

 Charter Township of Garfield Planning Department Report No. 2025-5		
Prepared:	January 15, 2025	Pages: 9
Meeting:	January 22, 2025 Planning Commission	Attachments: <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject:	2024 Charter Township of Garfield Planning Commission Annual Report	

INTRODUCTION:

The 2024 Charter Township of Garfield Planning Commission Annual Report was prepared pursuant to the requirements of Section 19(2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (“MPEA”), which states:

A planning commission shall make an annual written report to the legislative body concerning its operations and the status of planning activities, including recommendations regarding actions by the legislative body related to planning and development.

This report is intended to serve as the Planning Commission’s report to the Township Board in accordance with the MPEA as quoted above. It will also outline the Planning Department’s activities during 2024.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

The Planning Director and Deputy Planning Director serve on various committees and provide support services to several boards and commissions, including but not limited to:

- Garfield Township Board of Trustees (Staff)
- Garfield Township Planning Commission (Staff)
- Garfield Township Parks and Recreation Commission (Staff)
- Garfield Township Zoning Board of Appeals (Liaison)
- Joint Traverse City and Garfield Township Planning Commission (Staff)
- Joint Traverse City and Garfield Township Recreation Authority (as needed)
- Traverse Transportation Coordinating Initiative (TTCI) (Technical Committee Member)
- Northwest Regional Airport Authority Zoning Board (Garfield Township Representative)
- Grand Traverse County Road Commission (Garfield Township Alternate Representative)

ADMINISTRATION:

The Planning Department was responsible for generating 114 staff reports in 2024 for the various boards and commissions listed above. Day-to-day tasks of the department also include:

- Answering questions and discussing planning-related issues with the Township residents, developers, partner organizations, and community stakeholders
- Reviewing new and ongoing development applications
- Monitoring development approvals through completion of the approval process
- Administering grants and parks and recreation projects
- Developing plans and related studies
- Preparing zoning analyses and drafting new text for the Zoning Ordinance
- Conducting site visits
- Managing GIS data



PLANNING COMMISSION OVERVIEW:

The Planning Commission meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month and is responsible for reviewing development applications, preparing plans, and making recommendations to the Township Board on development applications and zoning amendments. This meeting schedule allows the Planning Commission to hear, review, and decide on projects during the first meeting and to advance the interests of the community by holding a study session during the second meeting of the month. This schedule will continue throughout 2025.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

In February 2024, Planning Department staff provided a year-end report to the Township Board regarding its activity that supported the Strategic Plan in 2023. No changes were made to any Strategic Plan goals in 2024.

MASTER PLAN:

The previous Township Master Plan was adopted in September 2018 and was amended in June 2020 when the Barlow Garfield Neighborhood Plan was adopted and incorporated into the Master Plan. The Planning Commission began working on an updated Township Master Plan in 2023, using many of its study sessions to review draft sections of the updated Plan and to study different topic areas. The process of updating the Master Plan was completed in 2024, with the following key items:

January 24, 2024	Public Engagement Open House
January 24, 2024	Planning Commission Study Session: Review of Complete Draft
February 28, 2024	Planning Commission Study Session: Review of Final Draft
March 27, 2024	Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission and the Township Board: Review of Final Draft and Beginning of Public Review Period
June 12, 2024	Planning Commission Regular Meeting: Recommend Adoption of Master Plan to the Township Board
July 9, 2024	Adoption of Master Plan by Township Board

The Master Plan provides policy guidance for the Planning Department and the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will review potential Master Plan implementation projects in 2025 including updates to the Zoning Ordinance.

ANNUAL WORK PLAN:

At the beginning of each year, the Planning Commission is scheduled to update its annual work priorities. For the past several years, they have used a Master Plan implementation matrix to help identify the priority projects for the upcoming year. The Planning Commission did not update the Master Plan implementation matrix in 2024 since the priority was to complete the update of the Master Plan itself.

The updated Master Plan includes an updated Implementation Matrix which the Planning Commission can use to guide future priority projects. The new Implementation Matrix has 12 goals, each with their own set of objectives, which can become the basis for priority actions. These 12 goals are as follows:

- 1. *Natural Resources: Natural Environment*** – Goal: Promote natural environment protection in a planned and strategic manner.
- 2. *Natural Resources: Water Quality*** – Goal: Make water system improvements and support environmental conservation efforts to protect water quality.

