizing conservation Provide information regarding the tangible (property, estate, and income tax incentives) and intangible (preserving land for future generations) benefits of donating and/or selling development rights and/or land to a land trust for easement or land use purposes. Also provide information about legal requirements, restrictions, and other pertinent information at local meetings tailored for this project.  
Sponsor: West Michigan Land Trust

### **Promote Efficient Traffic Flow**

Program: **Alternative Transportation/Bicycle Path Fund**  
Description: A foundational trust to be used for match-funds to create a system of  
Sponsor: Grand Haven Area Foundation, Holland/Zeeland Area Foundation, Coopersville Foundation

## **EDUCATION**

Educational training is the single most crucial component of any rural preservation effort since you must thoroughly understand the foundations of planning and planning techniques before you can implement zoning changes. If new planning techniques are foreign to planners, they will not implement them - no matter how effective they are.

In order to provide planners with an opportunity to learn more about innovative planning techniques, increase their knowledgeable about planning principles, and approach planning problems with confidence, the Ottawa County Planning Commission will be establishing a planners library for local planners.

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Additionally, an annual calendar of training opportunities for planners, local leaders and citizens will be organized.

It is our intent to create local township planners in Ottawa County that are experts in planning basics, as well as aesthetic, environmental, and transportation planning. As further incentive, we will also be implementing a Continuing Education Units (CEU) program whereby planners can earn “credit” for their educational efforts.

The types of educational training opportunities that would be offered under this initiative are as follows:

Basic Education Training

Education: **New Member Education Packets**

Purpose: Informational packets will be sent to new planning commissioners upon role of a planning commissioner, and basic planning concepts and techniques.

Target Audience: Newly appointed planning commissioners

Frequency: As commission appointments are made

Education: **Basic Educational Training Seminars**

Purpose: Seminars will be scheduled to encourage basic proficiency and knowledge in

Target Audience: Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeal Members, Community

Frequency: Biannual

Education: **Advanced Planning Topics**

Purpose: Seminars will be scheduled to encourage knowledge in specific, advanced

Target Audience: Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeal Members, Community

Frequency: Biannual

Education: **Educational Forums & Seminars**

Purpose: Forums and seminars will be scheduled with speakers who have expertise in

Target Audience: Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeal Members, Community

Frequency: Biannual

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Education: **Planner/Developer Role Seminars**  
Purpose: Seminars will be scheduled to educate planners about developers' perspectives  
Target Audience: Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeal Members, Developers, Community Members  
Frequency: Annual

Education: **Land Preservation Programs**  
Purpose: Provide landowners with information about opportunities and benefits of  
Target Audience: Owners of agricultural , scenic, environmentally sensitive, or targeted greenway  
Frequency: Annual

Education: **Site Development Concepts**  
Purpose: Seminars will be scheduled to educate developers about innovative site preservation techniques.  
Target Audience: Developers, Excavators, Homebuilders, Road Builders  
Frequency: Annual

Education: **Program Awareness**  
Purpose: Seminars will be scheduled to educate interested agencies, organizations, and individuals, about local, state, and federal programs and grants that are available to assist with environmental, aesthetic, and transportation planning issues.  
Target Audience: Agencies, Organizations, Community Members  
Frequency: Annual

## **COLLABORATION**

Another primary component of the Smart Growth Demonstration Project is to increase collaborative efforts between several key organizations and individuals that are impacting the development process. By increasing dialouge and understanding among these key groups there is an increased chance that planning goals can be collectively attained through a common vision. Collaborative efforts can occur through he Joint Planning Commission Meetings that are presently sponsored by the Ottawa County Planning Commission. The potential organizations that would participate, and the potential benefits that may be realized by increasing collaborative efforts are as follows:

<b><u>Organization</u></b>	<b><u>Benefit</u></b>
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<b><u>Bordering Planning Commissions:</u></b>	Increased coordination on issues such as pedestrian paths,
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<u>Planning Commission &amp; Developers:</u>	Increased interaction, understanding, trust, communication, designs that benefit the community and developer.
<u>Road Commission:</u>	Increased communication regarding issues of general concern, agency policies and practices, and maintenance and
<u>Intermediate School District:</u>	Increased coordination on planning issues regarding new
<u>Utility Companies:</u>	Increased communication regarding the maintenance and routes, and the use of right-of-ways for pedestrian paths.

