

Village of Onekama 2024 Master Plan RFP

Addendum No. 1, December 13, 2013

Questions about Onekama:

1. What are things you are excited about that are in the works?

Growth. This growth, however, needs to be appropriately managed so that it benefits the residents, property owners and businesses of the community. The Village has been declining in population and the infrastructure isn't in place that supports growth, so we're excited about the Master Plan planning process and implementation of recommendations that will create a destination as opposed to the pass-through town we are today.

2. The RFP mentions a strong movement in the Village to revitalize or reinvest in the area. Has there been formal movement toward this goal (e.g., establishing a Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Regional Chamber of Commerce, others)?

Establishment of a DDA was attempted in the past, but due to a number of issues, it was never approved and implemented. Discussions have taken place with Manistee (Chamber of Commerce) and State of Michigan (MEDC) organizations that support the growth and development in the county. There is developer interest in the Village of Onekama and the patterns of spending in the county indicate the Village is the second location, after the City of Manistee, where people spend money. The Village of Onekama would like to be known as a place that partners with developers, in order to ensure successful development projects, and that the residents of the Village and Township are benefiting as well.

3. What are some of the key issues you are currently addressing in the community?

Residents don't want to become another Frankfort, yet the Village of Onekama is nowhere near the same make up of that area, other than having water nearby. We need to understand who and what we want to be. Statistically speaking, the Village is a retirement community, and a declining one at that. The Village has a tourism-based economy, yet we don't invest in what tourists want. The Village is also addressing infrastructure issues that limit growth.

There are investors and businesses interested in locating in the Village and we need to embrace and grow that interest, or they will go elsewhere. An updated Master Plan will demonstrate to investors that the Village has a plan and vision for managed growth and we are committed to bringing that Plan to fruition. An established vision for the community is also important for local residents.

Currently, opportunities for employment and housing for young people are limited so many leave the area.

4. Has Onekama dealt with hot-topic issues like short-term rentals and marijuana sales?

The Village has addressed issues such as the decline of population, short-term rentals and merging the Village and Township governments. The Village has an aging sanitary sewer system and due to operational issues, expansion into the Township has been very limited. Connection to a municipal sanitary sewer system is important for the health of the local watershed and to support businesses important to the area such as the Portage Point Inn. Businesses need this public infrastructure in order to allow for growth. This growth then results in an increase in tax base that is needed to continue to meet the demands of both businesses and residents.

The Village does not have an ordinance directly regulating short term rentals but it remains an issue for the Village. Development of an ordinance, similar to the ordinance adopted by the township, will be the subject of future discussions by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission is currently developing ordinance language to permit multi-use buildings to support business development. However, without an updated Master Plan that presents a clear community-driven vision to guide future development decisions, development of the ordinance language is challenging.

Several years ago, there was a proposal to consolidate Village and Township governmental services. Although this consolidation of services did not move forward, there are opportunities for the Village and Township to collaborate on a number of community services/resources. There could be cost savings that benefit both communities by working together.

5. Would you say that the Village of Onekama is currently being adequately serviced by: the road and transportation systems, pedestrian and non-motorized connections, parks and rec opportunities, housing options, employment opportunities, health and social services?

The Village has adequate local streets, but there is a lack of public transportation and quality/continuous sidewalks. There are a number of local parks but usage is minimal. Pedestrian connections between the local parks could be improved. There are efforts from private groups to improve the main Village Park with the construction of a new event stage and pavilion. The Village Park also has a beach area but usage is minimal. Boat traffic on Portage Lake is significant but there is a lack of available docks/slips.

With regard to housing options, there are a number of short-term rentals in the Village, which generates income for the property owners, but it then eliminates workforce/affordable housing options for employers who need permanent and/or seasonal employees. This also limits the ability to bring new permanent residents into the Village, which would result in more sustainable growth. Increased housing options would also benefit the local schools and investors wanting to do business in the Village.

Due to the lack of housing and subsequent employment opportunities in Onekama, people look to the City of Manistee or Traverse City for permanent employment opportunities or seasonal work, such as golf courses.

Since Onekama's population is an older population, more medical-related facilities to support the elderly would be beneficial. Health care is primarily available in Manistee and Traverse City, since there is no medical, dental or vision care available in the Village.

6. Are there any current regional issues that will positively or negatively impact Onekama (e.g., new road or infrastructure projects, employment centers opening or closing, new housing or commercial developments)?

There are many regional conditions that positively impact the Village of Onekama. The Village is beautifully positioned along the north shore of Portage Lake and just a short distance from Lake Michigan. After many years of stagnant or declining growth, Manistee is experiencing a resurgence of growth. There is also a casino that is located at the intersection of US-31 and M-22, just a few miles from Onekama. Onekama is also located on M-22, a state recognized scenic by-way and one of the most beautiful stretches of highway in the state. There are plenty of beaches in the area, a nationally recognized golf course, and updated state of the art school facility. Given all these positive influences, we just don't seem to take advantage of this location.

M-22 is the main street through the Village, yet we don't do things to cause traffic to stop and take notice. MDOT plans to resurface M-22 in the next couple of years and we should work with MDOT to consider other roadway improvements that benefit all users, not just vehicles. Sidewalks need to be improved and are only on the north side of the road. There is no sidewalk on the south side of M-22, so the businesses on that side of the road suffer from the lack of foot traffic. There are vacant lots and empty buildings along Main Street (M-22) that are not being fully utilized. We need to get the community to come together during development of the Master Plan to establish a vision for the community and goals/objectives to implement that vision.