3. **Natural Resources: Energy** – Goal: Support energy efficiency and conservation, and sustainable building practices and products.
4. **Natural Resources: Agricultural Land** – Goal: Preserve prime and unique farmland and maintain agricultural character.
5. **Parks and Trails** – Goal: Foster a system of high-quality active and passive parks connected by trails.
6. **Housing** – Goal: Provide a balance of housing choices with a variety of housing types.
7. **Transportation and Infrastructure: Streets and Roads** – Goal: Support the improvement, maintenance, and connectivity of streets and roads.
8. **Transportation and Infrastructure: Parking and Sidewalks** – Goal: Establish a coordinated, efficient, and attractive system of pathways, sidewalks, and parking areas.
9. **Transportation and Infrastructure: Water and Sanitary Sewer** – Goal: Improve, expand, and maintain critical water and sewer infrastructure.
10. **Transportation and Infrastructure: Stormwater** – Goal: Establish requirements for stormwater management to reduce flooding, protect people and property, and support healthy streams and rivers.
11. **Economic Development** – Goal: Encourage a diverse and stable economic base.
12. **Public Safety** – Goal: Support collaborations which promote public safety.

APPLICATION FEE REVENUE:

The Township collects fees for different types of applications, include development applications reviewed by the Planning Department and Planning Commission. These fees generated **\$14,700** in revenue in 2024 as described by the breakdown in the following table:

Application Type	Number of Applications	Fee	Revenue
<i>Administrative Reviews (14)</i>			
Site Plan Review – Administrative	11	\$400	\$4,400
Planned Development – Administrative Amendment	1	\$400	\$400
Special Use Permit – Administrative Amendment	2	\$400	\$800
<i>Planning Commission Reviews (17)</i>			
Conceptual Review	3	\$100	\$300
Planned Development – Minor Amendment	1	\$600	\$600
Planned Development – Major Amendment	1	\$800	\$800
PC Sign Review – C-P and Planned Developments	3	\$400	\$1,200
Site Plan Review – Planning Commission (C-P / C-H)	4	\$400	\$1,600
Special Use Permit – Major Amendment	2	\$800	\$1,600
Special Use Permit – New Application	3	\$1,000	\$3,000
TOTAL	31		\$14,700

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS:

In some specific cases, the Planning Director can administratively approve projects provided they meet all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. This procedure significantly improves efficiency in the review of minor requests. The Planning Department requires any Administrative Amendment to be justified through written findings.

The Planning Department conducts reviews for all administrative amendments to Special Use Permits and Planned Unit Developments as well as (starting in 2024) administrative site plan reviews for by-right uses in commercial and industrial zoning districts. The following applications were administratively reviewed and approved in 2024:

Administrative Site Plan Reviews

File Number	Project Name	Project Description
SPR-2024-04	Soils & Structures Inc	Proposed building addition and parking lot expansion to existing office
SPR-2024-05	Northern Floor and Tile	Proposed building addition on existing industrial site
SPR-2024-06	Wash N Go Car Wash	Proposed accessory improvements to an existing car wash operation, including new vacuums and payment stations
SPR-2024-07	Kingsley Lumber	Proposed lumber processing and sawmill operation
SPR-2024-08	Precision Plumbing and Heating	Proposed contractor’s establishment and operations headquarters
SPR-2024-09	Mobile Medical Response	Proposed headquarters and operational base for ambulance service provider
SPR-2024-10	Historic Barns Park	Proposed renovations of an existing barn and additional connector between barns
SPR-2024-11	Bay Meadows Golf Course	Proposed addition to an existing building at existing golf course
SPR-2024-13	Unit 32 Hammond Industrial Centre	Proposed car detailing (automobile service) shop
SPR-2024-15	Renew It Group	Proposed showroom and warehouse for deck supply / construction business
SPR-2024-17	Striker Supply	Proposed rental and retail outlet for concrete product supplier business

Administrative Amendment Reviews

- SUP-1994-1-FF – Resurrection Life Church Addition (PUD Administrative Amendment)**
 The 3.62-acre subject site is located at 2586 Crossing Circle in the Grand Traverse Crossing PUD, in the back (east) portion of the development. This application is for an 8,835 ft² addition to the existing 7,251 ft² church building.
- SUP-2023-04-A – Creekside Community Church (SUP Administrative Amendment)**
 The 21.63-acre subject parcel is located at 3686 West South Airport Road, along the north side of the road west of US 31. The application is for a Special Use Permit amendment to accommodate a completely redesigned parking lot area.
- SUP-2023-05-A – Ridge45 Multi-Family Housing (SUP Administrative Amendment)**
 The 59.65-acre subject site is located at 1532 West Hammond Road, west of LaFranier Road. The request is to amend the Special Use Permit to replace a previously approved 4,000 ft² maintenance building with two pickleball courts and a 400 ft² pavilion, relocate a previously approved dumpster enclosure for two dumpsters, and relocate a previously approved dog park.

PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEWS:

Conceptual Reviews

Conceptual reviews allow for applicants to appear before the Planning Commission with little more than a concept for development. This process is intended to provide an applicant with valuable feedback from the Planning Commission on a potential project before a full application is submitted. Several applicants have used this process to take advantage of discussing a potential project and gathering feedback without having to first enlist surveying, planning, and/or engineering services to complete an application. The following projects were conceptually reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2024:

- **Gauthier Site (April 10 meeting)** – The applicants presented a potential multi-family development project at 2105 N US 31 South, on the west side of US 31 at McRae Hill Road, across from Hartman Road. The applicants also presented a project concept to the Township Board including discussion about the potential of using Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a funding tool.
- **Two Brothers Dog Park Café and Taphouse (June 12 meeting)** – The applicants presented their proposed bar / restaurant and dog park at 1776 South Garfield Avenue in Cherryland Mall.
- **Cherryland Center Comprehensive Development Plan (October 9 meeting)** – The Planning Commission reviewed a draft Comprehensive Development Plan of the Cherryland Center property which was prepared by one of the owners: Cherryland Center LLC. The last time the Cherryland Center Comprehensive Development Plan was prepared was in 1998 with the conversion of the site to a strip retail center from the original enclosed shopping mall.

Development Reviews

The Planning Commission reviewed several projects in 2024 including Site Plan Reviews, Planned Unit Developments, Special Use Permits, and amendments. These reviews are summarized by the following, with a note as to whether the application was approved (which includes those approved with conditions), denied, or if the application expired or was withdrawn by the applicant.

- **SUP-2023-08 – 3066 N Garfield Commercial District Housing (Approved)**
This application, originally submitted in 2023, requested a Special Use Permit for a commercial district housing development of 18 apartment units at 3066 N Garfield Road. During introduction of the application, it was found that although the proposal was generally suitable for the location, the site plan did not meet all requirements of Section 725 of the Zoning Ordinance for commercial district housing developments. The application was tabled to allow the Planning Commission to review and recommend a text amendment to Section 725, which was ultimately approved by the Township Board. The application was then un-tabled, reviewed, and approved by the Planning Commission.
- **PUD-2020-02-C – BATA/TCHC PUD Minor Amendment (Approved)**
This PUD application was approved in March 2022 for a transit-oriented, mixed-use development including apartments; single-family residential; BATA administration building, bus maintenance facility, and bus storage garage; transfer station; café; and childcare center. The project is on 53.2 acres of an existing 77.1-acre site at the northeast corner of LaFranier and Hammond Roads. An application for minor amendment was approved in May 2024 for a modification to the phasing plan which would allow the previously approved playground in Phase 1 to be delayed until the conflict with its proximity to the gas lines is resolved.

