



Planning Commission  
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**Planning Commission Agenda**  
**March 15, 2023**

- I. Call to Order 5:30 pm**
  - A. Pledge of Allegiance
  - B. New Member Welcome
  - C. Roll Call
  
- II. Public Comment**  
Any agenda item – 3 min. limit
  
- III. Consent Items**
  - A. Approval of agenda
  - B. Approval of Planning Commission 2/15/2023 minutes
  
- IV. Communications**
  - A. R2PC March Packet
  
- V. Old Business**
  - A. Sec. 36-431 and Sec. 36-432
  - B. Master Plan review – pp. 78-97
  
- VI. New Business**
  - A. No new business
  
- VII. Zoning Administrator Report**
  
- VIII. Commissioners' Comments**
  
- IX. Public Comment**  
Any Commission related item – 3 min. limit
  
- X. Adjournment**  
Next meeting Wednesday, April 19, 2023 at 5:30 pm

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**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Hillsdale City Hall**  
**Council Chambers**  
**February 15, 2023**  
**5:30 pm**

**I. Call to Order**

Meeting opened at 5:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call.

**II. Members Present**

**A.** Members Present: Chairman Eric Moore, Vice Chair Ron Scholl Commissioner William Morrissey, Commissioner Elias McConnell, Commissioner Kerry Laycock, Commissioner Penny Swan

**B.** Public Present: Zoning Administrator Alan Beeker

**III. Public Comment**

No public comment

**IV. Consent of Agenda and Minutes**

Motion to approve the consent items as presented made by Commissioner Swan, seconded by Commissioner Morrissey with change of commissioner Laycock's name from "Kerry" to "Laycock" in previous minutes, motion approved unanimously

**V. Communications**

Alan Beeker share communications on R2PC February packet, no comments

**VI. Old Business**

**A.** Sec. 36-431 and Sec. 36-432

**B.** Discussion of wind turbines in the city, decision to remove wind energy

**VII. New Business**

Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP)

**A.** Public comment for CIP, no comments

**B.** Discussion of page 15 and 2025 power inadequacies

**C.** Moore motions to approve and send to council, Swan seconds, unanimous

**VIII. Zoning Administrator Report**

**A.** Update on Meijer, excavation equipment moved onto site, discussion of barn on property

**B.** Update on Keefer, no new news

**C.** Discussion of changing one-way streets back to two-way streets, drawings to come

**IX. Commissioner's Comments**

None

**X. Public Comment**

Citizen concerned with safety issue parking around city hall, handicap parking around city hall and wheelchair accessibility, would like us to adopt building standards, wants fire escapes put into buildings downtown area especially in two and three story apartments

**XI. Adjournment**

Commissioner Swan moved to adjourn the meeting at 1820, Commissioner Kerry seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:08 pm.

**XII. Next meeting: March 15, 2023 at 5:30 pm.**



**TO: Planning Commission**

**FROM: Zoning Administrator**

**DATE: March 15, 2023**

**RE: Accessory Structure Ordinance Amendment**

**Background:** At the February meeting, the Commission requested revisions to the draft ordinance submitted. The draft submitted for the March meeting reflects those revisions. If the ordinance does not require additional changes, the Zoning Administrator requests that the Commission set a public hearing date for the regular April meeting.

Sec. 36-431. - Accessory buildings.

**Definitions:**

**BUILDING-INTEGRATED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system that is an integral part of a primary or accessory building or structure (rather than separate mechanical device), replacing or substituting for an architectural or structural component of the building or structure. Building-integrated systems include, but are not limited to, photovoltaic or hot water solar energy systems that are contained within roofing materials, windows, skylights, and awnings.

**GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system mounted on support posts, like a rack or pole that are attached to or rest on the ground.

**MAXIMUM TILT:** The maximum angle of a solar array (i.e., most vertical position) for capturing solar radiation as compared to the horizon line.

**MINIMUM TILT:** The minimal angle of a solar array (i.e., most horizontal position) for capturing solar radiation as compared to the horizon line.

**PRINCIPAL-USE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A commercial, ground-mounted solar energy system that converts sunlight into electricity for the primary purpose of off-site use through the electrical grid or export to the wholesale market.

**ROOF-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system mounted on racking that is attached to or ballasted on the roof of a building or structure.

**SOLAR ARRAY:** A photovoltaic panel, solar thermal collector, or collection of panels or collectors in a solar energy system that collects solar radiation.

**SOLAR CARPORT:** A solar energy system of any size that is installed on a structure that is accessory to a parking area, and which may include electric vehicle supply equipment or energy storage facilities. Solar panels affixed on the roof of an existing carport structure are considered a Roof-Mounted SES.

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM (SES):** A photovoltaic system or solar thermal system for generating and/or storing electricity or heat, including all above and below ground equipment or components required for the system to operate properly and to be secured to a roof surface or the ground. This includes any necessary operations and maintenance building(s), but does not include any temporary construction offices, substation(s) or other transmission facilities between the SES and the point of interconnection to the electric grid.

