



Village of Dimondale

Strategic Plan

2014-2024

visit www.villageofdimondale.org



The Village of Dimondale Looks to the Future

The Village of Dimondale is located in Windsor Township in Eaton County, Michigan on a bend of the Grand River, just southwest of Lansing.

It has a rich history dating back to 1848 when Isaac M. Dimond came to the area and, among his many enterprises, began to construct a dam on the Grand River. A grist mill was completed by 1856, and the Village was platted in 1859. By 1880, the Village boasted seven stores, two millinery shops, a grist mill, sawmill and several machine shops.

In 1906, Dimondale became incorporated as a Village.

During the past 100 years, the community retained a quaint, small-town feel while keeping up with the world's cultural and technological advancements.

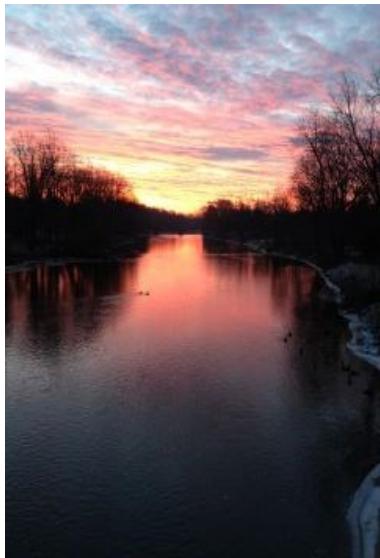
To be prepared for the next decade, the Dimondale Village Council embarked on a year-long process to strategically plan for the future. The Council formed six subcommittees: Financial Future, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Infrastructure, Administration and Management, and Communication and Technology.

In March of 2014, the Village participated in a Community Assessment Program coordinated by the Michigan Rural Council. Community members and government officials participated in focus groups and the entire community was invited to a Town Hall meeting to brainstorm about the community's assets and needs. The findings of the Community Assessment were incorporated into this document.

The Village Council would like to thank the entire community for their support and feedback during this process. We hope this document will provide a roadmap for the Village's future success.

Mike Chappell, Village President
Lori Conarton, Trustee
Robert Campbell, Trustee
Ralph Reznick, Trustee

Scott Ammarman, Trustee
Bill Bower, Trustee
Linda Luginbill, Trustee
Denise Parisian, Village Manager



Financial Fu-

Administration & Manage-



Parks & Recreation

Economic Develop-



Communication & Technol-

Infrastruc-

Financial Future

The Village of Dimondale has a reputation for being efficient and effective with tax dollars. Roads are built only after saving for the funding, and parks are built using grants and donations. During the economic recession, through strategies such as decreasing staff, the Village has been able to continue to provide services without reductions. As we look to the future, we know that costs will continue to escalate and state dollars may continue to decline. Strategic planning included discussions about how to continue to fund the services expected by Village residents in an uncertain future.

GOAL:

Provide Village residents with a great value for the taxes they pay.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Seek opportunities for additional revenue sources.

Action:

- Analyze taxation statutes and tax rate to evaluate available millage allocation
- Research special assessment process and costs.
- Create listing of municipal funding grant writers, including contact information and area of expertise.
- Identify and pursue opportunities to extend Village boundaries.
- Create an analysis of tax potential allowed under the law.
- Actively seek support from adjoining municipalities for recreation spaces and activities.
- Work with neighboring communities to extend pedestrian and bike trails in the greater Lansing area when opportunities arise.

2) Continue to streamline and look for efficiencies in government operations.

Action:

- Prepare cost analysis for trash and brush and leaf pickup.
- Collaborate with Windsor Township and Eaton County to share services when appropriate.
- Research Village fees to ensure they adequately cover costs of the services provided.

Administration and Management

The Village currently operates under a Village Manager/Council system for its management. The Village Manager serves as both the Clerk and Treasurer for the Village, as well as assumes responsibility for the day-to-day operations. While the Village operates efficiently with the current structure and number of employees, an older workforce may necessitate changes in the next several years. To ensure that transition is smooth, the strategic planning process allowed the Village to assess our current management system and make some decisions for the future.

GOAL:

Ensure that Village ordinances guide and promote cultural, social and economic growth of the Village for the next decade.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Review all Village ordinances for applicability and fair treatment.

Action:

- Direct Village Planning Commission to conduct review of ordinances to ensure they are relevant.
- 2) Enact a plan to ensure a prompt response by the Village to ensure the safety of citizens in the case of a disaster.

Action:

- Develop and maintain a Village emergency response plan.