## **TASK FORCES**

The last component of the Smart Growth Demonstration Project is to utilize local task forces to resolve specific planning problems that arise from our Smart Growth planning initiatives. As an example, the Planning Commission has already appointed a task force to deal with at least one problem that could result from implementing open space development in rural townships. That problem is the need for sewer treatment if clustering is going to be effectively used to attain the density levels that are necessary to successfully implement open space zoning. Because of the importance of open space zoning in rural preservation efforts, the Ottawa County Planning Commission appointed a Water & Environment Subcommittee (WES) to address this infrastructure problem. The WES has already discovered a potential solution for the treatment of septage waste in rural areas and it involves the use of an innovative constructed wetlands treatment process. A pilot project at a single residential site is already operational in Crockery Township, and it is hoped that a this project can begin to treat septage waste at a subdivision level.

The Planning Commission has formed other task forces to address other planning problems and will use this tool to address other issues as they arise during the project's implementation.

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## Administrative Components - Smart Growth Demonstration Project

The information included in this section is provided so local communities, which are considering whether to participate in the Smart Growth Demonstration Project, will clearly understand the administrative aspects of the project, and the intentions of the Planning Commission.

This project plan is flexible and can be amended as needed. Additionally, to allay local and county concerns, “partnership agreements” can be drafted to clarify the project parameters. However, the intent of this program is to be creative, innovative, and results oriented; and therefore, the Ottawa County Planning Commission would like to partner with communities that are willing to “think outside the box”.

### CONSULTANTS

The first action item under administrative components will be to hire a consultant on a contractual basis to provide technical expertise to oversee the rewriting of the Master Plans & Zoning Ordinances. The consultant will be responsible for conducting charretts, public hearings, map inventories and all other aspects of master plan and zoning ordinance development. This individual/company will have rural preservation expertise and will be innovative, creative, and willing to be unorthodox in his/her approach to planning.

Additionally, it is our intent to ensure that official planning documents include an abundance of illustrations and interpretive graphics to clearly and simply convey community standards and design guidelines. This project will not be a run-of-the-mill project that incorporates boilerplate ordinances. A preliminary, draft copy of a Request-for-Proposal (RFP) outlining the roles and responsibilities of the consultant’s duties is listed below:

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**  
**for**  
**Professional Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Development in Ottawa County**

#### I. BACKGROUND

Ottawa County residents enjoy a high quality of life due to the County’s naturally occurring scenic beauty, strong social fabric, and diversified/expanding economy. The residents of the County enjoy sandy beaches on Lake Michigan, multiple recreation opportunities, low crime rates, and limited government. Moreover, the labor force is well educated and has a strong work ethic. The local economy is diversified and has strong manufacturing and retail components in addition to having the largest and the most profitable agricultural production rate in Michigan.

These attributes have attracted not only many visitors, but also a large number of permanent residents. In fact, so much growth has occurred in Ottawa County that it is now the ninth largest county in Michigan and the fastest growing of all counties with populations greater than 200,000. Ottawa County’s estimated population is currently 224,357 and it is expected to reach 271,016 by the year 2010 and 338,450 by the year 2020. Furthermore, this growth is not occurring around one central urbanized area, but around three urbanized areas (Holland/Zeeland, Muskegon/Tri-Cities, Grand Rapids) and one emerging urbanized area (Allendale). This fact makes Ottawa County’s growth all the more challenging to plan for since it is originating from multiple locations in or near the county.

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In recent years, the Ottawa County Planning Commission has undertaken several initiatives to assist local units of government in their planning efforts. The latest initiative is the creation of a Smart Growth Demonstration Project (**See Attachment A**). This project is intended to demonstrate that townships can preserve rural character in the midst of increasing and inevitable growth and development through innovative planning.

In this project, Ottawa County will provide technical assistance and monetary support at the local governmental level in an effort to implement innovative, progressive, and cutting-edge planning ideas and techniques in their Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances. In addition to financial and technical assistance, the Planning Commission has devised several other project components that will be initiated in conjunction with the Master Plan/Zoning Ordinance effort. These components are listed below:

- Implement community based programs designed to preserve rural character
- Provide educational opportunities for local planners
- Increase collaboration and communication between local planning commissioners and entities that affect the planning process
- Create task forces to resolve specific planning problems that arise from Smart Growth planning initiatives

Since Ottawa County consists of two types of townships - rural/agricultural and developing/fringe - it was decided that demonstration projects should occur in both types of communities. By conducting demonstration projects in both types of townships, it will be possible to implement individually tailored initiatives to address and resolve the spectrum of planning problems that are faced by both agricultural and developing townships.

