

# Vision & Guiding Principles

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The City of Flint Master Plan is a blueprint for the future, guiding redevelopment and reinvestment in the City for the next 20 years. The Master Plan also articulates a vision of what the community desires to become in the future. This section presents the Master Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles and establishes a framework for planning recommendations, policies, future projects and actions:

- The **Vision** is a narrative that documents the accomplishments and achievements that will occur within the City of Flint following the adoption of the Master Plan in 2013.
- The **Guiding Principles** outline changes to policy needed to successfully guide the Flint community toward its Vision.

Taken collectively, the Vision and Guiding Principles provide a foundation for the policies and recommendations contained in Imagine Flint, the City's new Master Plan.

## Evolving Discussion

The Vision and Guiding Principles incorporate the main ideas and recurring themes discussed throughout the planning process and are primarily based on the Vision and Goals Workshop conducted on March 9, 2013.

The results of on-going public outreach efforts were used to create materials and guide discussion during the Vision and Goals Workshop. During the Vision and Goals Workshop participants became part of an evolving discussion where they were asked to help provide potential solutions to the issues facing the Flint community.

The *Vision* and *Guiding Principles* have been organized using the main themes that came out of the Vision and Goals Workshop. These include:

- Social Equity & Sustainability
- Reshaping the Economy
- Quality of Life
- Adapting to Change
- Youth
- Civic Life

## A Vision for Flint

The City of Flint has continued its tradition of transformation from a lumber center to a carriage town to an auto city. The Master Plan provides the community with a single, united vision and the guidance needed to help transform Flint into a vibrant, sustainable community for residents, workers, students, and visitors.

The City is not capable of implementing the Master Plan on its own and must rely on the people of Flint, its greatest asset, to help realize the community's desired vision and aspirations. Collectively, the Flint community is working together to make real progress as it faces the City's toughest challenges. Our actions are not bound by today's limitations, but by tomorrow's potential and by *what we Imagine Flint can be*.

### We Imagine Flint...

- *as a city that provides for the fundamental needs of all people and embraces a healthy relationship with our land, water, air and energy resources.*
- *with a growing and diverse economy that spurs innovation and small business development while preparing our workforce for jobs that offer a livable wage.*
- *as a safe and desirable place to live with vibrant, attractive, and walkable neighborhoods near quality schools, beautiful open spaces, fresh food, and public transportation.*
- *as a city that creatively adapts to change by remaking our physical environment to be smarter, greener, and more efficient.*
- *as a community that nurtures youth and creates a safe, healthy, place for them to learn and thrive.*
- *as a city that combines the energy of residents, organizations, and government to proactively address challenges and share in open and accountable decision-making.*

### Social Equity & Sustainability

Past planning efforts failed to deliver equal access and opportunity for all of Flint's residents. This Vision has been developed with the entire community and is rooted in the principles of social equity and sustainability. The entire Master Plan is intentionally being developed with social equity and sustainability in mind to address clear inequalities between different races and income groups and to care for our most vulnerable people and natural assets in Flint.

## Guiding Principles

- **Weave social equity and sustainability into all we do.** Fundamental needs include access to education, jobs, health, safety, housing, transportation and involvement in civic and cultural life. In all of these areas, pay attention to the actual experiences and outcomes for various social groups based on race, ethnicity, age, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability and shift policies and practices where needed to close any gaps.
- **Balance and blend social, environmental, and economic needs.** Pursue priorities that reinvigorate the economy, our human connections, and our relationship to the natural environment.

## Reshaping the Economy

Flint is industrious and tenacious. We will build on these virtues to cultivate opportunities from within and ensure that as we attract new employers, we position Flint residents to prosper as well. The City will embrace a creative and entrepreneurial spirit, invest in the skills of our people, and remove barriers to education and financing that unfairly limit potential. We will promote opportunities for lifelong learning to close the gap between the skills of the local workforce and the requirements of local jobs.

## Guiding Principles

- **Human development is economic development.** Improve education (early childhood through 12<sup>th</sup> grade), adult literacy, workforce training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Coordinate resources and initiatives to better prepare Flint residents for locally available jobs and growth. There must be a focus on human development to create equal access to opportunities for success.
- **Flint residents can be the drivers of the Flint Economy.** Focus on local small business development and providing access to capital and supportive services to help businesses start and grow. Foster a renewed spirit of entrepreneurship by reducing red tape and creating local business incentives.
- **Take advantage of infrastructure, transportation, and vacant industrial brownfields.** Leverage our regional location, access to rail lines and highways, expanding airport, and available development sites to maintain and strengthen our position as an employment center and economic engine.
- **Strengthen existing businesses, attract new industries.** Flint has a strong core of industries and existing employers that should not be forgotten. A two-pronged strategy

is needed that attracts emerging industries while supporting existing businesses and focusing on existing strengths.

- ***Leverage downtown to strengthen institutions.*** Promote development to capitalize on the daytime population of workers and students. A healthy downtown can help expand education and health institutions as assets that draw more visitors to Flint.
- ***Commit to changing Flint's internal and external image.*** Flint must revive its identity by building upon its existing cultural and natural assets and seizing upon new opportunities that can transform the City. These opportunities might include the arts, modern business and technology, green infrastructure, and urban agriculture.

## Quality of Life

Flint will measure success not by the number of residents who call Flint home, but by the quality of life that its residents enjoy. The City will have a thriving downtown and vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that encourage relationships between neighbors across generations. Residents will enjoy remarkable cultural assets and convenient access to services, including recreation, jobs, parks, fresh food, small businesses, and transit. Moreover, residents also have the right to expect a minimum standard of service from their City. Achieving these goals will require community partners – residents, businesses, institutions and non-profits – to work together, fostering a sense of shared ownership for neighborhood projects.