GOAL:

Create a stable and streamlined government that is accountable and transparent to its citizens.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Provide sufficient oversight for Village Office operations and practices.

Action:

- Complete annual internal control audits for all significant areas of fiscal responsibility.
 - Review all Village policies for effectiveness.
- 2) Continue to operate with Village Manager providing administrative functions for Village.

Action:

- Create a succession plan for the Village Manager and key staff positions.
- 3) Ensure adequate staffing to provide services in a timely manner.

Action:

- Review employment practices and procedures to ensure they are adequate to maintain highly-skilled workplace.
- Develop a compensation plan for employees.

Parks and Recreation

In the recent past, the Village has put an emphasis on parks and recreation in the Village. The Village acquired the Dimondale Lions Park, constructed Danford Island Park and maintains the basketball court and the corner park for residents. These outdoor spaces are widely used and appreciated by residents. The Grand River is a valuable asset and as we look to the future, we hope to increase opportunities to utilize the river and adjoining space to provide relaxing, family-friendly places for residents and visitors.

GOAL:

Maximize the recreational potential of the Grand River.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Provide public access for recreational activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.
- 2) Promote river-related events.

Action:

- Support and invite river activities/events by other organizations.
- Promote use of Danford Island Park's facilities through communication with residents.
- Construct the second phase of Danford Island Park (Gazebo, fishing pier, pathways on island).

GOAL:

Promote healthy living.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Maintain a walkable/bikeable Village.
- 2) Support physical fitness activities.
- 3) Share information about healthy lifestyle choices.

Action:

- Attract organizations to sponsor 5K walk/run in Dimondale.
- Use Farmers' Market to distribute information on healthy eating; promote exercise (walking club), and cultivate resources.
- Work with neighboring communities to extend bike paths.
- Promote and expand the walking tour of historical sites.
- Sponsor horseshoe tournaments.
- Research disc golf course.

GOAL:

Protect natural resources.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Provide environmental education.
- 2) Preserve riparian habitat.
- 3) Maintain a healthy urban forest.
- 4) Preserve and expand fish and wildlife habitat.

Action:

- Install dog waste stations throughout parks.
- Create a plan for redeveloping urban forest.
- Build and place bat houses, duck boxes, bird houses throughout park properties.
- Plant and manage vegetation to support and attract wildlife with a focus on the elimination of invasive species.
- Inform residents about protecting riparian habitat areas through best management practices.
- Offer Village properties for use by environmental groups for natural resource education.
- Establish interpretive trails on the island.

GOAL:

Promote a sense of place.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Sponsor activities that encourage community interaction.
- 2) Advocate community pride and placemaking ideals.
- 3) Create/obtain more community spaces.
- 4) Provide opportunities for historical education.
- 5) Advance arts and cultural enterprises.

Action:

- Hold a festival with a wide range of family activities and a focus on river/water resources.
- Explore sponsoring an outdoor movie program.
- Develop a plan for placing benches throughout the community.
- Promote the creation of a local Arts Council to sponsor activities.

GOAL:

Develop support mechanisms for parks and recreation.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Foster a “Friends of the Park” organization.
- 2) Encourage community volunteerism.
- 3) Pursue grants for park improvements and recreational activities.
- 4) Establish and strengthen partnerships to support and improve parks.

Action:

- Foster creation of “Friends of the Park.”
- Organize information for volunteering opportunities.
- Research and apply for federal, state and local grants.
- Continue fundraising activities and explore new approaches for generating support.
- Create and implement a public relations plan/promotions.
- Seek assistance from Windsor Township and other agencies.

Economic Development

The Village Council recognizes that the health of the business district affects the quality of life for Dimondale residents and the value of all property. Current planning philosophy contends that the key to promoting economic prosperity lies in creating the kind of community where people want to live. This strategic plan addresses that “marriage” with the aim of improving the quality of life for residents and stimulating positive change and business growth through public and private collaboration. These goals and objectives assume a partnership between the Village and the Dimondale Business Association and a commitment from both entities to fostering a thriving, vibrant community.

GOAL:

Ensure the stability and success of existing businesses and attract new businesses.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Explore and implement economic growth strategies.

Action:

- Collaborate with regional agencies (TCRPC, LEAP, LTREP, Can Do!, etc.).
- Research funding options for business start up, façade improvement, etc. (MSU, MSHDA, MDOT, MEDC, etc.).
- Promote entrepreneurship (offer classes, resources, mentoring, etc.).
- Solicit potential business interest and introduce realtors to real estate opportunities (letters, advertisements, open houses).
- Support existing and new home-based business development.