- **SUP-2024-01 – Potter’s Home Retreat Bed and Breakfast (Denied)**
This application requested a Special Use Permit for the use of an existing single-family residence as a bed and breakfast establishment at 492 West Potter Road. The application was denied based on findings that the use of the property as described in the application did not meet the definition of a bed and breakfast, and other reasons identified by the Planning Commission.
- **SUP-2024-02 – TowerNorth Wireless Communication Facility (Under Review)**
This application requests a special use permit for a wireless communication facility (cell tower) at 2767 Zimmerman Road, with a 155-foot-tall monopole tower with associated antenna equipment and fenced area. In July 2024, the Planning Commission tabled the application and requested the applicant move the location of the proposed tower to meet all setback requirements before moving the application forward. The applicants submitted an updated site plan with a new proposed tower location in December 2024. The updated application is currently under review.
- **SUP-2001-02-D – Bison Hollow TJ Maxx Sign Review (Denied)**
This application was for a wall sign of 128.6 square feet sign on the front (east) building elevation, exceeding the permitted sign size by 28.6 square feet and requiring Planning Commission review of the criteria of Section 630.G.(3)(b) of the Zoning Ordinance. The application was denied based on findings that these criteria were not met.
- **SUP-1990-07-A – French Manor LaFranier Major Amendment (Approved)**
A Special Use Permit major amendment was approved for expansion of French Manor LaFranier, an existing adult foster care facility at 3090 LaFranier Road. The facility expansion consists of a 1,472-square-foot building addition and a 2,176-square-foot building addition for a total of 3,648 added square feet.
- **SUP-2000-08-N – Copper Ridge PUD Building Sign Review (Approved)**
An internal directional sign was approved for Thirlby Clinic, which moved into an existing office building (Building 5) at 4110 Copper Ridge Drive in the Copper Ridge PUD.
- **SPR 2022-21-A – K1 Indoor Kart Racing Center / High Tops (Withdrawn)**
The application proposed a bar, restaurant, and nightclub in a portion of the K1 Speed Indoor Kart Racing facility within the Cherryland Center. The application was withdrawn before any action on it was taken by the Planning Commission.
- **SUP-2024-03 – Angel Care Child Care Center (Approved)**
A Special Use Permit was approved for a child care center as an additional use in an existing church building at 1514 Birmley Road.
- **PUD-2020-01-E – Oakleaf Village PUD Directional Sign Review (Approved)**
A minor amendment was approved for the Oakleaf Village PUD at 5143 North Long Lake Road, west of Zimmerman Road, for four internal directional signs.
- **SPR 2024-14 – Cherryland Center Comprehensive Development Plan (Approved)**
The Planning Commission approved a comprehensive development plan for the Cherryland Center site in accordance with Section 322.D(1) of the Zoning Ordinance which indicates a comprehensive development plan may be required to establish an approved development pattern for a site within the C-P Planned Shopping Center zoning district. The 1998 conversion of the mall to a strip center was the most recent previous time the comprehensive development plan was updated and approved for Cherryland Center.

- **SPR 2024-12 – Cherryland Center 24/7 Golf (Approved)**
A site plan was approved to construct an indoor entertainment center within a portion of the existing Traverse City Curling Center building (formerly the Kmart store) in the Cherryland Center.
- **SUP-2000-08-O – Copper Ridge PUD Major Amendment (Under Review)**
This application requests a major amendment to the Copper Ridge PUD, originally approved in 2000, located northwest of Silver Lake Road near Barnes Road. The amendment would incorporate and allow different land uses in different locations than requested in the original application and the potential to increase the number of residential dwelling units.
- **SUP-2001-05-A – Cherryland Humane Society Major Amendment (Approved)**
A Special Use Permit major amendment was approved for the Cherryland Humane Society, located at 1750 Ahlberg Drive southeast of the intersection of Hammond Road and Keystone Road, for the expansion of the existing 14,168 ft² building with two (2) building additions totaling 9,006 ft².
- **SPR 2024-16 – Two Brothers Dog Park Cafe and Taphouse (Approved)**
A site plan was approved for a proposed café, taphouse, and dog park using about 7,000 ft² of the 47,900 ft² (15%) former Younkers building, and about 6,000 ft² of what is currently a parking area with maneuvering lanes.

ZONING ORDINANCE MAP AMENDMENTS (REZONING):

One zoning ordinance map amendment application, originally submitted in 2023, was considered in 2024:

- **Amendment No. 39 – Z-2023-03 – Lederer R-1 Rezoning (Approved)**
This application requested the rezoning of one parcel of roughly 3.8 acres at 4220 Eastward Drive from the Agricultural (A) to the One-Family Residential (R-1) zoning district.

ZONING ORDINANCE CONDITIONAL REZONING AMENDMENTS:

One conditional rezoning amendment application, originally submitted in 2023, was considered in 2024:

- **Amendment No. 40 – Z-2023-04 – Culver Meadows Conditional Rezoning (Approved)**
This application encompassed two parcels on N. West Silver Lake Road of about 5.14 total acres and requested the conditional rezoning of these parcels from the R-1 – One-Family Residential to the A – Agricultural zoning district for use as an adult foster care, large group home, and child care center. This request includes utilizing an existing large group home and building a new large group home and new child care center.

ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS:

Two proposed zoning ordinance text amendments were considered in 2024:

- **Amendment No. 38 – Section 725 Commercial District Housing Development (Adopted)**
This amendment covered two portions of Section 725 (Commercial District Housing Development) of the Zoning Ordinance, specifically to alter the requirements for parking and open space to allow for greater design flexibility.