Accessory buildings and accessory structures shall be subject to the following regulations, which shall apply in all zone districts:

1. All accessory buildings and accessory structures are permitted in all zone districts subject to compliance with all of the following:
  - a. The accessory building and/or accessory structure is customarily and clearly incidental to a use that is permitted under this chapter and/or is a permitted use in the zone district in which it is to be located;
  - b. The accessory building and/or accessory structure does not create a nuisance or hazard; and

- c. The accessory building and/or accessory structure meets and is in accordance with all applicable limitations, requirements and provisions of this article and the applicable zone district.
2. No accessory buildings or accessory structures shall be established until the principal use to which it is an accessory has been established or a building, placement or construction permit for the principal use has been obtained.
3. Where the accessory building is structurally attached to a main building, it shall be subject to and must conform to all yard regulations of this title, applicable to the main buildings.
4. Accessory buildings or other accessory structures shall not be erected, placed or established in any required yard, unless otherwise permitted by this chapter.
5. No detached accessory building or other accessory structure shall be located closer than ten feet to any main building or structure, unless it can conform to all other yard regulations as required for the main building or structure. It shall not be located any closer than three feet to any side or rear lot line, unless otherwise permitted by this chapter. In those instances where the rear lot line is coterminous with an alley right-of-way, the accessory building or accessory structure shall be no closer than one foot to such rear lot line. In no instance shall an accessory building or accessory structure be located within a dedicated easement right-of-way.
6. When an accessory building or accessory structure is located on a corner lot, the side lot line of which is substantially a continuation of the front lot line of the lot to its rear, the accessory building or accessory structure shall not project beyond the front line of the existing main structure on the lot in rear of such corner lot. An accessory building or accessory structure shall not be located within ten feet of a street right-of-way line.

**An On-site Ground-Mounted Solar Energy System is an accessory use which shall meet the following standards:**

1. **Ground-Mounted SES shall not exceed 15 feet measured from the ground to the top of the system when oriented at maximum tilt. Ground mounted SES may not be placed in the front yard. Ground mounted SES shall be subject to and must conform to all yard regulations of this title, applicable to the main buildings as measured when oriented at minimum design tilt.**
2. **A Small Principal-Use SES is a permitted use in all zoning districts subject to site plan review and shall meet all of the following requirements:**
  - a. **Total height shall not exceed 15 feet measured from the ground to the top of the system when oriented at maximum tilt.**
  - b. **Setback distance shall be measured from the property line or road right-of-way to the closest point of the solar array at minimum tilt or any SES components and as follows:**
  - c. **A Ground-Mounted SES shall follow the setback distance for primary buildings or structures for the district in which it is sited.**

- d. A Ground-Mounted SES is not subject to property line setbacks for common property lines of two or more participating lots, except road right-of-way setbacks shall apply.
  - e. A Small Principal-Use SES shall be secured with perimeter fencing to restrict unauthorized access. If installed, perimeter fencing shall be a maximum of 6 feet in height. Additional screening may be required upon review.
3. Roof-Mounted SES shall not exceed the combined height of the building and the roof mounted SES, when oriented at maximum tilt, for principal structures in any zoning district. A Roof-Mounted SES or Building-Integrated SES installed on a nonconforming building, structure, or use shall not be considered an expansion of the nonconformity.

All Ground mounted SES applications must include a site plan and drawings that show the height and dimensions of the SES. Applications for Roof-Mounted SES must include horizontal and vertical elevation drawings that show the location and height of the SES on the building and dimensions of the SES. All SES drawings shall include dimensions of the minimum and maximum tilt. Reflection angles for solar collectors shall be oriented such that they do not project glare onto adjacent properties. Any connection to the public utility grid shall be inspected and approved by the appropriate public utility.

All solar energy equipment shall be maintained and kept in good working order. If it is determined by the Zoning Administrator or other City Staff that a solar energy system is not being maintained, kept in good working order, or is no longer being utilized to perform its intended function for six consecutive months, the property owner shall be given 30 day notice for removal of unit and all equipment. If the solar energy system is not removed within 30 days, any person, or anyone acting in behalf of the person, violating any of the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. The imposition of any sentence shall not exempt the offender from compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

Sec. 36-432. - Accessory buildings in residential districts.

Accessory buildings and accessory structures located in any residential zone districts shall be subject to the following regulations except as otherwise permitted in this chapter:

1. No detached accessory building or accessory structure in an R-1, RD-1, or RM-1 district shall exceed one story or 15 feet in height.
2. No accessory building or accessory structure inclusive of the main structure may exceed the required density requirements of section 36-411.
3. Playhouses, greenhouses and gazebos may not be located in side and rear yards within three feet of the property line.
4. Swimming pools shall be regulated by the Michigan Residential Building Code. Swimming pools, excepting inflatable swimming pools having a length or diameter of less than five feet and/or a depth of less than 18 inches, shall be placed in the rear yard only. Inflatable swimming pools having a length or diameter of five feet or more and/or a depth of 18 inches or more shall be located within the rear or side yards only. No hot tub or swimming pool shall be located within three feet of the property line.
5. Porches and decks must conform to all yard setback, bulk and height requirements. Construction of new porches and decks and the reconstruction of existing porches and decks shall be subject to compliance with the requirements of sections 36-411 and 36-787.
6. Game courts, as defined in section 36-6, excepting basketball hoops, are allowed within the rear and side yards only. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, basketball hoops may be located in the driveway to the main residential building or to an accessory building, to an attached or detached accessory building or accessory structure. No game courts, playground or other recreational equipment may be located within three feet of the property line.
7. Garbage and trash containers are allowed in the side and rear yards only, except at designated times of pickup, during which they may be located at the property line in accordance with and subject to the provisions of chapter 28 of this Code.
8. Clothes lines, supporting poles and similar natural laundry drying equipment are allowed within the side or rear yard but shall not be located within three feet of the property line.
9. Pet shelters, pens, cages and runs are allowed only in the rear yard but shall not be located within three feet of the property line.
10. The use of semi-trailers, enclosed trailers, trucks, rail cars or vehicles as storage buildings or structures or as accessory buildings or structures is prohibited.
11. **Ground-Mounted Solar Energy System shall meet the requirements listed in Sec. 36-431.**
12. **Roof-Mounted Solar Energy System shall meet the requirements listed in Sec. 36-431.**
13. **No wind generating energy system shall be permitted.**





