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## Sidewalks, restaurants top Stevensville Master Plan

Planner says action steps will keep plan from gathering dust

By LOUISE WREGE - HP Staff Writer Feb 9, 2018 Updated 3 hrs ago



Officials have approved distributing the Stevensville Master Plan for public comment. Among the requests in the plan are the increased investment in sidewalks and the attraction of more businesses to Stevensville.

Don Campbell / HP staff

STEVENSVILLE — Investing more in sidewalks and attracting more restaurants were the two highest requests as planners put together the Stevensville Master Plan.

On Wednesday, village trustees approved distributing the plan's draft for public comment.

“We want everyone to look at it ... and public comments will be presented at a public hearing,” said Ryan Fellows, associate planner with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the agency hired to assemble the plan.

The earliest the public hearing can be held is in May.

Fellows said 132 people responded to the community survey, which sought the opinions of residents and shoppers.

When asked what they would like to see in the village, 21 percent of respondents mentioned something about sidewalks, including repairing current ones or adding new ones, he said.

Fellows said the 148-page plan includes the Five Year Sidewalk Asset Management Plan trustees approved in 2017, which was also done by his organization.

“The trustees “are really on top of knowing what the community wants and are addressing that need,” he said.

Village Council President Steve Slavicek said trustees put aside \$1,500 per month for its sidewalk fund. Last year, he said the money was used to put in sidewalks along Johnson Road from the Dollar General west to the railroad tracks.

This year, he said the money will be used to repair sidewalks on St. Joseph Avenue.

“We want to be proactive and get stuff done,” he said.

Attracting more businesses was a close second on the community survey.

Seventeen percent of the respondents stated they would like the village to attract more restaurants, with another 16 percent wanting more businesses in addition to restaurants.

A low crime rate, a quality school system and access to Lake Michigan were identified as the top three aspects that improve the village’s quality of life.

A link to the plan can be found at <http://www.swmpc.org/stevensvillemp.asp>. A link to the previous 2001 plan can also be found on that web page.

Fellows said comments can be emailed to him at [rfellows@swmpc.org](mailto:rfellows@swmpc.org) or mailed to Village of Stevensville, 5768 St. Joseph Ave., Stevensville, MI 49127.

Fellows said the master plan will be used to help guide trustees as they plan development.

He said five goals, which include action steps, are among the plan’s most important aspects.

“Anytime a plan doesn’t have an action plan, it can sit on a shelf and have a fatigue problem,” he said.

The goals include encouraging economic development and coordinating transportation systems. In addition, Fellows said the village plans to build resiliency by obtaining Redevelopment Ready Communities certification through the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

“Taking the steps required to obtain the certification will help the village run well,” he said.

In addition, the plan identifies three properties for redevelopment:

- Anstey Foundry Co., 2788 Lawrence, which has been vacant since 2004,
- Village Square along John Beers Road, which is partially vacant, and
- About 44 acres owned by LECO Corp. along Red Arrow Highway that is mostly vacant.

An option in the plan discusses working with Sarett Nature Center to develop walking paths along Hickory Creek to the Village Square.

“We want to develop this recreation asset and increase foot traffic,” he said. “... Half the battle is just getting people to your business.”

In other business at Wednesday’s meeting, trustees approved hiring General Code to recodify the village’s ordinances for \$2,341. Slavicek said after the ordinances are recodified, it will cost \$1,195 to have the company update and maintain them.

In addition, he said the village is looking for a new building inspector. Applications can be dropped off at the Village Hall on St. Joseph Avenue.

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