2) Develop an economic “tool box.”

Action:

- Generate and maintain an inventory of existing commercial properties (size, use, ownership, status, etc.) and a wish list of desirable/compatible enterprises.
- Create guidelines for starting a business in Dimondale and post on website.

3) Create a connected web presence.

Action:

- Encourage website development for all businesses.
- Promote the Dimondale Business Association “Discover Dimondale” website.
- Improve/expand telecommunications infrastructure where possible.

GOAL:

Improve the quality of commercial real estate and create a more attractive downtown.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop a sound physical improvement plan based on good design.

Action:

- Explore the possibility of Associate membership in Michigan Main Street Program.
- Explore an application for MSU’s Small Town Design Initiative program.

2) Improve aesthetic quality of downtown.

Action:

- Target blighted buildings for improvement by working with property owners on disposition strategy (removal, repurpose, sale, etc.).
- Work with business owners to develop a policy for attractive temporary signage.
- Encourage façade improvements, flower boxes, benches, etc.

GOAL:

Create a sense of place (and identity) to attract people and successful businesses.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop a marketing strategy.

Action:

- Complete an assets/challenges inventory.
- Promote the “Discover Dimondale” brand.
- Install way-finding signs.

2) Invest in positive social activity.

Action:

- Work with adjacent jurisdictions to connect/extend bike paths and sidewalks.
- Develop arts and cultural initiatives to connect Danford Island Park with downtown.
- Create opportunities for people to gather downtown (Farmers’ Market, Car Show, Taste of Dimondale, etc.).

Communication and Technology

This portion of the strategic planning process explored uses of technology to assist with the effective communication of the Village with residents and to provide Village residents with access to the most current technology available to meet their needs for personal communication, acquisition of services and entertainment. The term technology is used here as the infrastructure needed to provide such abilities and the applications used to provide the services identified. All current forms of technology, internet, cable, wireless, cellular and traditional phone were reviewed as well as consideration of future technologies.

GOAL:

Use technology to increase avenues of communication between Village officials and citizens.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Communicate with residents effectively.

Action:

- Develop Village communications policy.
- Create email distribution list to communicate with residents.
- Create “Ask the President” section or blog on the Village website.
- Use an appropriate form of social media to provide regular updates on Village activities and news.
- Maintain a robust website providing all possible digitized Village ordinances, procedures, records and other information. The website should be interactive, allowing residents to ask questions, make suggestions, fill in and submit forms and report problems.
- Provide email access to all Village Council members.

2) Ensure that information and communication is provided to those without technology.

Action:

- Make print copies of Village newsletter and other documents available.

GOAL:

Identify technologies that help provide services more efficiently and economically.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Use technology when possible to conduct Village business.

Action:

- Research use of online service for sewer and fee payments.

GOAL:

Optimize technology available to the community.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Continually evaluate technology needs of the community.

Action:

- Explore limited free WIFI provided by the Village for Village property downtown and Village parks.
- Negotiate franchise agreements with service and technology in mind.
- Identify and solicit technology providers that meet the needs of Village residents with the most current and dependable technology services.

- 2) Use technology to keep citizens safe.

Action:

- Work with township and county to build an emergency response platform to communicate with residents about weather and other alerts, i.e. Nixle.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Village of Dimondale has a history of investment in infrastructure. Since 1988, five million dollars of road improvements have been completed on Village streets. And, in partnership with Windsor Township, in 1996 and 2005, reinvestment in the wastewater treatment plant resulted in a new process and a current system value of six million. With revenue declining and little potential for growth in the tax base, efficient planning and staging of repairs and construction is more critical than ever. A commitment to maintaining Village roads, bridges, sewers, drains, buildings and grounds is a pledge to the quality of life in our community and to fulfilling the public trust in local government. Recommendations from this task force will address infrastructure responsibilities in the following areas: public water, streets, sidewalks and pathways, wastewater and facilities.

SPECIFICATIONS

The Village has very little in place regarding construction specifications. Standardizing specifications to meet the Village's needs and purpose would further assure that quality and consistency are prioritized and defined for future leaders.

GOAL:

Build high-quality and long-lasting public infrastructure for posterity.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop and adopt construction and design standards.

Action:

- Research and compose minimum specifications for roads, sewers and water mains.

PUBLIC WATER

The 2012 survey demonstrated that public water is still an issue to Village residents. However, the degree of pressure remains limited and it is anticipated that home owners in general do not feel a need great enough to consider the cost of providing this service in the near future.