## Guiding Principles

- ***Everybody must feel safe everywhere.*** Public safety includes enforcement and crime prevention focused on supportive programming for ex-offenders and youth. Empower local groups to play a meaningful role in public safety and crime prevention through neighborhood and private/public partnerships, maximizing enforcement resources and improving transparency and communication between citizens and the police department.
- ***Flint will prosper when neighborhoods succeed.*** Neighborhoods need our careful attention and investment. Commit to partnering with neighborhood organization to create neighborhood specific plans to coordinate resources more effectively.
- ***Every person deserves a safe and healthy home and a choice of housing.*** Create pathways for home ownership and promote quality rental housing to allow for a mix of incomes, combat homelessness, and encourage ethnically and racially diverse neighborhoods. Establish grant programs to promote home maintenance and make it easier for residents to purchase lots and vacant homes.
- ***Fighting blight is vital.*** High crime and a large amount of poorly maintained and vacant properties contribute significantly to the City's negative image. Removing blight and its symptoms must go hand-in-hand with efforts to rebrand Flint.

- ***Flint's neighborhoods need community anchors.*** Existing community facilities can serve as community hubs with multiple services under one roof. Vacant buildings, like closed schools, can be repurposed to create community centers and be used as tools to fight crime, promote workforce education, provide needed services, and build a sense of community.
- ***Better quality of life and strong education are vital to keep our youth here.*** The City can play a key role in encouraging local youth and students who come to Flint for their higher education to stay in the community. Improvements to quality of life components such City services, public safety, housing, parks, K-12 education, and cultural assets will help provide an environment where youth and students want to stay and invest in the community.

## Adapting to Change

Past decreases in Flint's population and economic base presented real challenges to City finances and resulted in uneven patterns of development. But these challenges also present Flint with opportunities. Flint has an opportunity to provide a variety of housing options ranging from multi-family apartments to large-lot, single family homes. Flint has an opportunity to rethink the community's relationship with the natural environment, including our lakes, river, and green spaces. The City also has an opportunity to re-shape its neighborhoods and re-establish a sense of place. The Master Plan is a valuable tool in allowing the City to take advantage of these and other opportunities.

## Guiding Principles

- ***Flint residents deserve to live in an attractive community.*** Flint's natural amenities and architectural assets are highlighted and celebrated. The City needs to work cooperatively with other stakeholders to maintain properties, ensure adequate code enforcement, and implement greening/beautification, repurposing, and demolition efforts.
- ***Flint's neighborhoods need to be accessible.*** Services and community assets including schools, parks, health care, employment and fresh foods should be easily accessible by walking or public transit.
- ***Flint's infrastructure needs to be smarter.*** Modernize Flint's infrastructure, looking at new ways to improve systems, such as green infrastructure, to cut costs and promote long-term sustainability.
- ***Identify alternative funding sources and strategies.*** Work with partner organizations to leverage resources, combine services, reduce costs and create access to additional revenues and new funding sources. Pursue needed changes to state law to give cities flexibility to generate additional funding.

- ***Encourage mixed-use development.*** Target areas around key community assets and along major corridors for higher density development. Focus on walkability, cycling, and transit when considering new development patterns. Address violations to fair housing and fair lending laws and other practices that reinforce racial and economic segregation.
- ***Repurpose and reinvent under-populated areas.*** Assemble vacant properties to create opportunities for less dense living in select areas. Establish green areas to serve as urban open space for parks and recreational uses.

## Youth

The City will work with institutions and non-profit partners to better coordinate efforts and resources in the support of the healthy development of Flint's youth. Flint's youth will have safe access to well-maintained parks and recreation facilities and to quality schools and ample after-school programming. Flint youth will have every opportunity to survive and thrive, and have the values and guidance to become productive, engaged adults.

### Guiding Principles

- ***Youth are our priority.*** The Flint community needs to focus on eradicating youth poverty and providing equitable access to quality educational and enrichment programs and jobs. Utilize recreation and workforce programs to instill a sense of neighborhood pride among youth and engage the youth in City decision-making.
- ***Strengthen intergenerational relationships.*** Expand efforts to build trust and communication between youth, adults, and elders through mentorship, sustained participation in youth programs, and closer neighborhood ties.
- ***Healthy families raise healthy youth.*** Help provide family support, such as daycare, and community services, such as adult education or financial counseling, that strengthen the ability of parents and caregivers to fulfill their roles.
- ***Create room for the voice of youth.*** Involve young people in the life of the community and in decisions that impact the youth. Welcome youth contributions and perspectives.

## Civic Life

The City of Flint will be accountable to its people. The City will honor its pledge to guide the development and redevelopment of Flint using the values and priorities identified in the Master Plan. The City will collaborate with its partners to ensure open community engagement and accountability and make the most efficient use of resources.

## Guiding Principles

- ***Base decisions on active public participation.*** Engage residents and stakeholders on an ongoing basis, before decisions are made. Maintain open communication throughout the process. Emphasize outreach to people and communities that are most likely to be impacted by a decision or whose voices are under-represented.
- ***Neighborhood empowerment is integral to Flint's success.*** The Flint community must encourage community problem solving and invest resources in neighborhood planning and improvement efforts. Identify ways for community groups to easily “plug in” to improvement efforts in neighborhoods, parks, and schools.
- ***Coordination is needed to make good use of existing assets.*** There are hundreds of public, private, non-profit, and community groups engaged in efforts to improve the Flint community. The City can play a key role in coordinating these efforts and encouraging collaboration among all who are interested in enhancing Flint.
- ***Make the government accountable to follow the Master Plan.*** Implementation of the Master Plan will depend upon continued coordination with city departments to make sure their programs and policies align with the Plan. City Officials must base decisions on the guidance in the Master Plan.