**TO: Planning Commission**

**FROM: Zoning Administrator**

**DATE: March 15, 2023**

**RE: Master Plan review**

**Background: The Master Plan is a working document for the city plan. Periodically, the Commission needs to review how things are proceeding. Attached are the pages specific for our review.**



# Comprehensive Development Plan

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## **Residential Development Plan**

Residential land users comprise the largest acreage of developed area in the City of Hillsdale. Existing single-family neighborhoods are scattered throughout the City with the highest concentrations found closest to the downtown district and fronting primary arterial roadways. The residential areas of the City comprise pre-war along with post-war residential subdivisions. Residential density lessens as you move away from the downtown district.

Existing vacant land near the City outskirts often lacks municipal services such as water, sewer, and paved streets which would reduce development costs for a prospective developer. In addition, some land is marginal for development due to floodplains, wetland areas, or limited access. However, vacant land is not the only alternative to growth. Redevelopment of existing vacant and blighted properties pose an exciting potential for new mixed use development that would enhance walkability and have access to city services.

The Land Use Plan suggests low density residential uses for a majority of the vacant land at the periphery of the City's corporate boundaries. Low density residential use of these parcels is consistent with existing uses that surround them. The exceptions to proposed single-family use near the city edge are high density residential uses on the east and west edges. High density use is proposed in the area around State and Wolcott on the east side of the City and on Fayette on the west side near existing multiple-family developments. New moderate-density use is proposed in the Barber/Mauck area and south of Bacon on the west side of the City.

A majority of city parcels are targeted for low density residential development by this Plan. The criteria used in targeting these parcels is availability of municipal water and sewer, paved streets, availability of utilities like gas and electric, and the lack of environmentally sensitive physical features such as wetlands and floodplains. These parcels all have ample access. Any landlocked parcel is automatically excluded for potential development.

The demand for housing in the City is expected to increase slightly over the life of this plan. A number of factors are contributing to this increased demand. As the population of the City grows, there will be a need for more housing of all types. Additionally, as the population is growing there is a trend toward a decrease in the size of the average household. Decreasing densities will put an additional strain on the existing housing stock.

## Housing Plan

The dominant pre-war era housing stock gives the City of Hillsdale a distinct historic flavor. These quaint, tree-lined neighborhoods add to its quality living environment. At the same time, the overall age of the housing stock presents maintenance challenges that can become blight issues if not monitored properly.

A significant portion (65 percent) of the community's housing stock was built prior to 1940. From a planning perspective this becomes important as housing stock built prior to 1940 will be at an age where major code related updates may be necessary. In many cases, occupants of this housing stock are the original owners who are now elderly or low income and often on fixed incomes and may be financially incapable of making necessary repairs. In other cases, the housing stock has been converted to a multiple-family use while still others have been sold to first time buyers who are usually young and lack financial resources necessary for major repairs.

Other factors contribute to the increasing demand for all types of housing. The average number of persons per household in the City has been declining from approximately three (3) per household in 1980 to 2.46 at present. Consequently, an increasing population has a greater need for additional housing units than a decade ago. In addition, the population of the City is expected to continue to expand.

In consideration of these factors, combined with opportunities to meet the goals and objectives of this plan, the City of Hillsdale must continue successful programs aimed at increasing the quality and safety of existing housing and focus on new programs that will provide a measure of stability of residential neighborhoods. The City must also encourage new housing starts if it is to grow to meet the demands of a new and changing population. The following programs and/or policies are recommended:

- The City should continue with its Use and Occupancy permit inspection program to assure that existing structures are safe and decent for those occupying them.
- The City should encourage support groups to help those needing assistance with property maintenance.
- A historic preservation program including historic preservation districts should be researched and implemented if feasible in predetermined areas in the City.
- The City should continue its efforts in enforcement of the property maintenance code which prohibits or greatly restricts storage of material, equipment, and abandoned vehicles.
- The City should continue its participation in the Redevelopment Ready Communities Program as well as consider other available through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.
- The City should encourage and promote the development of the Three Meadows project, by utilizing flexible design and zoning in this area with regard to different types of residential development.
- The City should use all resources such as zoning regulations and site plan review to encourage mixed use developments.

## **Industrial and Commercial Development Plan**

Jobs created by commercial and industrial land users make possible the survival of a community as dollars generated from employment filter down through the local economy. The continued viability of commercial and industrial sectors of the community must be encouraged and supported as a major asset to Hillsdale. However, the physical relationship of these uses to residential land use needs careful consideration to avoid or reduce undesirable nuisances.

Recent developments in internet connectivity open up a whole new sector of technology employment opportunities in Hillsdale. In 2014, Hillsdale became one of the best connected areas in the country after 72 strands of high speed optic fiber were brought to Hillsdale through the Merit REACH-3MC project. This project helped construct additional fiber-optic infrastructure providing increased redundancy and internet performance. A 40 Gbps direct connection between Chicago and Ann Arbor provides a high-capacity redundant path to the major internet connection points east and west. The final Merit upgrade is a 40 Gbps path between Hillsdale and Lansing. In addition, Hillsdale has a 96 strand fiber-optic connection south to Ohio through the Oarnet fiber network. There are now four 10 Gbps fiber pathways in and out of Hillsdale, thereby creating four way redundancy allowing equally fast upload and download speeds.