- **Amendment No. 41 – Dwelling, Three Family and Dwelling, Four-Family (Adopted)**

This amendment altered several sections of the Zoning Ordinance to add definitions for Dwelling, Three Family (triplex) and Dwelling, Four Family (quadplex); allow triplexes and quadplexes as uses permitted by right in the R-3 zoning district; and adjust minimum lot area, minimum lot width, and minimum yard setbacks in the R-3 district to account for triplexes and quadplexes.

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSIONS:

The Planning Commission held nine (9) study sessions in 2024, on the fourth Wednesday of each month excluding September, November, and December. The March study session was also conducted as a joint meeting with the Township Board. Commissioners discussed the following topics at these study sessions:

- ***Master Plan Update*** – The Township Board adopted an updated Master Plan on July 9, 2024. In advance of the Township Board’s adoption of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission finished their review of the Master Plan. Commissioners reviewed a complete draft in January, a final draft in February, and finalized the draft Master Plan with the Township Board at the joint meeting in March. Planning Commissioners next discussed potential Master Plan implementation projects at the April and May study sessions.
- ***Zoning Ordinance: R-3 Updates*** – In June and July, Commissioners reviewed potential changes to the R-3 district to allow triplexes and quadplexes by right. These changes were proposed to help implement the housing goal of the Master Plan and to provide flexibility for smaller multi-family housing. These changes were ultimately recommended to and adopted by the Township Board.
- ***Zoning Ordinance: Signs*** – Commissioners reviewed potential updates to the sign regulations of Section 630 at the June, July, August, and October study sessions. Part of the impetus for a review of these regulations included several cases from the past 5-10 years reviewed by the United States Supreme Court which may impact how signs can be regulated. Commissioners recommended that the Township Attorney review Section 630. The Attorney’s review is expected by early 2025.
- ***Monitoring Proposed State Legislation on Vacation Home Rentals*** – Throughout 2024, Planning Commissioners monitored proposed State legislation on short-term rentals including creation of a statewide database, local regulation without outright banning of short-term rentals, and creation of an excise tax. Commissioners discussed how the Township could regulate short-term rentals and reviewed draft language at their June, July, and August study sessions. Ultimately, none of these proposed bills were adopted and each would need to be re-introduced in the new State Legislature session. The Planning Commission will monitor any newly proposed legislation in 2025.
- ***City of Traverse City Master Plan*** – The City of Traverse City updated their Master Plan in 2024 and sent a draft to neighboring communities for review. The Township Planning Commissioners reviewed this draft in June and July and offered comments to the City of Traverse City, especially regarding items that impact both communities including non-motorized transportation.
- ***Zoning Ordinance: Definition of “Substantial Construction”*** – The Planning Commission began discussions in October about the definition of “Substantial Construction” and potentially adding it to the Zoning Ordinance. This was in response to the Township Board’s discussions regarding the “start of construction” as a term applied to a condition of approval for the BATA / Traverse City Housing Commission PUD. The Planning Commission’s discussions will continue into 2025.

JOINT TRAVERSE CITY AND GARFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION:

The six-member Joint Planning Commission is comprised of two Traverse City Planning Commissioners and one Traverse City resident appointed by the Traverse City Commission, and two Garfield Township Planning Commissioners and one Garfield Township resident appointed by the Garfield Township Board.

The Commission meets at least four times per year roughly once every three months, typically at 5:15 PM on the third Wednesday of the month. The Commission met four times in 2024 on January 31, April 17, July 17, and October 16. Items covered at the meetings in 2024 have included the following:

- Updates regarding Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area. Garfield Township was recommended for and ultimately received \$300,000 in grant funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for a 1.25-mile accessible loop trail.
- Commons Infrastructure Study. The first phase of the study was originally completed in 2023 with the second phase under consideration in 2024. The funding was provided by the Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.
- Proposal for the construction of a new shed to serve the Community Garden at Historic Barns Park. Ultimately, the Garden found other ways to have storage other than a new shed.
- Historic Barns Park renovation of Barn 206 and the construction of a proposed connector building between Barn 206 and Barn 204. This project was under administrative site plan review.
- Proposed improvements to the watermain serving the Historic Barns Park. The project is needed to ensure sufficient water flow and pressure. The project is funded by the Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and is based on an approved proposal from Hubbell, Roth, and Clark, an engineering consulting firm for the City of Traverse City.

RECOMMENDATION / ACTION REQUESTED:

Following review, if Commissioners are prepared to accept the 2024 Annual Report in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the following motion is suggested:

THAT the 2024 Planning Commission Annual Report, as provided in Planning Department Report 2025-5, BE APPROVED and FORWARDED to the Township Board.