The rural/agricultural township selected to participate in the Smart Growth Demonstration Project is Chester Township. Chester Township is a farming community of 2,294 residents which has seen a 7.5% increase in population between 1990 and 1998. The township is located in northeast Ottawa County approximately 15 miles northwest of Grand Rapids. (**See Attachment B - Map**). Blendon Township has been selected to participate in the Smart Growth Demonstration Project as the developing/fringe township. Since 1990, Blendon Township's population has increased 21% from 4,740 to 5,740. The township is situated between Holland/Zeeland, Grand Rapids, and Allendale. (**See Attachment B - Map**)

## **II. OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

Before innovative, creative, and progressive planning techniques can be implemented to preserve rural character in our communities, it is necessary to define the specific rural characteristics that are most advantageous to protect. The Ottawa County Planning Commission has identified the three most important features that convey rural character in the County, and the features by which most residents measure growth and development. The rural characteristics are aesthetic features, environmental quality, and transportation efficiency.

To that point, the Smart Growth Project is intended to demonstrate that these rural characteristics can be protected and preserved in the midst of growth and development through innovative land use policies. The rural characteristics are defined in further detail below:

### **1. Aesthetic Features**

- Open space including panoramic, picturesque, and scenic views
- Tree lined and canopy covered transportation corridors
- Agricultural lands for open space value

### **2. Environmental Quality**

- Integrity of surface and groundwater quality (i.e. erosion, stormwater, sedimentation, nutrient loading)
- Beneficial natural features (i.e. critical dunes, wetlands, forests, unique soils)
- Wildlife habitat

### **3. Traffic Efficiency**

- Minimal traffic congestion
- Safe traffic flow
- Interconnected pedestrian trails and greenways as alternative means of transportation

## **III. PROJECT SCOPE**

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As previously mentioned, the Smart Growth Demonstration Project is comprised of five primary components (Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, Community Based Programs, Education, Collaboration/Communication, and Task Forces). The scope of this Request-for-Proposal (RFP) is limited primarily to the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Rewrite for Blendon and Chester Townships. Implementation of the other primary components will be the responsibility of the County Planning Commission and the Township partners.

Proposals may be submitted individually for either of the two townships, or as a package proposal that includes both townships. If a package proposal is submitted, the proposals must still be individually tailored to each township. It is important to note, for instance, that each partner is desirous of preserving agriculture, but we have placed more emphasis on preserving agricultural land in Chester Township because it faces less development pressure than Blendon Township from urban core areas.

In addition to general assistance from the Ottawa County Planning Department and the township partners, the consultant will have the option (at their own discretion) of using the expertise and resources of several Technical Partners who have donated their services to this project. As an example, the law firm of Scholten and Fant will provide legal advice. A list of technical partners, resumes, and the level of service to be provided is outlined in **Attachment C**.

Specific aspects of the project scope are listed in greater detail below:

### **1. Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance**

A rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance for Blendon and Chester Townships will be conducted. A list of the unique elements that will be included in the revised Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance is listed below:

- a. Cutting Edge Techniques - The revisions will provide innovative, progressive, and unique planning techniques and solutions that will preserve rural character (as defined in Section II - Objectives and Goals). The techniques will address all types of land use and development as well as every development option (ordinance, Land Division Act, other). Boilerplate ordinances and textbook planning approaches that are not results oriented are discouraged.
- b. Illustrations and Interpretive Graphics - The revisions will incorporate an abundance of visual illustrations and interpretive graphics to clearly and simply convey community standards and design guidelines.
- c. Baseline Mapping Inventory - The revisions will include the categorization and mapping of baseline features. These would include, but are not limited to the following features: critical dunes, wetlands, flood plains, surface waters, ravines, view sheds, farmland, forests, tree stands, potential greenways, character defining features, scenic roads, wildlife habitat, buried utilities and other pertinent information that would be important to inventory from a planning perspective.
- d. Capital Improvement Action Plan - The revisions will include a Capital Improvement Action Plan (CIAP). The CIAP will provide a multi-year schedule (timeline) for public physical improvements (roads, utilities, public facilities, other) that should occur to reinforce the elements of the Master Plan. The CIAP will link future planned capital improvements with the projections and placement of future growth. General cost estimates for each improvement will be provided. This is not intended to be a full-fledged Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP).
- e. Checklists - The revision will include checklists that can be utilized by planners and zoning administrators to ensure proper and thorough evaluations and oversight of planning and land use regulations.
- f. Interactive Planning Process - The revision should include suggested practices that can be used by township planners to facilitate communication and cooperation between developers and their Planning Commission. The practices should include a process that encourages interaction, communication, understanding, flexibility, and trust between both parties. The objective is to encourage more win-win development proposals for the community and developer. As an example, Peninsula Township in Grand Traverse County conducts interactive meetings with developers in which wood blocks and other props are used to layout proposed developments on a table. The planners and developers take turns laying out their ideas and providing input relating to the development until there is a mutually agreeable site plan that both parties can approve.
- g. Meetings - The selected consultant will be required to hold/attend meetings for the purpose of obtaining community input, disbursing information about the process or proposals, and conducting public hearings as necessary. The minimum and maximum number of total meetings shall be proposed by the consultant in their proposal.