The recent fiber upgrades enables the City of Hillsdale to host jobs in the technology sector. In response, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) changed the name of the Hillsdale Industrial Park to the Hillsdale Manufacturing and Technology Park to acknowledge the possibility of attracting high tech firms to Hillsdale. The Hillsdale Planning Commission has adopted a 165 acre Technology Overlay District (TOD) in the Hillsdale Manufacturing and Technology Park to allow protection for the technology companies that locate in the park. The TOD would require berms, landscaping and distance between the traditional light industrial uses in the park and any new technology companies.

Finally, the availability of high speed internet connections, even into residential areas, will allow for much more home-based technology employment. The Planning Commission and City Council should work to align city ordinances to allow for home –based employment in the technology sector.

In conclusion, the City of Hillsdale continues to encourage new Industrial and Commercial development through the following strategies:

- actively seek out technology firms to locate in the Hillsdale Manufacturing and Technology Park
- actively advertise the fiber connectivity available in Hillsdale to high tech manufacturing firms which depend on high speed internet connections
- review and revise City ordinances to allow and encourage home based technology employment

## **Downtown Development Plan**

Central Business Districts (CBD) across the country have experienced serious difficulties remaining viable. A number of reasons have contributed to the decline of the CBD including the lure of larger vacant parcels on the outskirts of municipalities: the ability to construct large stores and pedestrian malls on these large parcels; convenient parking; on-line shopping “The Amazon.com Syndrome”; etc.

The CBD of Hillsdale remains a viable commercial presence in the community in spite of ongoing commercial development along the M-99 Corridor. Like other municipalities, the City of Hillsdale CBD continues to look for new ideas that will attract new businesses. Currently, the CBD boasts a variety of commercial establishments and services including banks, stores, restaurants, and specialty shops. The CBD remains viable due to the diversity of shops which offer retail goods not found in other commercial areas outside the downtown area.

Much of the City of Hillsdale CBD is on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of the structures in the CBD are contributing historic structures. The age and varied building styles present maintenance challenges, however the Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) district offers a Façade Rehabilitation Grant. The Rental Rehabilitation Program from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Redevelopment Ready Communities Program from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) are just a few of the programs available to help downtown building owners in rehabilitating their aging buildings.

## Existing Downtown Conditions

**Land and Building Use** — Land uses in the CBD include commercial and residential. The buildings in the CBD have varying levels of occupancy. Ground floors are reserved for commercial or office space only. The upper floors may be residential in addition to commercial and office. Many of the upper floor space available is underutilized due to the need for maintenance and code-related upgrades.

Upper floors should be viewed as potential expansion to the CBD. These spaces are untapped resources that could be attractive to developers. Various programs are available to aid in the reclamation of these spaces. Various programs also exist to aid in the upgrade and maintenance of building facades and roofs.

**Walkability** — The rerouting of M-99 through the downtown and the various one-way streets make circulation within the CBD awkward and unfriendly to visitors.

Vehicular circulation through the CBD should be addressed from both a walkability and economic development perspective. In 2007, MDOT re-routed truck traffic through the middle of the CBD, increasing truck traffic along Broad Street and effectively giving the impression of a bifurcated downtown. Hillsdale Street is one-way in the north direction adjacent to City Hall. North Manning Street is one-way in the south direction between Bacon and Hallet streets. North West Street is one-way in the north direction between Bacon and Carleton streets. A walkability study should be performed to document the issues and create an implementation plan to correct them. MEDC has expressed a willingness to work with the City and MDOT to resolve some of the circulation issues.

**Signage** — Signs convey information to people. The City is in need of uniform, concise signage throughout to help direct visitors to the downtown, colleges and services. Organizations have expressed interest in helping fund the new signage. The City's ordinance is a tool which can be effectively used to coordinate signage in the CBD. Improved signage helps balance the visual order of the urban environment, improves the historic character and makes it easier for visitors who travel the CBD.

Signs, including business and advertising signs, need to complement the character or unified image that the CBD is trying to project. Signs that are too large, too bright, too modern or do not contribute to a harmonious theme should be discouraged or limited. Business signage should be regulated so that it contributes to the overall theme such as hand painted or stenciled lettering on glass, above doors, or on awnings.

**Entry Markers** — Entry markers can be used to welcome visitors to the downtown. These markers could be constructed of a material that would be in character with a theme developed for the downtown (i.e. brick, wrought iron, etc.).



Informational signage, such as those which might direct traffic to public parking areas could also be designed in character with a theme developed for the downtown. Street names could be attached to building corners for convenience and again in character with a theme. Entry markers are also widely used by communities to notify people that they have entered a municipality's jurisdiction. They give the community identity and mark territorial boundaries. They may also express a slogan or the community's pride such as community organizations or school accomplishments.

## **Economic**

- Encourage a mix of retail business as the primary use of first floor buildings. Secondly, encourage office use of first floors in areas where the demand for retail space is lower, such as on secondary streets and at the periphery of the CBD.
- Encourage an adaptive reuse of vacant second and third floor space for office or residential purposes.
- Support the Hillsdale Business Association and coordinate activities with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Pursue tenants for vacant and underutilized structures.
- Conduct a market study to determine the demand for various types of retail businesses not found in the CBD.

