

November 19, 2021

Village of Gates Mills' Master Planning Process



This detailed communication about the Village's master planning process is the first of many regular updates about the progress of this important strategic endeavor to envision the future for our Village. While the formal launch of the master planning process doesn't begin until early next year, we wanted to summarize the activity to date, because it creates the solid foundation for the launch.

Let's start this discussion with addressing what is a master plan. It is a long-term guide for how a community wants to evolve in the future. It includes an assessment of trends and current conditions, an overall vision of the future, broad recommendations that can be undertaken by the community, and the action steps to achieve that vision. It is a flexible document that is intended to be interpreted as conditions change. It can address land use, housing, the environment, economic development and connectivity, for example. The last effort with any similarity to a master plan was the land use plan completed by the Village in 1997. It was limited in scope, and not considered to be a master plan.

At the start of any master planning process, there are a lot of questions. They include the following. What are the expectations of current residents with regard to amenities and services? What would attract future residents? What would enhance our quality of life in the Village? What must remain the same in order to preserve our heritage? What needs to change? Once those and more questions are addressed, then it is appropriate to assess the supports and challenges to reaching that desired future vision.

This is an exciting venture that will engage our residents in identifying the key land use/development issues and needed amenities to determine our future. Truly, this is an opportunity to control our destiny. We are a unique village with so many wonderful attributes. How can we preserve the appealing features of the Village while adapting to the world changing around us?

The answers will emerge by the end of the master planning process. They will come from you, our residents, through surveys, interviews, neighborhood meetings, Town Hall presentations, and updates in a variety of media. With the guidance of CT Consultants, we will solicit villager opinions, the perspectives of others who consider our village a desirable place to live, our community organizations, our partners, like the Mayfield City Schools District and the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, and those whose profession is analyzing trends in housing, the environment, employment, education, technology, and lifestyle.

It is important to reiterate that the Master Plan is a guiding document and not a set of laws. For example, any recommendations for potential changes to the Village's codified ordinances, such as the zoning code, will require a separate process to fine tune and formally adopt any amendments.

This endeavor will take some time. Starting early next year, this process will likely evolve throughout 2022. Going slowly will allow input from as many villagers as possible. Having this process facilitated by CT Consultants emphasizes the importance of open and honest dialogue with impartial professionals leading the effort.

Here is a summary of preparatory steps that have already been taken by the Village to ensure a strong foundation for this process.

Date	Action	Participants
June– September, 2019	Became familiar with the master planning process through research and discussion. Developed RFP and list of candidates. Conducted interviews and selected CT Consultants.	Master Plan Selection Committee: David Atton Chip AuWerter Karen Schneider Nat Smith Nancy Sogg Craig Steinbrink Sandra Turner
October, 2019 through January, 2020	Villagers invited to volunteer for the Master Plan Committee	Mayor Karen Schneider
January 14, 2020. Resolution No. 2020-04	Council approved contract with CT Consultants	Council Members: AuWerter, Frankel, Reynolds, Sogg, Turner, Welsh and Whitney. Vote was unanimous.
February, 2020 – September, 2021	Pandemic and consultant recommendation for a largely in-person experience delayed the launch of the process	All
August 10, 2021	Approved updated contract with CT Consultants	Council Members: AuWerter, Frankel, Sogg, Steinbrink, Turner, Whitney. Vote was unanimous.
September 21, 2020	Sandra Turner and Chip AuWerter will co-chair the Master Plan Committee	Mayor Karen Schneider
October, 2021	Met with CT Consultants to discuss the launch of the master planning process	Chip AuWerter Karen Schneider Sandra Turner with Kris Hopkins of CT Consultants
October - December, 2021	Again, Villagers were invited to volunteer for the Master Plan Committee	Mayor Karen Schneider
October – December, 2021	Volunteers are contacted to confirm their interest in serving on the Master Plan Committee	Chip AuWerter Karen Schneider Sandra Turner

Below are descriptions of the Advisory Committee, Key Interviews, and the Master Plan sub-committees.

Advisory Committee: Approximately 20-25 Village residents representing different neighborhoods, demographics (age, gender, cultural background, family size, etc.), community organizations, professional backgrounds, interests, years of residency, and availability to commit to monthly meetings throughout 2022. This working group will receive the results of community surveys, neighborhood discussions, formal interviews, and outside perspectives from those whose profession is analyzing trends in housing, the environment, employment, education, technology and lifestyle. The Advisory Committee will consider and discuss all of these inputs and make written recommendations to the Mayor and Council.

Key Interviews: CT Consultants will conduct conversational interviews with key stakeholders at the start of the project to better understand the critical development issues to be addressed, and opportunities to explore. They include members of the Advisory Committee and some others including past and present elected officials, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Architectural Review Board, and representatives(s) from local non-profit organizations such as the Gates Mills Land Conservancy, Chagrin River Watershed Partners and the Gates Mills Historical Society. The objective is to further understand existing trends and issues confronting Gates Mills. CT Consultants will summarize the results of the interviews, without attributing comments to specific individuals.

Outside Perspectives and Data Gathering: The goal of this sub-committee is to collect data from ‘outsiders’ and from databases that will help identify trends and assess how well the Village is or is not positioned going forward. Key tasks will include interviews with individuals and organizations outside of the Village including real estate and re-location firms, environmental organizations, K-12 education consultants, technology advisors, employers and elected officials in state government. This sub-committee is tasked with analyzing this data to advise of trends that may impact the future of the Village.

Neighborhood Co-Captains: This sub-committee will consist of teams of two to three neighbors in areas across the Village. They will conduct meetings with their neighbors to reach as many residents as possible. CT consultants will work with the Village to identify the neighborhoods, prepare instructions for conducting these meetings and provide training for the volunteers to ensure the information shared by the teams and collected from the residents is consistent.

Communications and Public Relations: This sub-committee will have responsibility to develop all communications informing the residents and appropriate news organizations about the planning process, developments, key findings, and the final recommendation(s). Information will be distributed through social media, articles in the Pink Sheet, Gates Mills Connect, and summaries posted on the Village’s website. These sub-committee members will assist with the preparation of exhibits for public meetings and the toolkit for the Neighborhood Co-Captains. Telling the story of the master planning process in a way that is informative, accurate, interesting and timely is the objective.

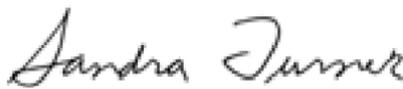
Master planning is a fluid process. As it evolves, more sub-committees may be required. More outside perspectives may be considered. Or data collected from citizen input may suggest a different approach for neighborhood gatherings. Should COVID become a factor, meetings may occur virtually rather than face-to-face. We ask you to be open and flexible along with us as we navigate this process. We are excited to finally begin this journey and hope that you will share in our enthusiasm. We can only be successful with our villagers’ involvement.

Your questions and comments are welcomed.

Sincerely,



Chip AuWerter, Co-Chair



Sandra Turner, Co-Chair