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- h. Executive Summary - The final Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance revisions will include an executive summary which highlights the revised and new zoning ordinances as well as any major changes that occurred.

## **2. Implementation Report**

It will be necessary to compile and distribute a Project Evaluation Report to address the successes, failures, obstacles, labor, and costs associated with revising the present Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances with innovative and cutting edge planning techniques that are designed to preserve rural character.

Observations and conclusions regarding the specific successes, failures, and obstacles involved with each innovative ordinance (i.e. Open Space, Overlay Zones, Traffic Corridor Overlays, Other) and other project components (Interpretative Graphics, Baseline Mapping, CIAP, Checklists, Interactive Planning Process, and Meetings) will be reported. The labor (consultant and township) and costs associated with the implementation of each innovative ordinance and other project components will be documented to the best of the consultant's ability.

This report will permit other local units of governments to review specific ordinances or project components and generally determine the associated benefits and drawbacks, as well as the labor and cost that will be involved in implementing such initiatives.

## **3. Benchmark Analysis**

During the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance revisions, benchmark goals will need to be established for each demonstration project. Examples of benchmark goals are listed below:

- Preserve (**insert number**) acres of open space/farmland, natural habitat, tree buffers in new developments.
- Maintain a road to development ratio of (**insert number**) to (**insert number**).
- Establish (**insert number**) miles of interconnected trails and greenways.
- Reduce time necessary to gain site plan approval by (**insert number**) meetings
- Reduce number of unacceptable site plan proposals by (**insert number**)
- Reduce oversights by (**insert number**) through the use of checklists

These benchmark goals will be measured during a 2-5 year period by each township. The results, along with information from the Implementation Report, will be compiled by the Ottawa County Planning Department into a Final Evaluation Report. This report will provide accurate and substantiated data to other local units of government which outlines the cost/benefit of each project component as it relates to the preservation of rural character.

## **IV. DELIVERABLES**

The following deliverables must be submitted upon completion of the project and tailored to the needs of each township.

1. One (1) copy ready and computer disk version of the information requested in Section III - Project Scope, including one (1) copy-ready schematically drawn map and one (1) digital version (GIS Arc/Info Coverage or Arc View shape file format) displaying the required Baseline Mapping information. The selected consultant can obtain base digital information layers from the Ottawa County GIS Director.
2. Twenty four (24) copies of the final versions of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance, Implementation Report, and Benchmark Analysis.

## **V. PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

Proposals may be submitted individually for either of the two townships, or as a package proposal that includes both townships. If a package proposal is submitted, the proposals must still be individually tailored to each township (and itemized separately). It is important to note, for instance, that each partner is desirous of preserving agriculture, but we have placed more emphasis on preserving agricultural land in Chester Township (rural/agricultural) because it faces less development pressure than Blendon Township from urban core areas.

Consultants shall submit three (3) copies of their proposals which will include the following information:

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- a. A resume including qualifications of firm and individuals; a list of similar projects completed; and references from past work involving similar projects.
- b. An Approach Plan that provides insight into the methodology that will be used in completing this project. Creativity is encouraged.
- c. A minimum and maximum number of total meetings and a timeline for the total project. It is anticipated that the entire project will not exceed 18 months.
- d. A budget that is detailed, itemized and includes reimbursables, travel, and all other costs with a not-to-exceed estimate for completing the work described in this RFP. The budget shall provide a maximum cost for completing the project and will be itemized as follows:
- Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances
  - General Rewrite
  - Interpretive Graphics
  - Baseline Mapping (hard copy and digital)
  - CIAP
  - Checklists
  - Interactive Planning Process
  - Implementation Report
  - Benchmark Analysis
- e. A Signature Page that is signed by an officer or employee of the firm who is authorized to bind the firm to this contract.