## **Aesthetics**

- Develop a unified theme to provide an image for development and redevelopment efforts.
- Research the feasibility and community interest in creating an historic preservation district in the CBD.
- Improve signage in the CBD centered on a unified theme.
- Explore zoning regulations that would prohibit the covering or alteration of historic facades.
- Protect mature trees whenever possible.

## **Circulation and Parking**

- Continue to provide safe efficient flow of automobile traffic while discouraging truck traffic in the downtown area.
- Provide sidewalks that are well maintained and convenient for downtown shoppers.
- Continue to provide free municipal parking for specified periods.
- Facilitate the re-routing of M-99 along with new prospective parking, streetscape and traffic flow.
- Remove one-way streets within the City. Recreate a direct entrance into downtown Hillsdale along Hillsdale Street and West Street.
- Re-create the intersection of North Street and North Broad to allow North Street to cross North Broad.
- Redevelop and expand Ferris Street parking lot to increase parking and create an attractive transition to the North Broad businesses and apartments.

## **Streetscape Improvements**

The majority of people traveling to and from the CBD will arrive in a vehicle. They will enter the downtown from any number of routes. The first impression of a City often begins at the street level.

North Howell and North Broad are the most prominent streets in the central business district with many businesses having frontage along these streets. Secondary streets include North, McCollum, East Bacon, and Waldron. In addition, alleys running parallel between North Howell and South Manning provide access to municipal parking lots.

Primary streetscape improvements should continue along North Howell and include street furniture such as benches and trash receptacles that are compatible with the downtown theme. Other improvements might include brick pavers at intersection crossings, "knuckles" at side street intersections, additional trees and tree guards.

The alleyways that run parallel to North Howell and South Manning are important considerations for any streetscape plan. These alleys are highly visible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic since municipal parking is so readily available in this area and many of the North Howell businesses have rear entrances. Therefore, pedestrian lighting, brick pavers, and greenery in this area will considerably improve the appearance. Additional landscaping, including green islands in the municipal parking lots, would benefit the overall image of the rear entrance areas.

The lack of an intersection at North Street and North Broad Street (M-99) in downtown Hillsdale is a hindrance to walkability and easy access to our downtown. One can see the shops across the street, but neither the driver nor the walker can legally cross North Broad (M-99) at North Street to get there. The driver is forced to turn around to find an alternate crossing, the closest being McCollum Street to the south.

Due to the lack of a crosswalk at North Street and North Broad, the Post Office and City Hall become pedestrian and vehicular islands. In order to access downtown from the Post Office and City Hall, you must walk a long block south which discourages the shopper from one entire City block of shops on Howell Street, or the walker can walk north one block to cross at the stop light at Carleton Road which crosses an extra wide, diagonal corner that is especially dangerous even with the light.

A traffic and walkability study should be done to analyze this problematic traffic pattern. Hillsdale Street and N. West Streets should be opened to two way traffic in order to welcome and allow visitors, faculty, staff and students from Hillsdale College to enter downtown Hillsdale. North Street should also be opened to traffic crossing North Broad (M-99).

## **Building Facades**

The most valuable resource the City of Hillsdale central business district possesses is its vast number of historically significant structures. The facades are relatively untouched from their original architecture. This is not universally true as some facades in the CBD have been altered or reconstructed due to fire, vandalism, or energy conservation needs. In other cases, it may be necessary to demolish an entire structure because it is no longer economically viable or poses a safety risk to the public. In most cases, it is possible to restore or redesign either a facade or an entire building in character with the surrounding CBD.

Accomplishing this unified architectural appearance in downtown building facades will require an aggressive approach by City officials in setting public policy and subsequently zoning regulations that will spell out specifically what an individual may do or not do with their building facade. This type of zoning is referred to as Form-based zoning and is prevalent in the new Placemaking movement.

Another approach might be to create a governing body that would deal specifically with historic preservation efforts of the City. In many communities this preservation commission is comprised of architects, historians, surveyors, planners, city officials, and residents in some combination. These historic preservation commissions are permitted and have authority by statute under Act 169, Public Acts of Michigan, 1970 and is commonly referred to as the Historic Districts, Sites, and Structures Act. The purpose of the Act is stated below and discussed in more detail in the following section:

Safeguard the heritage of the local unit by preserving a district in the local unit which reflects elements of the unit's cultural, social, economic, political, or architectural history.

Stabilize and improve property values in that district. Foster civic beauty.

Strengthen the local economy.

Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the citizens of the local unit and of the state.

## **Tax Incremental Finance Authority**

Hillsdale's Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) has done many things to improve and increase the downtown area's viability. By law (PA 450 of 1980), TIFA districts may undertake the following tasks:

- Prepare and analyze economic change in the downtown district.
- Study and analyze the impact of urban growth in the downtown district.
- Plan and propose the construction, restoration or preservation of a public facility, building, etc. which will promote economic growth.
- Implement any plan of development in the district necessary to achieve the objectives of the Act.
- Acquire or dispose of property.
- Improve land and buildings.
- Lease and collect fees for use of any building or property under its control.
- Lease any building under its control.
- Accept grants, donations, etc. from public or private sources.

The purpose of the Act is to halt property value deterioration, increase property tax valuation, to eliminate deterioration, and promote economic growth. Communities have been successfully using incremental financing to improve the business climate of their downtowns since 1975. A variety of programs have been initiated by finance authorities, many of which use tax increment financing (TIF) to help fund public improvements. The use of TIF funds are permitted for public improvement projects the City is presently using under the Tax Increment Finance Authority Act 450 (TIFA).

