

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2009, Pittsfield Township began conducting a multitude of public input and engagement processes. As such, we have a strong understanding that our community demands environmental stewardship. This is evident not just through the 72% approval of the Park Millage renewal in March 2016, but also through consistent prioritization by township residents of green/park space maintenance and acquisition. As with other public input processes, the 2020 Vision planning process highlighted the fact that non-motorized and multimodal expansion is consistently prioritized at the top by survey respondents and at the public forums, not just when discussing transportation and land use but also as part of the feedback for parks, recreation, art & culture, and even open space preservation! Clearly and without a doubt, if there is one issue that unites our community, it is expansion of non-motorized – sidewalks, bike lanes, greenways/pathways – amenities in our community. This concept extends into the prioritization of trails within the parks to provide for a seamless linear park network.

With the adoption of the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan seven years ago, our community began its journey toward becoming a regional leader in the establishment of a non-motorized transportation network, expanding multimodality, incorporating public art and spaces into the fabric of our landscape, promoting environmental stewardship, and successfully striking the delicate balance between preservation and (infill) development.



Leveraging a historic \$14 million in grant funding, in those seven years, Pittsfield made significant strides in implementing the vision of the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan. In 2015, as an update to the Parks & Recreation master plan came due, we decided to implement another innovative planning process, similar to the one undertaken for the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan (2009-2011), that envisioned synchronizing our two major planning documents - Township Master Plan and Parks & Recreation Plan - to outline one cohesive vision for our community. The need and importance of doing so derives, as noted above, from the fact that land use priorities are intrinsically linked, in Pittsfield Township, to a desire to preserve open/park spaces along with expanding non-motorized amenities, which are increasingly defining our community's linear park system.

The 2020 Vision planning process, conducted October-December 2015, provided for robust public engagement and generated about 750 survey responses that are geographically representative and statistically significant. Before we delved into analyzing this input, we first undertook a review of the extent to which we had been successful in achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan. As we did so, with Working Groups for each topical area/chapter, it quickly became apparent that, since the adoption of the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan, we have operated within a framework of sustainability.

For the purposes of this document and Pittsfield Township's past and future prioritization of projects/initiatives, we are defining sustainability to mean: (a) the preservation and expansion of open/green/park spaces wherein native habitats, rain gardens, pollinator gardens and local farming are supported; (b) establishment of a multi-modal transportation network that reduces emissions

and promotes public gathering spaces; and (c) Development that relies on infill and density to minimize expansion of grey and impermeable surfaces.

This focus on sustainability arises as much from a need to preserve our environment as it does from creating a sense of place for all, including seniors and youth, such that everyone not only feels welcome but enjoys living, working and recreating in Pittsfield Township. By promoting infill and mixed-use development, our vision is to create spaces that provide immediate multimodal access to services and amenities within a green and visually pleasing environment. By promoting non-motorized and transit, our vision is to provide everyone greater access to healthy lifestyles and services/amenities that are not in close proximity. By expanding our preserved and green spaces, our vision is to respect Pittsfield's agricultural heritage by supporting local agriculture and access to local foods while providing for a seamless inclusion of green spaces and nature into the fabric of our community.

In the final analysis, this document – along with the township master plan (2020 Sustainable Vision Master Plan) – outline a vision that goes beyond the greening of our landscape by hard coding sustainability into the DNA of Pittsfield Township. In other words, we have made sustainability a central unit of analysis in updating the Parks & Recreation narrative along with our goals and objectives such that our future vision is defined within a sustainable framework to: (a) expand amenities and accessibility to park spaces, especially in deficient areas such as the northwest and northeast; (b) expand green and preserved spaces, including providing for small, organic farming; (c) implementing traffic congestion solutions that promote multi-modality and reduction in emissions; and (d) continued expansion of the non-motorized network we began establishing in 2009 such that it provides for seamless inter-connectivity between our public, residential, park, cultural, green, entertainment, commercial, green and open spaces.

The goals and objectives, as they relate to the first two points noted above, are outlined in greater detail in this document with the 2020 Sustainable Vision Master Plan providing details for the other two priorities, even as each of these documents 'speaks' with each other to put forth a cohesive 2020 Vision for defining a Premier Pittsfield.

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