Additional information regarding proposals is listed below:

- f. A Pre-Bidders Conference will be held in the Board Room of the Ottawa County Fillmore Street Complex Administrative Offices in West Olive, Michigan on **Thursday, March 9, 2000 at 10:00 a.m. Ottawa County, Blendon Township, Chester Township, and the Technical Partners** will be in attendance to answer questions. **A 20-30 minute Power Point Presentation will be given to provide an overview of the Smart Growth Demonstration Project Components.** Copies of each township's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances will be given to consultants who attend the Pre-Bidders Conference.
- g. Proposals shall be submitted in a sealed envelope, which is clearly marked on the outside "SMART GROWTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL", by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 31, 2000** to:

Ottawa County Administrative Services  
12220 Fillmore, Room 331  
West Olive, MI 49460

- h. All costs associated with the preparation of the proposal shall be the responsibility of the bidding consultant.
- i. Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing (mail or e-mail) to Mark Knudsen, Director of the Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department, at the following address:

Mark Knudsen, Director  
Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department  
12220 Fillmore Street, Room 331  
West Olive MI 49460  
mknudsen@co.ottawa.mi.us

All responses will be copied to all consultants who attend the Pre-Bidders Conference or request such information.

- j. The County of Ottawa reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to accept any proposals received, and to negotiate with the study consultants for assignments not specifically outlined herein.

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## VI. SELECTION CRITERIA

The proposals received pursuant to this RFP will be judged based upon the following:

- a. Quality, completeness and clarity of the Proposal and Approach Plan. (This will be a significant factor in the decision to award a final contract.)
- b. Ability of firm, as evidenced through prior experience in similar projects to provide creative and innovative master plan and zoning ordinance solutions to maintain rural character.
- c. Demonstration of sufficient training, supervision, and technical resources to successfully complete the project.
- d. Staff availability and firm's proven ability to complete the necessary work in a timely fashion.
- e. Identifying time line for work to be completed.
- f. Cost. (This will also be a significant factor in the decision to award a final contract.).

The final selection will be a joint decision between representatives of each township and the Ottawa County Planning Commission.

## VII. CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

1. The consultant(s) will be required to sign an agreement that includes the terms and requirements as outlined in the RFP.
2. The consultant(s) will be accountable to the Ottawa County Planning Commission, but the townships will ultimately be able to reject any proposals regarding the rewriting of the Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances.
3. The consultant(s) will complete project requirements within an agreed upon timeline negotiated between the consultant, the Ottawa County Planning Commission, and each township. The timeline may not be altered without prior approval of the Ottawa County Planning Commission and each local township.
4. The consultant(s) will attend all public hearings relating to the revision of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances.
5. The consultant(s) will provide monthly project reports to the Ottawa County Planning and Grants Director and each township. Information in the report should include the following:
  - a. Work accomplished during the month
  - b. Work to be accomplished in the next month
  - c. Problems to be brought to the attention of the Ottawa County Planning Commission and the Townships
  - d. Updated project timelines
6. All materials produced in connection with the project including, but not limited to, maps, studies, evaluations, reports, and all other documents shall be delivered to and become the property of the County of Ottawa and each respective township.
7. Boilerplate documents and standardized responses are discouraged.
8. Each township may retain, at their own expense, their present land-use consultants to review proposed changes.

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9. All invoices must be submitted to the Ottawa County Planning Commission and the appropriate township Planning Commission for review and approval before payment is made. Invoices must clearly itemize expenses or the invoice will not be paid. The following are the percentages that will be paid based upon work that is completed:

- 10% - of the total amount will be paid to the consultant after a kick-off meeting with local township officials, the Ottawa County Planning Commission, and the public.
- 65% - of the total amount will be available for costs incurred by the consultant as they complete the Project Scope (Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance; Implementation Report; Benchmark Analysis)
- 20% - of the total amount will be paid to the consultant once a final copy of each Project Scope section (Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance; Implementation Report; Benchmark Analysis) is approved by the Ottawa County Planning Commission and the appropriate township Planning Commission. The Ottawa County Planning Commission, Chester Township, and Blendon Township expect Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances that are complete, comprehensive, professional, and unique to each township. Boilerplate documents and standardized responses are discouraged. All work must be logical and grammatically/contextually precise or it will be returned to the consultant for correction(s). If corrections are needed, a revised report must be resubmitted to the County Planning Commission and the appropriate township Planning Commission for review and approval before payment is made. This process will continue until the Ottawa County Planning Commission and the appropriate township Planning Commission approves the final copy of each section.
- 5% - of the total amount will be paid to the consultant once the deliverables are secured and approved by the Ottawa County Planning Commission and the appropriate township Planning Commission.