The basic premise behind tax increment financing under Act 450 is that public investment in public improvement projects will improve the overall economic condition in a downtown district and result in private investment which would otherwise not have occurred without public investments. The Act requires that a development plan and tax increment finance plan first be developed before capturing TIF revenue. Once these plans are adopted, the City may capture tax increments that result from an increase in property tax valuation above and beyond a base year when valuations are frozen at that base and use the TIF revenue for public projects identified in the development plan.

The City established the TIFA in 1997. The board has overseen various projects that helped establish new viable businesses downtown. These businesses, in turn, rehabilitated properties within the TIFA district. The TIFA currently oversees a Façade Grant, Downtown Beautification and Restaurant Attraction Program. They are currently working on establishing a Business Attraction Program.

\*Capture history available in the appendix

## **Mixed Development Plan**

Mixed developments are land uses that may include a variety of land use types on an individual parcel or within a particular development area such as single-family, multiple-family, office, and low-impact commercial uses. They are intended to preserve the historic character of the community particularly, although not exclusively, around the CBD. In most cases, mixed developments will be encouraged in "transition" areas where residential uses which were once predominate are now less desirable for that purpose, but are useful structures for other types of use. In some cases economic conditions and surrounding land uses have changed in an area making reuse of a structure less desirable for residential purposes. In other cases road networks or transportation patterns change making existing dwellings very attractive for office or low impact commercial purposes. In still other cases, the existing land uses are already mixed and it's the City's intention to encourage a further mix in land use types.

## **Limited Development Area Plan**

Within the City of Hillsdale are lands which, because of natural and man-made constraints are difficult to develop. Physical constraints to development are generally present on those lands that are environmentally sensitive to encroachment by man.

Wetlands are identified by the presence of water-loving vegetation; hydric soils, and saturated or seasonably flooded substrata. They function as natural water filters treating surface water as it recharges aquifers below. They also function as a mechanism for erosion control and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Finally, they have recreation potential for bird watching, nature study, and other educational opportunities. Protecting these resources by encouraging development away from wetlands is a goal of this plan. It may be necessary to provide zoning that is flexible enough for a potential developer to build around these environmentally sensitive areas by increasing densities in other areas more conducive to development: a tradeoff for preserving existing wetlands. This could be accomplished through new zoning regulations. Floodplains are another type of environmentally sensitive land. They are nearly level alluvial plains that border a stream or wetland and are subject to flooding unless artificially protected. A "50 year floodplain" is one which could be expected to flood on an average of once in 50 years. Some floodplains flood annually while others only periodically. Development in floodplain areas magnify the flooding potential because a house, for example, displaces space which would otherwise accommodate flood water. The presence of seasonal water threatens both property and lives. The community has an obligation to limit the amount and type of development that takes place in a floodway area. This plan recognizes the need to limit development in the floodplain areas and suggests a limited use for these areas.

Soils also play a role in the ability of a parcel to handle a particular type of development. Some soils have severe and moderate limitations such as excessive slopes, high water tables, instability and ponding. Engineering techniques exist that may overcome some limitations. Development on soils with severe limitations can result in basements that flood or

foundations that crack. These become community problems when property owners request the City to provide drainage on ponding soil or municipal sewer to the site when septic systems fail. Discouraging intensive development on soils with severe limitations before it occurs is in accordance with the development goals of this plan.

A soil survey has been completed for the City by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The Planning Commission should use the publication extensively when reviewing development requests.

Zoning is the tool most frequently used in regulating land uses in environmentally sensitive areas. The Planning Commission has created a Parks & Recreational Facilities (PRF) district which will protect natural resources from unnecessary encroachment when encroachment will result in social, biological or economic harm to the community or the land surrounding a proposed development project.

Other areas in the City have limited development potential but unlike the environmental constraints that have been present for centuries, man-made barriers have resulted in areas that have marginal potential for development. These areas are designated on the Land Use plan map for limited use because of access problems such as being landlocked, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, abandoned landfills or abandoned mining operations. These man-made obstacles do not necessarily mean that an intensive development will not be allowed; rather the designation of "limited use" simply acknowledges that the Planning Commission recognizes it will be difficult for a use other than the current use to be expected at these sites. When a change in use does occur, this plan suggests that it be a use compatible with surrounding uses and under no circumstances a more intensive use than surround area.

## **Recreation Action Plan**

An inventory of existing recreational facilities made available to the community by the City reveals a variety of recreational activities, (baseball/softball, soccer, fishing, swimming, boating, nature education, family reunions/weddings, concerts, disc golf, cycling, walking/running, basketball and volleyball). The City of Hillsdale boasts seven parks, each offering any number of these activities. Due to a rich history behind their creation, there is added historical value as well. In addition, the City maintains 7.5 miles of paved bike path for cyclists, runners, walkers, and skaters. The City works in collaboration with the Hillsdale Community Schools to share facilities throughout the year. Youth and adult basketball leagues, volleyball leagues, baseball, football and soccer are some examples of those activities in which the two entities share facilities. Davis Middle School and Hillsdale High School host Hillsdale Recreation in the youth tackle football league and youth/adult basketball and volleyball leagues during the winter months. The City owned facility, Fields of Dreams, is home field for the high school boys' and girls' soccer in the spring and fall and makes the baseball fields available for pick-up games and an annual fundraising tournament. Fields of Dreams also hosts Central Michigan Soccer Association (CMSA) for its spring and fall club soccer leagues. Sand volleyball courts at Sandy Beach provide practice sites for high school, college and local women's sand volleyball leagues. Owen Memorial Park is used by the high school, academy and college for cross country training and competition and has become a popular venue for community fundraising events.

