

Gratiot Collaborative Group Awarded Grant for Innovative Countywide Master Planning Initiative

By Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.

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LIAA's Partnerships for Change: Sustainable Communities Grant to provide professional services and technical assistance

Ithaca, Michigan – At least twenty-one units of government within Gratiot County, Michigan have embarked on the state's first collaborative countywide master plan, and a \$67,000 service grant from the Traverse City-based Land Information Access Association's (LIAA) "Partnerships for Change: Sustainable Communities" program will boost the effort. Heather Seyfarth, Community Planner for the LIAA remarked, "We were very impressed with the grant application from the partnering units of government in Gratiot County. A county-wide master plan generated by local jurisdictions through cooperative efforts truly embodies the mission of the Partnerships for Change Sustainable Communities program. Moreover, we believe that a plan of this nature is the first of its kind in Michigan."

Local government leaders came together several months ago to discuss the concept of a joint master plan between two cities and a township, but the scope quickly expanded as additional local government leaders expressed interest in participating. Updated master plans are mandatory for every unit of government in Michigan, and most units spend thousands of dollars creating individual plans and updating them every five years. In an effort to save taxpayer dollars and create a master plan that embodies each unit within the context of the entire county, the Gratiot Countywide Master Planning Group began work on organizing a committee structure for community participation. Current committees include Historical Context, Physical Characteristics, Demographics, Housing, Economy, Community Services, Education, Roadways & Transportation, and Community Collaboration. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. President and Chair of the Master Planning Group stated, "I expect the planning effort to deliver a far superior plan for the wider community than individual plans would ever allow." Community members interested in participating may contact Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. at (989) 875-2083.

The mission of the Partnerships for Change Sustainable Communities program is effective preservation and management of cultural and natural resources on a statewide basis through inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination in land use planning and management, resulting in more efficient economic development through an inter-jurisdictional focus on community-wide concerns. Funding for Partnerships for Change Sustainable Communities comes from the Americana, C.S. Mott and W.K. Kellogg Foundations, and the Coastal Management Program of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Partners include the Michigan Township Association, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Planning, and Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit www.partnershipsforchange.cc.

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Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. (GGDI) is organized to coordinate economic development efforts in the greater Gratiot County area.

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