10. The selected consultant will make one (1) oral presentation to the Ottawa County Planning Commission after the Project is completed.

## **TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Technical and financial partnerships will be developed to assist with project implementation. These partnerships will enhance the overall project by providing funding and technical expertise. The Ottawa County Planning & Grants Department will coordinate and direct all inquires and requests to the “partners” and will serve as a single point of contact to avoid confusion and duplication of efforts.

The following companies and organizations have generously agreed to provide funding and/or in-kind contributions for this project:

### **Legal Partners**

Organization: **Scholten & Fant, Attorneys at Law**  
Contact: Tom Reinsma  
202 Old Kent Building  
Grand Haven MI 49417  
616-842-3030

Contribution: Staff attorneys

Specific Services to be Rendered:

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- Legal Review - review of master plans and zoning ordinances and zoning ordinance amendment procedures
  - Meeting Attendance - attend public hearing and township meetings as necessary

### **Landscape Architect**

Organization: **Landscape Design Services, Inc.**

Contact: Matthew Bakker  
0-7351 West Olive Road  
Holland MI 49424  
616-399-1734

Contribution: Landscape Planners

Specific Services to be Rendered:

- Landscape Design Services - recommended landscape design standards for transportation corridors, scenic corridors, retail, commercial, residential developments, and scenic areas
- Visual Aids - provide illustrations for use in zoning ordinances, master plan, and/or educational brochures

### **Developers**

Organization: **Bosgraaf Development**

Contact: Ted Bosgraaf  
301 Douglas Avenue  
Holland MI 49424  
616-396-0877

**Rob Robbins, Attorney at Law**

16930 Robbins Road, Suite 105  
Grand Haven MI 49417  
616-846-9400

**Eastbrook Companies**

Contact: Dale Kracker, Development Manager  
2130 Enterprise SE  
Kentwood MI 49508  
616-455-0200

Contribution: Tours of innovative developments and ordinance review.

Specific Services to be Rendered:

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- The Preserve - Tour of development that preserves agricultural land.
  - The Woodlands - Tour of development that preserves aesthetic features and enhances transportation efficiency.
  - Baileys Grove - Tour of development that preserve environmental quality and promotes interconnected trail-ways
  - Ordinance Review - Assess the feasibility of the proposed zoning ordinances, when requested, to ensure that they will permit marketable development.

### **Land Trust**

Organization: **Land Conservancy of West Michigan**

Contact: April Scholtz  
1345 Monroe NW, Suite 3224  
Grand Rapids MI 49506  
616-451-9476

Contribution: Tailoring specific promotional and educational activities around the tangible and intangible benefits of conservation and land use easements.

Specific Services to be Rendered:

- Meetings - Promotion of development that preserves environmental quality and open space.
- Easements - Hold easements for development rights on targeted land parcels that the local units of government have identified as priority preservation areas.

### **Engineering**

Organization: **Fleiss and Vandenbrink Engineering, Inc. (Chester Townships)**

Contact: Paul Galdes  
4771 - 50th Street SE  
Grand Rapids MI 49512  
616-541-6000

**Nederveld Engineering, Inc. (Blendon Township)**

Contact: Troy Stahl  
575 East 16th Street  
Holland MI 49423  
616-393-0449

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Contribution: Engineering services.

Specific Services to be Rendered:

- Infrastructure - Review and inventory current infrastructure (roads, utilities, public services)
- Public Service Implications - Review Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance revisions for stormwater, transportation, and public service implications of proposed land use patterns.
- Prioritize Capital Needs - Assist in identifying and prioritizing the improvements that will be necessary to implement the revised Smart Growth Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances; and establish recommendations for practical timelines in which these infrastructure improvements should be made.

### **Public Relations**

Organization: **To Be Determined**

Contribution: Public Relations Services.

Specific Services to be Rendered:

- Writing press releases, and create radio actualities to announce major events, noteworthy accomplishments, and general progress of the project.

### **Digital Rendering**

Organization: MarketTech  
Contact: Jim Olthof  
530 Danforth  
Coopersville MI 49404  
616-837-5817

Contribution: Digital rendering of development proposals.