Facility programming is done through the City Recreation Department and regular maintenance of the parks is carried out by the Department of Public Services. The two departments communicate the needs of each park as well as share ideas for upgrades. Suggestions by the public are well received and considered. A five year Joint Recreation Plan recognizes the need for recreational facilities and places emphasis on improvement to the existing facilities rather than the creation of new. The City has been able to fulfill many of these improvement projects by partnering with local service groups, grant funding and the generosity of its citizens through donations and volunteerism.

The renovation of Mrs. Stock's Park was the first of these partnership efforts beginning eleven years ago. The renovation of this downtown park continues today and future plans are still in the making. This project began with a City Council appointed committee and the Hillsdale Garden Club. Mrs. Stock's Park has grown from an unkempt eyesore to the winner of five national gardening awards. The park hosts a series of summer concerts, weddings, family gatherings and picnics. Through collaborative efforts of the City, donations from the community, Hillsdale Garden Club and grants from the Hillsdale County Community Foundation, Mrs. Stock's Park Committee continues to move toward realizing its vision. With the pond now in good condition, a powered pavilion constructed, new wrought-iron fencing, beautiful gardens in place and an irrigation system to maintain them, improvements continue. Plans are underway for lighting throughout the park, a memorial garden and plumbed restrooms.

Once a local hot spot, Sandy Beach had fallen into extreme disrepair due to severe budget constraints. In 2009, Hillsdale Rotary Club presented the City with a plan to revitalize Sandy Beach. The project will be completed in five phases, four of which have been completed to date. Improvements to the park have included renovation of the bath house/concession building, complete excavation of the beach, newly poured walkways, new ADA certified play equipment, a docking system and a new septic system installed by the City. The final phase, to begin in the spring of 2015, provides for the addition of a basketball court, an upgrade to the sand volleyball courts and parking lot improvements.

The local Kiwanis Club has, within the past year, adopted Cold Springs Park for major renovation. This project, while not mentioned in the current Joint Recreation Plan, is worthy of mentioning not only because of the enormity of renovation, but because of the extent of collaboration. This project will involve the City of Hillsdale, Kiwanis Club, Michigan State University, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) as well as a plethora of community volunteerism. Not only does this project involve restoring the original site back to a healthy, thriving state, but an expansion of the park through the purchase of adjacent property. Kiwanis plans to partner with the high school in order to restore the adjacent school owned woodlot property in an effort to tie it into the park. The project is in the planning stage, but Kiwanis is hopeful to break ground in 2016 with a ten year projection for completion.

Fields of Dreams is a facility originally developed in a collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers. Funding for improvements to the facility has come from an endowment under the administration of the Hillsdale County Community Foundation, private donations, tournament fundraisers run by the Recreation Department, Hillsdale Youth Baseball

Charity Fund and the Ladies Beautification League. The last of six dugouts were installed in the summer of 2014. Other improvements have included resurfacing of three baseball diamonds, purchase of new bleachers and refurbishment of existing structures, pouring of cement slabs under bleachers and a community paint mural provided for by the Ladies Beautification League and other concession stand improvements. A new project funded by memorials left by two local families, concessions revenues and tournament revenues and a grant from the Hillsdale County Community Foundation is slated to be completed in the spring of 2015. This project is for custom seating fabricated by a local tradesman, cement walkway two shade trees, and a lighted flagpole. Epoxy coating on the plumbed restroom floors is scheduled to be done as well.

The City should take advantage of its location on the headwaters of the St. Joseph River. As property becomes available, the City should attempt to gain possession to incorporate into its park system and/or encourage private development of river front property into recreational uses such as canoe liveries or fishing docks. Alternatively, river front property should be encouraged to be developed privately in a way that takes advantage of its water-front asset for dining, residential views, and park-like setting.

The City should take advantage of its position on the North Country Trail to maximize the use and availability of its trail system, most notably the 70 mile portion of the Baw Beese Trail. The trails should be better signed and advertised to make it accessible to outsiders. Wayfinding Signs should clearly mark the Trail head and access points along with delineating a clear route to the downtown and other shopping and eating areas in the City.



## **Transportation and Circulation Plan**

### **Street and Traffic Analysis**

**Walkability** — the rerouting of M-99 through the downtown and the various one-way streets make circulation within the CBD awkward and unfriendly to visitors.

Vehicular circulation through the CBD should be addressed from both a walkability and economic development perspective. In 2007, MDOT re-routed truck traffic through the middle of the CBD, increasing truck traffic along Broad Street and effectively giving the impression of a bifurcated downtown. Hillsdale Street is one-way in the north direction adjacent to City Hall. North Manning Street is one-way in the south direction between Bacon and Hallet streets. North West Street is one-way in the north direction between Bacon and Carleton streets. A walkability study should be performed to document the issues and create an implementation plan to correct them. MEDC has expressed a willingness to work with the City and MDOT to resolve some of the circulation issues.

### **Circulation and Parking**

- Continue to provide safe efficient flow of automobile traffic while discouraging truck traffic in the downtown area.
- Provide sidewalks that are well maintained and convenient for downtown shoppers.
- Continue to provide free municipal parking for specified periods.
- Facilitate the re-routing of M-99 along with new prospective parking, streetscape and traffic flow.
- Remove one-way streets within the City. Recreate a direct entrance into downtown Hillsdale along Hillsdale Street and West Street.
- Re-create the intersection of North Street and North Broad to allow North Street to cross North Broad.
- Redevelop and expand Ferris Street parking lot to increase parking and create an attractive transition to the North Broad businesses and apartments.