GOAL:

Remain prepared to pursue public water when public interest or public health issues create more pressure/need.

OBJECTIVE:

1) Update costs, data and options for public water system construction.

Action:

- Speak with the Board of Water and Light about the current possibility of service provision.
- Speak with Delta Charter Township about the current possibility of service provision.
- Speak with Wolverine Engineers regarding cost and feasibility of constructing a Village-owned system.
- Maintain Mid-Michigan Water Association membership in order to stay connected with area providers, regional leaders, etc.

STREETS

The Village has a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for streets that identifies priorities through the next 10 to 12 years. This Strategic Plan focuses on securing funding for implementing the CIP and the development of asset management practices for maintaining safe and attractive streets.

GOAL:

Implement the adopted Ten-Year Streets Improvement Program.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Identify and secure funding through dedicated revenue sources

Action:

- Pursue grant funding for major street capital repairs/improvements.
- Research tax allocation and increases for road and drain improvements.

2) Work with other units of government to improve non-Village roads in proximity to the Village.

Action:

- Actively pursue a partnership with Windsor Township and the Eaton County Road Commission for reconstruction of East Road.
- Assist area residents to advance the improvement of Walnut Highway.

GOAL:

Maintain all streets for the safe, efficient and convenient movement of vehicles.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Provide superior year-round maintenance and implement asset management concepts to prolong pavement life.

Action:

- Develop a crack sealing maintenance program.
- Update Asset Management Plan (Act 51).
- Update and maintain Road Soft program for record keeping tool.
- Research winter liquids program for salt application alternatives.

SIDEWALKS AND PATHWAYS

The Village adopted a Complete Streets Resolution in 2010 and well before that time began to incorporate sidewalks and bike paths in every road development. All major streets are now walkable and bikeable within the Village corporate limits.

GOAL:

Support and implement complete streets principles.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Work with neighboring communities to extend bicycle and pedestrian paths throughout the Greater Lansing area.

Action:

- Communicate the Village's interest in and support of the expansion of sidewalks and bike paths in Eaton County.
- Work with Windsor Township to include pathways in the update of the Windsor Charter Township and Village of Dimondale Comprehensive Plan.

- 2) Expand the Village's "trail" system as funding and opportunity allow.

Action:

- Develop a walking path along the river connecting Danford Park with Lions Park.

WASTEWATER

The Village built a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) in 1970 which discharged to the groundwater and provided service to Village properties exclusively. In 1996, the WWTP underwent an expansion which converted the treatment process to surface water discharge and extended service into certain areas of Windsor Township. One additional expansion occurred in 2005, also to a portion of the Township. Customer growth on the system has not met expectations and the plant has significant available capacity. The primary issues facing the system are: the cost of maintaining the system on a very limited customer base and funding capital repairs given aging infrastructure.

GOAL:

Ensure the efficient provision of future wastewater treatment services.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop and implement planning tools to assist with management strategies and decisions.

Action:

- Apply for a SAW Grant (Sewer and Water) for the development of an asset management plan.

2) Develop a funding plan for future provision of services.

Action:

- Research borrowing options, costs, strategies for emergency and nonemergency situations.
- Research all possibilities for extending service within and outside of the current service area.

3) Support system development and expansion to make use of available capacity.

Action:

- Work with Windsor Township to provide sewer service within “Coordinated Growth Area” identified in Comprehensive Plan.

FACILITIES

Village owned buildings are aging and range from 60+ years for the oldest (Village Office) to 19 years (WWTP office/lab). Within those buildings the HVAC systems are also aging and lighting systems are older technology.

GOAL:

Operate facilities efficiently and cost effectively.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop a facilities management plan.

Action:

- Audit all buildings for energy savings and repairs.
- Implement repairs/improvements from audit.
- Prepare a plan and budget for HVAC systems replacement/upgrades.

2) Develop a plan for upgrading lighting systems.

Action:

- Research lighting systems for energy efficient replacement technology.
- Research funding options for lighting upgrade (buildings and street lamps).
- Implement lighting systems upgrade,

Infrastructure/Asset Management

The Village owns a small (five vehicles) and aging (15 years+) fleet of vehicles without a plan for replacement. Good fiscal practice dictates solid planning for capital expenditures in all areas.

GOAL:

Manage transportation costs efficiently and effectively.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop a vehicle and equipment management plan.

Action:

- Analyze the cost of replacing vehicles and large equipment and develop a time frame for replacement.
- Integrate the Vehicle Replacement Plan with the Capital Improvement Plan.