Specific Services to be Rendered:

- Create a digital rendition (both aerial and street view) of a proposed, future development in Blendon and Chester Townships

### **COMMUNITY ASSURANCES**

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In order to allay concerns that local units of government may have regarding the parameters of the project and the County's role in this endeavor, the County Planning Commission and local units of government will enter into a local partnership agreement prior to implementation of the project. A preliminary, draft copy of a local partnership agreement is listed below:

**SMART GROWTH**  
**LOCAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

This Agreement is made this \_\_\_\_ day of October, 1999, between the County of Ottawa, by and through its Planning & Grants Department, 12220 Fillmore, West Olive, Michigan 49460 ("Ottawa County") and \_\_\_\_\_ Township, \_\_\_\_\_, ("the Township"), with reference to the following facts and circumstances:

A. Ottawa County and the Township anticipate that population growth and development will continue within Ottawa County and the Township, threatening the now-existing rural character of many areas.

B. To prepare for such growth, it is necessary and advisable for Ottawa County and the Township to work cooperatively to develop new and innovative land-use planning techniques to maintain the rural characteristics of Ottawa County and the Township.

C. Ottawa County and the Township have developed this Smart Growth Demonstration Project, to protect the rural environment (surface and groundwater integrity, beneficial natural features, wildlife habitat) of Ottawa County and the Township, to preserve their aesthetic beauty (open space, scenic views, trees, agricultural land) and to minimize traffic congestion.

Now therefore the parties agree as follows:

1. General Agreement: During 1999-2000 Ottawa County and the Township, through the Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department, will hire a consultant to prepare a rewrite of the Township's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to the extent necessary. The consultant will be hired pursuant to the competitive bidding process as outlined in Exhibit "A." The revised Township Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance will be developed and implemented pursuant to the general standards, requirements, and guidelines set forth in Exhibit "B."

2. Cost of Project: Eighty percent (80%) of the funding for the cost of hiring the consultant to develop the revised Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance shall be provided by Ottawa County, and twenty percent (20%) of the funding will be provided by the Township. Both parties will be responsible for their own indirect costs, such as staff-time, postage, copying, and other miscellaneous expenses. All unanticipated costs will be allocated between Ottawa County and the Township as the parties may agree. The amount and allocation of any costs associated with Community-Based Programs (i.e. Tree Transplant

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Program, Conservation Easement Program, Agricultural Disclaimer Program) will be negotiated and agreed upon between Ottawa County and the Township, before the implementation of any such programs. Ottawa County agrees to search for private and public grant sources to fund any Community-Based Programs.

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3. Ottawa County to Act as Fiduciary: Ottawa County will act as fiduciary for all funds necessary to pay the consultant, and payment therefore shall be made by Ottawa County, as the Township, Ottawa County, and the consultant may agree, upon submission of appropriate invoices, following the standard Ottawa County policies therefore.

4. Township to Bear all Legal Responsibilities for Updated Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as Implemented: It is agreed and understood that the Township shall bear all legal responsibilities for the updated Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as may be adopted by the Township, including the actual costs of adoption (legal fees, printing, etc.) The Township agrees to indemnify and hold Ottawa County harmless against (i) all claims of property damage, injury, or loss, including all claims based upon allegations of an unconstitutional "taking" of property under the federal or state constitutions, and/or (ii) against any and all claims for personal injury or loss, arising from any action taken or not taken with regard to the development, implementation, adoption and enforcement of the revised Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances.

6. Entire Agreement: This Agreement constitutes the entire Agreement between and among Ottawa County and the Township pertaining to the Smart Growth Demonstration Project for the revision of the Township's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. All prior and simultaneous agreements are merged herein. No modification or alteration of this Agreement shall be effective unless in writing and signed by the authorized representatives of Ottawa County and the Township.

In witness whereof the parties have signed this Agreement effective the date set forth above.

THE COUNTY OF OTTAWA

By: \_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXHIBIT "A"**  
**COMPETITIVE BID OF CONSULTANT SERVICES**

The Consultant will be retained through a competitive bidding process, conducted pursuant to the terms of the Ottawa County Procurement Policy. Ottawa County and the Township will mutually develop and agree upon the terms of the Request For Proposal (RFP) for the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance before it is issued to potential bidders. The parties will mutually review all submitted proposals and shall mutually agree upon the selection of the Consultant and upon the terms of any contract entered into with the successful bidder.