# Plan Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan developed by the Planning Commission will be of value only if put into use by local officials and City residents. In order for this plan to be effective, it has to be implemented. Implementation can take the form of additional study or planning, adoption of a zoning ordinance or amendments, creation of new general ordinances and capital improvements planning. The zoning ordinance is the most common tool used for plan implementation. The zoning ordinance puts into law the policies set forth in the Land Use Plan. The plan has identified a number of problems and deficiencies in the current zoning ordinance that will require revisions or amendments.

The plan has also identified areas that may need further study and planning. Community planning involves much more than reviewing proposed development plans and zoning related matters. It also involves grasping abstract concepts and developing visions of how a community should look in the future. The future extends beyond the life of any one individual of the community. Community planning requires that we consider the impact of all decisions on future generations. Therefore, this plan is only the beginning and will require additional study to implement all programs and policies which are recommended. Some projects or policies identified in the plan can be implemented with little capital expenditure. Other programs may require substantial capital outlay. There is also a need to consider the priority that each project should receive so that a systematic approach can be employed to help resolve issues identified in the plan.

Capital improvements programming is the orderly process of developing a comprehensive financial plan to accomplish needed public improvement projects in a community. The program is designed to be a balanced and coordinated approach that aligns the public improvement needs of the City with the financial capabilities necessary to implement the desired projects. Capital improvements programming provides several advantages to the community. Through it, public improvement projects can be determined and priorities assessed in a coordinated long-range plan. In the same manner, the financial resources which are necessary can be anticipated.

A capital improvements program also allows the City adequate time for the planning and engineering of projects. In the same manner, the capital improvements program helps the City anticipate the timing and application for Federal and State grants necessary for the financing of projects.

Finally, capital improvements programming allows local citizens the opportunity to participate and provide input into the community's public improvement needs.

Because capital improvements usually involve large capital expenditures, they can rarely be financed solely out of the local revenue alone. A number of financing methods have been developed to assist localities in financing costly, multi-year projects. Financing methods include generation of current revenue (e.g. user fees, general taxation), reserve funds, bonds, special district authorities, special assessments, state and federal grants, tax increment financing, and impact fees.

The Comprehensive Plan has identified a number of projects worthy of being funded. The following tables identify these projects and list possible funding sources for the projects at all levels of government. The table also lists the parties which are responsible for carrying out the implementation of the projects.

## Residential Development

Project	Possible Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibilities	Planning Commission Priority
Continue Use and Occupancy Inspection Program	General Fund, Permit Fees	City of Hillsdale	High
Assist Low to Moderate Income Residents to Maintain Homes	CDBG, MSHDA, FHA Low-Interest Loans	City of Hillsdale, Homeowners	High
Help Senior Citizens Improve the Condition of their Homes	MSHDA, HUD 202 (Elderly Housing), Private Funding Sources, Volunteers	City of Hillsdale, Homeowners	High
Protect and Improve Existing Single-Family Housing Stock	MSHDA, Private Funding Sources	City of Hillsdale, Homeowners	High
Assist in the Planning and Development of Three Meadows residential neighborhood	General Fund, NEZ Low-Interest Loans, Private Funding Sources	City of Hillsdale Homeowners	High
Assist in the Planning and Development of a Retirement Community and Senior Housing	Private Funding Sources	City and County of Hillsdale, Senior Center, Homeowners	Medium
Evaluate Side Street Parking in Certain Areas of the City	County Millage, MSHDA, Tax Credit Investment	City of Hillsdale	High

## Commercial Development

Project	Possible Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibilities	Planning Commission Priority
Pursue Tenants for Underutilized Buildings	TIFA, MSHDA, Private Funding Sources	MEDC, TIFA	High
Support Facade Improvements in CBD	MEDC, MSHDA, Low Interest Loans, TIFA	TIFA	Medium
Create a Detailed Development Plan for the CBD	TIFA	TIFA	Medium
Assist redevelopment of the Keefer House	TIFA, Private Funding Sources, MEDC	City of Hillsdale	Medium
Streetscape Improvements in the CBD	General Fund, MDOT, TIF, Private Funding Sources	City of Hillsdale	Medium
Encourage Commercial Development along M-99 where there are Existing Commercial Establishments	Special Assessments, EDC, MEDC, MDOT	City of Hillsdale	Medium
Encourage Commercial Location within the City	Special Assessments, EDC	TIFA, Service Groups	High
Encourage bike traffic by creating bike lanes and installing bike racks	MEDC, MDOT	TIFA, City of Hillsdale	Medium
Install City Wayfinding Signage	Hillsdale College, MEDC	North Country Trail	Medium
Install Baw Beese Trail Wayfinding Signage	City of Hillsdale	Assc. - Chief Baw Beese Chapter	Medium
Encourage New Industrial Development within the City's Industrial Park	Michigan Department of Commerce, private funding sources, special assessments, tax abatements	EDC	High
Work with Industrial Developers to Expand Existing Industries	Michigan Department of Commerce, special assessments	City of Hillsdale	High
Re-certify Manufacturing Park	EDC	EDC	Medium
Attract High Technology Companies	EDC	City of Hillsdale, EDC	Medium
Attract Remote Workers	Office of Economic Development	City of Hillsdale	Medium