

✓ 44

MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF MUNICIPAL PLANNING OFFICIALS

Master Plan Committee

MICHIGAN SURVEY OF MASTER PLAN ACTIVITIES

1948

This survey of Michigan communities was organized and conducted by the Master Plan Committee of the Society, with the approval and instructions of the Board of Directors. The questionnaire forms were distributed and collected by the Michigan Municipal League. In this way, it was possible to obtain reports from communities which are not represented in the membership of the Society. For this valuable assistance the Committee is very grateful.

Out of a total of 93 questionnaires mailed by the Municipal League, 56 were returned, or 60 percent. It was considered by the Committee that this return was sufficient to afford a satisfactory analysis of community planning activities throughout the State. However, it should be borne in mind that many communities may have failed to report because they had no planning activities. Consequently, data in the tables showing the proportion of Michigan communities conducting organized planning may appear higher than actually exists. In order to eliminate error where possible, most items are compared with the number of communities reporting on a particular item.

For purpose of brevity, the names of communities have not been listed. Instead, the various items of information have been presented in the tables; with cities arranged in classes according to population and area in square miles. Thus, local planning officials may compare their staff, budget or status of master plan work with those of other cities in the same size class. In this regard, it will be noted that population grouping is based on the 1940 Census. Although an estimate of 1947 population was requested in the questionnaire, many cities omitted this item. Therefore 1947 population could not be used. Because of well substantiated population changes since 1940 in certain communities, local officials may want to use recent estimates in determining their own place in the population grouping.

Readers no doubt will want to make their own analyses of statistical items of interest to them. Following are some general observations.

TYPES OF PLANNING AGENCY

By Population Groups (See Table I)

1. No reporting city of above 10,000 population is without a planning agency.
2. All cities having planning commissions operate under Act 285 of 1931 or under charter provisions except three in the 10,000-19,999 population class.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Some outstanding points among the findings of this survey are as follows:

1. There has been a widespread impetus to community planning since 1940, after a too-long period of dormancy.
2. There is an encouragingly high proportion of reporting communities having planning agencies (85 percent). However, the proportion having completed or conducting master plan activities is somewhat lower (64 percent). This suggests the need for re-vitalizing planning agencies, and encouraging the establishment of new ones.
3. Staff services for planning are more adequate in the larger cities, but there is a substantial precedent for the employment of technical services in even the smallest communities. Consultants apparently are active in all size groups, and may prove the solution of planning finance in the smaller communities.
4. Planning costs per capita are relatively higher in the smaller cities, ranging from 12¢ in the largest to over 50¢ in the smallest.
5. Possibly because of relatively greater density of population in the larger cities, planning costs per square mile increase with the area.
6. Nearly all cities of 10,000 population or over have started master plan work. Less than half of those under 10,000 have started.
7. Basic research (land use, population, economics) is being given increasing recognition in master plan work, but many communities still are not using it.
8. Among completed phases of the master plan, major thoroughfares were given greatest emphasis, with plans for land use, recreation, schools and public buildings also ranking high. Current planning places the greatest emphasis on parking.
9. Too many zoning ordinances have been adopted without land use plans and other basic research.
10. Subdivision regulations are gaining in acceptance.

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Table VIII

Progress By Geographic Regions

Geographic(*) Region	Number Reporting	Type of Planning Agency Commission Other None			Number Plan- ning Agencies	Percent of those reporting	Status of Master Plan					
		Commission	Other	None			None Started	Percent of those reporting	Completed	Percent of those reporting	In Process	Percent of those reporting
Southeastern Michigan	36	23	8	5	31	86.1	12	33.3	8	22.2	16	44.5
Southwestern Michigan	11	8	1	2	9	81.8	6	54.4	1	9.1	4	36.4
Upper Michigan	4	3	1	-	4	100.0	-	-	2	50.0	2	50.0
Upper Peninsula	5	2	-	3	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0	2	40.0

* Following is a list of communities included in each geographic region:

Southeastern

Michigan

Verndale	Lansing	Riverview
Albion	Lincoln Park	Rockwood
Almont	Fraser	Royal Oak
Ann Arbor	Garden City	Saginaw
Bay City	Highland Park	Sandusky
Davidson	Howell	Tecumseh
Dearborn	Huntington Woods	Trenton
Detroit	Inkster	Vassar
East Detroit	Jackson	Wayne

Southwestern

Michigan

Benton Harbor	Big Rapids	East Grand Rapids	Fremont	Grand Rapids	Michigan	Muskegon	North Muskegon	Pentwater	South Haven
Upper Michigan	Alpena	Manistee	Rogers City	Traverse City	Upper Peninsula	Hancock	Ironwood	Marquette	Sault Ste. Marie