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**EXHIBIT "B"**

**SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION OF SERVICES**

1. Ottawa County and the Township agree to implement innovative, creative, and progressive planning techniques.
2. Ottawa County and the Township agree that prepared press releases and press statements will receive joint approval prior to distribution.
3. Ottawa County and the Township agree that planning approaches for the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances will take the interests of the land owner, developer, homeowner, and community into account.
4. Ottawa County and the Township agree that planning approaches for the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances will focus on protecting the rural environment (surface and groundwater integrity, beneficial natural features, wildlife habitat) preserving the aesthetic beauty (open space, scenic views, trees, agricultural land) and minimize traffic congestion.
5. Ottawa County and the Township will agree upon planning techniques and tools to be used in the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances, but ultimately the Township will have final authority regarding the approval and implementation of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.
6. Ottawa County and the Township will agree upon the nature and scope of any Community-Based Programs before they are implemented.
7. Ottawa County and the Township agree that the process for conducting the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances will include a wide range of community interests for the purposes of receiving input regarding the rewrite.
8. Ottawa County and the Township agree that the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances will not exceed 18 months to complete.
9. The Township will assign a representative to act as a Single Point of Contact. The Single Point of Contact will work with the Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department Director and the selected consultant for the purposes of ensuring that timely communication occurs between County and Township Officials and to ensure that the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances is completed in a timely and professional manner.
10. The Township will be responsible for publishing all required minutes and public notices, and for compliance with the Open Meetings Act

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11. Ottawa County Planning Commission members and Township Planning Commission members agree to attend a minimum of one additional meeting per month beyond their regularly scheduled meetings (extra meetings may include public hearings, tours of innovative developments, "kickoff" events, public relation events, consultant meetings, and other similar events).
  12. Ottawa County Planning Commission members and Township Planning Commission members will make every attempt to attend training sessions concerning innovative planning techniques.
  13. Ottawa County and the Township agree that staff and their respective planning commissioners will provide all available county and township data and information that is necessary for the consultant to complete their duties in a timely manner.
  14. Ottawa County and the Township will work with Technical Partners as necessary to successfully implement the Smart Growth Demonstration Project.
  15. The Township will appoint representatives to task forces and committees as needed to implement the rewrite of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances and to establish Community-Based Programs. The Ottawa County Planning Commission and the Township Planning Commission will oversee the functions of all committees and task forces.
  16. Ottawa County and the Township may share information regarding the successes, failures, cost, feasibility, and functionality of the Smart Growth Demonstration Project and any Community-Based Programs with other townships.
  17. The Township will be responsible for updating its Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances after the Smart Growth Demonstration Project is complete.

## **SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

The selection criteria that will be used by the Ottawa County Planning Commission to select townships to participate in this project are as follows:

### **Selection Criteria:**

1. Willingness, ability, and commitment of individual planning commissioners to attend numerous meetings and planning sessions to complete the project in a timely manner.
2. Preparedness of local planning commission/department.

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3. Local unit of government's willingness conduct comprehensive overhauls of master plan and zoning ordinance.
  4. Local unit of government's willingness to be flexible in approach to planning.
  5. Local unit of government's willingness to support creative and new approaches to planning
  6. Local unit of government's willingness to commit to updating master plan and zoning ordinance on a regular basis.
  7. Willingness and ability of local officials to tour innovative, open space developments in West Michigan.
  8. Minimum local financial contribution of 10% of total project cost.
  9. Presence of unique lands and/or natural features.
  10. Development pressure.
  11. Support for Open Space development.
  12. Presence of developers wanting to participate in innovative projects.

The timetable that will be used by the Ottawa County Planning Commission to select townships to participate in this project are as follows:

Process:

January 99 - October 99	Project presentation - Township Boards and Planning Commission
November 99	Townships submit Letter of Interest
December 99	Demonstration Sites Selected
March 00	Issue Request-for-Proposals
April 00	Select Consultant
April 15, 00	Kickoff Meeting with County, Townships, Consultants, and Partners. Begin Implementation of Smart Growth Demonstration Projects
October 01	End Implementation Phase



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## **Conclusion**

The project is a practical and results-oriented endeavor that will utilize innovative and creative approaches to planning to ensure that rural character is preserved in the midst of tremendous growth pressure in Ottawa County. It will require and promote cooperation and collaboration between township and county government, but all final decisions will ultimately be controlled by the local unit of governments participating in the program.

This “rural preservation” effort will be followed by a subsequent demonstration project that will be designed to assist urban areas with urban preservation and revitalization.